

Ministerial Statement on The Government of Barbados’ Education Transformation Agenda

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker,

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
— Nelson Mandela

I come to the Nation today, deeply honoured and profoundly inspired, for we are at a watershed moment in the history of our Republic. This Administration since coming to office, as part of its commitment to the people of Barbados, anchored by its philosophy as outlined through the Covenant of Hope, have undertaken a number of key and strategic reforms, so as to reposition the country, looking ahead, whilst ensuring that we have the necessary tools to be competitive, maintain a high quality of life, and maximising every citizen’s God given potential.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the presence in the chamber, of Senior Officials from the Ministry of Educational Transformation, as well as students and Executive Members of the National Student Council, who are all central to the transformation of our education system. This statement also comes at a very important juncture, as we all recognise and celebrate International Youth Day, and I therefore recognise the presence of the Barbados Youth Development Council, who have also joined us here this morning, for this very important milestone in our country’s education development journey.

The Government of Barbados, through the Ministry of Educational Transformation, has initiated a plan to significantly change the education system, with the goal of becoming the leading system globally within seven years. A journey guided by the unwavering belief that education is not just a public good and a human right, but the bedrock of national development, innovation, equity, and resilience.

This initiative, managed and coordinated through the “Programme for the Transformation of the Education System in Barbados” is a full-scale transformation, crafted to produce a FIRM system, that is: Fair, Inclusive, Relevant, and Modern.

Our vision is clear - *to build a world-class, inclusive education system grounded in Barbadian values - one that nurtures every learner; equips every teacher; empowers every school, and honours every community.*

Our mission is to enable the provision of quality and equitable education to all students; it is our unwavering national promise, to be accessed by every learner, in every community, without exception.

This is not the government’s transformation alone, this is not the Ministry’s transformation alone. The transformation of our education system **must** be and is a whole-of-society undertaking. From the teacher in the classroom to the parent at home; from the private sector partner to the NGO; from the child in nursery school to the university graduate. This Administration strongly believes that every single one of us has a role to play, for this is our shared mission, and our collective legacy.

But why now? Why is this transformation so essential to the resilient prosperity of our Nation?

Mr Speaker, transforming education in Barbados is not just a strategic objective but it is a moral imperative and national necessity. In this digital age, where tablets, smartphones, and online platforms are ubiquitous, the traditional model of rote learning and regurgitation is no longer sufficient. Instead, education must evolve to empower students with literacy and numeracy mastery, while embedding the principles of **SAVE** - Skills, Attitudes, Values, and Excellence—into every learner’s journey. By doing so, we ensure that social and emotional development are elevated alongside academic achievement. We must be so convicted of this imperative that we must view the new mode of educating our children as a movement.

Notwithstanding respective Governments sustained investment in education, the system continues to face deep-rooted and systemic challenges that undermine its ability to consistently deliver equitable, high-quality learning outcomes for all. Indeed, while access to education is universal, and there is gender parity and over 75% of our school leaders and teachers are trained, the system has not consistently met the standards required to prepare our students for the realities of a rapidly changing society and a knowledge-driven global economy.

Dating from as far back as 2010, several Reports, including the one prepared by National Advisory Commission on Education (NACE), highlighted a number of pressing issues that plagued the system. These included lack of access to pre-primary education, an outdated curriculum, an inequitable mode of transition of students from primary to secondary school, inadequate and aging school infrastructure, gaps in effective leadership, limited professional development opportunities for education officers, school leaders and teachers, constraints with sector planning and monitoring, inadequate social-emotional learning opportunities and psychosocial support, weak school-parent relations, and a misaligned legislative framework.

Honourable Members, permit me to expound on each of these issues and justify the reason for change.

Studies have shown that the first five years of a child’s life are critical to their development as human beings. Nevertheless, we have an education system that must go further in preparing our youngest citizens for a life of promise and possibility. Due to the lack of universal access to education at the pre-primary level, some children enter primary school without the foundational cognitive, social, and emotional skills, attitudes and values needed for a successful primary education.

This must be addressed. If not now, when? And if not us, then who?

Additionally, it has been 25 years since the Ministry of Educational Transformation last reviewed and/or updated the National Curricula under the Each One Matters Reform proposed by the Honourable Prime Minister, when she held the office of Minister of Education, back in 2000. The efforts to incorporate technology and upskill teachers and students was commendable at that time and could have been more valuable during the COVID-19 Pandemic had we stayed on that trajectory. Today we are resolved that teaching and learning cannot continue as happened 25 years ago with the hope of preparing our students for an unpredictable future. We acknowledge that we must prepare our children for a society whose mores and norms are rapidly changing and we must keep pace with an evolving labour market demands

or the diverse interests and aspirations of learners. In fact, we have fallen short in prioritising and equipping our students with the critical thinking, digital literacy, and socio-emotional competencies vital for success in the 21st century.

The necessity to further transform our curriculum and teaching approaches to meet the needs of our students is further compounded by the way that students are sifted and sorted for placement in secondary schools. Currently, a student's placement into secondary school is determined solely by performance on a single day through the high-stake Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination. This places considerable pressure on students, as it does not account for variations in performance due to factors such as illness, anxiety, or other external circumstances. Moreover, it fails to capture the child's full academic diversity and abilities and raises concerns about fairness and equity, and the need for a more comprehensive approach to assessment. For too long, this has meant that approximately half of our students score less than fifty percent (50%) in Mathematics and one-fifth of our students (1 in every 5) scored less than fifty percent (50%) in English in the Common Entrance Examination. Additionally the labelling of students that occurs within our society as a result of their performance on that one day, causes in many instances significant deflation of students' self-esteem and may lead to them having entrenched false perceptions with respect to their success (or lack of it)..

This state of affairs does not lend with the building of students' true confidence and self-esteem and runs contrary to Mission 2 of the "Mission Barbados Declaration" and the Charter for the Republic, where every learner should feel empowered and capable of becoming involved in the social, economic, and cultural development of the country as confident, creative, compassionate, and entrepreneurial citizens.

This must be corrected.

These perceptions amongst other issues are reflected in the growing prevalence of psychological, social, and emotional challenges affecting students across the Barbadian school system. However, for many years the Student Support Services Unit of the Ministry had been understaffed. Prior to 2020, the Student Support Services (SSS) Unit was staffed by only 14 persons, including just one psychologist to serve the entire national school system. This severe shortage of professionals significantly limited the Ministry's capacity to deliver timely and comprehensive psychosocial support to students. With such limited human resources, the backlog of cases grew, response times were extended, and many students with pressing emotional, behavioural, or mental health needs went unassessed or received only minimal intervention.

As we all know, learning cannot take place without sound teaching. Given the changes to the learning profile of children entering the education system, principals and teachers, now, more than ever, are required to apply inclusive, learner-centred pedagogies such as differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and competency-based approaches. The Ministry has recognized the major importance of teachers having opportunities for continued professional development training. For example during the consultations, teachers indicated that Erdiston Teachers' Training College, the lone teacher training College on the island, needed a continuous professional development framework in place that allowed them to access courses year round, and that the programmes and courses offered need to be in partnership with highly ranked, globally recognised universities in order to be attractive.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the importance in the upskilling of principals and teachers, it is equally important to engage and provide support to parents. Whilst many parents actively engage with their children's learning, several are unaware, whilst some others for whatever reason may be unwilling to effectively engage with schools. This lack of participation often hinders student achievement, reinforces inappropriate behaviours and stunts the honing of positive values inside and outside the classroom.

In addition, to parental involvement, research has also shown that school infrastructure can also positively impact improved student outcomes. If we consider the age of our educational facilities, we will recognise that the majority of them are between 50 and approximately 200 years old. The age of these schools and their associated infrastructure impact their ability to meet the requirements of 21st-century learning environments. In addition, deferred maintenance, and limited modernisation at some schools understandably leads to dissatisfaction across the board, hindering the realisation of desired learning outcomes by our students.

Mr. Speaker, it is evident that changes to the system necessitate changes to the legislation and education policies to support new initiatives. Whilst the Education Act which governs education in Barbados has served the system well, several aspects are now largely outdated, with core statutes and associated legislation not fully reflecting the realities and demands of a 21st-century education system. Many provisions were crafted for a context in which teaching, learning, and school operations differed significantly from today's environment. They do not address current priorities such as the digital capture of data, digital learning, inclusive education, climate-resilient infrastructure, or modern accountability standards. These gaps have the potential to limit the Ministry's ability to respond to new pedagogical approaches and enforce quality standards across all institutions.

is!

To realise the full potential of every student across Barbados, the transformation agenda is anchored in five strategic goals:

1. To raise the level of student achievement across the board.
2. To empower and support our educators through continuous professional growth.
3. To modernise our physical and digital learning environments.
4. To strengthen the internal operations and strategic capabilities of the Ministry.
5. To overhaul the legislative, policy and governance frameworks that shape education delivery.

These goals have been deliberately selected for the following reasons:

- Improving student learning outcomes is at the heart of education transformation. By focusing on achievement, the Ministry aims to ensure that every student acquires the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world, regardless of their background, school, or learning context.
- Teachers are the engine of the education system. By investing in the ongoing development of our teachers and school leaders, Barbados can build a highly competent

and motivated teaching force that is well-equipped to use modern and relevant methodologies and respond to the diverse needs of all our students.

- Research show that outdated facilities and limited access to technology hinder student engagement and achievement. Modern, safe, inclusive, and tech-integrated environments are essential for fostering creativity, resilience, and 21st-century learning.
- Similarly, for transformation to be sustained, the Ministry itself must be agile, data-driven, and strategically aligned. Strengthening institutional capacity will ensure better coordination, more effective policy execution, and improved responsiveness to national priorities.
- Reforming the legal, policy and governance structures is critical to ensuring that the education system is equitable, accountable, and adaptable, aligned with both global standards and the unique needs of Barbadian society.

These goals will be achieved through eight powerful and interconnected components, reimagining everything from the spaces where our children learn, to the curriculum that shapes their minds, to the way our schools are governed, all while embedding equity at the heart of every aspect of the system.

Already, implementation progress is being made with the Government's Education Transformation Programme:

- Professional development workshops are equipping hundreds of teachers and principals with 21st-century skills.
- Construction has begun on cutting-edge facilities like the Oceana Innovation Hub the first of its kind in the region.
- Public consultations have been launched on an Inclusive Education Policy that will ensure that no child is left behind.
- And a new curriculum and a new ethos of continuous assessment are being prepared for national rollout.

These changes are not intended to be cosmetic nor incremental.

If done correctly, these changes will be transformational.

WHERE WE ARE: THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Let me take a moment to share more about the work that the Ministry of Educational Transformation has undertaken over the past 18 to 24 months.

Modernisation of the Ministry

- The Ministry of Educational Transformation is undergoing its own modernisation process in order to credibly and effectively lead the education transformation agenda. This includes:
 - Enhancing digital systems such as the Education Management Information System and the introduction of a digital learning platform to be launched in September 2025.
 - Restructuring the Ministry to align roles, functions, and workflows with strategic outcomes scheduled for completion in 2026. I am pleased to say that, as of September 2025, the Ministry of Educational Transformation will be welcoming 20 new Education Officers and six Master Teachers to provide

coaching to principals and teachers in various subject areas and in school leadership. We have also welcomed three psychologists over the past four months.

- Designing a Career Pathway Framework in 2024 for educators to promote retention and motivation.
- Conducted a Secondary Schools Gap Analysis in 2024 which examined the
 - Adequacy of teacher capacity and competence
 - Adequacy of physical space at the secondary level

Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building

- A full-scale Curriculum Reform process is underway. The new curriculum will feature inclusive education, continuous assessment, and an emphasis on citizenship, innovation, and resilience. Revised curriculum offerings will be seen throughout the system from September 2026 with a view to completing the first phase in 2028.
- Strategic partnerships have been launched with Columbia University's Teachers College to train teachers and principals in improving their effectiveness in the school environment. Over the past year, we have trained approximately 200 teachers and principals in Developing Teacher Efficacy in the classroom and Exploring Leadership Paradigms, Principles and Practices. These five 5-week modules are designed to expose participants to transformative teaching, with an emphasis on social and emotional learning integrating Arts, digital learning, and school and community partnerships. They also expose participants to the management of change, the difference between leadership and management and the true meaning of educational leadership in a transformed system. A second cohort of teachers and Principals is scheduled to undertake these year-long courses in September 2025.
- Professional development for educators has reached over 1,500 individuals, and follow-up coaching is embedded to ensure impact, in areas such as structured literacy, school improvement planning, using data for school improvement, structured approach to teaching students on the autism spectrum, project-based learning and play based learning.
- Diagnostic and early screening programmes for vision, learning difficulties and psychosocial needs have reached over 2000 of our students.
- Over six hundred teachers will be trained in new assessment methods starting this summer.

Infrastructure and Technology Upgrades

- The procurement for the selection of contractors for the upgrade of ten primary schools under the IDB-financed Skills for the Future II Project will commence within the next two months.
- Through the visionary partnership with the XQ Institute, USA, we have built the Oceana Innovation Hub, which is not just a school, but a living, breathing space for discovery, innovation, and sustainability. A summer camp is currently underway and students from schools across Barbados will be able to access the Hub during the upcoming academic year.

- The beautification and upgrade of our schools is now starting and will , involve government, NGOs, the private sector, and community groups.
- A Modern School Infrastructure Design Competition was successfully executed in 2024 which inspired local architects to envision 21st-century Climate Resilient learning environments.
- Two infrastructure-related grants from UNICEF have been sourced with a focus on - Putting Youth and Women at the Centre of Climate Resilience and Safety and Green and Renewable Energy Transition for Youth and Education.

Modernising Regulations and Governance

- A review and update of the Education Act is in progress and will be completed by December 2025.

Communication and Change Management

- A dedicated Change Management Unit, staffed with experts in transformation, monitoring and evaluation, research, procurement and programme management, responsible for the overall implementation of the Education Transformation Programme is operational.
- A communications strategy has been developed to ensure that key stakeholders are informed, engaged, and empowered.
- Internally at the Ministry of Educational Transformation, we launched the Change Champions Network, made up of volunteers across the Ministry who serve as ambassadors for transformation.

New Institutions and Centres

- The conceptual framework for the establishment of a national education leadership Institute aligned within what will be the University College of Barbados to strengthen school leadership has been completed.
- The procurement for the development of An External Quality Assurance Framework to support school improvement through inspections and developmental support is being finalised with the aim of establishing a common standard for measuring and assuring the quality of all schools and is expected to be completed by September 2026.
- The Teacher Service Commission which will be responsible for overseeing the recruitment, appointment, and management of all teachers and educational staff is currently in the process of being appointed.

Student Nutrition

- Student nutrition plays a critical role in academic performance, physical development, and overall well-being. This is the reason that the Government of Barbados decades ago, introduced the provision of free school meals at the primary level to ensure that all students— irrespective of their socio-economic background—have access to the essential nutrients needed for concentration, energy, and healthy growth.
- This Government-led initiative continues to benefit children of school age during the luncheon period while school is in session. However, this Government took it a step further. Recognising that school meals sometimes is the only meal that students receive

while attending school, this administration embarked on a programme in 2022 called the “Summer Nutrition (SuN) programme” which made meals accessible to all students during the summer period. During the first year of implementation, the total number of children registered for the SuN programme was 4,218. The total meals requested from School Meals Department (SMD) was 6,732 (including meals served to registrants of the national summer camp programme).

- The SuN programme is a highly successful one with students from Government summer camps across the island including some private camps taking advantage of the service.
- In 2023, the Ministry of Education implemented the School Nutrition Policy which was developed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in 2022. The emphasis of the Policy was just not the provision of meals but the provision of nutritious foods that could set students on the trajectory of healthy and sustainable living. When students are well-nourished, they are more likely to attend school regularly, engage actively in learning, and perform better academically.

The Importance of Citizenship

- While the 21st century world enjoys the benefits of technological advancements, it faces significant economic, social and environmental issues. The globalised world is one that exposes children and youth to the unwholesome behaviour, immoral actions and questionable morals of leaders, groups and ordinary people across the globe. This has the potential to destroy the moral fabric of our local communities and democratic states. It is against this background that the Ministry of Education, reintroduced the teaching of Civics in the school curricula at the primary and secondary levels in 2022.
- The teaching of Civics seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they may become informed, ethically responsible, engaged and active citizens. This Civics curriculum focuses on the study of groups, institutions, politics and government in a democratic Barbadian society. It helps students to recognise their roles and responsibilities in maintaining and improving these structures. Additionally, it helps them to appreciate the values, beliefs and ideas that need to be protected in an effort to continue to safeguard our society. Overall, students are taught that a good Barbadian citizen is a good global citizen.
- The Civics curriculum is designed with the following objectives in mind:
 - To encourage students to exhibit a sense of responsibility that they will become informed, responsible, engaged and active citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to society;
 - To promote an interest in civic issues that leads students to become civic-minded;
 - To develop in students a sense of duty, moral responsibility and commitment to social justice;
 - To develop problem-solvers, critical thinkers and innovators;
 - To develop a sense of pride for the nation and its institutions;
 - To enable students to develop and practice social skills which create positive interpersonal relations.

The Civics curriculum is currently under review and will place greater emphasis on the aspects related to citizenship. Each child must make a commitment to Country, Community, Family, Colleagues and Self.

In this regard and consistent with the agenda of this Government, the Civics curriculum shall be renamed the “Citizenship curriculum” Recognizing that citizenship is the highest office in any democracy.

Declining Student:Teacher Ratio

Student data from the past 25 years shows a steady drop in the number of students enrolling in schools every year. This matches the decline in birth rates during the same time period. **From 2000 to 2025, school enrolment fell from 51,014 to 34,870 students. Projections indicate this number will keep decreasing over the next five years. However, the teacher recruitment rates have remained steady over this period.** Based on this data, the Ministry has seen the need for amalgamation of selected schools across the island. With a current teacher student ratio of 1:10, amalgamation of selected schools will not place any student at a disadvantage. The Ministry will also seek to ensure that there is a greater use of specialist skills in the areas where there are needed given this healthy teacher student ratio.

UPCOMING INITIATIVES

Today, I am also pleased to share with you a slate of upcoming initiatives that signal a bold next phase in our transformation journey.

- The Ministry of Educational Transformation has sufficient capacity to provide universal access to early childhood education for all 3–5-year-olds, starting September 2026. However, during this academic year, the goal is to develop standards for Early Childhood that ensures suitable infrastructure, appropriate human resources and high-quality education that nurtures critical skills, positive attitudes, and strong values in keeping with regional and international best practices. I am happy to announce that a new Centre of Excellence at Maria Holder Nursery Gall Hill will open in September 2025, showcasing best practices in Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STREAM) and play-based learning. More importantly, From September 2026, play-based learning will be embedded across all early childhood institutions to foster curiosity, inquiry, language, and social development.
- By the beginning of September 2025, a comprehensive programme will get underway to upgrade and modernise school infrastructure at the nursery, primary, and secondary levels. This includes the innovative use of resources in a partnership with XQ Institute and other philanthropic donors, to establish a state-of-the-art 4th-6th Form Academy, the Barbados Climate School at Chelston Park, designed to foster 21st-century learning and leadership, with a focus on sustainability and climate.
- As part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring that all students learn in environments that are safe, modern, and conducive to academic success, the current Ursuline Convent Facility has been identified for the relocation and absorption of students from the existing Graydon Sealy Secondary school facility. Plans are already in hand, and we expect to have the facility ready for occupation by September 2026.

- We are committed to *continuous learning and professional excellence*. All teachers and principals will benefit from ongoing training opportunities, including the continued strategic partnership with Teachers College, Columbia University to build teacher efficacy in the classroom and strengthen school leadership models. By September 2025, the second cohort of principals and teachers will access training opportunities offered by Columbia University and Erdiston Teachers; Training College.
- To elevate the teaching profession and ensure greater accountability, a comprehensive *Teacher Licensing System* will be developed and introduced by September 2027. This system will promote professional standards and affirm teaching as a respected, accountable, and lifelong vocation.
- While we have started the phased introduction of technology across the system, by 2027, *there will be full system-wide distribution of technology*, with a particular focus on the distribution of assistive devices to support learners with special educational needs, thus ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, has equitable access to learning opportunities.
- The use of *Project-Based Learning (PBL)* will be significantly expanded across schools as a core instructional strategy as part of the transformation of our education system. This learner-centred approach is expected to deepen student engagement, foster critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, and better connect learning to real-world contexts. This ensures that students are not only knowledgeable, but also capable problem-solvers prepared for the demands of a modern society. So far, we have trained over 700 Principals, Heads of Departments in core areas such as English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies, Senior Teachers, Subject Coordinators in the core areas and teachers across primary, special and secondary schools in utilising the Project-Based learning approach. This training will continue over the next academic year.
- There will also be the reintroduction of the *Schools Positive Behaviour Management Programme* under the brand VIBE which stands for Values-Driven, Inclusive, Behavioural Excellence and Empowered Learning Environments. This initiative seeks to foster supportive school cultures across the basic education system in Barbados and aligns with the UNICEF Child Friendly Schools Framework.

For this upcoming Academic Year, the tenets of VIBE will revolve around Student Centredness, Creating Safe Spaces and Positive Discipline. It encompasses a *comprehensive Social and Emotional Learning Programme* that will be rolled out across all schools to support the emotional well-being, resilience, and positive development of students, foundational to academic success and healthy school environments. To this end, the Ministry of Educational Transformation has partnered with NGOs and private sector organisations to embark on an intensive programme that will sensitise all teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents on the importance of **Raising a More Emotionally Intelligent Generation**.

- While many of our children behave well, there is an unacceptably growing number of children whose behaviour will not be tolerated in our schools. It is for this reason that we are seeking to further partner with the private sector or NGOs to establish and operate a *Residential Rehabilitative and Therapeutic Facility* by 2028. Students housed in the facility will be required to access a full-time residential programme. It will provide a range of intervention strategies that will cater to the psychosocial, behavioural, personal development and academic and artistic attainment of school-aged

children between the ages of twelve (12) and eighteen (18) in line with the prescriptions of the impending child protection legislation.

- Recognising the vital role of families in the education ecosystem, we are launching a Parent Education Programme (PEP) aimed at equipping parents and caregivers with the tools and knowledge to foster positive parenting practices and deeper engagement in their children's learning. This programme will begin in September 2025.
- An expanded, evidence-based National Literacy Programme will ensure that every Barbadian child leaves school with the ability to read, comprehend, and communicate effectively, regardless of socioeconomic background.

This academic year, we will work harder to achieve our vision by ensuring every child who can read in primary and secondary schools has the chance and support to be able to do so.

This past school year, the Ministry of Educational Transformation trained over 300 teachers in Reading, benefitting over 5000 students in Infants A and B at primary and special schools, as well as in remedial classes at ten secondary schools. This was a significant step forward, and we are proud of the dedication shown by our Ministry team and educators.

But we are not stopping there.

- Beginning in September 2025, we will expand this programme to include all classes at the early childhood level, from Nursery to Class 1. To support this expansion, a Jump Start Literacy Workshop will be held during the last week of August 2025, focusing on the teaching of reading comprehension. Furthermore, throughout the upcoming school year, teachers will receive job-embedded coaching in literacy, ensuring that professional development is continuous, practical, and impactful.

We recognize, however, that literacy is not solely the responsibility of our schools. It is a shared mission; one that must include our families and communities. That is why we have placed a strong emphasis on parental engagement. During the past academic year, we hosted five parent-engagement sessions, offering strategies to help parents support their children's reading development at home. These sessions will continue into the new academic year, and we encourage all parents to participate actively.

In parallel, our sister ministry—the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Training—will be conducting an adult literacy programme, ensuring that no one is left behind in our national literacy movement.

- To be clear - this Government remains steadfast in its commitment: every child who needs help learning to read will receive it—between now and December 2026. We will ensure that all our children can read fully by age 7, and for those who have passed that age and have not demonstrated reading competency, an aggressive intervention will be made to ensure that they can read.
- To strengthen performance in mathematics, we will roll out a Nationwide Mathematics Programme funded by the Government of Qatar during the next academic year. The Programme will focus on curriculum support, teacher training, and innovative

pedagogical approaches that ensure higher levels of student achievement in this critical subject area.

- We will also be strengthening our commitment to inclusive and learner-centred education by expanding access to a comprehensive range of specialised student support services. This includes, once the diagnoses have been made, guaranteed access to psychosocial support, counselling, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and other essential interventions that address the holistic needs of our learners. In addition, we will encourage the development and implementation of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs), enhanced with data gathered from the national criterion reference test for students in Infants B and Class 2, with specific learning needs. These expanded services will commence from September 2025.

THE NEW PLACEMENT MODEL AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STRUCTURE

While education transformation encompasses far more than tinkering with the transition from primary to secondary school, a point I have had to reiterate on several occasions, I fully recognise the profound importance of this exercise in the lives of our students. I am also deeply aware of its historical weight and enduring emotional significance for Barbadian parents and guardians. It is not merely an exam; it is a moment charged with hope, anxiety, and national attention.

In that regard, I will now devote the next few minutes of this Statement to addressing both the proposed transition model and the broader structural reforms to our secondary education system.

During the widespread consultations with stakeholders in 2023, there was strong consensus on the need for transformation of Barbados' basic education system. However, several concerns emerged, particularly around the:

- Transitioning between education levels (Primary to Secondary, Junior to Senior College of Excellence)
- Structure and redesign of the secondary school system

We took these concerns seriously and examined them in detail. The Ministry of Educational Transformation has since held additional meetings with stakeholders, including with our teachers' unions. Consequently, we have further refined the perspectives on the primary to secondary transition model and structural reforms of the secondary system. Outcomes of these engagements are as follows:

Starting with the September 2028 school year, the Ministry of Educational Transformation will modify the admission requirements to secondary schools by adding an additional process to the Barbados Secondary Schools' Entrance Examination (BSSEE), better known as the Common Entrance Exam. The single exam in the BSSEE will be replaced by this hybrid, more equitable and competency-based student placement system, ensuring a fair approach to student evaluation and placement.

This new model will:

- Use student performance data from Classes 3 and 4 in combination with a modified, national written exam at the end of Classes 3 and 4.

- Incorporate a progressive student profile that will be developed for each child and continue with them into secondary school, supporting more targeted and personalized teaching and learning.
- Take into account both choice and geographic location when assigning school placements, with the goal of promoting greater equity in the allocation of students to secondary schools.

Through these changes, we strive to support every student's unique journey, build greater equity, and strengthen confidence in our education system for all Barbadian families.

Key Features of the New Transition Model

Broadened Curriculum and Assessment Base

The scope of assessment will be expanded beyond the traditional focus on Mathematics and Language Arts to include Social Studies (with Citizenship) and Science, fostering a more balanced and interdisciplinary learning experience. Students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills competencies through various formats — not only via standardised written exams, but also through alternative assessment methods such as project-based work, curated portfolios, structured quizzes, reflective journals, and observational checklists. This approach recognises the diverse way students learn and communicate understanding, and is specifically designed to foster deeper engagement, creativity, and critical thinking.

Assessment Weighting

Student placement at the secondary level will now be based on a blended assessment model, comprising 50% standardised written exam and 50% continuous assessment, guided by a nationally prescribed framework. This balanced model allows for a more holistic view of each student's readiness for transition. The continuous assessment component will track learning progress over time, highlighting consistency, effort, and applied understanding across multiple subject areas. As we moved towards greater equity, these assessment weightings may be adjusted as the Continuous Assessment Framework (CAF) is piloted, evaluated and improved over time. Importantly, the CAF is developmental in nature with targeted support for areas where students need the most help..

Transition Profiles and Individualised Learning Plans (ILPs)

Each student will transition to secondary school with a comprehensive learner profile, documenting their academic strengths, areas requiring support, learning styles, and developmental progress. This profile will serve as a critical tool for receiving schools, enabling teachers to differentiate instruction and implement targeted interventions from day one. . Furthermore, it will also directly inform the development of Individualised Learning Plans (ILPs) or Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) for students with specific learning needs — ensuring that support is both proactive and student-centred, grounded in real data.

Appeals Process

An appeals process will be established for circumstances where the assigned school placement, has led to undue hardship on the student and/or the family. All appeals will be reviewed by a designated panel appointed by the Ministry. Consideration of appeals will be subject to space availability at the preferred school and will be managed in a manner that preserves the integrity and fairness of the overall placement process. Through this mechanism, student welfare will be paramount while ensuring that the placement framework is robust and impartial.

Catchment Area Protocols

Each secondary school will typically admit students using a 50:50 ratio, that is, half of the admitted students come from within the school's designated catchment area and half from outside the catchment. While all schools set a minimum entrance score to help guide placements, students living within the catchment area may still be admitted if their score is slightly below the minimum. These minimum scores may vary each year depending on the overall performance of the student cohort and the number of available spaces at the school. It should be noted that there will be no disturbance with respect to the gender parity policy that has existed for decades for the allocation of students.

Teacher Preparation and Quality Assurance

Beginning this Academic Year, the Ministry, through the Erdiston Teachers' Training College in collaboration with a globally recognised university, will launch a focused training programme for teachers in the areas of continuous assessment and differentiated instruction. Educators will be equipped with curriculum guides featuring practical examples of assessment strategies aligned with the national framework. To ensure consistency and quality across schools, dedicated support teams will be established to assist teachers and monitor the effective and accurate implementation of these assessment practices.

Assessment Infrastructure

Finally, with respect to the new placement model, a specialised task force has been established to refine the methodologies for student placement and to oversee the development of a National Item Bank to support the new assessment system. As part of the broader curriculum reform, special emphasis will be placed on play-based and project-based learning, particularly at the foundational levels, to foster creativity, critical thinking, and deeper engagement among young learners.

Secondary School Structure and Programming

Regarding the Secondary Education Structure, the Ministry of Educational Transformation proposes that all secondary schools offer a comprehensive seven-year programme designed to address the diverse academic and technical and vocational learning needs of the students. This will be buttressed by a renewed concentration on the social, and emotional needs of students to support their holistic development.

The Government of Barbados believes that our young people must be engaged in structured activities with either uniformed groups or service oriented clubs. After consultation with the Social Partnership and the Social Justice Committee, the Ministry will require the participation of our young people in these activities either through extracurricular or in-school activities. This level of engagement highlights the importance of service to country and

to others. This will commence from September 2026 but we will use this coming academic year to build up capacity among all the clubs and uniformed groups.

Additionally, the Government has also been consulting on what a national service framework could look like for a persons between the ages of 16 and 18 years old for those who are not in secondary school or post secondary institutions. Statements, addressing this will be made at a later time. whether there should be the National Service for our youth.

Furthermore, the Government plans to implement targeted “pull-out” programmes at all levels of secondary school levels to provide remediation for students who need extra help, with special focus on the critical first three years. For gifted students who demonstrate necessary emotional readiness, opportunities for accelerated progression will be offered; if students are not yet ready emotionally, enrichment activities will be provided instead. This approach ensures flexibility so every student has opportunities tailored to their needs and potential.

In this regard, Personalized Learning Plans will be developed for both remedial and accelerated learners to support their individual educational journeys.

To ensure a well-rounded education for every Barbadian Child at the secondary level, students in Forms 1 through 3 will follow a broad and balanced curriculum that includes:

- English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Citizenship
- Coding and Robotics
- Foreign Languages
- Financial Literacy
- Agricultural Science
- Physical Education
- Digital and Media Literacy
- Visual and Performing Arts (Art, Craft, Music and Theatre)
- Moral Education
- Home Economics

This curriculum will be further enriched by a diverse range of electives and a strong focus on Career Guidance and Social and Emotional Learning. As stated before, students will also be required to belong to a uniformed organization (Sea Cadets, Scouts, Guides or service clubs (Like 4H and Key Club) as a core part of their secondary education experience. Teachers and support staff working with these students will be carefully selected and specifically trained to foster a nurturing and supportive learning environments.

For students in Forms 4 and 5, the focus will shift to consolidating core studies and participating in community based activities. these students will continue to study core subjects while engaging in community-based activities. Upon successfully completing Form 5, students will be awarded the Barbados National Secondary Diploma (BNSD).

Form 6 Programmes

To further ensure that our secondary education system not only prepares students academically but also equips them for meaningful engagement in society and the workforce, the Ministry is introducing a more dynamic and future-focused upper secondary programme. This enhanced approach balances strong academics with real-world experiences and career-oriented pathways, reflecting the evolving aspirations of our students and the demands of a modern economy. Students may spend up to two years in Form 6, where they will have options to:

- Pursue CAPE Level subjects or Ministry-approved equivalents
- Study additional CSEC subjects, CVQs, and/or City and Guilds qualifications or Ministry-approved equivalents
- Retake subjects through any Ministry-approved examining body, including Cambridge, City and Guilds, and the International Baccalaureate.

Specialized Areas of Study

As part of the Ministry's commitment to provide a relevant and forward-looking education system, secondary schools will offer various programmes that reflect national priorities, student interests, and emerging sectors of the economy. These programmes include:

- **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Life Sciences** (e.g., Geography, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Agricultural Science, Environmental Science, IT, Green Engineering)
- **Business, Entrepreneurship, and Finance** (e.g., Principles of Business, Accounting, Economics, Logistics, Financial Services)
- **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** (e.g., Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Technology, Cosmetology, Digital Media, Animation, Fashion)
- **Creative, Performing, and Digital Arts** (e.g., Music, Theatre Arts, Visual Arts, Animation, Business Studies related to arts)
- **Humanities** (e.g., English Literature, Caribbean History, Law, Sociology, Tourism, Modern Languages)

These areas of specialisations were identified through a survey of students in Forms 4 to 6 and through consultation with the Ministry of Labour and Export Barbados (Barbados Investment Development Cooperation) to ensure alignment between education and emerging workforce needs.

Transition to Form 6

Entry into Form 6 will typically follow the successful completion of Form 5. Student placement will be guided by a combination of factors to ensure alignment with students' interests, abilities, and future goals are taken into account, including:

- Student choice and area of interest;
- Performance in Ministry-standardized proficiency assessments, CSEC, CVQs, and City and Guilds results;

- Career guidance input;
- Successful completion of the Barbados National Secondary Diploma (BNSD)

After Form 5, students may also choose to enter the workforce or pursue post-secondary and tertiary education.

New and Specialized Institutions

In addition to the establishment of the Barbados Climate School as a dedicated 4th to 6th Form institution, consideration is being given to the creation of more specialized schools starting with a School that focuses on AI Education and another that will partner with the National Sports Council to establish an Academy of Excellence in Sports.

These institutions will serve students from Forms 4 through 6, with admissions based on choice, interest, and demonstrated competency.

CHANGE IN NOMENCLATURE OF EDUCATIONAL LEVELS ACROSS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Traditionally, the Barbadian education system has used the terms “Classes” at the primary level and “Forms” at the secondary level. To ensure greater alignment with regional and international standards, and to improve clarity and consistency in communicating educational levels, it is proposed that both “Forms” and “Classes” be replaced by the universal term “Grades.”

This change will enable easier comparison with education systems in other Caribbean territories and worldwide, especially for purposes, such as , data reporting, student mobility, curriculum mapping, and programme design. Beginning in September 2026, the following Grade-based structure will officially replace the current terminology:

LEVEL IN BARBADOS	GRADE
Nursery	Pre-primary
Reception	Kindergarten
Infants A	Grade 1
Infants B	Grade 2
Class 1	Grade 3
Class 2	Grade 4
Class 3	Grade 5
Class 4	Grade 6
Form 1	Grade 7
Form 2	Grade 8
Form 3	Grade 9
Form 4	Grade 10
Form 5	Grade 11
Lower 6th	Grade 12 and 13
Upper 6th	

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Engagement Strategy

To reposition education transformation in the hearts and minds of Barbadians - not as a distant bureaucratic process, but as a dynamic, inclusive, and culturally meaningful national movement - the Ministry will, over the next 12 months, implement a comprehensive Communications and Engagement Strategy.

This strategy aims to significantly deepen public participation and build a shared sense of ownership across all sectors of society. Specifically, the Ministry is targeting a 30% increase in stakeholder attendance and participation at Ministry-hosted events within the first year of the rollout.

Beyond engagement, the Strategy is designed to enhance public understanding of the goals, benefits, and progress of the transformation agenda. Within 18 months, our objective is that most Barbadians will be able to accurately identify the core pillars and objectives of the reform effort, a marker of greater clarity, transparency, and trust.

Central to this effort will be the launch of a national cultural campaign, strategically crafted to embed education transformation within the collective consciousness of our nation and our people. Through both traditional and digital media, this campaign will aim to reach at least 60% of the population, using the voices, stories, and aspirations of Barbadians to inspire pride, encourage dialogue, and foster collective support.

Crucially, the Ministry will not undertake this journey alone. Active partnerships with NGOs, businesses, cultural organisations, community groups, and diaspora networks will ensure that messaging is co-created, amplified and localized to reflect the diversity of Barbados.

These efforts are intentionally designed to shift the public narrative from one that sees education transformation as technical and procedural, to understanding it as energising, accessible, and central to Barbados' resilient prosperity. This national movement speaks to our highest hopes as a people, and that generates the broad-based collective momentum needed for meaningful transformation.

New Branding

For the past three years, the Ministry's transformation agenda has been guided by a singular and compelling vision — *A Bright Future for Every Child*. That vision remains unchanged. In fact, it has deepened in both meaning and purpose.

Based on extensive and focused engagement, today, I am proud to introduce and officially launch the new brand identity for Education Transformation in Barbados: ***Every Child, Barbados***.

This new identity is not a departure from our founding vision; it is an evolution. It represents a renewed and strengthened commitment to build a more inclusive, responsive, and future-ready education system. One that puts the needs, rights, and potential of *every child* at the heart of national development.

Let me be clear: *Every Child, Barbados*. is not a replacement, it is a reaffirmation. A bold and unified statement of our promise to provide every child, regardless of background or circumstance, with the opportunities and support needed to thrive and succeed.

More than a slogan, *Every Child, Barbados*. is a national call to action.

Because true education transformation cannot and must not be the work of government alone. It must be a whole-of-society movement - one that brings together parents, teachers, students, school leaders, faith communities, civil society, business and industry, and every citizen committed to shaping a brighter, more equitable Barbados. It is a mission that requires leadership, in particular political leadership, given the fact that many people are ambivalent about change even when the change is necessary for their health and empowerment.

This mission, this call is to all of us, because the future of every child is the future of our nation.

We are already making significant strides - through policy reform, investments in school infrastructure, curriculum renewal, teacher training, and the expansion of digital tools and learning environments.

So.....What does this education transformation mean for you?

Students, it means that regardless of your socioeconomic background you will be able to access world-class teaching, modern facilities, and the skills needed to succeed in life, contribute to national progress, and carry forward the proud legacy of Barbados.

Principals and teachers, it means that you will be exposed to cutting-edge leadership and teaching methodologies, be given the professional freedom to innovate and be supported with the resources to inspire every learner and lead a culture of excellence that shapes the next generation of Barbadians.

Parents – you will be given the peace of mind that your children are receiving a quality, future-ready education in safe, supportive, and well-equipped schools - empowering them to dream bigger, achieve more, and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

For **labour and the private sector**, this translates to a future-ready workforce equipped with the skills, adaptability, innovation and resilience needed to drive economic growth, strengthen competitiveness, and secure Barbados' prosperity in the global marketplace.

For the **community and civil society**, the transformation on which we are embarking will lead to an empowered citizenry, stronger social cohesion, and a shared responsibility in nurturing the next generation to build a more just, inclusive, and resilient Barbados.

CALL TO ACTION

We have much to do. There will be challenges, and there will be critics. But Barbados is rising—and our education system must rise with it.

Let this be the era in which we changed the trajectory of our nation. Let this be the generation that looked our children in the eye and said: *we didn't wait - we acted; we didn't delay - we dared to make the Barbadian Education System the #1 Education System in the world!*

Education is not only the great equalizer. It is the great transformer. And with it, we will forge a Barbados that is smarter, stronger, and more just-for all.

Our goal is to transform the education system, not simply make incremental changes. We seek to support learners of all ages and abilities, preparing them for modern jobs with essential skills, values, emotional intelligence, pride, and purpose as citizens. To thrive as a nation, we need caring, committed, and resilient individuals dedicated to their country, community, family, and themselves.

This is not just an education project. This is a nation-building project. One that goes beyond exam results and test scores. One that reimagines what it means to learn, to lead, and to live with purpose in a 21st-century Barbados.

Education Transformation cannot and will not succeed without the people. That means you. Our transformation must be co-created, not imposed. Everyone has a role, from teachers to technicians, schoolchildren to CEOs, media to mentors, tradespeople to technologists.

We must build schools of excellence in every community, lift every learner, and celebrate every teacher. We must ensure that the child in rural St. Andrew has the same opportunities as the child in Bridgetown. We must leave no child, no teacher, no school, no parish behind.

Finally, as Minister of Education, I pledge to the people of Barbados that the Ministry of Educational Transformation will report openly and regularly on the progress of our Education Transformation Programme, because accountability is the bedrock of trust, and together we will ensure that every promise made becomes a promise kept for our nation's children. This commitment will be honoured through the establishment of an independent oversight committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, the launch of an Education Transformation microsite and results dashboard, and regular and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders - including school leaders, teachers, students, parents, teachers' unions, principals' associations, and the wider public.

IN CLOSING

Let me thank our partners- parents and students, teachers and principals, and all others who interact with our school system, either institutionally like our teachers' unions or those who provide services to them on an ongoing basis. In addition, let me thank some of our international partners—who have stood with us: the Inter-American Development Bank, the XQ Institute, Michael Murphy Studios, the Teachers College, Columbia University, the World Bank, UNICEF, The European Delegation, The Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, The Caribbean Development Bank, and others who have brought technical expertise, vision, and solidarity.

Let me also thank the Permanent Secretary and Chief Education Officer and their officers in the Ministry of Educational Transformation who have shown what is possible when we dare to imagine something better.

I wish to also express my sincere gratitude to the former Ministers of Education whose leadership and contributions were instrumental in shaping the foundation of the Transformation Agenda I have presented to you today. Their vision and commitment have helped pave the way for this bold new chapter in Barbadian education.

I extend heartfelt thanks to Prime Minister, the Honourable member for Saint Michael North East for her visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to national development. It is through her bold vision, and the space, time, and resources she has afforded us, that we have been empowered to pursue what is unquestionably the most consequential mandate of the Barbados Labour Party administration in a generation - the transformation of our education system. Her steadfast belief in the potential of every Barbadian child continues to guide and inspire this national endeavour. For the Prime Minister, Each One Matters.

Above all, I extend my deepest gratitude to the people of Barbados, for your patience, your passion, and your unwavering participation in this undertaking. Your voices, hopes, and dreams

have been heard and have help shaped this agenda, and your commitment continues to be the driving force behind our shared mission to build a brighter future for every child.

But we know the journey ahead is long, and we cannot travel it alone.

So today, the Government of Barbados extends an open invitation to every Barbadian: Walk with us. Stand with us. Work with us - for *Every Child, Barbados*.

Barbados, let us move forward—not with hesitation, but with hope. Let us be bold. Let us be united. Let us be firm,

Let us make this transformation not just possible, but unforgettable, for **Every Child, Barbados!**