



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

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Minister of Education (Acting)

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Early Childhood Education Inquiry Framework

Friday, February 10th, 2017

Mr. Speaker,

During the past year technical officers in the Department of Education have been working with teachers, parents and the community to inform, establish and implement an inquiry framework for teaching and learning in preschool and lower primary school levels. This morning I take this opportunity to share with Honourable Members of this House, the concept of the Early Childhood Education Inquiry Model, what steps have been taken to introduce and implement this framework and the anticipated effects for children and their learning.

Mr. Speaker,

My Honourable colleagues may recall that in 2013 this Government called for the modernization and transformation of Early Childhood Education in Bermuda through the Inclusive and Special Education Discussion Paper. Key questions to consider when we think about modernization and transformation of early childhood education are: What is our image of Bermuda's child? and how will our practices and behaviours toward children reflect these values? The Early Childhood *Inquiring Minds Framework* is geared for Preschool through Primary 3 students and promotes an image of a child who is capable, curious and engaged in learning from birth.

Mr. Speaker,

The *Inquiring Minds Framework* recognizes that young children are learning every day. Like scientists, children are researching their world. They ask big and important questions, such as: Why do dogs wag their tails, do they have feelings

like us? Is a slug a snail without a shell? How do trees drink, do they have a tongue? and, What is two tens?

Mr. Speaker,

The *Inquiring Minds Framework* or inquiry model builds on the natural curiosity and questions of young children. The model has four phases:

- i) Notice
- ii) Wonder
- iii) Explore, and
- iv) Share

In the first phase, teachers engage children in interesting and novel experiences that prompt them to take notice and to wonder. Next, they work with children to define and refine their questions, deciding on which questions are worth pursuing. In the explore phase, small groups engage in investigations to hypothesize and theorize based on their findings. Children are then encouraged to share and discuss what they have learned; and then pose new questions for consideration. This methodology of teaching the Creative and Cambridge Curriculum ensures that Bermuda's children, from the start of their school career will develop creative and critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration - all skills of the 21st century.

Children entering Primary One in September 2017 will graduate in 2030 into a world where imagination, investigation, invention and innovation (the 4i's) will be the hallmarks for Bermuda's success in a global society. The future of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education will depend on the quality of teaching and learning in these 4i's. We envision Bermuda's children as life-long learners, having inquiring minds, that is the ability to ask questions about important topics, research possibilities, develop their own hypotheses and theories, and think critically and creatively - well prepared for the world they will encounter in 2030.

Mr. Speaker,

The *Inquiring Minds Framework* for Early Childhood Education was introduced in our public schools in September 2015. The framework provides for an overview of the strategies that teachers will use in the classroom such as:

- creating a culture that builds on children's questions and informal knowledge,

- providing rigorous problems that foster inquiry,
- posing higher level questions to challenge children in their thinking; and,
- providing opportunities for children to engage in small group investigations to deeply probe and then share.

Mr. Speaker,

The inquiry model is a shift in practice. It requires a systemic approach for implementation that must involve all stakeholders including pre-school administrators, principals, teachers and para-educators. It starts with conversations about - What does an inquiry school look, sound and feel like? Kath Murdoch, author of the book: *The Power of Inquiry: Teaching and Learning with Curiosity, Creativity and Purpose in the Contemporary Classroom*, indicated that key indicators of an inquiry school include:

- collaborative planning and open dialogue amongst staff,
- all teachers viewing themselves as inquiry teachers,
- students and teachers using shared language and shared approaches, and,
- students making strong connections with local and global communities.

Mr. Speaker,

This school year, the systemic approach focused on teachers at the Preschool and Primary One level in that the strategies of the inquiry model were implemented. However, the strength of full implementation of the four inquiry phases and key inquiry strategies will require specific professional development training and in-school support during the next few years in order to experience the necessary shifts in practice, at each year level. In the end, when students can respond effectively to questions like: What are you learning? Why is it important? How is it real and meaningful in the world? What skills and strategies are you using?, we will then know our students are applying multiple learning strategies to understand what they do and why.

Mr. Speaker,

My Honourable Colleagues are aware that our public school students sit Cambridge exams at the P6, M3 and S2 levels. At these times, our students will be demonstrating thinking skills, for example, effectively solving mathematical problems using a range of strategies, reading between the lines of text to infer meaning, and writing interesting essays that convey a well-reasoned argument.

Since inquiry is applicable to all subject content, the goal of the Department of Education is that it becomes an essential strategy for teaching and learning across the System, at all levels, and in all subjects.

Mr. Speaker,

In closing, I wish to thank all of our technical officers in the Department of Education who contributed to the development of the *Inquiring Minds Framework*, under the leadership of Dr. Llewellyn Simmons, Director of Academics and Dr. Sharon Speir, Assistant Director of Early Childhood Education. We also extend thanks to our school principals, pre-school administrators, teachers, para-educators and parents who are supporting this initiative so that it is a success.

We want our young people to be equipped with the critical skills necessary to effectively compete in the global economy. The *Inquiring Minds Framework* for Early Childhood Education is intended to ensure our children are well positioned for the opportunities their futures hold. As a community we must also support and help develop our future leaders, innovators, and dynamic citizens – our children!

Thank you

Mr. Speaker