



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

The Hon. N. Cole Simons, JP, MP
Minister of Education

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Parental Involvement Committee Launch

Friday March 10th, 2017

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to announce the launch of a progressive effort to involve and engage public school parents for the betterment of our education system.

I have recently met with preschool administrators, principals and Department of Education staff. At these meetings, I shared my views on the importance of meaningful relationships between students and educators. The teachers who left the most indelible mark on me as a student and as the man before you today are to me like family.

We know that we cannot underestimate the value of family in a child's education, and this Government has acknowledged and affirmed our responsibility to grow relationships and partnerships with parents, families and the community. Schools do this every day through PTAs and parent councils and the important work of supporting and improving individual schools. But during consultation on what were then proposed amendments

to the Education Act 1996, a parent asked the question – but what about parent engagement for the entire public education system?

After continued consultation and engagement, this Government determined that we should put in place a Parental Involvement Committee. This was a direct response to the desire expressed by parents for *proactive* and *strategic* access to the Department of Education. I emphasized the words *proactive* and *strategic* for good reason. Parents currently have access to the Commissioner of Education and other Department staff, but we want to better communicate to parents that their beliefs, skills and suggestions are encouraged and welcome on important issues that affect them, their children and the system. We don't just want parents to come to us - we want to go to them and seek their advice and representation not only when problems occur, but before they happen. We see great things ahead for our public education system, for all schools and for all children. We therefore want and have invited parents, as well as other stakeholders in our public education system to be part of that vision and future.

Established by the Education Amendment Act 2015, the Parental Involvement Committee is an advisory body that will be made up of public school parents who will work with the Commissioner of Education and school leaders to improve parental involvement across all public schools. It was created to give parents stronger voices to make a difference across the public school system.

The Parental Involvement Committee will:

- Provide advice and feedback from parent perspectives;

- Represent broad parental interests, including issues of concern;
- Provide support to parent councils and PTAs;
- Help parents support their children’s learning at home and at school;
and
- Help to develop a parental involvement and community engagement strategy.

We want the very best for our children and in support of developing a great team of parents; we have developed a selection and appointment process adapted from the Human Rights Act, 1981.

A dynamic selection team representing parents, the community and the Board of Education has been put together to:

- a. invite, persons, through advertisement, to serve on the Parental Involvement Committee; and
- b. review all applications, interview applicants, and ultimately recommend persons for appointment.

This includes promoting the Parental Involvement Committee and communicating what it’s all about.

I have appointed an educator, Mrs. Tamicia Darrell, member of the Board of Education, Deputy Principal at West End Primary School, Bermuda Union of Teacher Executive member, and very proud parent and community member to serve as Chairperson of the selection team. Other members representing parents, the community, and the Board and Department of Education include Mr. Keithlyn Fleming, Mr. Noel Pearman, Mrs. Jo-Ann Pully and Ms. Kimberley McKeown.

The selection team has already been reaching out to encourage parents to consider participating for the betterment of our public education system. Parent councils, PTAs, and all parents of public school children are being asked to put their name forward for membership on the Parental Involvement Committee.

The criteria for consideration for membership on the Parental Involvement Committee were kept important and simple. Parents selected should represent a cross-section of parents across public schools and:

- Have a child or children enrolled in a Bermuda public school;
- Be committed to family and community engagement;
- Be able to attend monthly meetings;
- Be able to work co-operatively and collaboratively; and
- Be able to engage parents and community partners and represent their ideas and interests.

Before concluding, I would like to say that I, along with the Permanent Secretary, Commissioner of Education and others in the Ministry see the immense potential of the Parental Involvement Committee for our system. It was not established by the Legislature as simply another Government body, but was supported as a mechanism to harness the power and value of parents to our schools and community. Therefore, I would encourage all public school parents to seek out more information from our website and consider applying by the deadline of April 9th, 2017. Applications and any questions should be emailed to parents@moed.bm.

What is possible for our system will happen with collaboration and strengthened partnerships with parents. I look forward to working with parents, educators and the broader community towards the common aim of helping to improve student achievement, our schools and our public education system.

Thank you.