



**REMARKS**  
**BY**  
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**MINISTER OF EDUCATION**  
**THE BAHAMAS**

**In the**

**HOUSE of ASSEMBLY**  
**Monday, April 6, 2020**

**MR. SPEAKER:**

Today, I update this Honourable House and the nation of the progress by the Ministry of Education is delivering ‘live’ instructions, making educational resources available, and assisting parents, teachers, administrators and all stakeholders in the execution of the online educational system that is now full steam in the Bahamas.

This virtual platform serves approximately 50,000+ public school students, 25,000 private school students, and 25,000 more tertiary enrolled students.

As you are aware, Sir, the Ministry of Education closed its school doors on Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, as a result of the pandemic upon us. Before this virus outbreak, the Ministry had launched its virtual school in September, 2019, engaging over 1600 students, primarily those in remote districts in our country. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, the Online Platform was needed to provide instruction for the storm-affected students of Abaco and Grand Bahama.

Today, there is a further immediacy and urgency for educators across The Bahamas to deliver online lessons to all students in Grades K-12, utilizing the virtual school platform.

Since the school’s closure, the Ministry’s leadership and Teams of Teachers, Curriculum Officers, Administrators and Technical Officers have met and prepared volumes of material for students for all grade levels, as well as sourced materials from available sources around the globe to augment and supplement the Ministry’s Offering. to produce “e-learning instructional resources” for all curricula, at the various grade levels.

Technical officers met over two days (Monday 16<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2020) to develop a plan for the way forward. As a result, curriculum officers established teams of teachers to develop content for placement on the Virtual learning platform. An

online student registration process was created of which the public was notified primarily using a media campaign engaging traditional and social media.

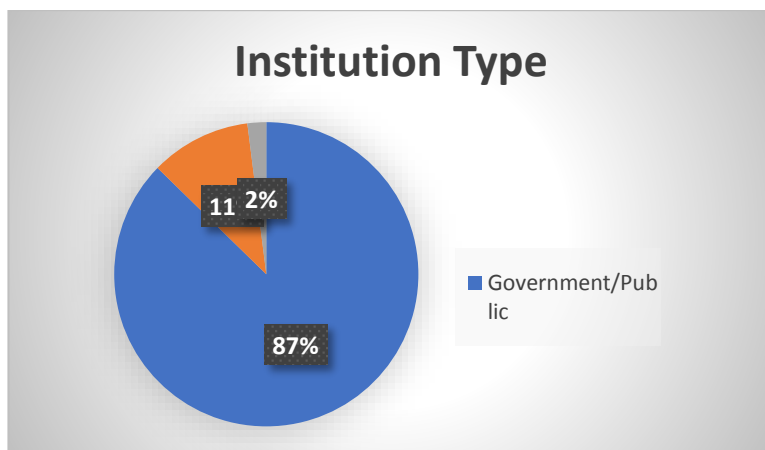
By Monday 23rd March, the Ministry’s Virtual learning site was activated with content for students of all grade levels. About 9,000 students were registered.



## REGISTRATION

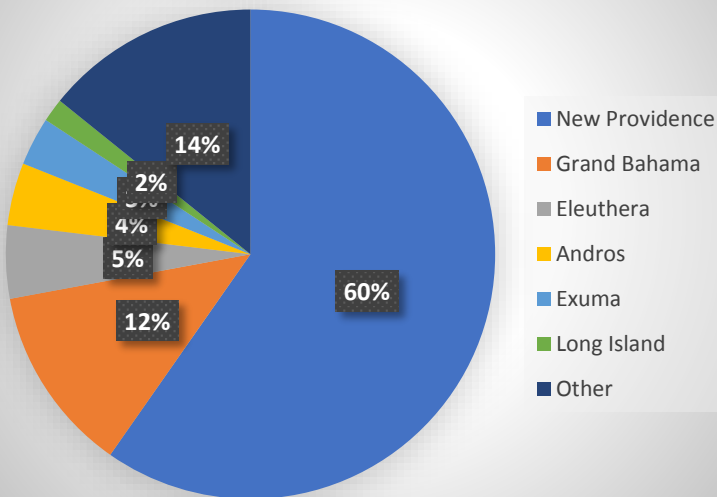
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**Total Registered – 25999**  
(as of April 5, 2020, 1:00 p.m.)



INSTITUTION TYPE	
Public – 22707	(87%)
Private – 2779	(11%)
Homeschool - 518	(2%)

## By Island



### BY ISLAND

New Providence – 15524 (60%)

Grand Bahama – 3216 (12%)

Eleuthera – 1254 (5%)

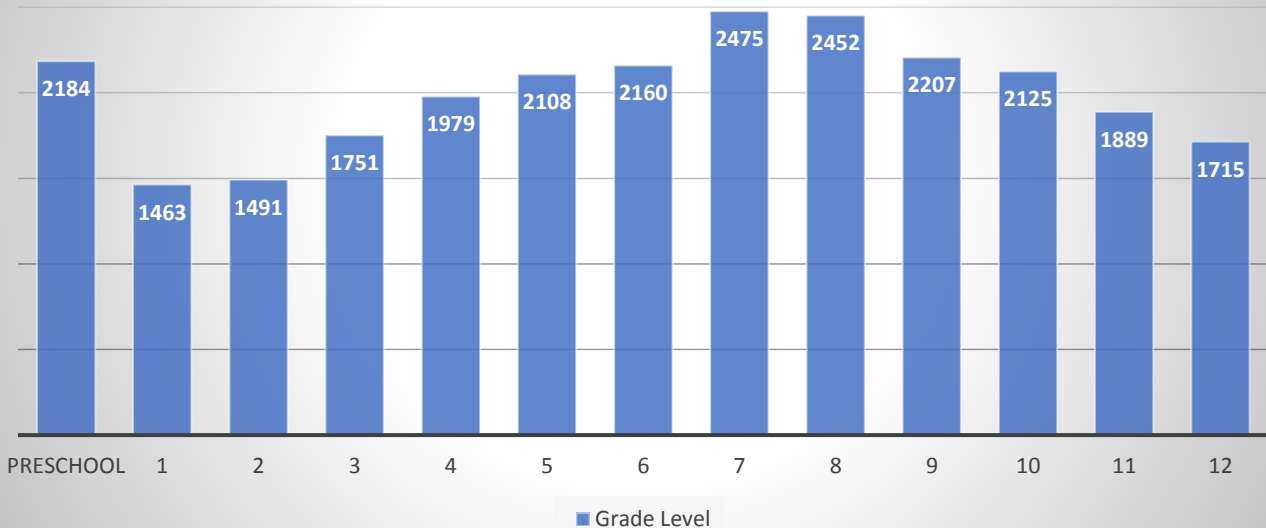
Andros – 1076 (4%)

Exuma – 831 (3%)

Long Island – 403 (2%)

Other – 3695 (14%)

## Registration by Grade Level



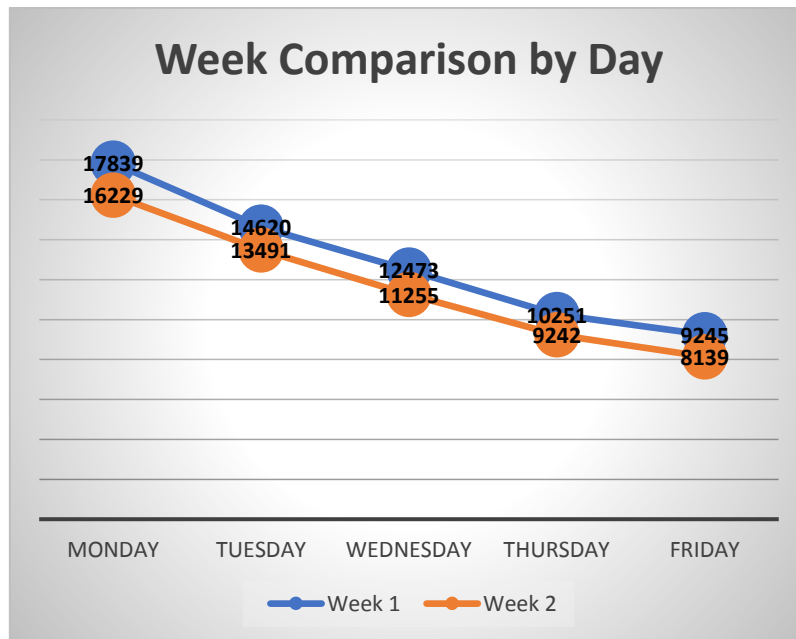
### Additional Information:

- 97% of Registered Students have access to the Internet at home.
- 100% of Registered Students have access to a device at home.

## SITE ACTIVITY

**Unique Visitor** - used in Web analytics to refer to a person who visits a site at least once within the reporting period. Each visitor to the site is only counted once during the reporting period, so if the same IP address accesses the site many times, it still only counts as one visitor.

**WEEK 1 ( March 23 – 27, 2020) 64,428**  
**WEEK 2 (March 30 – April 3, 2020) 58,356**



The above chart shows that:

- Week 1 Daily Average of Unique Visitors = 12,886.
- Week 2 Daily Average of Unique Visitors = 11,671.
- There were 1215 fewer average daily visits to the platform on Week 2 than Week 1.

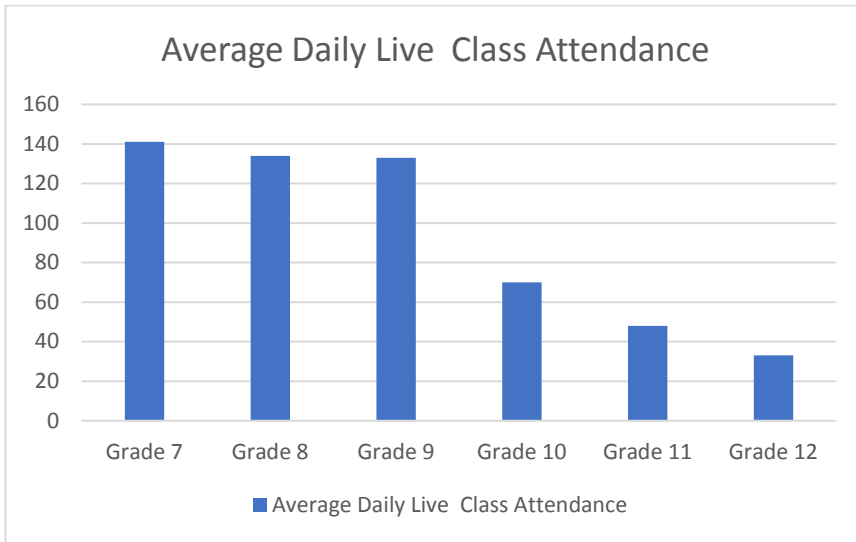
## SECONDARY LIVE CLASSES

- Live classes began on the Monday, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 for Secondary Students
- 112 Live Classes were offered:

Subjects	Live Classes Held
1. Mathematics	24
2. English Language	28
3. Religious Knowledge	16
4. Health Science	7
5. General Science	2
6. Social Studies	9
7. History	9
8. Geography	9
9. Biology	8

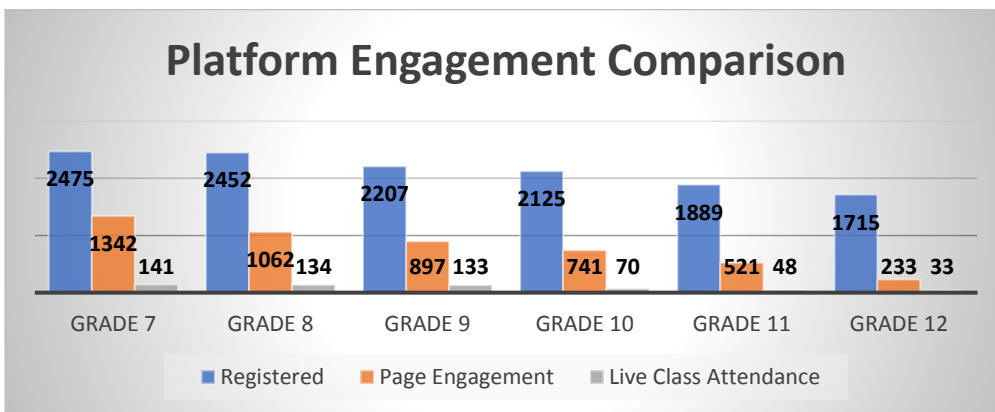
## Average Attendance by Grade Level

Grade Level	Average Daily Attendance
Grade 7	141
Grade 8	134
Grade 9	133
Grade 10	70
Grade 11	48
Grade 12	33



## Secondary Students Platform Engagement

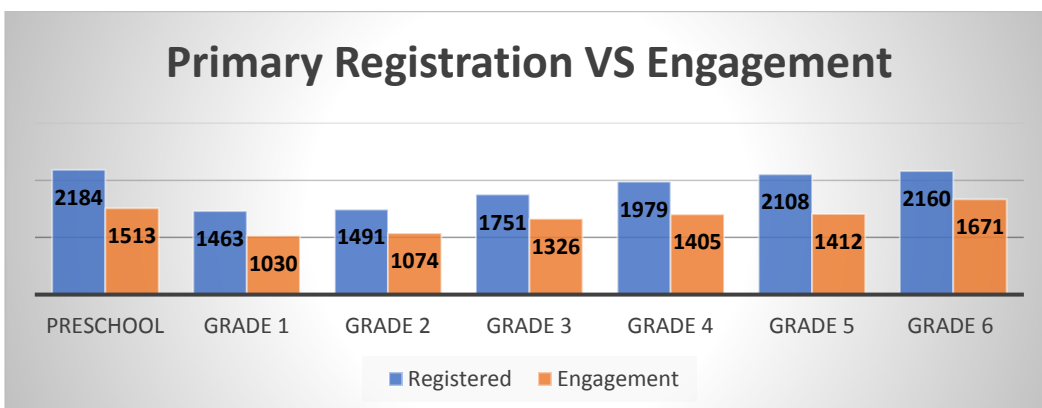
The following chart compares the average number of students attending the live classes versus the number of students engaging with the resources available at each grade level.



Observations:

- 36% of students registered engage with the platform daily.
- Less than 12% of the students engaging with the platform attend the live classes.
- Note: 97% of registered students have access to the internet and devices at home.

## Primary School Platform Engagement

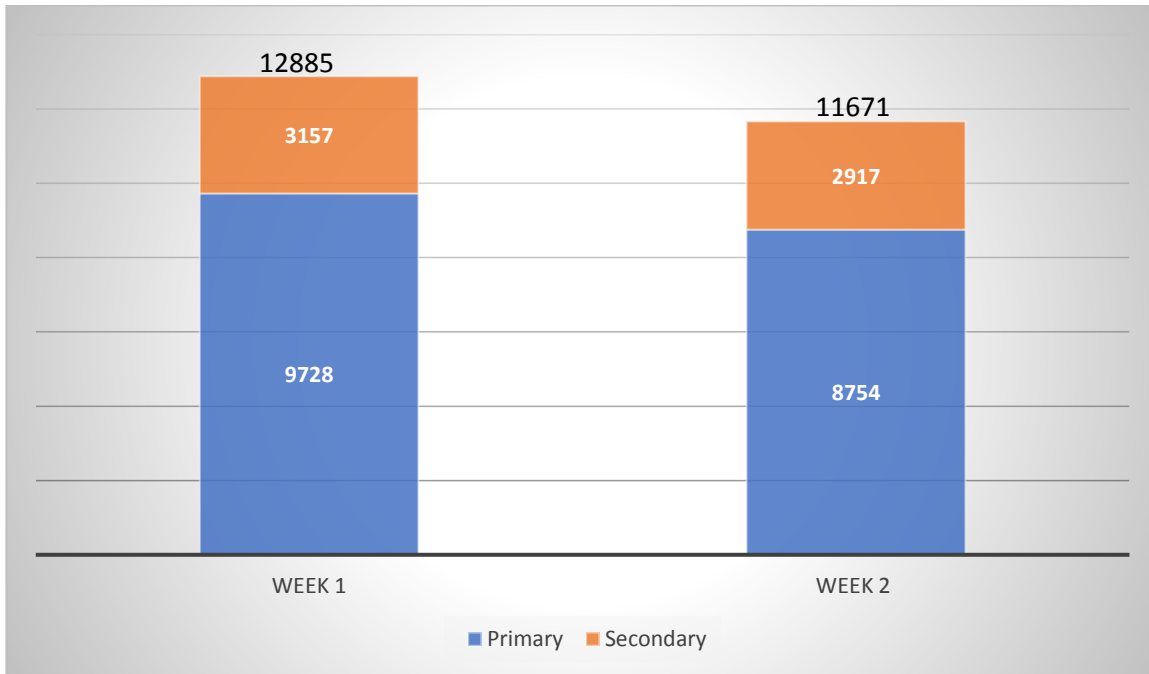


Observation:

- 71% of primary school students registered engagement with the platform daily.

## OVERALL AVERAGE DAILY ENGAGEMENT OF REGISTERED STUDENTS (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY)

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This is somewhat alarming, which begs the question as to whether students are being sufficiently supervised or encouraged by Parents to continue their learning. Parents also have their roles to play, in addition to their usual responsibilities. The students are at home now, under the continuous supervision and vigilance of their care-givers. We must ensure that their learning continues. It is therefore highly recommended that some schedule of study and focus similar to the one they ordinarily observe while school is in session, be developed and maintained throughout the week, so that students, especially younger ones, continue with their instructions.

## TEACHER INVOLVEMENT

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I am happy to report that Teachers have done an outstanding job in preparing themselves for this new reality, By being involved in the preparation and execution of the Virtual Learning Platform.

ROLE	# of Teachers
Live Teaching (Presenter and Chat Facilitators)	165
Resource Teams	488
Professional Development and Training Team	27
Website Maintenance	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>692</b>

## TRAINING SESSIONS CONDUCTED

Additionally, thousands of teachers have been trained in the various online platforms which many have used to engage their own students independently. The Tech Unit hosted two webinars daily to train teachers in various tools that can be used, during this time, to support teaching and learning with their individual students.

The first session was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

<b>Title of Session</b>	<b># of Teachers Participated</b>
1. Zoom	2161
2. Quizziz and Kahoot	383
3. Google Classroom	539
4. Class Dojo	539
5. Creating Instructional Videos	233
6. WhatsApp for Teachers	483
7. Edmodo	526
8. Freckles	431
9. Reading Eggs	538
10. PowToons	549
11. Boom Cards	575
12. Nearpod	587
13. BrainPop	509
14. YouTube for Teachers	626
15. LiveWorksheets	568

## RESOURCES COLLECTED

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Under the supervision of Curriculum Officers, resource teams curated and created resources to support specific learning of goals for each subject and grade level. These resources include:

- Videos
- Lesson Notes
- PowerPoint Presentations
- Worksheets
- Online Games and Activity

<b>Level</b>	<b>Resources Collected</b>
Secondary	1266
Primary	1489
<b>Total</b>	<b>2755</b>

## CABLE TV LIVE BROADCAST

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There are a large number of public school students who do not have a device or internet capability. They have to continue learning. Thus, beginning, Wednesday, April 15, Cable Bahamas will dedicate two channels (295 and 296) for the 'live' broadcasting of educational content by the Ministry of Education.



The broadcast, from 9a to 3p M-F, daily, will cover programming in three main areas:

1. Instructional (Live and recorded lessons streamed from the Virtual School)
2. Informational
3. Character Building

Channel 296 will be for those students studying for their BJC, and BGCSE only; while 297 will cover content for all other grades. MOE is awaiting a date for launch from Cable Bahamas.

In 2019, Learning Management System, called One n One, a collaboration with the Bahamas Telecommunication Company Limited (BTC), The Cable & Wireless Foundation and Sandals Foundation was offered to assist the Ministry of Education to provide three (3) months of dedicated remote, online classes for Public School students displaced by Hurricane Dorian, in Abaco, Grand Bahama and other Family Islands. Throughout the period of engagement, students and teachers were engaged in a virtual classroom on weekends on the One-on-One virtual platform, to take them through much needed lessons on the five (5) core high school subjects, including Mathematics and Language for the BJC & BGCSE curricula.

This week, Cabinet will consider a proposal to supplement the instruction being offered via its own Virtual Schooling initiative, by providing remote instructions via the One-on-One platform for all students in Grades K-12 in the public and private sectors, from April – June, 2020. Covid-19 has created a tremendous learning gap, Mr. Speaker, that if not addressed, can result in a potentially irrecoverable deficit for students in the Bahamian education sector.

There is currently no data available on Private sector students receiving virtual learning, the Ministry of Education has received many requests for general financial assistance, and now increased grant-in-aid subventions since Hurricane Dorian, when a number of the New Providence based private schools took in a number of displaced students, particularly students from Abaco.

Since the COVID 19 Crisis, anecdotal evidence affirms that many private institutions are struggling with the provision of on- line classes, particularly for their students who have no internet connectivity. In this regard, the One On One proposal for facilitating pre-recorded lessons via Flo TV makes this proposal particularly critical for the Ministry of Education.

This arrangement would enable all teachers in The Bahamas in public and private schools to access live, remote classes with their students for a period of two and a half months, commencing on April 20th, 2020, while exercising social distancing in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

I ask parents/guardians and care-givers to please register their students. Go to [www.ministryofeducationbahamas.com](http://www.ministryofeducationbahamas.com), web page. You will see a link that says virtual learning portal, click on that; and register. For those already registered, simply go to your respective grades, and begin your work. Registered students have received their learning schedules, so they know the times for their classes. The virtual learning space mirrors exactly what the students would be doing in a regular school day – two periods in the morning, a break, two more periods, then lunch. The same thing.

Mr. Speaker, in the midst of this crisis, the MOE is aware of the psycho-social support that many may need to help them cope. Thus, I am pleased to announce that Isra-Aid, a Non-Profit entity, and Ms. Imri Grinberg, The Bahamas Head of Mission, has been invaluable a resource in providing critical ne

They created a series of modules of interactive webinars to reach the entire staff in the coming weeks. Our purpose is twofold: to provide psychosocial assistance to the staff and to give the school counselors and teachers effective tools to support the students. They have been collaborating with the Guidance and Counselling Unit and the Superintendents to coordinate future dates for engagements.

Last Friday, Isra-Aid launched its first webinar "Dealing with Uncertainty" for the school counselors, which was extremely successful. There was very good feedback with 96 unique participants.

#### Access to Education

With the establishment of the Virtual School, and the paucity of devices of internet services for a significant swath of our student population, they have committed to ensuring that no student is left behind. IsraAID is endeavoring the following initiatives:

1. Procurement of tablets, solar chargers, data packages for students in Abaco. Also planning to include an information toolkit for children and parents with additional activities.
2. Assisting the MOE's Staff in monitoring the attendance and participation of students in the Virtual School.
3. Helping in the creation of online content including webinars, videos, and activities related to education, hygiene promotion, well-being, and recreation to collaborate and approved by the MoE and added to the Virtual School.
4. Creating and distributing printed content packets for students who currently do not have online access.

Mr. Speaker, our Ministry and Department Teams have been working virtually around the clock to expand the offering of the virtual school, and assist the many thousands of Bahamian students now affected by this pandemic. I am deeply appreciative of all those technical officers within the Department of Education and the scores of teachers and school administrators who have answered the call ensure that our students' education does not have to stop because of the Coronavirus. Proud of Permanent Secretary Mrs. Lorraine Armbrister and Education Director, Mr. Marcellus Taylor, for their stellar leadership in delivery this new platform for our students and teachers.

Whether it was the development of the Virtual Learning platform, production of learning resources, establishing and facilitating virtual learning classes, offering training and support to Administrators, Teachers, parents and students, all of these efforts are appreciated greatly. We are grateful and the Bahamas is proud of you for your invaluable contribution to the country's development.

The Problem, Mr. Speaker, and for which we do not now have the data is how many students in our system do not have internet access? Or if they do, do not have a device with which to access the internet, and thus continue with their learning.

We are advised anecdotally, that there is between 10-20% of our students who may be so deprived. If so, we are looking at 10,000 students in the public sector alone. This, I can assure You, Sir, as noted previously is being addressed.

To that end, the Ministry is now working with our Providers, Aliv and BTC, in designing a platform where internet-deprived students, or device-challenged students the internet capability, get devices, and alternatively, view their lessons on two dedicated Cable Channels that will be populated with the appropriate content for their use.

That is why, as we move forward, All hands must be on deck to assist in advancing our Virtual Learning activities. As I stated on March 18 in this Honourable Chamber, Though Teachers and students are away from Campus, learning and teaching MUST continue. End of term exams have to be calculated. National Exams have to re-fashioned. Schools all over the world are scrambling to adjust to this new environment, whether it their admission requirements, assessment modules, etc.

This is not a vacation. The school system has already lost precious instructional and learning time due to Hurricane Dorian. We cannot afford a single day further in lost educational time. Teachers and school administrators, while separated physically from their students, will be asked to undertake the following:

Please keep in mind that this is new territory and as we navigate these uncharted waters, we will seek to provide you with the guidance needed to have success. As Prime Minister stated Sunday night in his national update, the Govt's decisions in this COVID-19 reality are based on the facts and the best medical and scientific information possible. As he asked the nation, I repeat in my advice to Educators throughout the system, please be guided by health officials and reliable information from credible sources.

Further to all this, Mr. Speaker, is our students of developmental or alternatively learning abilities. They have to be supported and taught as well. We are addressing this as we speak, but it has its challenges.

Remember, we are in this together and when you succeed, we all success and the students and the country are the beneficiaries. We are one team with one goal!

Rest assured that the Ministry of Education is committed fully to the education of all students in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas and we will do our best to provide them with a quality education without regard to the circumstances. We are aware that some students do not have access to the Internet or devices and we are exploring ways to reduce or eliminate these access to education issues.

### **LUNCH PROGRAM**

There are some 4200 public school students on our lunch voucher program, as identified by the Dept of Social Svcs. Recognizing that the need for continued sustenance must be maintained, the Ministry organized a deliver system for the distribution of the vouchers to the affected students and their families. Approx. 55% of vouchers collected in NP and 45% in GB. Fam. Is. 100% issued. Transportation appears to be key issue. Xtra Vaue and Budget had issues with printing od vouchers.

Should be resolved this week. Team would like to ask security personnel at the various schools in New Providence to assist with issuing the remainder of the vouchers in NP & GB. Due to the short week and the need to write up 2700 vouchers for NP and 1500 for GB the new vouchers will not be distributed until 15 to 17 April.

**PROPOSED REVISED EXAMINATION DATES**

The MOE is reviewing our natl exam schedule closely, and guided by the facts and science, will be making announcement as soon as all the data needed to make that decision is available to us.

Additionally, many have called asking about the re-opening of schools.

Mr. Speaker, as the PM just announced, this curfew and intermittent lockdown will continue until the end of April, 2020.

Therefore, schools will not re-open until certainly after that, but not until the Competent Authority – The PM – gives the Order to do so.

Obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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