



**Ministerial Statement**  
To The House of Assembly

By

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

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Update on the Board of Education's Strategic Planning Process

**Friday May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

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**Mr. Speaker,**

This morning I am pleased to share with my Honourable colleagues an update on the strategic planning process for the development of a strategic direction for the Bermuda Public School System.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Let me remind the members of this Honourable House that in the 2016 Speech from the Throne, it was announced that: “staff, parents, community members and the Board of Education will engage with one another to develop a community-owned strategic plan. The plan will set direction for the continued transformation of public education and be focused on implementable, achievable priorities and goals to help prepare our students for continued success”.

**Mr. Speaker,**

My Honourable colleagues will also recall that the development of a community-owned strategic plan for the Bermuda Public School System is being undertaken by the Board of Education as legislated under the Education Act, 1996. In this regard, the Board will ultimately make recommendations regarding a strategic direction for public school education that will replace the Strategic Plan 2010-2015, Blueprint for Reform in Education, which expired in June 2015.

**Mr. Speaker,**

In March this year, I informed the House that the Board engaged the professional services of Dr. Jeremiah Newell, CEO of Newell and Associates to help support the steering of the strategic plan. Dr. Newell is providing consultative direction in

ensuring that the strategic planning approach upholds the values of the Board in that it is transparent, inclusive, engaging, and most importantly community driven.

**Mr. Speaker,**

During the past three months, the Ministry has provided the Board of Education with sustained leadership, administrative, and project management support in the planning, organization and communication of the strategic planning process that has been undertaken. A detailed project plan was mapped out for introducing the Ministry's key stakeholders to the strategic planning process. This was important as the process does not follow the normal organizational top-down planning approach. Also, it was critical for stakeholders to understand the vision and how the Board had planned to implement authentic community engagement that is, truly hearing the voices of the community on the future of public school education in Bermuda.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The core elements of the strategic planning approach include:

- Holding information and Q&A sessions for key stakeholder groups;
- Training volunteers to become community facilitators;
- Identifying community leaders to serve as hosts for community conversations;
- Engaging the community through small group conversations across the island;
- Administering an on-line survey to gather island-wide community input on public education;
- Establishing an Ambassador Design Team to write the strategic plan; and,
- Establishing a Strategy Review Team to provide critical feedback to the released prototypes, using design thinking.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The week of March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 marked the initial undertaking of stakeholder information and Q&A sessions facilitated by Dr. Newell. These included sessions with members of the Board of Education; executive members of the Bermuda Union of Teachers and the Bermuda Public Service Union; preschool administrators, staff at the Child Development Programme, school principals and their leadership teams; school PTA executive members, school Board Chairs, Parent Council members and community partners; teachers; Bermuda College representatives; and, the Department of Education staff.

**Mr. Speaker,**

To-date more than 70 individuals comprising parents, business persons and partners, teachers, principals and community persons have been trained to be facilitators of community conversations. A total of 20 students from CedarBridge Academy and the Berkeley Institute were also trained to be facilitators. They will be facilitating community conversations with students at various year levels during the month of June 2017. Additionally, more than 50 community conversations have been held thus far, which has allowed over 600 persons from all walks of life to have their voices heard, and offer their perspective on the future of public education in Bermuda. The initial goal was to have 600 participants engaged in community conversations but this has been exceeded. We believe this is indicative of the community's desire to improve public school education for our children.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Conversations have occurred in several communities across the island for the general public, for social groups, business person associations, public school principals, deputy principals, pre-school administrators, private school principals, teachers, school custodians, PTAs, senior school students, leadership teams in government, church groups, Bermuda College faculty, the local fraternity community, the Bermuda Technical Institute Alumni, the Mirrors leadership team and their students, and members of the Bermuda Education Network. The input, suggestions, comments, concerns and views shared during these community conversations have all been documented, and is forming a rich database of qualitative information that will be used to develop themes for the design and formulation of a community-driven strategic plan. Community conversations will continue during the month of May and the first few weeks in June 2017.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Additionally, a brief on-line survey comprising 15 questions has been posted on the Ministry's website with the intent of reaching the broader public and those who are not able to participate in community conversations. The questions seek input and views about public school education. Thus far, a total of 1,242 individuals have completed the survey. We have had a first look at the data and persons completing the survey are telling us it is very important that our students are critical thinkers and problem solvers; that they have the basic academic skills; and they can communicate well both verbally and in writing. Roughly 60% of the 1,242 responses were from parents and/or guardians of students.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Through advertisement, over 100 applications were received from persons interested in being part of the Ambassador Design Team. The purpose of the team is to write the strategic plan using all the information gathered from the on-line survey and the community conversations. A total of 36 persons have already been selected as the team and met last week Saturday in an all-day session to commence their work. The remaining applicants will form strategic planning review teams responsible for reviewing prototype versions of the strategic plan.

**Mr. Speaker,**

In closing, let me share that a new website, [www.educatebermuda.com](http://www.educatebermuda.com) has been launched and is a ‘one-stop-shop’ for all information about the public education strategic plan. The purpose of the website aligns with the Board of Education’s promise to be transparent about the strategic planning process. I have visited the website and it gives an overview of strategic planning process, snapshots of the community conversations, and most of all you can see the actual results of the strategic planning survey. The site allows the public to not only view but also provide feedback on prototypes of the strategic plan. So I encourage my Honourable colleagues and the general public to visit the site at [www.educatebermuda.com](http://www.educatebermuda.com) and provide their input.

**Mr. Speaker,**

These are exciting times for our public school system. It has been extremely encouraging to know that so many people across the broad communities in Bermuda have not only voiced their support for this strategic planning effort, but have called, emailed and even stopped me on the street to find out how they can become involved and to support this initiative.

**Mr. Speaker,**

I truly believe that there is genuine passion and commitment in the community to enhance our public school system in Bermuda; and, in making it the number one choice for parents to send their children to. That’s what we envision; and that’s the journey we are currently undertaking so that all students in our public schools experience a sustained quality education.

**Thank you**

**Mr. Speaker**