



DRAFT

REIMAGINING EDUCATION IN BARBADOS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TECHNOLOGICAL & VOCATIONAL TRAINING



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FUTURE
FOR EVERY CHILD



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GLOSSARY

Asynchronous learning	A form of education instruction and learning that does not occur in the same place or at the same time.
Community of Practice	Comprises a group of people (school leaders/teachers) who share a common issue/concern or interest in a particular topic within their schools and come together in a forum to share best practice or dialogue in search of solutions.
Flipped instruction	A teaching methodology that reverses the flow of the traditional classroom where students are encouraged to learn about new content on their own using pre-selected instructions or other resources to explain content. Class time is then used for interactive activities, problem-solving or projects.
Gig economy	Refers to a labour market that relies heavily on temporary and part-time positions filled by independent contractors and freelancers rather than full-time, permanent employees. Gig workers gain flexibility and independence but little or no job security.
Individualised Educational Programmes	A learning approach that adjusts the pace of learning to meet the needs of individual students.
Science Technology Engineering Arts & Mathematics education	A holistic approach to teaching and learning that combines science, engineering, arts & mathematics by harnessing the natural symbiosis between these disciplines to foster creative problem-solving, collaboration and critical thinking.
Social Emotional Learning	Refers to the process of developing self-awareness, self-control and interpersonal skills. It is a method used to promote a holistic approach to child development.
Special Educational Needs	A term used to describe learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for a child to learn compared to other children of the same age.
Synchronous learning	Refers to learning that happens at the same time, with a teacher and a group of students all taking part in a lesson at the same time.
Wrap-around services	A comprehensive, holistic, youth and family-driven way of responding when children or youth experience serious mental health or behavioral challenges. Wrap-around puts the child or youth and family at the centre.

ACRONYMS

BNSD	Barbados National Secondary Diploma
BSS	Barbados Statistical Service
CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
EC	Early Childhood
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETTC	Erdiston Teachers' Training College
FIRM	Fair, Inclusive, Relevant, Modern
GOB	Government of Barbados
IEP	Individualised Education Plan
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JCE	Junior College of Excellence
METVT	Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training
MHW	Ministry of Health & Wellness
NTI	National Transformation Initiative
SCE	Senior College of Excellence
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics
SJPI	Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education & Training
UN	United Nations



TRANSFORMING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF BARBADOS

Introduction

Barbados acknowledges that our education system has historically served our nation effectively, but we also recognise its lack of equitable service to all learners. This situation necessitates a thorough examination of our system to identify policies and practices that remain effective, areas requiring reinforcement, and those in need of reimagining. The overarching goal is to establish an education system that empowers all students to reach their full potential, fostering a future where opportunities are boundless and inclusive. Essentially, it should provide “A bright future for every child”.

The world today is vastly different from the time when Barbados introduced its current education system – transforming that system is vital for Barbados’ sustainable and ongoing development and ensuring that every child receives a quality education. Consequently, fostering a culture of excellence requires all stakeholders to collaborate in shaping an education system that is Fair, Inclusive, Relevant, and Modern (FIRM).

A FIRM Foundation

The proposed education system should be built on a FIRM foundation. The system should be:

- Fair to all students in helping them to realise their full potential
- Inclusive of all students – challenged, gifted and with other exceptionalities
- Relevant to the needs of students, the society and the global realities
- Modernised to meet the needs of schools, the Ministry and the country's economic growth and development trajectory

While students should be at the centre of our education system, it is equally vital to take into account the requirements of other participants in education. Therefore, after thorough analysis of all aspects of our current education system, the following enquiries were raised:

- Is it fair?
- Is it inclusive?
- Is it relevant?
- Is it modern?

Consideration of these questions has resulted in the proposals captured in the ensuing sections of this document.

Our Aspiration – “Global Citizens, Bajan Values”

Barbados is part of a world that is evolving rapidly – a world that is increasingly driven by technology, characterised by a highly volatile labour market and diminishing job security, and is more embracing of entrepreneurial approaches.

As we look to the future, we envision the creation of a global citizen who is rooted in Bajan values. Graduates should be adaptable with transferable skills that enable them to compete anywhere in the world, with the confidence that the qualities that make them uniquely Bajan also make them world-class.

Our goal, therefore, must be two-fold:

1. Our education system must be capable of developing problem-solvers and critical-thinkers who are:
 - self-confident
 - well-balanced/rounded
 - productive
 - adaptable
 - innovative



2. Barbados must be transformed into a country that is positioned to be globally competitive.

For these goals to be achieved and for transformation to become a reality, our children need to have the curiosity for lifelong learning and be equipped with the skills to enjoy quality livelihoods and life in the 21st century.

Apart from the design of curricula that promote these qualities, we recognise that teachers, leaders, parents and the wider community are critical to the achievement of these goals. It is within this context that our education system must be one that engages students, strengthens leaders, equips teachers, empowers parents and builds communities. Among the proposed enhancements required to achieve this aspiration are:

- Upgrading and equitably resourcing schools
- Reforming curricula across all levels
- Integrating technology
- Strengthening leadership and instructional quality
- Enhancing continuing professional development for educators
- Modernising the Education Act (legislative and regulatory environment)
- Bolstering parental education and engagement
- Increasing community involvement
- Establishing relevant agencies that will facilitate the sustainability of quality, equity and accountability of the system



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THE EVOLUTION OF BARBADOS' EDUCATION SYSTEM: FROM THEN TO NOW

The move towards a more structured education system in Barbados began with the establishment of the Mitchinson Commission in 1875. The principal role of the Commission was to organise the education system in three stages – primary, secondary and tertiary. While schooling at the primary level became accessible to the masses, schools at the secondary level did not provide enough places to accommodate all of the children from the primary level. At that time, there were three (3) First Grade Grammar Schools and six (6) Second Grade Grammar Schools, which provided places at the secondary level, and which had a heavy emphasis on the teaching of Latin. A further Second Grade Grammar school was added later.

According to Carter (2022)¹ entry to the Grammar Schools was by way of an entrance examination, which was controlled by the school principal who had the administrative right to admit students at his “whim and fancy”. The principal’s preference was exercised through an interview process for a Scholarship and Exhibition offered to students by the government, to gain entry to the Grammar Schools.

Carter further suggests that this approach contributed to a reinforcement of the colonial and elitist structure, as it often disqualified those students whose abject poverty was exposed by revealing

¹ Carter, D. (2022). Entrance Examination to Barbados Public Secondary Schools: 1950s to 2022.

their address and circumstance. A model of “sifting and sorting” was born from this approach, which resulted in many children of the working class being unable to access secondary education, including many who had the intellectual capacity to do so.

In the early 1950s, Secondary Modern Schools were introduced to facilitate the access of children of working-class parents. They offered a wide curriculum that focused on academic as well as technical and vocational subjects. By 1959, these schools had a combined roll of 2,435 students compared to the 3,836 in the Grammar schools. However, by the academic year 1961-1962, the number of children in Secondary Modern Schools outnumbered those in Grammar Schools by 311. Almost six decades later, in 2020-2021, that gap had grown to nine hundred and seventeen 917 with ten thousand and fifty-nine 10,059 students in the equivalent of Secondary Modern Schools, compared with nine thousand one hundred and forty-two 9,142 students in the comparative Grammar Schools.

In 1959, the Barbados Secondary Schools’ Entrance Examination (BSSEE) was introduced as a screening test meant to separate “high” and “low” performing students. Commonly called the Common Entrance Examination, the screening test quickly became a fiercely competitive examination where students were vigorously coached to pass. High scores resulted in students gaining access to the older and preferred Grammar Schools, while low scores meant that students were placed in schools referred to as “second grade” Secondary Modern Schools (Comprehensive Schools). This system of selection for the transition of students from the primary to the secondary level continues today.

Today, children are still being prepared to pass the BSSEE (Common Entrance Exam) to gain entry into what are perceived to be prestigious, older secondary or Grammar Schools.

Inequity Among Schools

Those who do not gain access to “prestigious” secondary schools are placed in newer secondary schools which, traditionally, have been negatively perceived as being disproportionately equipped and resourced, relative to older secondary schools. Yet, all schools are expected to deliver the same curriculum, at the same pace, using the same pedagogy and the same methods of assessment, with students expected to write the same exams at the end of the secondary school journey. During consultations, educators suggested that this situation may have been the genesis of some of the inequity that we are currently experiencing in secondary education in Barbados.

Disparity in Performance

In addition to the observed disparities among schools, data highlights variations in the academic performance between boys and girls by the end of primary. For instance, between 2015 and 2022, a notable percentage of boys struggled in Mathematics. Approximately, 29% scored below 40%, while in English, this figure ranged from 16% to 24%. Conversely, girls generally excelled in English, but in Mathematics, a significant 20% to 34% of them scored below 40% during the same period. One can deduce that an alarming number of boys progress to the secondary level each year without achieving proficiency in primary-level literacy and numeracy. This situation is mirrored in the case of girls concerning Mathematics.

The pass rate of secondary school students in regional exams is also a cause for concern. The graph below shows the trend in those passing five (5) or more subjects (including math and English) after five (5) years of secondary education.

Figure 1 graph opposite, shows that across the years assessed, many public secondary students received no passes (represented by the orange bar) in five subjects including Mathematics and English for which they were entered and subsequently sat. As to be expected, there was a decline in performance over the Covid 19 period (2020 - 2021) reflecting the adverse impact of learning disruption on pass rates during those examination years. Unfortunately, as reflected in the 2023 results, the pattern has continued.

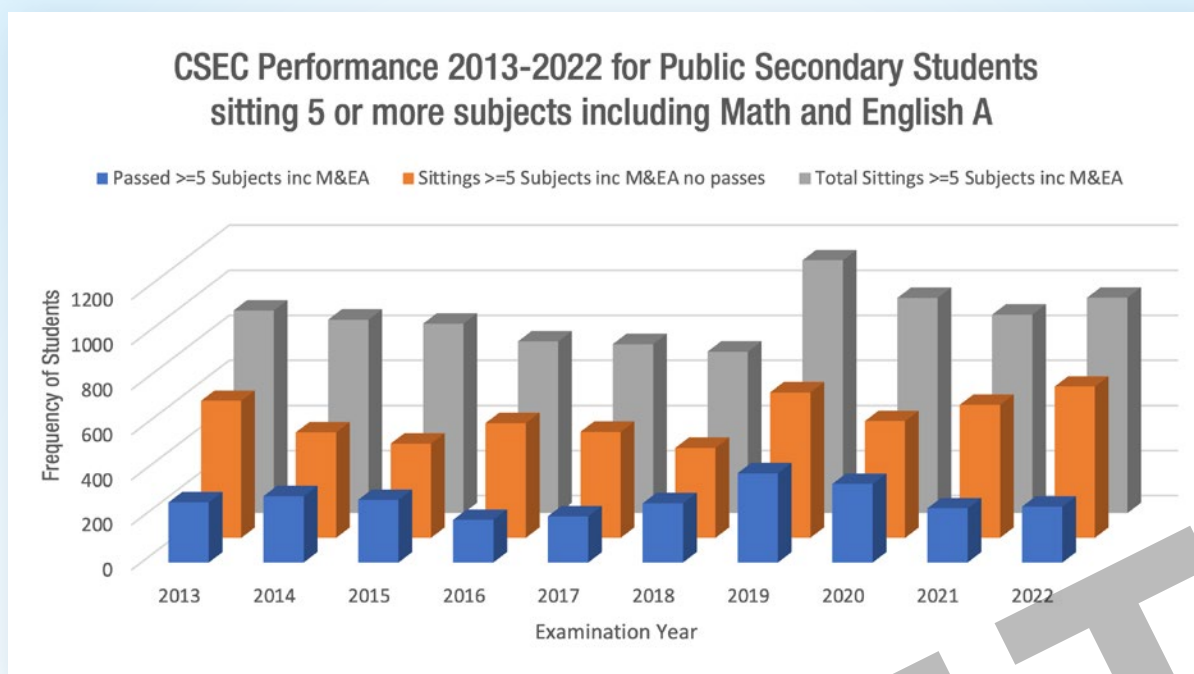


Figure 1: CSEC Performance 2013-2022 for Public Secondary Students May/ June examination sitting 5 or more subjects including Math and English A.

YEAR	5TH FORM ENROLMENT	% OF 5TH FORM COHORT NOT SITTING ANY EXAMS	*% PASSING 5 OR MORE INCLUDING MATH & ENGLISH
2018	4293	12%	65%
2019	4233	10%	60%
2020	4296	11%	60%
2021	4610	19%	55%

Table 1: Performance in 5th form exit exams

*NOTE: *Percent passing 5 or more including Math & English includes early sitters (those from lower grades)*

The data depicted in Table 1 shows that a concerning percentage of students at fifth form are not sitting any exams. Pass rates based on the numbers sitting disguises the magnitude of the issue as it does not address those who, though in fifth form, were deemed not ready to sit.

What is concerning for the system which bases funding of schools on a per capita basis, is the glaring level of inefficiency in throughput which does not reflect value for money. Of even more concern, is that the system as currently organised, is failing too many of our students. Passing at least five subjects, including Math and English A, is the minimum requirement for admission to tertiary education institutions and entry-level employment opportunities.

These results clearly indicate an urgent call for action. A thorough review of the secondary system is critical for charting the path to success. It is against this backdrop that a proposal for a new secondary model is considered in this paper.

COVID-19 Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic, where full, face-to-face school was suspended from March 18, 2020, until February 21, 2022, exacerbated the challenges already observed in Barbados' educational system, as evidenced in Figure 1 (page 9). The impact was felt by both students and teachers. Learning deficits in students manifested in many struggling to understand basic concepts in mathematics and English. In addition, there was a noticeable increase in behavioural challenges. Teachers were also challenged to use the online delivery mode.

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING: RESULTS

During the month of May 2023, the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training (METVT), administered National Diagnostic Tests to 2nd, 3rd and 4th form students of secondary schools in the areas of literacy and numeracy to assess the level of learning deficits. The results are depicted below.

	FORM 2		FORM 3		FORM 4	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
English	42	49	47	54	40	48
Ranges	0-84	0-91	0-91	0-91	0-84	0-89
Mathematics	36	38	34	38	27	32
Ranges	0-92	0-94	0-97	0-97	0-97	0-97

Table 2: Combined average performance in the 2023 diagnostic test by sex and form level

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING AND THE NEED FOR EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

Data collected from the 2023 National Diagnostic Tests taken by secondary students following the Covid-19 pandemic is instructive, suggesting even more significant levels of learning loss during the height of the pandemic period than previously anticipated. Acknowledging pre-existing shortcomings, the latest data underscores the urgency of implementing targeted interventions for students who will leave the system before 2025, even before significant elements of the transformation agenda are officially initiated. The insights gained from the Covid-19 experience will shape the response, ensuring that schools and the entire system receive the appropriate training and resources that they need.

OTHER FALL-OUT FROM THE PANDEMIC

Currently, what is being observed more widely is that too many students are becoming overwhelmed and disengaged from the education system, and are falling further behind. This disengagement has had an impact on performance (see Figure 1) which was again reflected in the 2023 exam results.



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION FROM AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Education is the leading determinant of economic growth, employment and earnings. It sets the foundation for sustained economic growth and resilience. Economic resilience is “a community’s ability to foresee, adapt to, and leverage changing conditions to its advantage”. It is not just about bouncing back from a crisis but also about adapting to long-term structural change. Resilient economies are characterised by:

- **Business:** A strong, innovative, and diverse business base
- **People:** A skilled workforce with strong levels of participation
- **Place:** Understanding the particular characteristics of the place itself
- **Community:** A community bound by a sense of pulling together and with low levels of inequality
- **Governance:** Good governance strengthens resilience

The METVT is seized by the imperative of its mandate to be a significant contributing factor in building resilience for a sustained economic growth trajectory for Barbados and “a bright future for every child”. The mission critical role is that the sector must:

- Support and strengthen social capital, which acts as an important safety net during crises
- Raise the human capital of individuals, a critical foundation for resilience
- Play a critical role in strengthening community knowledge
- Organise schools and teaching & learning by engaging transformative, resilience-building strategies in our schools
- Help children develop the skills they need to cope with stress and adversity, achieve their goals, and maintain positive mental health
- Develop resilient classrooms that support memorable experiences and higher academic achievement for children

The Barbados Statistical Service (BSS) in its 2021 report (based on the 2010 census) provided a breakdown of the 136,100 persons in the employed labour force which represented a participation rate of 62.6%. This is shown in the Chart below:

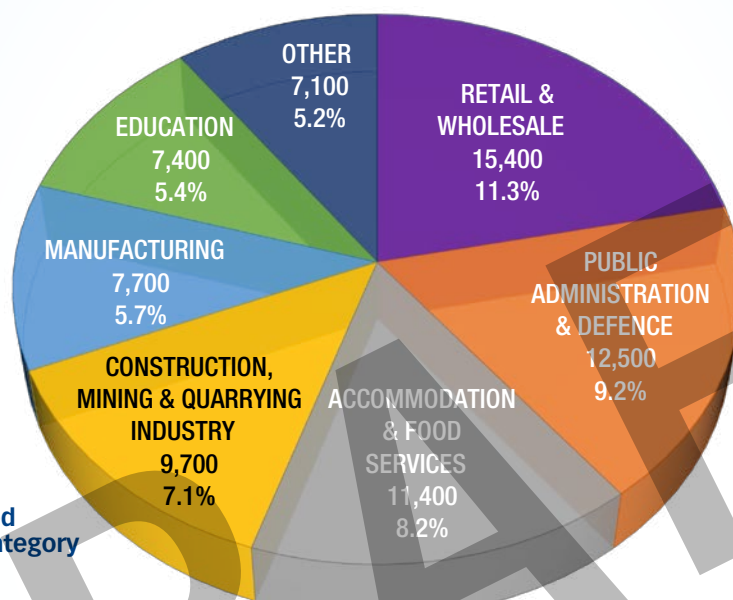


Figure 2: Employed labour force by category

A cursory analysis shows that Barbados has a service-oriented economy with approximately 40% of the employed labour force operating in the service sector. While there is some level of diversity in the economy, it requires more than diversity to build resilience. The education sector needs to be deliberate in how it manages outcomes and the choices it provides for our children. We have performed well in the past, but the results are telling us that there is a worrying decline and the METVT must be deliberate in ensuring it delivers a FIRM education that will serve our children well and position our small island state to be globally competitive.

We must, as a country in which human resources are our greatest asset, ask ourselves:

- Are we meeting the mission critical role for education at this time – can we afford to maintain the status quo?
- Can our country afford to continue to have an education system that caters only to some children, while a large portion are left behind?
- Are we preparing students to be significant contributors to a resilient economy?
- Should we not be fostering a system that equally values academic, creative and social and emotional learning?



WHERE WE ARE GOING

Transformation of the education system has been identified as one of Barbados' major priorities. Such transformation must drive creativity and innovation, and respond to the numerous challenges existing in the sector, which, if not addressed, will result in a negative impact on children's lives, the education system and the social and economic development of the country.

An ambitious and extensive transformation agenda is being proposed to address the existing challenges in the education system and to bring it up to date with the needs of a Fair, Inclusive, Relevant and Modern (FIRM) system.

A Bright Future for Every Child

The realisation of "A bright future for every child" anchors the efforts of METVT. This means that Barbados' education system must have one overarching aim – to enhance outcomes for every student. All of our children are precious. All of our children must be valued. All of our children must be provided with the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

In addition to achieving predetermined academic standards of literacy and numeracy, Barbados' education system must prepare our students socially and emotionally to:

- Be adaptable at all stages of their development, and to be readily able to explore new opportunities
- Develop the capacity to cope in a changing national, regional and global environment
- Acquire transferable 21st century skills, including critical thinking, cooperation, communication, collaboration and digital literacy
- Understand their role as contributing citizens to social and economic development (citizenship)
- Demonstrate what they know, as well as what they can do (competency-based)

Competency for Emerging Jobs

In keeping with global trends, Barbados must also focus attention on preparing our students for jobs which do not currently exist. Furthermore, we must ready our students to be more entrepreneurial at the national, regional and global levels as a means of earning, and as a driver of economic activity. The World Economic Forum, in its "Future of Jobs Report" (2016) reminds us that approximately six (6) out of every ten (10) students who entered school that year will be working in jobs that do not currently exist. Therefore, if our students are to be competent to operate in new spheres and perform in these emerging jobs, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is imperative that the education system prepares them appropriately, using competency-based approaches.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Barbados is committed to addressing the education of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), encompassing the gifted, physically challenged and students with exceptional learning characteristics. The cornerstone of this approach is inclusion. We must ensure that regular classrooms become environments that uphold every child's right to a high-quality education with differentiated instruction tailored to their needs. This entails providing essential physical facilities, materials, assistive devices, and well-trained teachers to deliver top-notch instruction. Gifted children must also be provided with additional learning opportunities by way of partnerships and on-line learning opportunities.

Where inclusive environments cannot meet the unique needs of these children, there will be specialised environments to foster the students' growth and enable them to thrive. Students from SEN groups facing mental or physical challenges will undergo specialised assessments through the ministry's Student Services Unit, leading to the development of Individualised Educational Programmes (IEPs) to cater to their specific needs. Gifted students will also have their educational needs captured in IEPs, tailored to their area of giftedness.



Enabling Student Achievement

For each child to reap success at school, there must be a concerted effort to understand the knowledge, skills, competencies, physical characteristics and interests that they display at each stage of development. As such, it is proposed that screening tests (hearing, speech, and sight), diagnostic assessments and interest inventories be commonplace at key stages within the education system. The information gleaned from the various assessments will aid in the development of intervention strategies and learning pathways that are tailored to each child's specific needs (profiles) and will determine the levels of support (learning supports) that are required for these children's continued success.

LEARNING PROFILES

- a. Development and implementation of a national diagnostic assessment at school entry (pre-primary) in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Wellness
- b. Benchmark student performance against standards and attainment targets referenced in the curriculum at key stages of schooling
- c. Development and implementation of a system of student profiles to track student movement, placement and progress across their school life

LEARNING PATHWAYS

- a. Development of a policy and strategy for the teaching of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- b. Provision of appropriate, culturally relevant teaching/ learning resources in basic education
- c. Development of a strategic plan for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education
- d. Developing the inherent athletic and creative talents of students endowed with such talent

LEARNING SUPPORTS

- a. Establishment of Career Guidance and Development Programme to assist students in choosing the most appropriate pathways for their education
- b. Development of mechanisms for the building of physical and mental resilience in children
- c. Development and implementation of Social and Emotional Learning strategies and targets
- d. Emphasis on teaching students "how" to learn, and helping them to better connect "what" they learn to the workplace and their lives
- e. Development of programmes and curricula which contribute to economic growth and national development

Curriculum Review and Reform

Curriculum reform is a fundamental element of the education and national transformation agenda. Barbados' education system must equip students to thrive in the industries of today and the opportunities of tomorrow. In this regard, the reform of the curricula will be underpinned by a project-based approach with an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts &



Mathematics (STEAM). This would include the introduction of programmes to enable students to be more than consumers of technology by elevating their capacities as developers and innovators. The project-based approach will also bolster the creative arts, entrepreneurship, engineering, mathematics and science education. Empowering students in this way positions them to make positive contributions, foster the growth of local and indigenous enterprises, participate in a global marketplace, and catalyse economic development. Digitally literate school leavers and graduates will facilitate broader global market access for Barbados and its businesses.

Prioritising flexibility and creating more pathways for student progression within our educational system is necessary to ongoing education transformation. Proposed activities aligned with this objective include:

- Continuous development of programmes in emerging fields
- Revising existing curricula, while developing relevant assessment methods
- Providing high-quality training and continuous professional development for educators and leaders
- Establishing industry partnerships to offer authentic workforce experience for students
- Forming curriculum development and review committees
- Fostering enhanced collaboration across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to monitor global trends to influence national curriculum development.

Customising Programmes to Develop Each Student's Skills, Capabilities and Interests

To ensure that every child has a genuine opportunity for a bright future, it is essential to consider the unique needs of each child. In practice, tasks and programmes must be tailored, to some extent, to adequately address the varied learning styles and intelligences of students. This approach also allows for learners to engage with materials at their own pace, reducing likely frustration that comes with "one-size-fits-all" teaching approaches.

Such tailored programming also promotes intrinsic motivation, increased student engagement and the honing of students' self-advocacy skills. In addition, individual programmes will be designed to facilitate self-regulation, so that students can take ownership of their own learning and feel proud that they have actively contributed to their personal development.

Programming aimed at enhancing this form of human development must encompass:

- Educator training in assessing students and tailoring their learning programmes
- Leveraging technology to create personalised learning environments



- Encouraging student involvement in shaping their learning experiences
- Offering students multiple opportunities and modes to showcase their knowledge and skills
- Developing personalised learning plans for each student as required
- Establishing flexible classrooms, enabling students to engage in groups that align with their skills, interests, and capabilities
- Implementing flipped instruction, which reverses the traditional model, allowing children to self-regulate and progress at their individual pace

Strengthening the Integration of Technology

The necessity of incorporating technology in the educational system as part of our transformation efforts is acknowledged. The main objectives in this regard are three-fold:

- Ensuring equitable access to education
- Cultivating digital competencies
- Expanding instructional methodologies

Barbados' transformation agenda emphasises digital instruction and the establishment of a comprehensive technology education framework, encompassing all electronic technologies. This includes the creation and distribution of educational content across various media. This framework encompasses:

- Creating digital channels with on-demand content, such as recorded audio and video lessons as well as synchronous and asynchronous activities
- Providing virtual platforms for lesson delivery across schools and institutions
- Supplying to schools appropriate technology support resources for digital education
- Developing and delivering training and continuous professional development for educators using various digital modalities
- Regularly updating the "Technology Education Framework"
- Creating manuals covering effective electronic instructional delivery, including best practices and acceptable electronic operational policies.
- Integrating Virtual Reality (VR) into the instructional programme
- Establishing individual profiles and dashboards for each child entering primary school, offering information on their interests, health and well-being, extracurricular activities, behaviour, and, where available, previous school performance. The goal is to tailor student-specific programming and interventions based on this data



Empowering Teachers

Teachers are invaluable to education and to student success. They are critical to the quality of instruction delivered, and to the creation of a facilitating teaching and learning environment. The transformation agenda must, therefore, focus on teachers in a meaningful way, ensuring that they are on the forefront of their profession. This would require that appropriate mechanisms for the monitoring, development, and oversight of members of the teaching profession be implemented. In addition, the recognition, reward, and self-actualisation of teachers are critical. These broad objectives can be operationalised through:

- Development of a Master Teacher track for upward mobility, retention of pedagogical talent and bolstering of teacher support through mentorship and coaching
- Provision of appropriate support resources for teaching and enhanced learning environments
- Development of licensing/ relicensing/ recertification system, supported by professional development standards
- Review and reorganisation of the teacher evaluation system
- Provision of specialised training for development and execution of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs)
- Development, in collaboration with Erdiston Teachers' Training College (ETTC) and other relevant bodies, of a suite of online and in-person courses to be accessed by teachers in pursuit of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Quality assurance of best practices and processes for:
 - a. Engaging relevant modes of delivery
 - b. Incorporating relevant technologies
 - c. Reviewing systems for certification
 - d. Reviewing and modifying systems for assessment
 - e. Evaluation of student learning
- Completion of the establishment of the Teaching Service Commission for quicker and more dedicated attention to matters for teachers and principals

Further, there is a need for the introduction of new pedagogical approaches to facilitate different models of teaching and learning. Best practices in instruction will also be identified, compiled, and disseminated system-wide, so that all teachers and children can benefit.

Enhancing Leadership

Strengthening Barbados' education system necessitates empowering our educational institutions through effective leadership. Effective leaders who are committed to achieving meaningful impact, are adaptable to change, and are actively involved in co-creating solutions, are essential. As such,



the quality oversight of vital personnel such as boards of management, principals and school management teams, student councils, and parent-teacher associations, profoundly influences the system's efficacy. Their crucial insights and support to the education sector are equally necessary for sustaining positive transformation of the system.

To ensure more effective and efficient leadership within the education sector, the proposed initiatives focus on reinforcing governance structures and building capacity within both the central ministry and schools. This approach aims to facilitate strategic policy-making within the Ministry of Education, foster institutional growth, and promote effective implementation in schools. It is essential to address the ongoing training and professional development needs of educators and leaders at all levels within the system. Therefore, strengthening Erdiston Teachers' Training College is a pivotal component of this effort. The recommended measures to strengthen leadership encompass:

- Development and delivery of System Leadership training for education officers in support of their roles in school improvement and policy implementation
- Delivery of leadership and governance training for boards of management, supported by the National Transformation Initiative (NTI)
- Development, in conjunction with ETTC and other relevant bodies, of a suite of courses to be accessed by education officers, in pursuit of continuing professional development
- Audit, revision, and creation of training programmes in general at ETTC
- Design and implementation of a "training of trainers" programme to assist ETTC trainers in modelling effective delivery of training curricula
- Identification and design of course materials and resources necessary to support delivery of training programmes
- Further development and implementation of a system-wide integrated framework for reporting and feedback
- Development of a framework to include the Education Management Information System (EMIS) to produce an annual statistical digest to inform evidence-based decision-making
- Implementation of a school inspectorate to provide for external quality assurance and school improvement
- Development of a shared-services division within the Ministry that focuses on provision of non-teaching services such as procurement, accounting, human resources, maintenance/ plant management, security, and other essentials, so that educational leaders can better focus on their core functions of instructional leadership and student development
- Reorganisation of the Ministry's Media Resources Department to improve school support, communication, and public information



- Development, costing and implementation of a monitoring and action plan to implement education transformation recommendations
- Institutionalising and centring students' voices through a strengthened, well-trained National Students' Council body
- Introduction of a peer mentorship programme for principals and other school leaders
- Design and preparation of operational manuals for oversight at school level
- Development of a leadership system within the secondary school that facilitates the principals' increased focus on matters related to instructional leadership and administration and diminishes the principals' focus on matters related to plant management
- Establishment of Communities of Practice among school leaders for information, best practice, and resource sharing.

The Role of Tertiary Institutions - Erdiston Teachers' Training College (ETTC)

As part of its role in the education transformation process, Erdiston Teachers' Training College (ETTC) is currently working with the National Transformation Initiative to up-skill teachers and to provide professional development opportunities by delivering courses through the Coursera platform (Educators Hub). The College is also surveying schools to determine the training needs of teachers and leadership personnel. Once this is completed, a mapping exercise will be undertaken to determine what can be used from the Coursera platform or other institutions with which the College is collaborating, and what the College will have to develop on its own. Those courses will be micro-credentialled by the College.

Additionally, the METVT is currently forging partnerships between the College and internationally recognised and accredited universities to aid in building capacity at the College. It is anticipated that these partnerships will result in increased quality offerings for all educators and educational leaders on a continuous basis in the form of seminars, workshops, short courses and modules. The successful pursuit of such professional development opportunities will result in dual certification which should lead to more effective leadership and teaching in the classroom.

While the agenda supports the building of capacity for teachers in the education system, there is recognition that there will be instances where teachers who, after targeted interventions, consistently perform below the required standard. Allowing these teachers to remain in the education system can have long-lasting and detrimental effects on the nation's children. Establishing a licensing system akin to those for doctors, lawyers and engineers will address the issue of chronic teacher under-performance by enhancing teacher competencies and maintaining their performance standards throughout their careers.



UPDATING AND ENHANCING THE LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The modernisation of the education system will require an enabling legislative and regulatory architecture. The current Education Act and Regulations, which were developed in the 1980s, are not congruent with the current environment, contemporary thinking and methods, or many of the reforms now being proposed. Modernising the legislative and regulatory frameworks will, therefore, be a pivotal aspect of the education transformation effort. This process will include a review of the Education Act and Regulations and a revision that will incorporate changes from the modernisation as well as, strengthen other areas of policy and regulations. A sub-committee has been established to research, advise and advance work in this respect.



EQUIPPING SCHOOLS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The environment in which teaching and learning take place has a significant bearing on the level of achievement of students across the entire educational landscape. Significant research across the global education sector points to a positive correlation between the quality of the physical facilities, teaching resources and student achievement. It underscores the fact that facilities, including specialised spaces, are pivotal to honing the curiosity and creativity of our students. As a result, attention will be simultaneously focused on teaching, learning, and the upkeep of and upgrades to the physical environment. Ventilation, distancing, and other physical considerations are critical to ensuring the health and safety of students, teachers, support staff and the entire school community.

Proposals for Infrastructural Enhancement

Proposed infrastructural enhancements include:

- Retrofitting and customisation of spaces for Early Childhood Development and Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Provision of experimental and demonstration labs and incubator spaces at ETTC and at various schools across the island, for both teacher and student development

- Upgrading the Gordon Corbin Studios to facilitate digital content creation for:
 - a. Development and delivery of pedagogical content
 - b. Development of public information and communications content
- Enhancement of bandwidth and connectivity to support digital access at all schools and to provide fence-to-fence coverage
- Transformation of public schools into green, energy-efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly learning environments

Accessibility

Attention to physical facilities is also critical in providing for the needs of children with physical disabilities. Therefore, in providing new infrastructure and refurbishing existing school plants, attention will be given to accessibility. A 'Schools' Accessibility Checklist' will be developed for each school, and where schools lack the requisite accessibility facilities, they will be flagged for upgrading.



DRAFT



PROPOSED REORGANISATION OF PRE-PRIMARY, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN BARBADOS

The current Barbados basic education model consists of three stages:

PRE-PRIMARY
(non-compulsory)
2 year duration
for ages 3 - 5

PRIMARY
6 year duration
for ages 6 - 11

***SECONDARY**
5 + 2 year
duration
for ages
12 - 16 (18)

Note*: Secondary students who qualify for and are accepted to study for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE), typically spend an additional two years.

Building a Solid Foundation in the Early Years

A primary aim of transforming the education system is to elevate student achievement in fundamental education, encompassing pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. A solid foundation in the early years will equip every child with essential tools to navigate the education system effectively.

Considering this, the following proposals endeavour to extend basic education to encompass ALL children aged 3 to 5. The Ministry of Education aims to introduce universal pre-primary education within the next three (3) years, making it accessible across all primary schools in Barbados, thereby fortifying the cornerstone of fundamental education. Play-based and values-based approaches will be emphasized, while nurturing vital skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.



Key Proposals: Pre-Primary

- Universal pre-primary education (3 – 5-year-olds) within next 3 years
- Play-based curriculum and retraining of teachers in the play-based approach to learning
- Universal diagnostic testing (at school entry and at specific points thereafter)
- Functional foreign language (introduction)
- Values-based curriculum - Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) targets infused across the curriculum
- A system of student profiles
- National performance standards (benchmarks)
- Coding, robotics, and other emerging technologies (introduction)
- Readiness for formal education
- Retrofitted/ customised spaces for Early Childhood Development and Special Educational Needs

Key Proposals: Primary

- Competency-based curriculum
- Continuous formative assessment (focus on mastery of curriculum, rather than teaching to a test)
- Revision of assessment practices for Class 1 – 4 to include written and practical assessments based on the different learning styles
- Technical and vocational skills and competencies infused across subjects
- Project-based approach to teaching and learning
- Inclusive approach (social and academic inclusion in mainstream schools for students with special educational needs – gifted, challenged, and other exceptionalities – to the extent possible)
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) targets integrated across all subjects
- Updated curricula
- National performance standards (benchmarks)
- Specialist teachers (numeracy and literacy)
- Master Teacher track (implementation of the Master Teacher track, specifically recommended at the outset for implementation at the primary level, to address the teaching/ learning challenges in schools that are performing below the national mean)
- Digital book scheme
- Flexibility in transition age from primary to secondary (early or later: 9 – 12 years)
- Criterion Referenced Assessment and Individualised Education Plans (modification of the Criterion Referenced Assessment to place greater emphasis on the use of data to inform IEPs)
- Curriculum development and review committees to consistently update curricula to keep them current

The overarching approach is the development of an enhanced competency-based curriculum that is constructed on five skill pillars: numeric (maths), kinaesthetic (movement), artistic (the arts), scientific (science), and linguistic (language). The curriculum will also be centred on instruction for critical thinking, verbal communication, problem-solving, civics and values, social interaction, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, confidence-building, and physical well-being.



Key Proposals: Secondary

- New mode of transferring students from primary to secondary school (feeder schools, with built-in appellate mechanism)
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- A system of student profiles
- New and updated curricula
- Competency-based options (technical and vocational approaches across subjects)
- Alternative forms of certification (CXC and other recognised examining bodies)
- Two-stage secondary structure, starting academic school year 2025:

1. Junior College of Excellence (JCE)

- ★ JCE – first three years of secondary education, typically age 12 to 14 years
- ★ Career guidance introduced during JCE
- ★ Updated broad-based core curricula, with a wide range of electives
- ★ Certification upon completing JCE

2. Senior College of Excellence (SCE)

- ★ Typically age 15 to 18 years
- ★ Specialist programming (linked to national development priorities, future of work)
 - a. Food Science and Agriculture
 - b. Technology (incl. ICT & Robotics)
 - c. The Built Environment (technical and vocational studies related to Construction)
 - d. Tourism and Hospitality
 - e. Sports and Arts (E-Sports, Media, and Communications)
 - f. Business, Entrepreneurship, and Design Technologies
 - g. Life Sciences and Biotechnology
 - h. Science and Mathematics
 - i. Languages, Humanities and Education
 - j. Alternative curricula, catering to students with Special Educational Needs

3. Construction of two (2) new schools:

- a. JCE (at former Ursuline Convent site)
- b. SCE (at Chelston Park site)





MODERNISING TEACHING & LEARNING

The transformation of the education system in Barbados will have, as one of its drivers, modernised curricula which are standardised and streamlined across the system beginning at the Early Childhood (EC) level up to form 3 at the secondary level. The syllabi for external examinations will begin at form 4. Work has begun with the review of curricula that now exists and will, as an early step in the transformation agenda, move to identify the gaps in content, the teaching standards and attainment targets.

New content will be introduced at all levels, to widen the range of offerings for inclusive, quality education. The signal change will be in how instruction is delivered. For the 21st century learner, schooling needs to move away from being transactional to becoming transformational, if Barbados is to produce critical thinkers who are globally competitive and compassionate citizens. Teachers will be trained in the new delivery modality. The curriculum specialists within the METVT will be involved in the revision process to prepare them to become trainers as the curricula are rolled out across the system.

The early years will see the curriculum at the Early Childhood level focused on the development of interest in learning, readiness, preparation for learning and positive social interaction for transitioning to the primary level.

At the primary level, curriculum delivery will be centred not only on imparting knowledge, but more significantly, on preparing students to demonstrate what they know and what they can do. Rather than simple recall, the focus will be on developing each student's ability to apply, analyse,

synthesise and evaluate information with a view towards allowing them to use creative ways to showcase what they have learnt.

Upon transitioning to the Junior Colleges of Excellence, students whose educational journey will be formatively and continuously assessed will be further guided in how to apply knowledge, determine their aptitude, and identify their preferences. The curricula will lay the foundation for each child to access learning in line with their needs, abilities, and interests.

When students transition to the Senior Colleges of Excellence, they will excel in an area that best fits their inherent talents and honed abilities. This will allow them to maximise learning in an environment that provides value, builds confidence, and allows them to leave secondary school as confident citizens ready to contribute to the country's growth and development.



Proposal for Rolling Out the Schools' Transformation Plan

The development and roll-out of the modernised curricula will align with the forward-thinking approach to the restructuring of the school system so that students will be sensitised to elements of the new curriculum before full implementation of the new structure in 2025. The roll-out will be planned such that once exposed to the revised curriculum, teaching and learning will continue based on these revised curricula and coincide with the reorganisation of secondary into junior and senior colleges of excellence.

The Case for a New Secondary Model/Paradigm

Students currently transition from the primary to the secondary level based on the Barbados Secondary Schools' Entrance Examination (BSSEE), a norm-referenced test – consisting of papers in English, mathematics and essay writing – which measures and ranks performance from the highest to the lowest. As a result, the focus is often not whether students demonstrate mastery of the primary curriculum, but rather, the mark obtained, the students' national ranking and their placement in an unofficial, but strongly perceived ranking of secondary schools.

This system, which was established when Barbados was still a British colony, has been in place for the past 64 years, and was designed for a bygone era when Barbados and the world were much different. It reinforced colonial notions and satisfied the need of the colonisers for a blue-collar labour force for whom quality education was not a necessity. So structured, the system did not, and in so far as that structure remains, still does not, adequately cater to the needs of all Barbadian children.

The system, as currently configured, does not cater to multiple intelligences. Additionally, there is the worrying trend that indicates that our students do not adequately possess the social and emotional intelligence required for harmonious interactions. With its overemphasis on academic performance, the current system does not adequately value the promotion of skills and competencies in their broadest manifestation, including those necessary to support sustainable development in the current national and global social and economic contexts. Moreover, it does not adequately prepare our students to be adults with the best chances for success as part of the community, the family and in the workplace.

Further, while some secondary schools in Barbados currently encompass students aged 11 to 18, this approach, while advantageous in specific contexts, is increasingly scrutinised in contemporary research and literature. Indeed, the prevailing evidence suggests that the wide age span can create fertile ground for unintended and adverse influences on younger students². Notably, instances of indiscipline and violent behaviour in recent years within secondary schools may trace their roots back to bullying and other negative behaviours exacerbated by age disparities. Consequently, there is growing consensus that we need an educational model that offers nurturing and protective environments for younger adolescents³.

Equipping our students with the necessary tools to cultivate social and emotional intelligence is paramount. These tools encompass self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, conflict resolution, and responsible decision-making. During the critical ages of 12 to 14, it is essential to encourage students to take charge of their learning, engaging in activities that foster self-pacing, research skills, and a sense of responsibility for their education. The Dalton Plan, a secondary education approach rooted in individualised learning, serves as a compelling framework for achieving these objectives.

There is also another compelling argument for the proposed reorganisation of the secondary school system, one which is rooted in the economic trajectory for Barbados' sustainable economic growth built on resilience. The conditions for resilience as well as the role of education in building economic growth and resilience have been presented. Hallmarks of this are:

1. Equity in education
2. Diversity in offerings
3. A clear learning pathway way that allows each child to maximise learning and build skills in areas of preference
4. Modern approaches to teaching and learning
5. Modernised administration of education services
6. Long-term relevance
7. Equipping and preparing every student to function and contribute to Barbados' growth and development in a manner best suited to their inherent abilities, preferences, and educational growth

These are areas that provide a blueprint for a FIRM education system.



² Steinberg L. (2008). *Adolescence*. NY: McGraw Hill.
Frideres J. (2002). *Immigrants, Integration and the Intersection of Identities*. Calgary: Univ. of Calgary Press.
Erikson E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. NY: Norton.

³ Blakemore S.J. (2008). Development of the Social Brain During Adolescence. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* (61) 1.

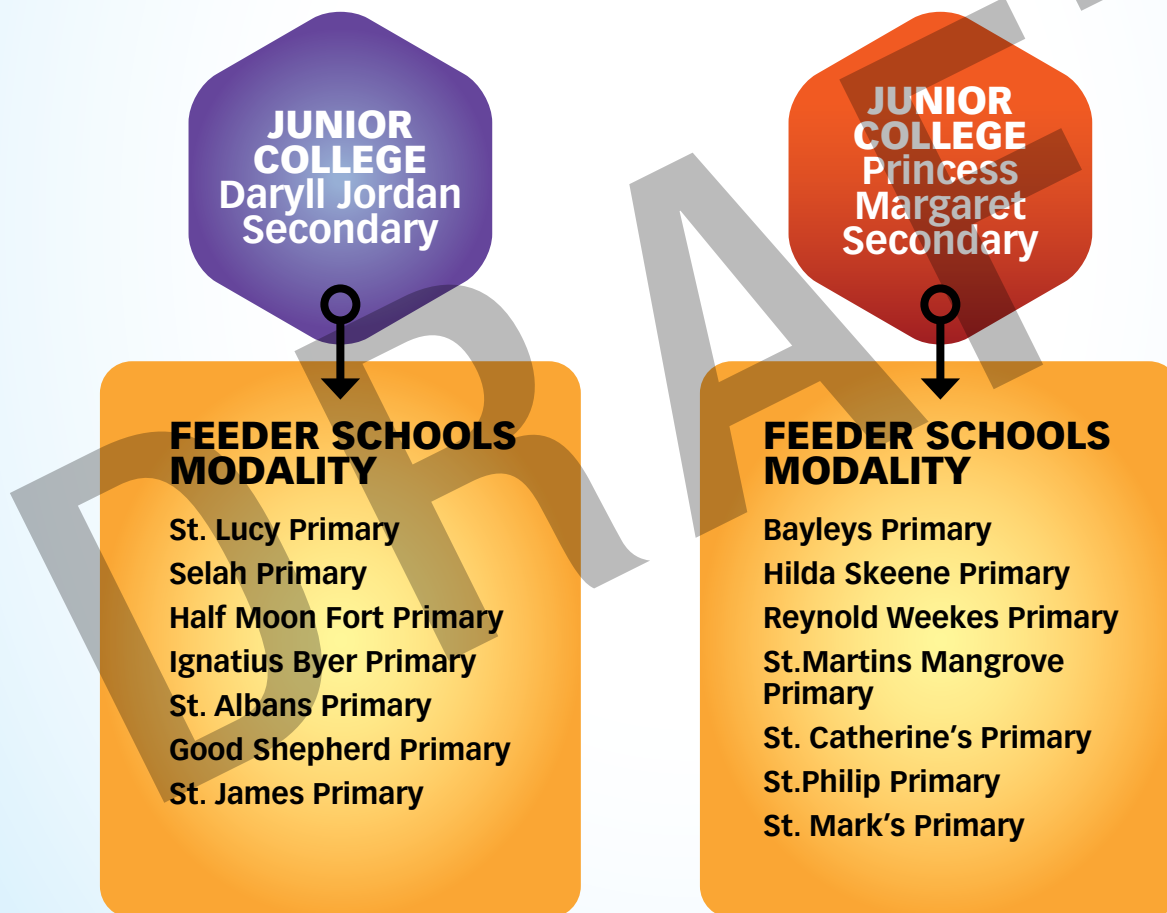
The Proposed Reform

Primary students will undergo a significant change as the Common Entrance Examination will be replaced. Instead, at class 4, students will participate in assessments to gauge their mastery of the primary curriculum. The results will not determine placement. Demonstrated mastery will serve as the foundation for transitioning to the next level, where personalised intervention strategies, based on students' profiles, will be employed. Support will be provided to enable equal access and excellence in areas where students show aptitude or inherent skills. Those who do not achieve mastery may also be advised to repeat the final year of primary school with targeted support.

Transition from the primary level will continue to be typically at age eleven (11), with the policy of flexible transfer remaining. This means that children may transition as early as nine (9) years old if their development supports early transition, or they may be retained at the primary level until age twelve (12), if deemed necessary.

Transition from primary to Junior College of Excellence will be based on a feeder/ catchment model by primary school. This means that students from primary schools around the catchment school will be assigned to that school. However, in extenuating cases, (for example, health reasons), special consideration will be given to transition by student address. In this regard, there will be an independent appellate process to address any valid concerns after the original placement.

Examples of placement under the feeder/catchment model are set out below:



The curriculum for the JCE level will be broad-based to ensure that students receive the extensive exposure required to allow them to choose the specialties they would like to follow at the next level. It will also include exposure to STEAM, an approach to teaching and learning that uses science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics as entry points for guiding various levels of student inquiry and promoting questioning and problem-solving to hone critical thinking skills.



Programmes and curricula should include:

- An infusion of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) targets to be set for various levels. These targets will develop competencies in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, conflict-resolution and responsible decision-making
- A citizenship module with targets at each level
- Literacy and numeracy
- Service learning

This first phase will ensure that students have a strong grasp of core areas such as English and mathematics as well as an array of other subjects, while making it compulsory for students to participate in extracurricular activities and service learning.

Upon completion of the JCE stage, students will transition to Senior College of Excellence (SCE) by means of their JCE profile, as well as an entry assessment of proficiency reflecting

their demonstrated areas of focus to determine the best fit for placement at an SCE. The entry assessment may use multiple modalities. It is proposed that students typically spend three (3) years at the JCE before making the transition to SCE.

SCEs will be institutions catering to students typically between 15 to 18 years old, now accommodated in fourth to sixth forms. It is proposed that the SCE will consist of two (2) stages. Stage 1 will be equivalent to what is now fourth and fifth forms, while Stage 2 will, in most cases, be equivalent to what is now sixth form or the International Baccalaureate. Each SCE will offer a common core necessary for the rounded development of all students. That core will consist of: mathematics, English, information technology, a natural as well as a social science subject and a foreign language. Students will pursue a minimum of three to a maximum of five subjects in their area of specialisation.

The SCE model will afford students the opportunity to hone their intelligences, skills and talents. For example, a student who has talent in music, or other visual and performing arts will be able to pursue a programme which allows the development and enhancement of that talent, gain qualifications in courses related to it, and move to higher education or to the world of work because of those qualifications.

The proposed areas of specialty for the SCEs are as follows:

	PROPOSED AREAS OF SPECIALISATION	RATIONALE
1	ICT and Robotics	In keeping with the assertion of the World Economic Forum that the future of work will be underpinned by technology, secondary school programming in Barbados should prepare students to not only use the technology, but also to create it. While all children will be exposed to ICT and robotics, this programme will cater to those who want to develop a career in the discipline.
2	Food Science and Agriculture	There is a current emphasis in Barbados on food security. Development in our food industries must start with the introduction of related courses in the curriculum. In addition, such a programme will contribute to throughput for the tertiary level institution in Agriculture being developed.
3	The Built Environment (technical and vocational Studies related to construction)	The current boom in construction has led the government to implement the Construction Gateway Programme so that local industry can have constant access to the supply of labour. Initiating such a programme at this level of education will contribute to keeping that supply consistent, as well as to developing the foundation for higher education advancement in the area.

	PROPOSED AREAS OF SPECIALISATION	RATIONALE
4	Hospitality and Tourism	Tourism is the major foreign exchange earner in Barbados and the development of a programme in the area, particularly if it is located in the centre of the tourism belt, will provide students with the opportunity to benefit from the formation of partnerships with businesses in the area as well as to access work experience opportunities as part of their programming.
5	Sports and Arts (E Sports, Media, and Communications)	The programme will help to develop the link between sports, the arts and development, while reinforcing the critical role of the 4th estate.
6	Science and Mathematics	Maths and science education provides a framework for how to find answers. They model phenomena and relationships in our environment and help us to focus on the interaction of the things that surround us. It is therefore necessary for us to continue providing our children with the knowledge and skills required to model phenomena and build relationships.
7	Life Sciences and Biotechnology	It is important to link the tools and knowledge generated in the life sciences to leverage the creation of solutions for everyday problems and development of products to address those problems, as is the focus of biotechnology. This allows for the delivering of a much more exciting curriculum catering to a wider cross-section of students.
8	Business, Entrepreneurship, and Design Technologies	There are natural links which can be formed across the three areas and which can provide students with opportunities to engage in product design and marketing of their products through incubator development.

	PROPOSED AREAS OF SPECIALISATION	RATIONALE
9	Languages, Humanities and Education	With the world now a global village, it is imperative that our children can communicate in languages other than English. We therefore need to expand the functional language base in the country beyond traditional languages, especially if we are to expand our global reach across the non-English speaking world.
10	Alternative curricula, catering to students with Special Educational Needs	While inclusion is the preferred modality for addressing the needs of children with cognitive and physical deficits, it is recognised that there may still be a need to provide specialised programming for these children. This programme is therefore intended to provide children with transition and workforce skills, and skills to generate their own employment.
11	Blue and Green Economy	In an environment in which climate change is affecting the sustainable development of small island developing states, countering the effects is crucial. This institution will partner with XQ Institute, a leading organisation dedicated to rethinking the high school experience with a common vision of addressing climate change to foster green and blue economies within the school curriculum and its architectural design. XQ will provide expertise and bring additional capacity to meet the shared goals of the partnership.

The SCEs model will allow students to follow a major option, but they may also pursue a minor (subject to timetabling). Programmes will be offered in face-to-face, online, and blended modalities. Students will also pursue certification with the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) but may also pursue certification with other accredited examination bodies. Finally, SCEs may opt to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme, if they so desire.

In addition, in the operation of the SCE, it is proposed that all students, not only those pursuing CAPE, be provided with the opportunity for a further two (2) years – typically up to 18 years of age – to complete their programmes. This approach would promote equity and improve the possibility

that all students will complete secondary education with some level of certification. However, students may opt to graduate at the end of Stage 1, as is currently the case, to pursue programmes at the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology, any other post-secondary institution, or to enter the world of work. All students at the end of the first phase of the SCE will graduate and be awarded the Barbados National Secondary Diploma (BNSD). This diploma will indicate that specific standards have been met in areas such as English, mathematics, the arts, science and a functional foreign language, as well as the fulfilment of requisite extra-curricular activities and service learning.

The advent of COVID-19 has taught us that the delivery of education can no longer be treated strictly as a face-to-face exercise. It is therefore proposed that programmes offered in SCEs should provide online options which allow opportunities for students to be enrolled in one College and still pursue programming in another SCE as well.

It is also proposed that the New Horizons Academy, which currently caters to children with significant behavioural challenges, and the Alma Parris School, which is being reintroduced to the system, be designated as institutions which offer alternative curricula, catering to students with cognitive, physical and/ or behavioural deficiencies. It is proposed that New Horizons serve as a Junior College of Excellence, while Alma Parris serve as a Senior College of Excellence with a focus on a curriculum designed to strengthen the educational provision for children at the lower end of the SEN spectrum. Alma Parris will deliver a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programme as its specialty, to provide its graduates with the opportunity to exit the system with certificated workforce skills, such as cosmetology and barbering, plumbing, gardening/ landscaping, auto mechanics, with the possibility of partnering with industry for internship opportunities and authentic work-force experience.

Flexibility will be built into the system to allow for students in the alternative programme who have the capacity and who desire to pursue programmes in other SCEs, to transition to those SCEs to achieve their goals.

The proposed reform in secondary education will allow for the Junior Colleges of Excellence (JCE) to provide wide exposure to a range of subject disciplines in a focused way that will yield value for money i.e., getting the most out of the education spend, ensuring efficiency in education spend through the principle of economies of scale yielding greater effectiveness.

The design of the Senior Colleges of Excellence (SCE) will provide for specialised offerings that allow for “electives” that relate to students’ demonstrated abilities, preferences, and interest. This is a deliberate approach to building diversity in learning that will enhance participation in the labour force.



Benefits of the reform of the organisation of the secondary education system

THE JUNIOR COLLEGES OF EXCELLENCE WILL BE DESIGNED TO OFFER SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS:

- Personalised Education: The Junior Colleges of Excellence will provide a more personalised and supportive learning environment, recognising the unique needs of students from all backgrounds
- Transitional Guidance: The Junior College model will help students smoothly transition from primary to secondary school, offering guidance and preparation for the academic and social changes ahead
- Early Intervention: The focus on the core learning areas will allow for the Junior Colleges of Excellence to more effectively identify academic exceptionalities (giftedness and learning gaps) early on, enabling timely interventions to help struggling students especially, but all students in general, to advance their learning
- Holistic Development: Junior Colleges of Excellence will prioritise comprehensive development, addressing not only academic but also social and emotional well-being
- Strong Teacher-Student Bonds: The Junior College arrangement will allow for more focused attention which should foster close relationships between teachers and students, offering valuable support and mentorship

BENEFITS FROM THE SENIOR COLLEGES OF EXCELLENCE INCLUDE:

Flexible Curriculum: Senior Colleges of Excellence (SCE) will offer a common core and a specialised programme of options

- Major & Minor Options: Students in a SCE will follow a major option, but may also take a minor option, available at another SCE
- Multiple Modalities: Programmes will be offered in face-to-face, online, and blended modalities
- Accreditation: Students will pursue certification with the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) but may also pursue certification with other accredited examination bodies
- International Baccalaureate: SCEs may opt to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme
- Programmes for all citizens up to age 18: All students, not only those pursuing CAPE, will have the opportunity to do a further two (2) years – up to 18 years of age – to complete their programmes
- Early Graduation: Students may opt to graduate at the end of Stage 1 (CSEC), to pursue programmes at another post-secondary institution, or to enter the world of work
- Dual Enrollment: SECs should provide online options allowing students to enrol in one SCE and, at the same time, pursue programmes at another SCE
- Flexible Enrollment: Built-in flexibility to allow students who have the capacity to pursue programmes in other SECs, and transition from one SEC to another to achieve their learning goals

The transformation of secondary education will remain faithful to the mantra “A bright future for every Child” and to this end there will be important benefits for our children with special needs. These include:

- Designated institutions for special education : Designated institutions that offer alternative curricula catering to students with cognitive, physical and/or behavioural deficiencies.
- Skills training: Graduates of special education programmes to exit with certified skills, such as cosmetology, barbering, plumbing, gardening, landscaping, and auto mechanics
- Work Experience: This alternative curriculum will incorporate authentic work-force experience

IN SUMMARY

Separating secondary into two distinct operating units will allow for more efficient use of resources (both human and capital) and maximisation of the physical infrastructure, which will be important as curricula are expanded and new delivery modalities are introduced. Education is dynamic and will continually evolve as new skills are introduced into the delivery system. Deliberately planning and allowing for this continued transformation will yield better value for money, given the early provision and the time value of money.

By allowing for more targeted utilisation of resources, the school system will benefit from greater levels of equity in terms of resource allocation and more inclusive and accessible quality education delivery for all students.

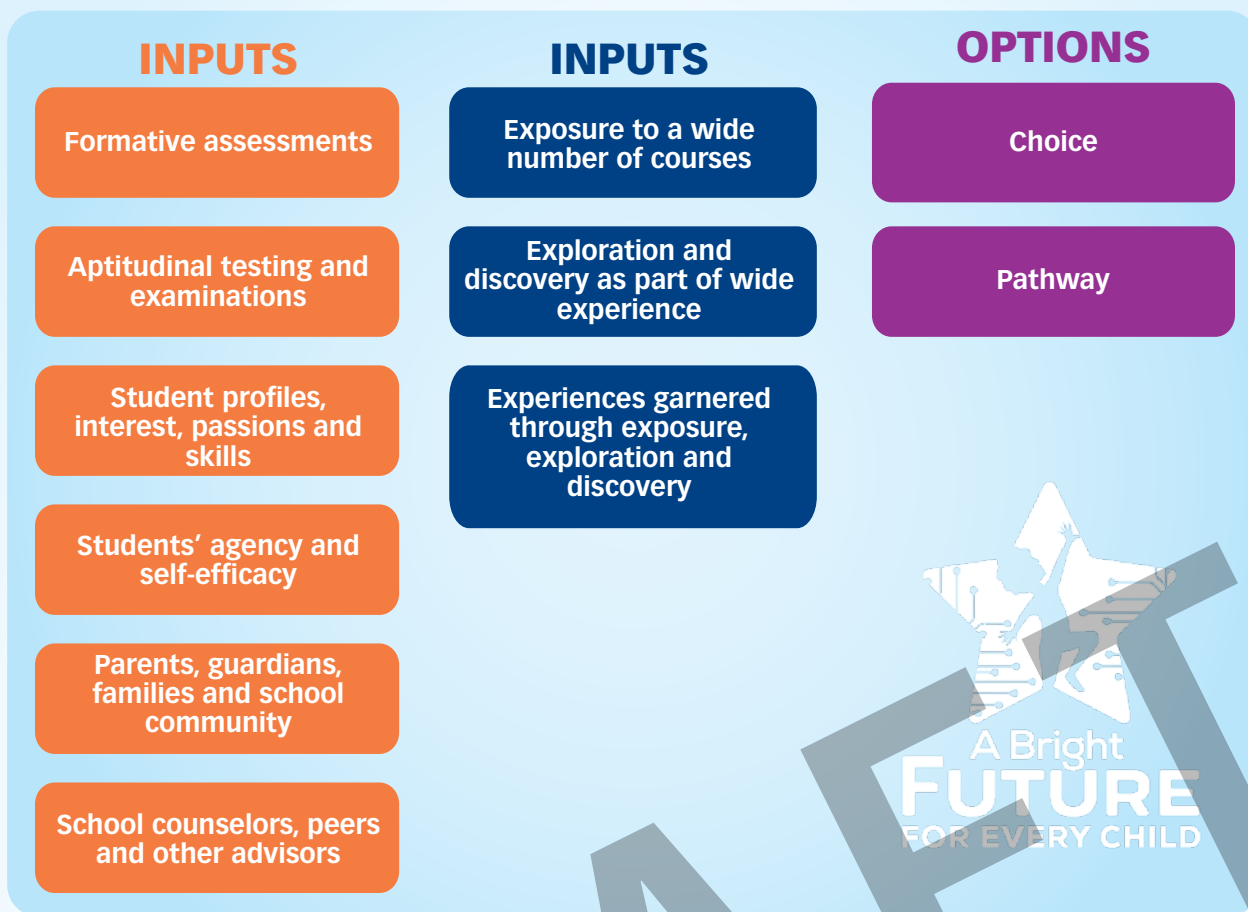
JCEs will provide an important bridge between the familiar primary environment and the more complex Senior College of Excellence school. They will be equipped to ease the transition for the benefit of students; and they will foster inclusive cultures that celebrate diversity in learning, emphasising teamwork and collaboration. The new school system, thoughtfully designed and managed, will offer a supportive environment for students during a critical phase of their development, and provide a balanced approach to education.

Proposed process for choosing a Senior College of Excellence

A critical aspect of a student's journey through JCE will be preparation for choosing the most appropriate SCE. It is proposed that students be exposed to a divergent set of activities, including career counselling, to help them determine which activities are of interest, those which they can execute with a high level of proficiency, those for which they have a passion, as well as in which they exude confidence while executing. The information gleaned from these interactions, the formative assessments that the students would have been undertaking across their programmes in the JCE, as well as the input of parents/guardians, teachers, counsellors, and peers, will all contribute to helping students select the SCE to which they would wish to transition. This information, along with the results of the student's aptitude tests, will feed into the student's profile and will, along with the student's selection, determine the programme to be followed at the next level.



The student will perform entry-level assessments in three focus areas, and the result will play a role in placement. Student assessment may include examinations, but examinations will not be the only means for assessing the student. A mechanism will be developed to determine the appropriate types of assessment which will be structured. The assessments will also be different based on the discipline being assessed. The following is a schematic of how it is proposed to have the process executed.



TRANSITIONING FROM THE OLD STRUCTURE TO THE NEW STRUCTURE

Consideration is being given to full transition from the old education system to the new system from the first year of implementation. This means that all children will transition to a JCE or an SCE. All schools will be fully populated with their complement of students in the first year; that is, each school that is designated as a JCE will have children typically between 12 – 14 years only, while each school that is designated as an SCE will be populated by children typically between 15 and 18 years old.

CHANGES IN THE PROCESS FOR DESIGNATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

The system's structure should not be changed without some modification to the way scholarships and awards are designated. In addition to the award of scholarships in academics, the proposal suggests that to generate interest among parents and students to pursue non-traditional courses of study, particularly in Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET) disciplines, the METVT must concretely highlight that these courses hold equal value and recognition as those typically eligible for scholarships.

This will go a long way in encouraging students to choose courses which will have significant impact on economic growth and national development, and which will allow them to find sustainable employment or generate their own employment in the future. The aim is to support students with extraordinary capacities, across all areas.



PARTICIPATORY FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

Barbados' education transformation effort recognises the importance of a collaborative approach involving four key partners:

1. Government (led by the Ministry of Education working across governmental agencies, with private sector, faith-based organisations and Third Sector entities).
2. National training institutions (for leaders, educators and administrators)
3. Schools (principals, teachers, students, administrative management, governance)
4. Parents/ guardians

Inter-Agency and Inter-Ministerial Collaboration

Diagnostic Testing: The METVT has been engaged in discussions with the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MHW) to formulate a sustainable plan of action to identify, record and address physiological and learning exceptionalities of students before school entry and at key stages along the learning journey. Through diagnostic testing, the intention is to formulate evidenced-based interventions to address needs identified and to improve outcomes.

The plan involves establishing a confidential and secure database repository of student profiles which will be used in generating empirical evidence to inform necessary interventions. Students will undergo developmental screening, diagnosis, monitoring, and evaluation. In cases where students exhibit exceptionalities, appropriate referrals will be initiated and action taken to address their unique needs.

Parental Engagement: Education transformation will require strong parental involvement and accountability. Consequently, the METVT will work collaboratively with the Ministry of People, Empowerment and Elder Affairs to develop parenting programmes and support to facilitate parental education and empowerment; and to provide necessary wrap-around services to strengthen families.

Building a culture of caring and support has proven to produce more well-adjusted students and parents with enhanced coping skills, enabling their households to become nurturing family environments.

Entities such as the Church and other faith-based organisations, social organisations and community-based groups, have a role to play in parental support.

There is an urgent need for specialised national parenting programmes. The national parent mentorship programme in support of parents as well as the PEACE (Personal Empowerment and Creative Expression) programme and Paredos-led programmes will be integrated as key components to support and address behavioural issues in schools.

Stakeholder Consultations

To ensure the inclusion of national stakeholders, there have been numerous consultations to help inform the transformation agenda. This is with a view to reimagining and strengthening the education system to be fit for purpose, and to future-proof the nation.

The Ministry has been meeting extensively (from as early as July 2022) with stakeholders to hear their views. Among the stakeholders who participated in initial meetings were teachers' unions, principals' associations, other labour unions, parents' representatives, youth representatives and Erdiston Teachers' Training College. Following robust discussion in five extensive meetings, the group unanimously recommended:

- 1.** Implementation of a new modality for transferring children from primary to secondary school which focuses on ensuring that children master the primary curriculum
- 2.** Introduction of a new secondary structure consisting of Junior Colleges of Excellence and Senior Colleges of Excellence at the secondary level, with
 - a.** The JCE, to address the first three years of secondary education, offering a broad-based core curriculum to help students explore and discover their strengths and areas of interest
 - b.** The SCE offering specialised programming for a minimum of two (2), and a maximum of four (4) years following completion of the JCE programme, with any extra years necessary to master the curriculum at both stages



This was further followed during June 2023 by stakeholder consultations under the theme “Reimagine Education”, which included a wider cross-section of teachers, principals, parents, students, post-secondary and tertiary institutions – such as Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute (SJPI), the University of the West Indies (UWI), Barbados Community College (BCC) and Erdiston Teachers’ Training College (ETTC); state owned enterprises under the umbrella of the METVT; faith-based organisations, members of the Social Justice Committee; members of the Third Sector; political organisations including the Opposition and Members of Parliament, as well as education officers and administrative staff of METVT.

These consultations provided significant feedback which has helped to inform proposals in this document. They also revealed that:

- There was consensus on the need for transformation of the education system
- Changes to the educational system should not be rushed, but must be carefully planned and be incremental
- There should be provision of pathways for children with diverse needs
- There must be equitable approaches to addressing all aspects of education (funding, human resources, infrastructure, assessment, etc.)
- The involvement of parents is required for the full realisation of student potential
- Student voices must be heard
- More emphasis needs to be placed on the value of teachers
- The curriculum should be characterised by strong values
- Sound instructional leadership and good management are critical for the effective functioning of schools
- The current education legislation needs to be more effective by being aligned with 21st century realities
- Leaders and teachers need to be adequately equipped to lead, teach, assess, evaluate, and cater to students’ needs
- All secondary schools should be allocated students across the performance spectrum
- Specialist teachers, particularly in literacy and numeracy, should be allocated at the primary level
- Provision must be made for children with special needs (SEN) – the gifted as well as those with cognitive and physical disabilities
- There must be expansion of access for children with SEN
- Adequate, modern resources should be made available to facilitate effective instruction
- The physical environment of all schools should be safe and conducive to teaching and learning

On the next page is the proposed new structure for the basic education system. It outlines the educational programme focus on each level. Mastery of curricula rather than age alone will determine how students move to the next level. Typical ages are indicated as a guideline as flexibility for earlier or later transition will be facilitated.

The stakeholder consultations confirmed that our collective effort must reimagine and transform education, not just reform or tweak the system. A transformed system should be one in which every school is a good school; and one that offers opportunity and value for every stakeholder.

PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE

Pre-Primary

Typically
3-5 years

Prerequisite Skills

Readiness for formal
education

Introduction to
Coding and Robotics

Functional Foreign
Languages

Introduction to
Entrepreneurship

Introduction to
Hospitality and
Civility



Primary

Typically
6-11 years

Core Curriculum
including Social &
Emotional Learning
and Barbadian
Citizenship

Coding and Robotics

Introduction to
TVET skills and
competencies

Functional foreign
languages

*Note: The current
core curriculum at the
Primary level is English,
Mathematics, Social
Studies, Science, Physical
Education, Art, Music,
Religious Knowledge and
Health and Family Life
Education.*



Junior College of Excellence

Typically
12-14 years

Core curriculum
including Social &
Emotional Learning,
Barbadian Citizenship
and IT

Aptitudinal
Assessment

Career Guidance

Coding and Robotics

Wide range of options



Senior College of Excellence

Typically
15-18 years

Core curriculum
including Social &
Emotional Learning,
Barbadian Citizenship
and IT

Specialist
Programming

Career Guidance

Coding and Robotics





GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

It is proposed that a number of oversight and advisory committees be established to guide the transformation and to assist in planning for the implementation of the new structure. Five oversight committees are proposed as follows:

EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

This committee, to be convened at the highest level by the Prime Minister, will provide the country with confidence that transformation is at the top of the government's agenda, and the process of implementation is being closely followed. The committee will include two former Ministers of Education – one from the governing party and the other from the Opposition – a representative of the private sector, a representative of the Labour Department, a student representative, and a parent. This committee will meet monthly.

NATIONAL ADVISORY STUDENT COMMITTEE

This committee, to be made up of primary and secondary students, will become a champion of the process.

PUBLIC EDUCATION QUALITY AND EQUITY COMMITTEE

This committee will act as a public education trustee. It will be responsible for visiting public schools to ensure that they are equitably resourced and that all meet the same acceptable standards. Where shortcomings are observed, the committee will indicate the gaps and make recommendations to the Ministry for closing those gaps. This committee will also be responsible for confirming, through quality assurance measures, that all schools are world class in their areas of speciality, providing comfort to parents that students are obtaining a high standard of education, whatever their programme of choice. The committee will be made up of retired, well-respected educators, known for their knowledge of the system, their integrity, judgement, and care for the development of students across the achievement spectrum.

EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION WORKING COMMITTEE

This committee, to be led by the Minister, will oversee the [day-to-day] progress of the transformation. In addition to the Minister, it will consist of the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Education Officer, the Director of the Education Transformation Unit, the XQ consultants and any other person to be invited by the Minister. The committee will chart progress, address challenges, and take relevant actions to ensure that the process moves efficiently. The committee will meet once a week.

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This committee, to be made up of citizens outside of the education community, will monitor the pulse of ordinary Barbadians and will advise METVT on actions to be taken to keep Barbadians up to date on the transformation process.

Operational Committees

Eight implementation/ operational committees are proposed, as follows:

1. AUDIT, TRAINING AND REDEPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS

This committee will conduct a survey of all teachers in the system –from pre-primary to secondary – to determine their qualifications and experience, and to ascertain their preference for working at various levels. The survey will administer a five-factor assessment to determine the suitability of teachers to work at various levels. The committee will also make recommendations for the training required by teachers to effectively function at different levels of the system or for them to transition out of the education service into the wider public service based on their skills, interests, and competencies.

2. TRANSITION

This committee will address all issues related to transition at both levels:

- Primary to Junior College
- Junior College to Senior College of Excellence

3. ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

This Committee will have oversight for the development of the assessments to be administered and will determine the levels at which these assessments will take place. It will also oversee the development of the template for the student profile to accompany students as they move from class to class and level to level, as well as guidelines for principals in determining how to utilise

the profiles. The committee will also be required to make recommendations for modification to the Criterion Referenced Assessment and use of the data generated from those assessments by the schools, as well as the development of assessments for Social and Emotional Learning.

4. CURRICULUM (INCLUDING CAREER GUIDANCE)

This committee will determine the curricula to be used at the Junior College and Senior College of Excellence levels. It will identify and oversee the development of the instructional and performance standards to be assessed in the various assessments; and advise on and provide oversight for the establishment of curriculum development and review committees.

5. AUDIT OF PHYSICAL/ MATERIAL RESOURCES

This committee will carry out an audit of the curriculum support resources across the system, with a view to determining what is available and what is required for the implementation of the various programmes.

6. LEGISLATION

This committee will advise on the legislative requirements to support the proposed new structure and prepare policy instructions for the revised/ new Education Act, other required legislation and any supporting regulations.

7. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

This committee will advise on and develop the marketing and communications plan and/ or oversee any consultants contracted to carry out this work.

8. LEADERSHIP

This committee will advise on the activities that need to be undertaken to enhance the leadership capacity across the system in both the short and long terms. It will advise on the training and professional development required for principals, deputy principals, senior teachers, heads of department, master teachers and other leadership personnel in schools; as well as officers in the technical arm of the Ministry responsible for oversight of the system. A key function of the committee will be advising on succession planning for school leadership.





FINANCING TRANSFORMATION

The transformation of the system as outlined, is an investment in Barbados' future. The investment has a capital cost and will have implications for the long-term recurrent cost of education if the gains from the transformation programme are to be sustained. The METVT has done considerable work in refining the elements of this investment in the education of our children for a brighter future. The investment schedule is shown below broken out into (i) capital cost (ii) recurrent cost and (iii) source of financing and the status of the financing arrangements.

A preliminary draft of the investment cost will be available by December 2023. The investment schedule will be determined by the programme delivery timeline.

Investment Schedule

COMPONENTS	CAPITAL COST	RECURRENT COSTS	SOURCE OF FINANCING	STATUS
Curriculum Teaching & Learning and Assessment	Curriculum development, resource materials [digital books] & teacher training	Ongoing professional development and material resources	IDB – Capital; GOB – Annual Recurrent budget	IDB loan programme signed
Physical Infrastructure & equipment/ learning support materials	Construction of 7 EC institutions Construction of 2 secondary schools Refurbishing and upgrades at primary and Junior and Senior of Excellence	Ongoing maintenance of the plant	Maria Holder Trust – Capital; XQ Institute -Capital GOB – Capital & Annual Recurrent budget	Agreement with financing partners signed; \$15M allocated in the 2023/24 budget
IT systems	Equipment Application software Data repository & dashboard Digital audit	Replacement Licensing & maintenance	IDB – Capital UN Agency – Capital GOB – Capital & Annual Recurrent budget	IDB & UN agency support agreed
Leadership & Governance	Development and initial delivery of training of select leadership cohort Design of a reimagined school governance structure	Ongoing leadership development Monitoring & quality assurance of governance model	XQ – Capital GOB – Capital & Annual Recurrent budget	XQ support commenced
Restructuring & resourcing of the METVT for the transformation journey	Gap Analysis, Organisation restructuring Planning/preparing for Implementation for the Education Transformation/ Change Management Unit & Operations manual Communication Programme to support the transformation agenda	Ongoing administrative cost for the METVT, Teaching Service Commission, School Inspection & leadership training	XQ – Capital GOB - Technical Assistance/ Capital GOB – Capital & Annual Recurrent budget	XQ support commenced
Training Needs analysis	Audit of METVT and teacher competencies	Required capacity building and or recruitment	XQ – Capital GOB – Capital & recurrent	XQ support commenced
Legislative review & revision [Education Act & Regulations]	Preparation of drafting Instructions/drafting	N/A	GOB/Loan/ Grant – Capital	Review committee in place and work commenced



BARBADOS AND BARBADIANS WIN WITH A REIMAGINED EDUCATION SYSTEM

Summary of the overarching objectives of the transformation

The proposed overall objectives of the transformation are:

1. Designing and implementing developmental programmes that are customised to each student's skills, capabilities, and interests
2. Developing relevant programmes and curricula which contribute to economic growth and national development
3. Strengthening the integration of technology
4. Improving instructional quality
5. Strengthening school and leadership
6. Strengthening system (Ministry/ central authority) leadership

7. Modernising the legislative and regulatory framework
8. Enhancing infrastructure/ physical and digital facilities

Barbados' current education system has historically elevated Barbados on the regional and global stage, allowing us to "punch above our weight". It is, however, now showing signs of diminishing returns, leaving too many of our young people without the opportunity to fully develop their potential.

A reimagined education system will offer all students a gateway to a brighter future. Parents and guardians will experience the satisfaction of seeing their child or ward dream and achieve. Educators will benefit from professional development and fulfilment, with increased opportunities for recognition and reward. Our communities and our country will feel a sense of national pride as we share in the positive results of this transformation. Our economy will benefit as well.

A radically reimagined and transformed education system will be the catalyst for creating the society in which we all desire to live. Students afforded every opportunity to live up to their full potential will feel valued and will become more self-confident. Motivated students will be less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour at school. In turn, they will become better balanced, self-regulating, productive citizens with a desire to contribute to Barbados' development.

Ultimately, increasing numbers of self-actualized citizens with avenues/ pathways for advancement will lead to a reduction in crime and a stable, safer society in which we can all be happy. Put differently, there will be a better Barbados for all.

Once more, Barbados stands on the brink of a transformative journey that will shape both our citizens and our nation through the power of education. This endeavour requires collective engagement, and its benefits will be felt by all, resulting in victory for everyone involved.

Barbados needs a new educational framework – one that is fair, inclusive, relevant, and modern. This system must cater to the diverse needs of all students, enabling them to reach their utmost potential. Simultaneously, it should address the nation's requirements for social well-being, stability, collaboration, solidarity, productivity, competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth. It must also empower educators, allowing them to achieve their personal aspirations, while fulfilling the core objectives of this transformative journey for our students. The transformation of Barbados' national education system is a collective endeavour, a shared aspiration, and a commitment that should embrace all of us. Let us unite and reimagine an educational landscape that promises a bright future for all our children.

This must be the hope and labour of us all!

REIMAGINE RECOMMIT REINVEST

A bright future for every child!



DRAFT



A Bright
FUTURE
FOR EVERY CHILD



REIMAGINE | RECOMMIT | REINVEST



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