

**Statement Highlighting Achievements in Education
January 2018-November 2018**

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of the 2018/2019 Session**

By the Honourable Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, MLA

Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands

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**MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORTS,
AGRICULTURE & LANDS
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT**

Mister Speaker, on behalf of the Government, it heartens me to deliver this Statement to the Honourable House regarding achievements in education since January of this year. I am quite excited about a number of achievements, many of which I have not had the opportunity to share with this Honourable House before.

Management and Facilities

Mister Speaker, we are well aware that education does not happen without support and resources. There are many systems and processes that happen behind the scenes that allow the staff to do their job of teaching, and the children do their job of learning. One such behind the scenes development is technology which will improve the work supporting education. *DocuWare* software was implemented to improve the efficiency of the processing of work orders from schools. This is to be extended to Registration of students, transcript applications, invoicing for outsourced contractors and applications for use of facilities. This is an ongoing process to improve and modernize our current mode of operations for improved customer service and transition to a paperless state.

The Education Department is continuing collaborative work with DES Units and Principals to increase their input in the budget process, ensuring that each Principal has more of a say in requests made specifically for their schools to address the needs of their own unique population.

Staff Enhancements

Mister Speaker, as this Honourable House was informed in the First Session, there has been an increase in teacher's salaries. We know how important teachers are to the lives of our children, and the future of our beloved country. This planned increase in salary, with a further increase in September 2020 will find no teacher employed in the Government system earning less than \$5000 per month. This increase will be a component in facilitating retention of staff who make a positive contribution to the lives of our children and the atmosphere of our schools. It will also help to make the vocation more appealing to Caymanians, and give the country a stronger standing when advertising positions in a competitive market. In keeping with this commitment to educators in the classrooms, there has been a commitment to also review the salaries of other staff, including senior management staff in the schools.

Mister Speaker, we have also taken steps to strengthen the leadership in all schools. One important step is that all schools now have at least one non-teaching Deputy Principal. With the current senior management structure in place, monitoring and support of effective teaching and in turn student progress in all our schools can be enhanced.

Mister Speaker, as we all know, a new and much needed facility is in the works for secondary education for the Western part of Grand Cayman. There has been further progress towards the construction of the much anticipated John Gray High School. This facility will serve the people of this country well. In fact, as we speak, the Cayman Islands Classic Basketball Tournament is being hosted in the completed John Gray High School gymnasium. In order to ensure that the facility

is managed and that there is an active person on the ground, a Facilities Superintendent was appointed specifically for the New John Gray Gymnasium.

Mister Speaker, our education system caters to children with varying abilities and needs. To ensure that we offer the best service possible to all our children, there has been a number of additions and initiatives over the last year. For example, all Primary School Special Education Needs Coordinators are now certified Reading Recovery Teachers. They are now able to provide this intervention for younger learners who find themselves having extreme difficulty with early reading. These staff members are now specially trained to work individually with students at the required intensity and duration. Research of this programme promises that about 75% of these children who receive this intervention achieve grade-level standard – I am sure we can all agree to the importance of this certification for the staff. I am sure we will remember the support I received with additional posts for our children with Special Educational Needs. The recruitment for these posts are now ongoing, with some already being assigned to children. I am positive that these posts will go a long way in improving the access to education for our children with Special Education Needs.

All staff in our education system are important, and all staff have impact on our children's experience at school. Considering the research surrounding professional development and effect size teacher assistant training is being facilitated over a period of 10 weeks and includes opportunities for the participants to gain new knowledge and skills, collaborate with each other, reflection on their experiences and learning, and tap into sources of efficacy. The

sessions are each 2 hours long (2:15 pm – 4:15pm) and we have had very positive feedback from participants and principals. There are 24 participants from various primary schools. The participants will complete sessions on a variety of topics, including promoting and supporting positive behaviour, supporting inclusion, and literacy, ICT and numeracy in the classroom. Even though this cohort has only had a few sessions, they have already requested Part Two of the training, which may be delivered using an online service through the Commonwealth Trust. These support staff are well on their way to adding to their already valuable contributions to our children's learning.

In addition to all other planned staff development, there were specific opportunities for Primary Specialists to aid in development of common schemes of work. This work will help to further the assurance that the children in all Government Primary Schools are receiving a consistent education across schools, and that their knowledge and skills are taught in a sequence which will allow them to build on past knowledge.

Mister Speaker, please allow me to end this segment of my Statement with the good news that there has been an increase in Caymanian appointments at the beginning of this school year. To our cadre of personnel, there has been added one Caymanian principal, one seconded Caymanian Deputy Principal and three newly qualified Caymanian teachers. As mentioned previously, we hope to attract more Caymanians to the teaching profession. I feel that these appointments demonstrate that Caymanians are still interested in the profession, and indeed have room to grow in our system. We wish each appointee the best

of everything as they development in their careers and make positive impacts on our system.

Mister Speaker, just as we in the Ministry and Department of Education endeavour to improve education, we acknowledge the hard work of the staff interacting with our children every day.

Programmes and Support

There are a number of programmes and supports in place for children. The Literacy Response To Intervention, or RTI, is one such important support. This has made a considerable impact on the literacy achievement of students needing additional support since its inception in 2015. As of June 2018 approximately 84% of students enrolled in the Levelled Literacy Intervention at Key Stage One and Key Stage Two were recorded as having made progress of an average of half a year to one year's growth. Similarly, at Key Stage Three, an approximate 79% of students made quarter of a year to half of a year's growth during the six month intervention cycle. During the 2017-2018 school year, 100% of the 89 students selected out of a cohort of 402 Year 2 students recorded growth in their literacy learning. For most students with a completed series of lessons, the growth was outstanding with 88% of students making substantial to accelerated progress and 12% making limited progress. The Literacy RTI has yielded note-worthy results, in spite of the framework still being in its fledgling stages. With improved consistency in school based management of the RTI framework and improved fidelity in the administration of the interventions, the Literacy RTI is projected to yield even greater results. The Maths Recovery intervention commenced in Year 3 as well, thus expanding the number of students who will be able to benefit from this intervention.

The Shining Stars Key Stage 1 Unit was established to cater to students in the younger age group who require more therapeutic intervention. It is anticipated that this Unit will help the children from a younger age to self-regulate, learn meta-cognitive skills, and be more prepared for learning and social interaction when they return to their regular catchment area schools. We look forward to celebrating the success stories that will come from this specialised Unit.

As you know, the National Science Education Strategy has been developed, and is now in the beginning phases of implementation. This Strategy is important, as it will help to highlight Science in our education system and our community. The Strategy consists of three goals which will guide all leaders and teachers in ensuring improvement of provision of Science education. Careers related to Science are on the rise. This strategy will help to ensure that our children are best prepared for these future career options.

While our children are in our care in our schools, we must do our best to ensure that they not only learn, but are kept safe. The Business Services Unit supported Child Protection training for some 450 third party contracted employees from March to November of this year. This was a massive undertaking, but it demonstrates the commitment to the future of this country.

Support for all our children is most evident when we can have achievements such as those of the group of seven students from the Lighthouse School who were successful in obtaining Level One in City and Guilds. This is an historic

accomplishment. These students are now attending the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre alongside their peers, and all reports are that they are doing very well and are a wonderful addition to the life of the school. When we can celebrate accomplishments such as these by the most vulnerable learners in our education system, we can be assured that the hard work of all involved is paying off. We will continue to follow-up on these students, and celebrate with them as they grow from strength to strength.

Mister Speaker, to continue on regarding the Lighthouse School, which is not only a beacon to the children and families they serve, but is now also proving to be a leading force in our system, the Pivats system which is used there to monitor progress and plan forward for each student has become further embedded. Training was completed by all staff at the Lighthouse School on this progress monitoring tool. All staff can now use Pivats to compare the progress of their students with other Special Education Needs schools internationally. This programme gives the Lighthouse School a consistent framework to monitor the progress of the children, and a clear pathway when planning for future stages for their students. I trust that members of this Honourable House will join me in commending the leaders, staff and students of the Lighthouse School on lighting the way for persons with special needs in our country.

Mister Speaker, Cayman Brac was not left out of the progress in Special Needs provision. Beacon Learning Centre was established to fill the gap in service provision for children who required a more intense and specialized programme than could be provided in the mainstream schools on the Brac. This newly

established service is catering to the needs of a number of Reception and Primary School aged children, and improvements in the children's overall development is being reported.

Closing

Mister Speaker, in closing, please allow me to extend my appreciation to the Government for supporting my Team and I in making positive contributions to the lives of our children and those who serve them tirelessly every day. I trust that we will all continue to make our children a priority as we build a strong and better Cayman Islands.

Thank you, Mister Speaker.