



Ministerial Statement

To The House of Assembly

By

The Hon. Diallo V. Rabain JP, MP

Minister of Education

Tabling of The Education Authority Act 2026

Friday, October 2nd, 2026

Mr Speaker,

I rise today to make a statement to this Honourable House in advance of the tabling, later in this Session, of the **Education Authority Bill 2026**.

Mr. Speaker,

This tabling is a milestone that has been almost two decades in the making. It marks the delivery of a commitment made to the people of Bermuda, a commitment shaped by report after report, by consultation after consultation, and by the persistent, patient work of educators, parents, students, public officers, and community stakeholders who refused to accept that our children deserved anything less than the best.

This is not a sudden announcement. This is not an idea born in a boardroom last month. And it is not a departure from anything I, or this Government, have said before.

Mr Speaker,

The message I bring to this House today is the same message I brought when I was first appointed to this portfolio. It is the same message I delivered directly to our educators at the start of this school year. And it is the same message I brought to this House on **July 17th of this year**, when I updated Honourable Members on the purpose, progress, and principles of the Bill now before us.

This reform exists for one reason: to build a public education system that serves Bermuda's children better than it does today. Every child in our public schools deserves to learn in a system that is well-governed, professionally led, and focused unwaveringly on their outcomes:

- in literacy,
- in numeracy,
- in wellbeing, and
- in the life chances they carry with them into adulthood.

Today's statement is not a new direction. It is the next step on a direction long set and long maintained and the Bill I will table later today gives that direction the force of law.

Mr Speaker,

To understand the Bill before this House, we must honour the road that brought it here. That road did not begin in 2025, or 2022, or even 2017. It began with a national reckoning about the state of public education in Bermuda.

The Hopkins Report of 2007 first laid bare the systemic challenges facing our public school system and set in motion a national conversation that has never truly ended. It was uncomfortable. It was necessary. And it demanded structural change, not cosmetic adjustments.

In the years that followed, successive reviews, plans, and independent reports reinforced the same fundamental conclusion: **governance reform was not optional**. Our system needed a body dedicated to the performance management, oversight, and strategic leadership of public education, one that could operate with the focus, agility, and accountability that a Ministry alone cannot provide.

The Bermuda First Report was pivotal. It explicitly recommended creating an Authority for public education. That recommendation, from a body representing a broad cross-section of our community, aligned directly with the evidence that had been accumulating for over a decade.

Mr Speaker,

The **Learning First** programme, *Collaboratively Designing an Improved School System for Bermuda*, took that recommendation and gave it structure, sequencing, and substance through direct consultation with Bermudians. And I want to be clear: this work has not been conducted behind closed doors. The Learning First programme has been publicly documented, publicly consulted, and remains publicly accessible to any Bermudian who wishes to review the record.

Transparency has been, and will remain, a hallmark of this reform.

Each of these efforts did not stand alone; each built upon the last. Each was tested against the realities of Bermuda's classrooms. And each pointed in the same direction.

Mr Speaker,

The **Education Authority Working Group** was then convened to translate a policy commitment into an operational reality. That Working Group, formed in 2021, laboured for years. Its members gave hundreds upon hundreds of hours. They wrestled with legislation, governance structures, funding models, accountability mechanisms, and transition planning. In every sense of the phrase, this has been a **labour of love**.

I want to place on the record of this House the profound gratitude of this Government to every person who sat around that table, reviewed those drafts, challenged assumptions, and kept the interests of Bermuda's children at the centre of every conversation. The Bill rests on their work.

Mr Speaker,

Our commitment to this reform is a matter of public record. The **2020 Platform** committed to School Boards under the Authority and to a two-tier system with signature schools. The **2025 Platform** recommitted to completing the Authority and to pathways in academic subjects, skilled trades like construction and health care, the arts, sports, and special needs education. These are not new promises; they have been placed before, and endorsed by, the Bermudian electorate.

The **Throne Speech of March 2025** confirmed that the Education Authority Bill would be brought before this Legislature in this Session. On **July 17th of this year**, I updated this House on the Bill's purpose, progress, and principles. Today, that commitment moves from update to tabling.

Mr Speaker,

Allow me to be precise, because clarity matters.

As I said to this House in July, establishing an Education Authority is among the most significant governance reforms contemplated for our public education system in a generation. The Bill I will table will bring focus, accountability, and dedicated governance to a system that has for too long been asked to reform itself while simultaneously running itself.

Mr Speaker,

This is not a partisan project. Successive governments have identified the need for stronger governance and clearer accountability in our public education system. This Bill builds on that shared analysis and on the reform work already underway, and it does what earlier efforts could not. It places the governance framework for public education into statute, where it can endure beyond any single administration.

And as I also made plain in July, this is not a rebranding exercise. It is not moving names on an organisational chart. It is a carefully designed structural reform, delivered in defined stages, to address long-standing challenges in the governance and accountability of our public education system.

Mr Speaker,

As I set out to this House in July, the Bill provides for the establishment of the Authority in defined, legislated stages. This is a deliberate design choice, one intended to ensure that reform is delivered thoughtfully, consultatively, and with

appropriate legal safeguards at every step. The Bill itself, will speak to those stages in full detail, and I will not repeat that operational detail today.

What I will say is this: the Authority is **not** a substitute for reform. It is **not** a magic bullet. It is **not** the end of the journey. It is the vehicle through which the broader reform agenda, signature schools, parish primary schools, improved professional development, multiple pathways to success, and inclusive education, all can be delivered with the coherence, focus, and continuity that transformation of this scale requires.

Mr Speaker,

I want to address directly a number of questions that I know are on the minds of Bermudians, of educators, and, I anticipate, of Members opposite.

First: "Are we waiting for the Authority to stand up before we continue the wider reform?"

The answer is unequivocal: **No**. Reform of this nature does not pause. The transition to parish primary schools and signature senior schools continues. Investment in our educators continues. The Authority is the governance architecture that will strengthen this work, not a gate that holds it back. Any suggestion that we should freeze reform while we build the Authority would betray the very children this reform is designed to serve.

Second: "Where is the evidence for moving from a three-tier to a two-tier system?"

Mr Speaker,

I have seen editorial commentary suggesting the evidence base is unclear. With respect, that suggestion does not survive contact with the record.

The evidence base has been built patiently over nearly two decades. The Hopkins Report identified the structural weaknesses of the three-tier model. Subsequent independent reviews reinforced those findings. International evidence, from jurisdictions that have made the same transition, confirms that a well-designed two-tier system with strong

primary foundations and specialised secondary pathways delivers better outcomes for students. The Learning First consultation, which engaged Bermudians directly, endorsed this direction. And the Bermuda First recommendation aligned with it.

We have documented this. We have published this. We have consulted on this. The evidence exists. It has always existed. What has been required is the political will to act on it, and this Government has demonstrated that will.

Mr Speaker,

I have also heard the suggestion, made outside this Chamber, that our children are being treated as subjects of an experiment. **I reject that characterisation entirely**, and I reject it on behalf of every parent, every educator, and every child in our public system. Reform grounded in nearly twenty years of evidence, in international best practice, and in direct consultation with Bermudians is not experimentation. It is the opposite of experimentation. It is the careful, deliberate application of what we know works.

And let me be clear, **Mr Speaker**. I am a Minister who will accept the best help wherever it is to be found. If the right expertise for a particular task sits in Bermuda, we will use it. If the right expertise sits overseas, we will use that too, and we will do so without apology, because our children deserve the best thinking available anywhere in the world. What matters is not where expertise originates. What matters is that it is applied with purpose, delivers value, and strengthens Bermudians' capacity to lead this system for the long term. The investment we are making is in Bermudian expertise, in Bermudian educators, and above all in Bermudian children

Third: "Is this the whole plan?"

No, **Mr Speaker**, and I want to be entirely honest with this House and with the public. The Bill before us is a critical piece of a larger plan, but it is not

the whole plan. Further updates will follow in the coming weeks as we complete our review of where reform stood at the point of the recent transition in this portfolio, and what has happened since. Throughout, this Government will remain transparent about what we know, what we are still working through, and what will follow.

Fourth: "What about our educators?"

Mr Speaker,

When I returned to this Ministry, one of the first commitments I made was made **directly to our educators**. I said to them at the start of this school year, and I say again today in this House: you are not simply the people who implement reform. You need to embrace and be part of the professional leadership of reform. The people who work with Bermuda's children every day must have a meaningful voice in shaping the system in which those children learn.

I also said to our educators, and I repeat it today, that the story that Bermuda's children are not receiving a quality education does not do justice to the work happening in our classrooms every day. Are there things we must do better? Yes. Are our children being failed by our teachers, principals, paraeducators, counsellors, and support staff? No. And I will keep saying that in this House and outside it.

The Authority is being built to give educators the structural support, the professional development, and the school-level governance that they have asked for, in some cases for decades. Nothing in the Authority's design diminishes the profession. Everything in its design is intended to strengthen it.

Fifth: "Why now?"

Because our children cannot wait. Because the evidence is in. Because the consultation is done. Because the commitments have been made, repeatedly, publicly, and with a mandate from the Bermudian people. And because governance reform delayed is opportunity denied to every child in a Bermuda public school today.

Mr Speaker,

At the heart of every governance chart, every piece of legislation, every consultation report, every reform initiative, and every disagreement about education, there is a child. A child in a preschool, a child in a primary school, a child on their way to a senior signature school. A child with additional learning needs whose family is depending on this system to deliver.

A child walking into one of our schools wondering: *Will my teacher see me? Will somebody believe in me? Will I be challenged? Will I be safe? Will I belong? Will this education prepare me for the future I want?*

Those are the questions by which this system will ultimately be judged. Every hour spent on this reform has been in service of the children who are asking these questions.

Mr Speaker,

One of the most important reasons for establishing the Authority, and one of the most important reasons for placing it in statute today, is this: **reform and the transformation of our Public Education System must be built to survive.** It must survive changes in Ministers. It must survive changes in Governments. It must survive the ordinary rhythms of political life.

As I said to this House in July, the answer is durability. An Education Authority provides a governance structure whose remit is education, and only education, insulated from the pressures of short political timescales, with a single, accountable point of professional leadership at the top of the public school system

Our children's education cannot be started and stopped every four or five years. The Bill before us today is the structural guarantee that the work done by so many, for so long, will endure and that the students in our schools today, and the students who will enter our schools tomorrow, will benefit from a system built for the long term.

Mr Speaker,

Twenty years of reports. A generation of consultation. Two manifestos of commitment. A Working Group that has given, quite literally, thousands of collective hours. Countless educators, parents, and public officers who have carried this work with dedication and belief.

Today, we honour all of that by taking the next step.

As I said to our educators at the start of this school year, and as I say again today: Governments will change. Ministers will change. But every child entering Bermuda's public schools deserves a system that continues to improve, regardless of who holds these roles. That is what this legislation is about: creating that stability and safeguarding it for the generations to come.

Mr Speaker,

Later today, I will formally table the **Education Authority Bill 2026** before this Honourable House. The Bill will then be available to all Members, and through them to the people of Bermuda, in its full and final drafted form. I look forward to the substantive, evidence-based debate that will follow at Second Reading, and to answering any questions Honourable Members may have on this statement today.

The Bermuda Education Authority is coming. Reform is continuing. Our students remain, as they have always been, first.

Thank you, **Mr Speaker.**