



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly
By
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Minister of Education

Ministerial Statement
Update on Education Reform - History and Legacy Working Group

Friday, March 18th, 2022

MR SPEAKER,

An African Proverb says this "*...If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors...*"

MR. SPEAKER,

Often I hear in the community that Bermuda history is not captured sufficiently, that members of the public do not have a firm grasp of the Bermuda story, compared to other countries worldwide. This lack of understanding of our story can make people not appreciate or feel as attached to or proud of their island home.

MR. SPEAKER,

In December of last year, I announced to the members of this House and the public the creation of the History and Legacy Working Group and introduced their members. This was borne, in part, out of the discussions I had with current and former educators, children of beloved educators, community members, and parents of current students, many of whom were also public school alumni. They showed a passion and reverence for the legacy of education in Bermuda, and I was determined to have this committee formed.

MR SPEAKER,

Through the work of the History and Legacy Committee, it is intended to not only tell the story of the evolution of education in Bermuda but also ensure

that the well-deserved pride in education delivery be restored. Today I rise to provide an update on their work to date.

MR SPEAKER,

Please permit me to remind Honourable Colleagues and the listening Public of the History and Legacy Working Group's remit. Under the direction of Chair Heather Whalen, the Working Group will:

1. Develop the terms of reference for the History and Legacy Committee;
2. Identify the types of professional and community roles and skill sets necessary for the History and Legacy Committee;
3. Identify potential work streams and supporting organisational structures and processes for the History and Legacy Committee project, e.g. research, data collection, community engagement, communication, etc.
4. Develop a provisional project plan outline with milestones;
5. Make recommendations on the likely duration of the short to medium term phases of the History and Legacy Committee project;
6. Make recommendations on the potential required time contribution of the History and Legacy Committee members for the project; and
7. Complete and present the Terms of Reference by March 31st, 2022.

MR SPEAKER,

The History and Legacy Committee will use the Terms of Reference as a framework to guide and carry out longer-term work that will be needed. The ultimate responsibility is to ensure the documentation of Bermuda's educational history; and make recommendations on the best ways to preserve, honour and commemorate the history and legacy of education in Bermuda.

MR SPEAKER,

I am a firm believer in sitting at the feet of one's elders to obtain knowledge and wisdom. The History and Legacy Working Group has taken the same approach by meeting with several respected historians and educators, including

- Mr Wentworth Christopher,
- Dr Clarence Maxwell,
- Ms Ruth Thomas and;
- Dr Norma Astwood.

MR SPEAKER,

Through these conversations, the Working Group has been able to clarify the eventual scope of the History and Legacy Committee and identify additional resources that will be required. The Working Group's knowledge and understanding of the impact that the socio-political, economic and religious climate had in shaping and "informing" the development of education in Bermuda was expanded. They also brought to light interesting facts that I did not know, such as nursery schools came into being when women started working outside of their homes more, post World War II and that the age to begin school was initially seven years old.

MR SPEAKER,

We live in a digital age. If we have a question, the answer is usually only a google search away. However, when it comes to specific information on Bermuda's history, few resources could provide the full breadth and depth of knowledge required. One such source of help leaned on was the Director of Bermuda National Library, Ms Joanne Brangman, and librarian Ellen Hollis.

MR SPEAKER,

Director Bragman and Librarian Hollis sat with and advised the group about materials and documents available at both the Archives and the Bermuda National Library. As custodians of these resources, they allowed access to primary and secondary education resources from as far back as the early 1900s. We are also grateful that both Ms Brangman and Ms Hollis offered advice regarding other organisations, schools, and religious institutions that may have very useful documents.

MR SPEAKER,

Indeed the Working Group was appreciative of and acknowledges the value of other institutions, such as the National Museum of Bermuda and the Bermuda National Trust; both of which have indicated their willingness to assist with making their relevant resources available for research purposes.

MR SPEAKER,

I am most grateful to those institutions for their willingness to support and cooperate with this venture. It has often been said that "*...it takes a village to raise a child...*", and in like manner, "*...the village...*" is needed to help tell the story of the evolution of educating "*...the children...*".

MR SPEAKER,

There is so much history to be referenced by the History and Legacy Working Group and the eventual History and Legacy Committee when it is completely formed and established. The story of the neighbourhood schools, the formations of nurseries, and our more well-known historical schools like the Central School will be explored. However, it does not end there. There is even more to be explored and discussed, such as the many areas for learning in Bermuda. Institutions like the former Howard Academy, the Dockyard as a place of Maritime learning or the specialised schools that have existed to provide education in specific career paths over the years will be a focus as well.

MR SPEAKER,

With so much information to be unearthed and stories to be shared, it is imperative to have processes in place to ensure that all resources are organised and in good working order. I commend the History and Legacy Working Group for formalising the role and structure of the eventual History and Legacy Committee and proposing an organisational structure for them. I am confident their work will see Bermuda's proud and storied educational history, given its proper respect on this island.

MR SPEAKER,

The passion to understand, value, and appreciate the evolution and history of education in Bermuda heartens me, and I am excited for the opportunity to highlight and share that fervor and enthusiasm with the rest of the island. When we embarked on the education reform journey, especially Parish Primary consultation, we knew that people would feel strongly about their schools. I thank the History and Legacy Working Group for their work thus far and look forward to receiving the Terms of Reference later this month for the broader work of the History and Legacy Committee.

Thank you, **MR SPEAKER.**