

Welcome to Inform



As the new school year gets underway, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this latest issue of 'Inform', the newsletter from the Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports & Culture, which aims to keep education professionals up-to-date with education news in the Cayman Islands.

There have been many exciting developments since our last issue, as you will discover by reading on. The Ministry recently revealed a whole new model for the governance of the education system, which will bring vast improvements in critical areas. A new unit dedicated to early childhood care is now fully operational, and you still have a chance to tell us what you think of the draft proposal for the new National Curriculum. You will also be encouraged that a full review of teachers' terms and conditions is planned for the

coming weeks, in which you will get a chance to have your say.

Of course, there is more besides, and you will be hearing about many new developments as they unfold. What all these activities have in common however, is that, in the spirit of our new model for governing the education service, they all recognise the needs of the student as the central focus of our endeavours. After all, the student is our *raison d'être*, our purpose, and achieving success for our students is achieving success for ourselves.

We at the Ministry are looking forward to a successful academic year ahead for us all, and I wish you the very best as you play your critical role in making it happen.

Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin, JP
Minister of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture

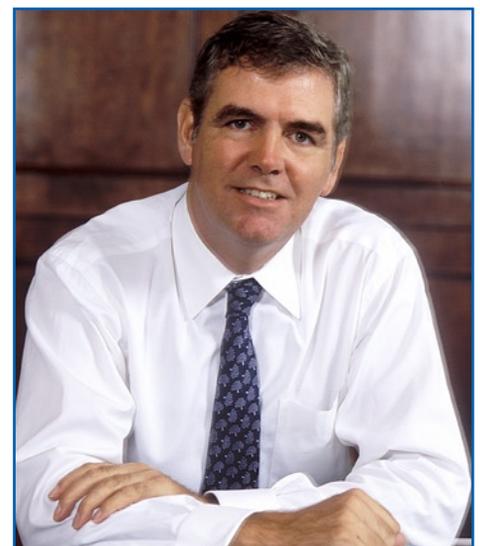
Teachers' terms and conditions under review

A full-scale review of teachers' terms and conditions of employment recently got underway, in line with the objectives set out for strategy four of the ten strategies for education reform. Strategy four is concerned with providing high quality dedicated Human Resources support to teachers, and the taskforce responsible is headed up by one of the most respected figures in Cayman's financial services industry, Managing Director of Butterfield Bank, Mr. Conor O'Dea.

Coordinated by Ministry Chief Human Resource Officer, Peter Beckford, the review will focus on an analysis of benefits and remuneration currently offered to teachers in the government system and an assessment of viable opportunities for improvement.

The taskforce is working on a questionnaire, which will ask teachers to comment and feedback on a range of issues relating to their contracts. This is expected to be ready for participation in October, and teachers will be invited to take part on the Ministry website, www.brighterfutures.gov.ky.

Insight gleaned from responses will assist the strategy four taskforce, together with the Ministry, in planning for improvements, which will increase retention, decrease staff turnover, and promote professional development for teachers. This will benefit students through improved continuity and morale among education professionals in the government's education system.



Mr. Conor O'Dea, Butterfield Bank

A new model of governance for the education service

A new model for the governance of the education service in the Cayman Islands was revealed early in September by Hon. Alden McLaughlin, JP, Minister of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports & Culture.

Despite the magnitude of the task, the new model comes just twelve months after its initial conception during the national education conference of 2005. Ten strategies for the reform of the education system were identified, of which a new governance model was strategy one. It is defined on page 20 of the 'National Consensus on the Future of Education in the Cayman Islands' document as being:

"The development of an administrative framework for a new education service, redefining, rationalizing and reassigning core functions for education amongst schools, the School's Inspectorate, the Education Department, the Ministry, the University College and all other organizations and stakeholders that support the delivery of education."

The guiding principle of the new model is that it must serve the student by placing them at the centre of the system. This improves upon the previous model, particularly in the way that services and their benefits, are delivered to users - schools and students.

The new model streamlines systems and processes as well as giving increased accountability for performance at every level. It also adds clarity to roles and facilitates more effective channels of communication and delivery between them. The combined effect of these enhancements is that students will receive the direct benefits of higher standards of service, delivered with increased reliability and efficiency.

Many improvements are evident in the new model, including clearer policies and processes, greater autonomy of service providers and better personnel management. Two of the most visible areas of change are in the revitalization of the Education Department, which will become the *Department of Education Services* (DoES), and the introduction of *Learning Communities*.

The latter is an innovation, which is designed to effect the embracement of education by the wider community. The Cayman Islands have been geographically segmented into four Learning Communities, three in Grand Cayman, and the other comprising Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

This concept decentralizes to a large extent the management of education services, and creates small clusters of schools, which will support and challenge each other to enhance performance. Learning Communities localize the education process, encouraging more ownership of students' performance within the community as a whole, and thus more involvement and support. Another clear benefit of localization is that education services will be more readily available at district level, and students will enjoy improved access to the tools they need to thrive.

Increased usage of school facilities after normal hours, managed

by an After-Hours Coordinator, expands the range of education services available to the entire community, particularly adult learning and training, making more productive use of the government's significant investment in school facilities.

Each of the Learning Communities will have a Learning Community Leader who reports to the Director of Education Services. All members of the Learning Community have a role to play and increased accountability for the achievements of students will promote a higher standard of teaching and learning. The Learning Communities will provide to schools and students, dedicated services such as: Guidance and Counseling Services; Student Support Services; Financial Support; ICT Support; Registration, Attendance & Truancy; Facilities Management and After Hours Programming.

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Learning Communities will be supported by the Department of Education Services (DoES). The DoES adopts a matrix organizational structure, to facilitate more direct links between multiple service users and providers. The Department will offer more efficient delivery in more clearly defined service areas, each with increased accountability and autonomy to maintain high levels of performance. These service areas include: Teaching, Learning and Communication; Human Resources; Finance; Facilities Management; Data & Exams; ICT and Helpdesk; and the Early Childhood Unit. Administrative staff will support routine operations, and key roles and responsibilities will be realigned to enable each function to fulfill its remit effectively, a process which is already well underway.

The new model is another major step forward for education in the Cayman Islands, and represents a well-researched, meticulously planned solution for the much-needed reform of the framework for governance of the education system. It has been carefully developed in consultation with stakeholders, using the full range of available experience, knowledge and skills, to provide a sustainable model for the successful long-term future of education. By placing the student at the centre, it will provide an operational climate which is conducive to success, across all three of the Cayman Islands.

The model is expected to be in full effect from July 1st, 2007, enabling staff to acclimatize to new working practices and procedures, and hit the ground running at the start of the new academic year in September.

For more information on the new governance model for the education service of the Cayman Islands, please visit the website of the Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports & Culture, www.brighterfutures.gov.ky.

Follow up to landmark education conference

An education conference is being planned as a follow up to the immensely successful Ministry led September 2005 conference, which brought together education professionals, the private sector and the wider community on an unprecedented scale to define the challenges facing education, and identify solutions as a collective whole.

The upcoming conference is expected to be held in early December, and will follow a similar format to its predecessor, in that representatives from both the education system and all facets of the wider community will be invited to participate.

Overwhelming community support during the September 2005 conference provided invaluable insight for planning a reform process, which could effectively address all the needs of the jurisdiction.

Ten strategies were identified to bring about the necessary changes, and since then, the pace of progress has been often dizzying.

The December conference is the ideal opportunity for government, educators, employers, parents, students, other stakeholders and the community, to regroup and pause to look again at what we set out to do and what we have achieved so far. It is also a chance to revisit plans for the future, and ensure that they remain in line with our objectives.

During the December conference, delegates will get the chance to reflect upon improvements to date in the education system, among them, the finalization of a new model for the governance of education services; the complete review of a new national curriculum for schools;

the introduction of smaller learning communities at George Hicks; the formation of a dedicated HR unit and the review of teachers' terms and conditions; the launch of the Early Childhood Unit; progress on the new high schools; and partnership with the world's leading expert on learning environments.



View the *National Consensus on the Future of Education in the Cayman Islands* document from last year's conference at www.brighterfutures.gov.ky

Unit dedicated to Cayman's youngest

Cayman's first Early Childhood Unit became operational over the summer to address the educational and welfare needs of young children across the islands.

Its formation meets the objectives of strategy 3 of the government's 10 strategies for education reform, which provides for *'the development of an Early Years unit to set standards, evaluate performance and support improvements in day-care centres, pre-schools and Reception programmes.'*

The unit is tasked with developing national standards on the provision and outcomes of childcare settings and early childhood education in general. It will ensure that all facilities operate within the law whilst following Education Council Guidelines, and maintain high standards of care and education.

The Early Childhood Unit (ECU) is headed-up by Mrs. Kate Marnoch, a schools' Inspector from the UK who specialises in early education. Mrs. Marnoch is also an experienced primary school teacher and a devoted parent, and was Senior Education Adviser in the UK and a national trainer for the 'Foundation Stage Curriculum' and the 'Birth to Three Matters Framework', which guides all British pre-schools, day nurseries and reception classes.

Working closely with Mrs. Marnoch to realize the development programme is Mrs. Marjorie Beckles, a Caymanian Education Officer of 17 years experience in the national system, specializing in the provision of 'early years' care and services.

The unit's plans include a self-evaluation model as well as an inspection programme. A handbook will be developed for 'early years' staff and inspectors, concurrent with annual inspections and reports on the local status of early childhood education. The unit will see that qualified staff are on hand, who possess expertise in child development and a clear understanding of how young children grow and learn.

The Early Childhood Unit will ensure that young children have opportunities to play, explore, discover, experiment, problem-solve, make friendships and develop self-confidence in safe, secure and stimulating environments.



Mrs. Kate Marnoch (left) and Mrs. Marjorie Beckles

Help shape the future of education

At the end of June, many months of extensive research and planning resulted in a first draft proposal for the new national curriculum for schools in the Cayman Islands, which was published online for public consultation. The Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports & Culture invited education professionals and members of the public to read the document online and respond with feedback by answering a short questionnaire on the Ministry website, www.brighterfutures.gov.ky/curriculum. The proposal pertains to strategy two of the ten strategies for reform identified following last year's education conference.

Consultation with stakeholders has proved to be a potent formula for success with Ministry initiatives, and so the Ministry is now urging anybody who has not yet participated to submit their responses

before the September 30th deadline. This appeal is of particular importance to teachers who have been away over the holidays and may not as yet have had the chance to take part.

The draft proposal gives a comprehensive account of its background, purpose, methods, resources, principals, and its conclusions. It explains why a review of the curriculum is necessary and defines the desired outcomes.

The new national curriculum will impact upon every student in Cayman, and so feedback from education professionals is vital to ensure its effectiveness. If you have not already done so, help shape the future of education by going online and having your say.

Ministry officials visit UK's cutting edge

Representatives from the Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports & Culture visited the UK in mid-September, with an agenda packed full of opportunities to gain valuable insight to benefit the Cayman Islands, from the cutting edge of education developments in the UK.

The Minister, Hon. Alden McLaughlin, JP, was accompanied by Ministry Chief Officer, Mrs. L. Angela Martins MBE, JP, and Ministry Strategic Development Advisor (Education), Mr. Gareth Long. The trip started with a visit to Erccall Wood Technology College, recognized nationally for its impressive track-record of significantly improving performance among students with learning and disciplinary difficulties.

Erccall Wood Technology College has already established links with Cayman, having visited the islands earlier this year, and engaging regularly with High Schools in Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac in video-conferencing sessions in which, the schools discuss issues and share experiences and ideas.

During the trip, the Ministry delegates experienced virtual learning environments and received an architect's presentation on 'Building Schools of the Future'. They also participated in discussions on Planning for the future, detention systems and behaviour policy. A video-conference link with Reece College, Tasmania, added a further international dimension to the visit, and meetings with reputable education experts, such as the Head of Learn-

ing Technologies at the UK's Department for Education and Skills (DfES); Teachers' TV representatives; and world-leading expert on learning environments, Professor Stephen Heppell, presented opportunities to share cutting-edge ideas and keep a finger firmly on the pulse of international developments in education.



Facilities planner to enhance learning environments

The Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports & Culture is actively seeking to appoint an experienced firm, which will assist in ensuring that school facilities receive the fullest possible benefit from government spending.

The appointed firm will assess all educational facilities using international methods and standards, and assist in the development of the government's capital works plan for maintaining and improving facilities.

The firm will also provide staff with training and advice on the effective usage of learning environments and will assist in the planning

and design of future schools. The firm is expected to offer consultancy services on the planning and implementation of technical, vocational and adult training programmes, to compliment the government's reform strategies and meet international standards.

Creating environments, which are conducive to effective teaching and learning, is vital for students to fulfill their potential in education. The government's retention of specialist consultancy services in the planning and design of education facilities will ensure that students enjoy the maximum possible benefit from their surroundings.