



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Education
OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY

28 March 2012

Mr. Quinton Ming
President
T. N. Tatem Middle School
Parent Teacher Association
60 Middle Road
Warwick WK 03

Dear Mr. Ming

Transfer of TN Tatem Middle School Principal, Possible discontinuation of the employment of the Deputy Principal and Related Matters

Thank you for your letter of 22 March addressed to the Minister seeking clarification on the transfer of the Principal of TN Tatem Middle School and the “discontinuation of the employment of the deputy-Principal.” We value and respect feedback from our stakeholders, and I am therefore pleased to respond to the technical matters contained in your correspondence. The Minister of Education will respond separately, to the policy related matters of concern.

Firstly, I will provide a bit of background information to the process. Principals are hired by the Public Service Commission on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Education. The relationship between Principals and the Ministry of Education is a contractual one that is managed through a Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Ministry of Education negotiates on behalf of the Government and the Association of School Principals on behalf of Principals.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement provides for the Ministry to utilise staff to meet the needs of the public school system within an agreed framework. As you are aware, the Ministry is in reform mode with an improvement strategy that is focused on teaching and learning so as to improve student outcomes for all students in the Bermuda Public School System. Principal transfers are one of the key levers for change.

In accordance with Article 3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, correspondence was sent to **all** Principals on 15 December 2011 advising them of the Ministry’s intent to transfer them. That letter stated:

“After much consideration, I am informing you of the possibility of being transferred to another school site for the 2012/2013 school year. The criteria being considered are as follows:

- 1. For the purpose of promoting professional learning for continuous improvement;*

2. (for) Site renewal; and

3. To maximize instructional leadership to improve student achievement.”

Article 3.4 of that Agreement states that, “*When the transfer of a Principal is initiated by the Ministry, notification and the reason for such a transfer will be given in writing not later than 31st December under normal circumstances. The Principal concerned will have the right to present his or her views of the transfer in writing within one calendar month of notification.*”

Mrs. McMahon, of TN Tatem Middle School, did not exercise that right.

On 14 March, in keeping with Article 3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Commissioner of Education met with Mrs. McMahon to advise her directly of the pending transfer and reiterate the rationale for the move.

Mrs. McMahon is now in her fifth year as Principal of TN Tatem Middle School, after holding the post of deputy-Principal; and prior to that serving as a teacher within that school.

The Commissioner of Education and I believe it is important for Mrs. McMahon to have a different experience at a different school within the same community. Her placement will strengthen the links between the two neighbouring schools, develop her leadership skills at the primary level, and help to impart the middle school experience to this feeder primary school thus ensuring that they are ready for the next level. In addition, and just as importantly, Mrs. McMahon takes a strong mathematics background to Purvis.

Our plan for transfers, as stated, is to spread the wealth to address points of need. This move will make the Warwick community stronger because Mrs. McMahon understands, knows and is able to respond to the Warwick community’s needs and the interests of its children and youth. She also knows the community partners and stakeholders, which will be an asset to the Purvis community.

With respect to the alleged “*discontinuation of the employment of the deputy-Principal.*” All scale posts, throughout the public system, including the post of deputy-Principal, will be vacant effective September 2012. These posts are a negotiated item with the Bermuda Union of Teachers. All interested persons in the system are eligible to apply.

However, we recognise the needs of TN Tatem in this process and, Mrs. McMahon will be assisting Mrs. Beckles with the selection of the deputy-Principal, although the Ministry of Education makes the final decision. You may be assured that we will ensure that the skill sets of the Principal and the Deputy are complementary to ensure the best operation of the school.

There was no mal-intent in the Ministry’s decision, in fact, quite a lot of deliberation went into the process. The decision was deliberate, intentional and strategic after reviewing student needs across the system.

With the Cambridge Curriculum, we have a curriculum that requires every child to do the same assessment. This means that there must be an alignment of curriculum, support, administration and services across the board that ensure and sustain that alignment.



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It was always our intent to meet with parents to explain the transition process. We still undertake to do this in order to ensure that all stakeholder needs are addressed and to continue to keep student needs at the forefront of all that we do.

Mr. Warren Jones

**Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education**

cc. Mrs. Wendy McDonell, Commissioner of Education