



## **Ministerial Statement**

To The Senate

By

**Senator Owen Darrell, JP**

Junior Minister of Education

## **Ministerial Statement**

2021 Senior School Graduations

**Date: Wednesday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

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**Madam President,**

Last week Monday and Wednesday, June 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, respectively, I had the pleasure of attending both the Berkeley Institute and CedarBridge Academy graduations. While the pandemic may have changed the location of these events from years past, I can say without question that all felt the spirit of accomplishment, joy and pride. It is a feeling that I carry with me today as I share with this Honourable House and the Bermuda public the accomplishments of our 2021 graduating classes.

**Madam President,**

I think it is safe to say that no other graduating year group has been through as much as the Class of 2021. Two academic years interrupted with pandemic and the pandemic related changes is without question stressful. Yet, we were able to see 139 students graduate from the Berkeley Institute and 91 from CedarBridge Academy. These students knew and appreciated the importance of their education and let nothing get in the way, despite the unpredictability of the times.

**Madam President,**

Our students' achievements are a testament to their tenacity, resilience, and perseverance. I have heard from several students who truly did feel like giving up. They were facing educational stresses from remote learning and uncertainty over whether their school building would reopen. They also faced stressors at home as their parents faced uncertainty with work. I commend them for finding the strength within themselves and pushing through even when they didn't feel like they could. Despite the times, our BPSS senior students accomplished amazing feats. Please indulge me as I speak to their great accomplishments.

**Madam President,**

At Berkeley Institute's graduation the guest speaker was Berkeley Alum, Mrs Dominique Richardson, a senior underwriter at the insurance firm Markel Bermuda. Mrs Richardson delivered a message to students congratulating them for their perseverance in the face of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. She encouraged them to fully recognise and appreciate what they have overcome and celebrate the fact that "...You guys did it – You made it. Period..."

**Madam President,**

Having satisfied the criteria set by the Department of Education for graduation from the Bermuda Public School System at the Berkeley Institute, there was a total of 139 Graduates as follows:

- 123 students graduated with the Bermuda School Diploma (BSD).
- 4 students received the Bermuda School Certificate (BSC).
- 5 students graduated with the Bermuda Alternate School Diploma (BASD) from the Functional Academics programme.
- 4 students graduated with the Penn Foster High School Diploma
- 3 students graduated from the first cohort of students with autism

**Madam President,**

Of these graduates,

- 7 students were awarded Advanced Honours - Summa Cum Laude;

- 5 students were awarded Advanced Honours - Magna Cum Laude;
- 4 students achieved Advanced Honours - Cum Laude.

**Madam President,**

- 7 students graduated from Bermuda College with Associate Degrees, of which 2 were awarded 'The Distinguished Dean's Award' by the Bermuda College.
- 5 students graduated from the Bermuda College with Applied Technology Certificates, of which 1 graduated with Distinction and received the award for Most Outstanding Applied Science Technology Graduate.
- 3 students graduated with their Nursing Assistant Certification
- 7 others are set to complete their Various Certifications by August 2021.

**Madam President,**

- 11 graduates received a collective total of \$3500 in Berkeley Panther Pride Award Scholarship funds.
- 22 students received Scholarships and Awards at Berkeley's fourth annual Scholarships and Awards Ceremony totalling approximately \$60,000.
- Additionally, students received numerous scholarships from the private sector and University admission scholarships totalling approximately \$280,000 to date

**Madam President,**

At CedarBridge Academy's graduation Mrs Thoslae Williams, a graduate from the CedarBridge Academy Class of 2011, was the guest speaker. Mrs Williams delivered a powerful and passionate call to graduates, encouraging them to dare to be different. She also pointed out to the graduates that their ending does not have to be the same as their beginning – if they put in the hard work, they will achieve their goals. She closed her remarks by reminding graduates to always work hard, be resilient and be positive thinkers.

**Madam President,**

Having satisfied the criteria set by the Department of Education for graduation from the Bermuda Public School System at Cedarbridge Academy, there was a total of 91 Graduates as follows:

**Madam President,**

- 79 students graduated with the Bermuda School Diploma ( BSD);
- 9 students graduated with the Bermuda Alternative School Diploma (BASD) from the Functional Academics programme;
- 2 students graduated with a Bermuda Functional Skills Certificate (BFSC);
- One student graduated with the Penn Foster High School Diploma;
- 3 students graduated with BSD Honours Distinction;
- 5 students graduated with BSD Honours;

**Madam President,**

- 1 student graduated from Bermuda College with an Associate Degree;
- 3 students graduated from Bermuda College with a Certificate in Applied Technology;
- 2 students graduated with the Nursing Assistants Certificate from Bermuda College;
- Most of our graduates will be attending The Bermuda College in the fall, and others will be attending overseas colleges and universities;

**Madam President,**

- Graduates at the CedarBridge Academy earned scholarships and awards in the amount of approximately \$37,000 in addition to internships and apprenticeships. At this time, I would like to thank our community partners, who have continued to support us despite the financial challenges they have faced during this pandemic.
- 20 students were recognised for earning the NCCER Core Certification in the area of technical education;

**Madam President,**

We know through research evidence and anecdotal stories no student reaches this milestone alone. The Ministry and Department of Education staff; school boards; principals; teachers; support staff; parents and guardians; students; volunteers; and community partners all helped our students reach this milestone. Whether it be knowledge, encouraging words, donations, time or motivating incentives, our public school students have a village around them. I want to thank the village that has supported the graduating classes of 2021, and their achievements are your achievements as well.

**Madam President,**

The Ministry of Education has embarked on the most ambitious but also necessary journey of education reform. We know that as the times have changed, so must how we educate our children. They must be prepared for the jobs of the future. It is for their future that we work so hard. By preparing our students for the future world of work, the Government's vision for the Bermuda Public School System to see all students educated to lead personally and professionally, compete locally, and contribute globally will be realised. This vision guides our decisions and forward progress that we may ensure the graduating classes to come are even more successful than the last.

**Madam President,**

This Government is dedicated to ensuring the success of every child in Bermuda, for we know that their success equals the success of our Island.

**Thank you, Madam President!**