

**Statement to the Legislative Assembly
3rd Meeting 2010/2011**

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

CIFEC Update

January 12, 2011

Madam Speaker,

I would like at this time update this Honourable House about the new Cayman Islands Further Education Centre (CIFEC), both in terms of our successes and how we have responded to some initial challenges.

The move to a five-year high school system was a significant part of the transition to the new high schools, and the creation of a Year 12 programme was a central feature of the process.

When I took office, it was rapidly made clear to me that despite the imminence of the opening of the new schools, (for you will remember at that time, the original contractor was still on site, and the expected opening was a year away i.e. September 2010) no comprehensive, strategic, budgeted, plan for the programmes had been created

Madam Speaker, after extensive consultation, discussion and review, I made the decision to move ahead with the secondary transition. We simply could not be held hostage by construction disputes and delays, and so I took the decision to treat the facilities issues and the educational issues as separate challenges. In this way whenever the physical plant of the schools became available, the “true school” – that is the students and staff and all their learning interactions - would be ready to move in at relatively short notice.

Madam Speaker, this appeared the only prudent course of action given the uncertainties that we inherited. The alternative would have left us with the choice of potentially either reorganizing the entire secondary system mid-year –with inevitable impact on learning, or leaving a multi-million dollar facility empty until we were ready to do so.

This strategy demanded that a project which might normally have been expected to require at least two years, and required an additional school campus, was to be completed in approximately eight months, with no new facilities. The potential benefits, however, were considered so valuable as to outweigh the risks, and in November 2009, the Ministry authorized the DES to move ahead with the Secondary Education Transition, a comprehensive restructuring of secondary education in Grand Cayman, which would create the all-through high school system

already in place in Cayman Brac, and the creation of a new mandatory Year 12 programme, at CIFEC, to provide a bridge between school and the world of work or further education.

Madam Speaker, this restructuring has been one of the most ambitious policy projects ever undertaken in Caymanian education history. Its implementation, I believe, is the single most significant achievement in education for 2009/10. During the course of the year, Clifton Hunter High School and John Gray High School were organized as Year 7 – 11 “all-through” schools, a new curriculum model was adopted, a new management structure developed, and timetables were centrally planned to ensure equity and access for all students. Catchment areas for the schools were defined and students assigned, and every secondary school staff member in Grand Cayman was reassigned. Students and teachers entered their newly-restructured schools in September, 2010.

I dare say, Madam Speaker that this has also been one of the most fiscally responsible large-scale initiatives ever undertaken within government. With careful planning and the strategic reallocation of resources, all of this was achieved without the use of expensive consultants and in a staffing neutral manner.

Madam Speaker, the secondary transition also facilitated the opening of CIFEC on the present George Hicks Campus. In this way this UDP government has honoured its manifesto commitments and delivered, for the first time in over 30 years of previous governmental promises, appropriate, internationally accredited TVET opportunities for Caymanian youth. The essential framework of these TVET opportunities is provided through the Business and Technology Education Council of the United Kingdom, popularly known as BTEC.

From September, 2010, our Vocational Career and Technical students have been following BTEC courses in Business, IT, Motor Vehicle, Medical Technician, Creative Media, Hospitality, and Sports and Leisure. In addition they have had opportunities to retake CXC or GCSE exams in a range of subjects both within the teaching timetable at the Further Education Centre and within additional evening programmes. All Vocational courses require two days a week work placement, and are supported by careers, life skill and work readiness programmes.

Madam Speaker, although we are very proud of the TVET opportunities thus provided, CIFEC is not just a technical school, it also houses, at present in another classroom block, our highest achieving students from Year 11 within the Advanced Placement programme (“AP”). Advanced Placement qualifications are administered by the College Board, the same examining body that offers the SAT in the US. In our programme, students are required to take Mathematics and English, as well as at least two other choices from Biology, Physics, Spanish, Geography, Psychology and Art. AP is the only two year programme available at CIFEC and further course choices will be available in the second year. AP course passes give direct credit transfers to over 90% of American universities, as well as being widely accepted for University entry and credit in 60 countries around the world. Madam Speaker let there be no doubt this is tremendous benefit to our students. AP is recognized by institutions such as University of Cambridge and Oxford in the UK and Harvard and Columbia in the US.

The creation of these facilities and programmes has been accomplished in a timely fashion, using existing facilities (which imposed severe challenges on planning models), and in a staffing-neutral, cost-neutral environment. This was only possible through a combination of careful planning, stringent economies and innovative programme development.

Madam Speaker, the completion of these plans to restructure secondary education, within the restrictions imposed, is an enormous triumph for our country and the youth of the Cayman Islands. This was made possible through the leadership and dedication of many persons within the Ministry, the Department of Education Services and our schools. We owe them our thanks.

Madam Speaker, given the enormity of the task, and the tight timescale involved, we have experienced some issues in start up that have taken time and energy to resolve, and some that we continue to work to enhance. Overall, the secondary transition has been relatively smooth; indeed the new principal of Clifton Hunter High School, Dr. Steven Geraghty, commented at the recent PTA that this has been the sixth but smoothest new school start up of his career.

From the outset, CIFEC experienced an uptake that was at the very highest end of what was planned for. This put significant pressure on the new staff to accommodate them into programmes of choice within a short time frame, and for that short time things were relatively

disorganised. However a response plan was quickly agreed and implemented and indeed it is the combined work of the CIFEC, DES and Ministry staff that has turned the matters around. I also personally made an unannounced visit to CIFEC in November to check on progress for myself. On arrival, I saw an orderly campus, with students in class and actively learning. I also met with some of the students and discussed their experiences and issues.

Madam Speaker, at this time I can inform you that all of the 250 students in Vocational courses are on work placements. Initially we had a small number of around 10 students who proved a challenge to place because they either have health issues or significant emotional, social and behavioural issues. The CIFEC staff has worked very hard to find appropriate placement for them and now they and some of our more academically challenged students are participating in a, Level 1, CIFEC programme, called Introductory Vocational Studies. It is our intention to offer this as a standard programme in September 2011.

Madam Speaker at this time I am pleased to report that the monthly progress update shows that in some subjects nearly 50% of the students are on track with their vocational course to achieve the BTEC Diploma by June 2011. If they maintain this progress they will receive an equivalent of 4, Level 2 (CXC/GCSE) passes in their chosen field. The majority of the rest are on track to obtain the BTEC Certificate, which is equivalent to 2, Level 2 (CXC/GCSE) passes. This regular monitoring has shown that all but a handful of students are embracing the opportunities offered to them and this handful are now being accommodated in the alternative programme as mentioned above.

This is the key! These programmes are about providing the critical “*Bridges to Success!*” for students of all abilities and interests. We must embrace training and learning opportunities and keep our children in school as long as possible. We must ensure they are prepared for their next phase of life, the world of work!

Similarly, in terms of our pilot AP programme, students have completed their assignments to date, and are on track to take their exams this year or next. As stated, this is a two year programme overall, so students achieving acceptable passes after one year can add new courses in the second year. I am pleased to report that all the texts ordered have now arrived. Communication between AP parents and staff is much improved, with an email group, regular

bulletins as well as the staff phone and emails that were available from the outset. All AP students and parents have also been given guidance on the amount of time expected in terms of out-of-lesson independent study.

Students in the AP programme will also shortly receive a netbook computer for the duration of their course, to assist them with their studies. A wireless internet hotspot has been set up by LIME, to facilitate all students who wish to use their own laptops, without compromising the government secure site. This also enables student to work within clear internet acceptable use protocols, as they would in the workplace, with the expectation of responsible use or facing the loss of this and other privileges.

Madam Speaker, the enormity of the challenge we have undertaken in the restructuring of secondary education cannot be understated, and is especially significant in the face of the global financial constraints that have impacted us all. Much has been achieved; much remains to be done, as the UDP Government and my Ministry continues to work to fulfil our commitment to delivering a world-class education system, with opportunities for success for all our students.

The present programme offerings at our secondary schools and CIFEC are but a start, as the Ministry and DES will continue to seek to expand the range of learning opportunities available to our students. With the anticipated move of CHHS to Frank Sound this coming Fall, more space will become available, allowing for additional programmes to be offered. Furthermore we also intend to resource and equip further vocational programmes at Cayman Brac High School in the coming year, to enhance the courses already initiated within Cayman Brac High School in 2010.

Throughout the restructuring we have learned important lessons that we will act upon when we welcome a whole new cohort of students next year.

Thank you Madam Speaker.