

Education Policy



Education

The first and central policy of the FDM is to focus on the development of Bermuda's human capital via evolutionary educational reform.

The reform that we propose is based on key principles such as parental choice, improved teaching standards, decentralization of school governance and administration, a voucher system for all students, and school competition.

The Free Democratic Movement recognises that both public and private schools have been fairly successful in matriculating young persons at school leaving age that are well-rounded in terms of mathematics, science and language, and well equipped to progress into either further education or the world of work. In no small part, the success stories of those students who have left the formal school system from Bermuda's schools has been due to the professional & committed teaching staff and school leadership that has served diligently over decades. Parents and families need also be commended for the obvious and powerful role they undoubtedly play in the aforementioned success stories of our students.

The Free Democratic Movement desires not only to see the continuation of the productive aspects of the current and past models of education provision in the country, but also to improve on both the rate of success of students who leave the school system with the qualifications they need to make the best choices for their future. As such, we will reform those areas that either need strengthening or fall below the standard that should be expected of a modern and well equipped 21st century society like Bermuda.

To that end, the FDM has identified a few areas that need strengthening such as:

- Improvement in the mathematical literacy and achievement of local students.
- Improvement in the technical/vocational offering to local students, particularly in regard to best placement of our students in the burgeoning digital and green economies necessary to be competitive in the 21st century.
- Increased transparency of the academic performance of different schools for parents by way of a published school performance table.
- Increased competition between schools by way of the above school performance tables as well as the removal of large mega schools and the middle school structure.
- Increased parental involvement in both the lives of their school-going children as well as the schools themselves.

An FDM government will:



1 Devolve control of how and what public schools teach away from the Dept of Education and place control of schools and the instruction within them into the hands of school leaders and their teams of teachers who know their students best and who have the professional and technical qualifications to most ensure the academic success of students.



2 Establish a Bermuda Teaching Standards Code that is adopted and ratified, to ensure that both new teachers and those already in the system meet the professional standards needed to be exemplary in their profession.



3 Encourage all public schools to adopt an academy-/charter school framework were they will be run by a Board of Governors that will be free to organize school structure, choose exam boards and seek external funding from individual and corporate sponsors as they see fit. Public and Private Trustee Boards that perform well will be encouraged and equipped to broaden their success through the creation of new schools, or through the partnership/redevelopment of underperforming schools.



4 The Department of Education will be downsized to ensure a compact and efficient unit of highly qualified professionals who will continue to set and monitor minimum expectations within education, including the provision of a CXC based National Curriculum. This will include the teaching of pre-colonial and post-colonial African history, Bermuda history through all the key stages, as well as setting expectations towards the goal that any curriculum across subjects taught in Bermuda schools is decolonized, and emphasizes the place of Bermuda and Bermudians in its content.



5 Facilitate competition as well as to ensure smaller school sizes, middle schools will be eliminated and decentralized secondary schools will be reintroduced.



6 An independent school inspectorate will be embodied that will monitor, assess and publish the performance of schools across key performance indicators on a regular basis. Under-performing schools will be given the chance to improve or undergo restructuring to ensure consistent academic success across the island.

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Children will enter an approved education provider at the age of 5 and be able to leave at the age of 18. Between these years, all children are expected to be in an approved education provider with such providers to be approved by the Department of Education.

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The Bermuda College will be restructured into a University through partnership with The University of the West Indies with the goal of providing degree level qualifications, inclusive of both academic and technical/vocational post-,graduate qualifications. The University will also function as the premier academic research institution on-island. This research will be across diverse disciplines, as funding allows, but with a heavy emphasis on research areas that seek to address and inform the critical future needs of the country such as energy, the environment, agriculture, food security, tourism, international business and the digital economy. Through this partnership we will also seek to create opportunities for Bermudians to more easily study in the Caribbean and to also develop the facility to educate international students in Bermuda.

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A school voucher system will be introduced for all Bermudian students and schools that will provide Parents & students with increased opportunity for students to attend the school of their choice and ensure their success.

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Schools will be empowered and encouraged to have a specific focus on human development inclusive of personal, social, health and emotional education. Included in this will be the fostering of a rich competitive sports environment within and across schools, as well as with competitive opportunities external to Bermuda. Relationships will be strengthened with

international sporting bodies such as Carifita, Conca- caf and others to ensure gifted and talented students are able to not only compete at a high level but also access the myriad of opportunities outside of sport that may arise through their sporting achievements. To that end, 'lifelong' individual/solo sports will be integrated into sports curriculum to give our youth a more diverse sporting experience in addition to the classic sports we know and love. School sports will work toward incorporating golf, diving, sailing, martial arts, cycle racing and more as demand and resources allow.

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The Corporate community will be incentivized to participate in the redevelopment of the Bermuda school system, starting with the development of a 'think tank' committee to assess the full capacity of what the corporate sector can offer toward strengthening the tBermuda education system.



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