

**Statement to the Legislative Assembly  
2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting 2011/2012**

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**By the Honourable Rolston Anglin, JP  
Minister of Education, Training and Employment**

**Alternative Education Services**

**30<sup>th</sup> September 2011**



**MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION, TRAINING,  
& EMPLOYMENT  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT**

Madame Speaker, I wish to inform the house of my Ministry's restructuring of provision for Alternative Education Services.

The Ministry has restructured alternative education for secondary school students with significant emotional, behavioural, and/or social difficulties (EBSB). The restructuring will address the low success rates regarding reintegration of EBSB students back into mainstream education, and into successful roles in society. It aims to reduce the high rates of EBSB students who have traditionally 'dropped out' of the education system altogether as well as providing better value for money.

In the past secondary school alternative education provision for EBSB students on Grand Cayman had three separate strands: The Suspension unit, the Tutorial Unit and the Transition Unit, all three of which based at the Alternative Education Centre (AEC). Students were referred to these units following documented behaviour issues, usually over a protracted period. The judgement for referral to the Tutorial and Transition units was based on the need for individual EBSB interventions, and on the negative impact that the student is having on the learning environment within their home school.

Madame Speaker in-school suspension is now served at suspension units within each High School. This change was made to address the issues identified in getting appropriate work set and returned to students on suspension, and to facilitate more effective communication regarding referral to suspension and attendance within the suspension units. This approach was informed by ESAU inspection findings - and I quote:

"In the suspension unit..the curriculum is not appropriate, mainly because the staff do not have enough information about the students...The AEC does not receive adequate information from the high schools about the students who have been sent to the suspension unit. The AEC teachers are often not made aware of what work the students have been doing and, as a result, may give them tasks that are not suitable." ESAU (2006).

The restructuring has also replaced the Transition Unit placement, which was for less challenged EBSB students, with a more inclusive approach that focuses on alternative programming within mainstream education at the Cayman Islands Centre for Further Education (CIFEC). Year 12 students, previously placed in Transition, are now provided with individualised learning bridges that link into a framework of core examination subjects and vocational training, supported by experienced EBSB staff. Within this structure there is flexibility to provide varied numbers of days in the workplace dependent on the students' needs.

Importantly however, it better prepares students for the world of work whilst also giving continued access relevant qualifications, particularly in numeracy and literacy that was often denied then in the past.

Madame Speaker, Tutorial placements, which were for the more challenging EBSD secondary school students, have been replaced by referral, through the judicial process, to the Therapeutic Community at Bonaventure Boys Home, which opened for students in September 2011, and, in the future, the planned Youth Rehabilitation Facility, due to open for clients in January 2013. These facilities are under the remit of the portfolio of the Ministry of Community Affairs, Gender and Housing, and are the result of a strong collaborative partnership with the Ministry of Education Training and Employment. Students who are placed within these residential facilities will benefit from a true twenty four (24) hour curriculum that will address both the educational and emotional needs of each individual. It is also important to highlight that the education component within these facilities will offer the aligned curriculum and examination opportunities to those on offer within the high schools, thus limiting any negative impact on their education entitlement and future progression.

Within this continuum of provision an interim, separate, Alternative Education facility will remain on a self-contained area within the CIFEC site, and will be used to accommodate students who are awaiting transfer to the Therapeutic Community or are in need of an emergency placement outside of the mainstream environment.

Finally, Madame Speaker, for the lower end of the EBSD spectrum, the restructuring has also included the expansion of in-school Behaviour Units and the creation of school based Behaviour and Educational Support Teams so that a continuum of effective, targeted intervention and support is provided for EBSD students. In-school support for EBSD students has been enhanced by employing a further EBSD specialist based within each high school Behaviour Unit and at CIFEC. The purpose of these Behaviour Units are to support the continued placement of students within their home mainstream school and their use has already made a significant impact on reducing previous levels of suspension.

Madame Speaker, the restructuring has aimed to address the recommendations of the last ESAU (Education Standards and Assessment Unit) report on AEC, and also relevant recommendations from the Report on Pre-Disposing Factors to Criminality in the Cayman Islands (2006) by Yolande Forde. For example, The Yolande Forde Report clearly states that – and I quote again

“Responses by the school authorities essentially constitute a punitive approach. It is by no means being suggested that bad behaviour should not be punished by school authorities... What is being suggested, rather, is that a punishment-centred approach is primarily reactive and myopic because it allows authorities

to respond to the symptoms/outcomes while the causes of the misconduct frequently go unaddressed” Forde (2006).

The restructuring shifts the focus from reactive approaches to student behaviour to systematic approaches that deal with early identification, assessment and therapeutic intervention. The restructuring is initially addressing aspects of secondary provision, but a parallel primary school behaviour approach forms part of the implementation of the Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BEST). The BEST model revolves around multi agency teams formed to review individual cases and ensure effective interventions, and support, in the context of their families and wider communities

Madame Speaker, I wish to allay fears that dangerous and anti-social youths will be forced back in to classrooms, and wish to emphasise that the most challenging students, to whom these fears apply will still be in separate accommodation, however their needs should now be better served through therapeutic intervention. The Residential Therapeutic Community will be accommodating ten (10) of our most challenging students by mid-October and by January 2013 the Youth Rehabilitation Centre will accommodate up to a further thirty four (34) students and have up to five (5) specialist teachers at their disposal. Exclusion from school, and indeed as often as not in past, from AEC itself, cannot be seen as a solution. These students are not ‘someone else’s problem’ and we must recognise that they may fail us, and themselves time and time again, but we as a society cannot afford to give up them. As I quote from Forde’s report again:

“These are the children who are the greatest risk of future criminal involvement. They are not going anywhere. They stay within the limited confines of this island and become the criminal element that places us and our families at risk”.

If we ever needed reminding of that, then I think the recent events in our communities should have added some sharp focus for us – of the six (6) recent shootings, at least five (5) were at some point AEC students, one as recently as 2010.

Madame Speaker, it is the view of this Ministry that the restructuring of AEC was long overdue and trust that they will receive the full support from this Honourable House. The changes that have been made should ensure, for the first time in our education system, Alternative Education Services that are:

- Strategically planned, not reactive
- Aligned in terms of curriculum and examination entitlement to mainstream high schools

- Cost effective and accountable
- Focussed on therapeutic intervention and reintegration.

Madame Speaker, I thank you.