PRESS STATEMENT

Department of Education Updates

The Hon Diallo V. Rabain, J.P., M.P.

Thursday, April 16th, 2020
5:30 pm

Good evening,

We know that this time is not easy for any one, and we are keeping our students, family and staff at the forefront. I am in awe of the efforts being undertaken by our school and system leaders, parents, students and other community support agencies as we navigate this difficult situation.

It is also important to reiterate that our priority is to ensure the health and well-being of our students, families and staff. Therefore, schools will remain closed until further notice.

Now, in light of the extension of the ‘Shelter in Place’ order until May 2nd, it is necessary to provide an update for our Education Family on several education matters.
The updates will focus on:

1. Remote Learning
2. School Registration
3. The Cambridge International Examinations
4. Senior School Graduation Requirements, and

I will begin with,

**Remote Learning**

Again, I would like to say that our principals and school staff are to be commended for their commitment and continued efforts to facilitate learning for our students during school closures.

With the decision to extend the “shelter-in-place”, our teachers will be ready to resume the remote learning programme for students from the preschool level to the senior level starting Monday, April 20th. Senior schools will continue with teaching the essential curriculum for each of the courses students are taking; while the pre, primary and middle schools will focus learning activities on content and skills that have already been taught.

These three levels, in addition to our special school (Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy) and the Success Academy at Roberts Avenue, will all implement a remote learning strategy that is responsive to the shelter in place conditions, and that considers the most current research for remote learning. More specifically, the learning activities will focus on three key areas: academics, physical activity and student well-being.

This week our school leaders collaborated and agreed on common schedules and expectations for the remote learning programme. Parents will be provided with
information on what is to be expected at each school level while the remote learning strategy is being implemented. School Principals will provide this information to our parents and guardians tomorrow, Friday April 17th.

**School Registration Decision Notifications**

As a result of COVID-19 and the shelter-in-place requirement, there has been a delay in notifying parents of enrolment decisions for first entry into primary, middle and senior school. Instead of receiving the usual letter by mail, parents will now be notified electronically.

1. Parents of students who will be entering Primary 1 will receive a letter via email on **Tuesday, May 5th, 2020**.
2. Parents of students entering S1 will be notified in PowerSchool, (the student management system) on **May 7th, 2020**; and
3. Parents of students entering M1 will be notified on **May 12th 2020**, also by PowerSchool.

Middle and senior school parents will be required to log on to PowerSchool to access the enrolment decision.

We look forward to welcoming new children into the Bermuda Public School System in September 2020, and to providing support for those students transitioning to middle and senior schools.

Now I will speak to our:

**Cambridge International Examinations**

I am pleased to report that students at our middle and senior schools who were registered to sit the Cambridge IGCSEs and A-Level examinations for the June
2020 series, will still be positioned to have grades awarded for the work completed for these courses.

On March 23rd, 2020, Cambridge announced that they would not hold the June 2020 exam series anywhere in the world, to protect the safety of students and teachers. Cambridge International have now set out a process to award grades to students which they believe to be the “most valid, fair and effective approach in these unique circumstances.”

This process involves making evidenced-based decisions about the grades for each student for each subject and this means that our students will be awarded grades commensurate with the work completed for each course.

**Graduation Requirements for Senior Schools**

Senior school principals and staff have been in discussions with Department of Education officers to consider adjustments to the graduation requirements, while maintaining the standard of the Bermuda School Diploma. Recommendations are being prepared for submission to the Ministry of Education and the decision on the recommendations will be shared with parents and students by end of next week.

**Health and Wellbeing**

To reiterate a common refrain, I urge the public education family to continue to protect our families and the community by practicing social distancing and frequent handwashing.

Individuals who need medical care should call their medical provider to report their illness prior to seeking care at a clinic, physician’s office, or hospital. Call the COVID-19 HOTLINE 444-2498 if you have any questions or concerns. The hotline
for emotional wellbeing matters is 543-1111. There will remain some questions that cannot yet be answered, for example about graduation ceremonies. At this time, while it is too early to make definitive statements, the Department of Education is working with schools on a number of issues, and further announcements will be forthcoming once decisions can be made.

The Department of Education will continue to provide updates through its Facebook page, email, school apps, social media, and the website [www.moed.bm](http://www.moed.bm).

**In closing,** I want to briefly provide an update for our students about the Ministry’s scholarships and awards offerings this year.

We know that it is also a concerning time for students planning to start college or university or to continue their studies in the Fall this year. As such, we have extended our scholarship deadline to May 7th and are looking at ways to make the application process easier for applicants.

The Ministry of Education is running a short survey for scholarship applicants to find out the impact of COVID-19 on their studies. The survey results will help the Ministry to better support applicants and eventual scholarship recipients. Thus far, we have received 61 survey responses, but we hope to have more participation so that we obtain fuller picture of the effects.

The survey link is available on our Facebook and Instagram page and will run for another week. Additionally, if you email scholarships@moed.bm, the survey link will be sent to you automatically. Any questions and feedback can also be sent to scholarships@moed.bm.
Thank You.