

National Statement of Commitment for the Transformation of Education Summit

In response to Covid-19, the Ministry of Education in St. Kitts and Nevis developed a plan for the continued education of students during school closure. While the transition to virtual learning resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has represented a turning point, it has also revealed the need for renewed investment in school infrastructure, digital devices and training of educators in the use of new technologies.

Efforts to transform the education system pre-date the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2014, Education Network, referred to as (EduNET), was launched for enhanced learning and sharing between schools. It was constructed for US\$1.2 million, and meant to provide a secure, high-speed network for communication, collaboration, e-Learning and research to be used by secondary school students. At the time of its launch, it was complemented by the One-2-One Laptop Project, a government initiative that issued more than nine thousand (9,000) personal computers during the period 2011 to 2013.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the desperate socio-economic situation of our most vulnerable families and a significant digital divide among students. With the discontinuation of the One-2-One Laptop project in 2015, disparities in technological access among students widened considerably. Consequently, some children were unable to capitalise on virtual education owing to a lack of suitable devices or connectivity. Where students had access to devices, issues of digital literacy emerged. Furthermore, the challenges of virtual education were compounded for students with disabilities.

Consequently, my administration is working to:

- (1) ensure that school opening is no longer disrupted by the pandemic, due to the negative psychosocial effects on children.
- (2) Re-instate the One-2-One Laptop programme at the secondary level and provide tablets for Primary school children.

While we have learned the importance of technology for all students, we affirm that face-to-face instruction remains the gold standard for instructional delivery and student learning. Thus, as the education sector in St. Kitts and Nevis recovers from Covid-19, we commit to transformation of the education sector through significant capital investment in school infrastructure, integration of technology in the classroom for learning and assessment, enhancement of curricula, as well as investment in psycho-social support for our students and teachers.

In 2014, with support from UNESCO St. Kitts & Nevis reviewed its education policy. Among the issues covered were:

- The need to implement teaching strategies and create learning environments that are engaging and stimulating.

- The need for strategic and targeted approaches to integration of ICT in teaching and learning.
- The need to improve the frameworks for teaching and learning.

In 2017 the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis published the 2017-2021 Education Sector Plan. The plan recommitted the country to the goals and objectives enshrined in the Education Act, (2005) which are: “The establishment and strengthening of a varied and comprehensive educational system that is based on societal needs”; and “The provision of access to quality education for all the nationals of St. Kitts and Nevis in institutions that foster the spiritual, cultural, moral, intellectual, physical, social, and economic development of the individual and the community.”

As we look toward the fulfilment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, we affirm our goal of achieving full implementation of the five thematic action tracks. We commit to:

- Addressing educational exclusion, safety and health
- Transforming the teaching profession
- Renewing curricula and pedagogies
- Steering digital transformation for equitable learning
- Increasing investment in education

Financing education as a common good

Our government commits to act in the best interest of our education sector and in line with our fiduciary duties. We believe strategic responsible investment represents important drivers of social and economic development. Thus we commit to the universal provision of high-quality, publicly funded education to:

- Attract, train and retain competent and motivated teachers
- Build and maintain schools
- Provide adequate teaching and learning materials for classrooms, and
- Provide system management (including curriculum development, school monitoring, learning assessment and innovation strategies).

Next steps

To ensure inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools our government will:

- Expand service provisions for special education and social safety net programmes to address the needs of disadvantaged children.
- Expand psycho-social support to students by appointing a guidance counsellor for each primary school.

- Support the full implementation of an enhanced curriculum and revision of the national framework for assessment.
- Establish a dedicated unit to provide regular preventive maintenance of all public education facilities.

In fulfilment of learning for life, work and sustainable development our government will:

- Increase the number of scholarships available for university education, professional development and vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Strengthen Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through the enhancement of the operations of national TVET institutions.
- Work to transform Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College into an accredited tertiary level educational institution.

With respect to enhancing the professionalisation of the teaching force, our government will:

- Establish a clear career pathway for the advancement of education professionals;
- Enact a framework for the continuous professional development of teachers;
- Facilitate the education and training of specialist teachers and professionals to support special education and
- Support the development of a National Teaching Council to regulate the teaching profession.