



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

The Hon. Diallo V. Rabain, JP, MP
Minister of Education and Workforce Development

Cambridge Representatives - Visits to Public Schools

Friday, March 16th, 2018

Mr. Speaker,

I rise this morning to share with my Honourable colleagues and the listening public the work that was undertaken when two specialists from Cambridge International visited our public schools during the week of March 5th 2018.

Mr. Speaker,

On February 14th 2018, I stood before the education and local community to share the Cambridge Checkpoint and IGCSE results for the 2017/2018 school year. During that press conference, I advised the public that our students were not performing at the expected standards for English, Math and Science and that our greatest concern was the results for mathematics.

Mr. Speaker,

I also informed the Public that we would be taking action to improve these results. I communicated that the first step would involve representatives from Cambridge coming to Bermuda during the first week of March to conduct observations in math classrooms and to facilitate training sessions designed to improve the teaching of mathematics.

Mr. Speaker,

Last week, Cambridge International representatives, Ms. Abigail Barnett and Dr. Alison Borthwick spent the full week on the island observing teachers, collecting observation data and providing intervention training for selected mathematics teachers at the primary and middle school levels. Ms. Barnett is the Deputy Director of Curriculum Programmes inclusive of professional development at Cambridge International, while Dr. Borthwick is a Developmental Mathematics Consultant. Prior to arriving on Island, the Cambridge representatives spent time reviewed the checkpoint results of our students in the primary and middle school levels; and also reviewing the National Mathematics Strategy implemented by the Department of Education in 2015.

Mr. Speaker,

The Cambridge representatives commenced their visits holding focused conversations with our students, teachers, principals and technical officers. They visited a total of 10 schools, observed 500 students from P1 to M3 while learning in their respective classroom environments. Evidence collected from their observations was used to develop recommendations on how we can re-focus the direction of mathematics in our public schools.

Mr. Speaker,

It was pleasing to know that the first impression given to our Cambridge representatives as they reported, was that Bermuda has world class public school students who are eager, intelligent, willing, keen, and who want to learn. They shared that our teachers are hardworking and that there was clear evidence of the Cambridge curriculum being taught in classrooms.

Mr. Speaker,

The Representatives were delighted to find that the classroom environments were both friendly and positive. However, a primary observation pointed out to the Department was the missed opportunities for our students to engage in deeper learning in many of the classrooms. Some of the practices that we have been implementing have not been the best practices. We recognize this, and now we endeavor to improve the practices to do better. Thus the Cambridge Representatives have put forward a number of recommendations regarding teaching and learning at the primary and middle school levels. These include:

- Increase the pace of learning;
- Increase the quantity of work that students complete;
- Make the assigned work more challenging;
- Focus more on conceptual rather than procedural understanding;
- Teachers should do less and engage students more in talking, thinking and reflecting;
- Give students more challenging work;
- Scaffold less so that students build independent skills;
- Allow students more ownership for their learning

Based on their findings and data, the Cambridge representatives also identified 10 areas of focus for mathematics instruction in our primary and middle schools.

Mr. Speaker,

The representatives then conducted training sessions with teachers focusing on these ten areas they identified; and, teachers will be expected to make a commitment to including all ten areas in their lesson plans, with an emphasis on developing fluency, reasoning and

problem solving. The ten areas of focus will help teachers to concentrate on the essential practices that are expected in mathematics classrooms. These focus areas are:

1. Deliver the Cambridge curriculum
2. Structure lessons with a beginning, middle and plenary
3. Use manipulatives
4. Use a mastery approach
5. Introduce fluency
6. Encourage reasoning
7. Encourage problem solving
8. Note the misconceptions in mathematics
9. Exercise questioning
10. Develop positive dispositions

Mr. Speaker,

This professional development training for our teachers in mathematics was needed. We will endeavor to ensure that this type of training is on-going as we move ahead. It is recognized that providing our teachers with constant professional development will help to enhance and build on the standard of teaching and learning in the classroom; and, ultimately improve the Cambridge score results for our students.

Mr. Speaker,

Let me highlight next steps in our endeavor to improve the Cambridge results for our public schools. The Department of Education expects to receive a written report from the Cambridge representatives of their observations and assessment within the next three weeks. Technical officers will then discuss next steps in securing long term improvements for student outcomes at the Primary and Middle school levels. A comprehensive delivery plan will be developed that comprise action steps, timelines and accountability measures for the improvement of mathematics across the system. Lastly, the Department will report out on a monthly basis the progress being made in our mathematics curriculum.

Thank you **Mr. Speaker**