

# The School of Education: Leading the Way for Future Generations of Teachers in The Bahamas

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## ABSTRACT

To present our achievements in the School of Education over the past 40 years we must keep in focus where we came from. We must ask ourselves ‘What did we achieve?’ The information presented below gives basic highlights or milestones of our progress in the preparation and training of the nation’s teachers under the umbrella of the Teacher’s Training College then the Division of Teacher Education and now the School of Education, the College of The Bahamas.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Bahamas became independent in 1973. One of the priority goals of an Independent Bahamas was to establish a college of The Bahamas

The Teachers Training College of New Providence and San Salvador, the sixth form of the Government High School and the Technical College of New Providence amalgamated to form The College of The Bahamas in 1975. The Teachers Training College became the Teacher Education Division of The College of The Bahamas and was given the national mandate to provide professional preparation and training to individuals desirous of becoming teachers.

## FROM 1980 TO 1989

The focus during this period was on the restructuring and development of programmes and services. The following milestones were accomplished:

One critical element in the restructuring process involved the adjustment of the Teacher’s Training College from being a whole educational entity to becoming just one part, a Division of a larger institution in 1984.

The Teacher Education Examination System was aligned with all other Divisions in The College of The Bahamas instead of being answerable to both the Joint Board of Teacher Education and The College of The Bahamas.

The Education Awareness Club was formed to address directly the concerns, issues and aspirations of students in the Teacher Education Division.

Other innovations included:

The first Family Island Group Teaching Practice was organized, Final Teaching Practice was reorganized and the criteria for participation were established, and a teaching certificate was offered for persons desirous of teaching.

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### **FROM 1990 TO 1999**

The central focus of the Teacher Education Division during this period was on teaching in the B.Ed. Programme and on advancing the following programmes:

The Associate of Arts degree in content areas along with the teaching certificate in primary and selected secondary education content areas; Pre-School Auxiliary Certificate Programme (offered part-time); Childcare for owners and operators of Pre-Schools (designed as a continuing education course for CEES), B.Ed. programme; Diploma in Education programmes, the latter being launched in 1994-1995

### **Teaching in B.Ed. Programmes**

In the early 1980's selected Teacher Education faculty taught in the UWI diploma programme and the B.Ed. programme, which offered concentrations in English and History. However, by the time these programmes ceased in 1998, COB Teacher Education faculty were appointed programme coordinators and teaching faculty.

In the Fall of 1996, the B.Ed. 4-year Primary Certification programme designed by the College of The Bahamas' Teacher Education Division was launched. Other undergraduate programmes pending were: B.Ed Primary Advanced Placement—two year frame; B.Ed. Secondary Physical Education—four year frame; and the B.Ed. Secondary Advanced Placement—two year frame.

### **BETWEEN 2000 AND 2008**

This period saw many great achievements:

Undergraduate initiatives included the establishment of international linkages through an internship programme called the Consortium of Overseas Student Teaching, or COST. The B.Ed. programmes were made available in limited offerings to students in the three Family Island centres: Exuma, Eleuthera and Abaco. Some full B.Ed. programmes were offered on the COB's Grand Bahama

Campus.

The School of Education also achieved some milestones of particular note, including the launch of its online Diploma in Education programme in February 2007.

Moreover, several important initiatives were launched during this period. The College received a \$250,000.00 grant to establish a Literacy Centre for Teacher Education. A teacher-mentoring programme was established in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. And research programmes were managed by School of Education faculty at the Bahamas Educational Research Centre (the BEREC) on the island of Andros.

The Summer Studies Institute was established in the early 2000s by the School of Education faculty in collaboration with the Office of the President of the College of The Bahamas to offer academic mentoring to high school students to facilitate their acceptance to COB.

Numerous programme restructuring and development initiatives were launched and completed.

In 1997 the Research Unit of COB received a UNESCO grant to purchase materials and equipment for a teacher education lab school. The lab school was set up at the Willard Patton Preschool, located in an inner city area of New Providence

In addition to expanding its undergraduate offerings and initiatives, the School of Education also launched several Master's degree programmes in collaboration with a number of tertiary institutions in the United States. The Master of Education in Special Education, a collaboration between the College of The Bahamas and the University of Miami, came on stream with its first cohort in January 2000. In the subsequent calendar year, a second cohort began the programme.

The Master of Education in School Counseling and Classroom Guidance, offered

in collaboration with Kent State University, began in 2001 and graduated three cohorts.

COB Teacher Education faculty were selected to provide technical leadership through appointments on the National Commission on Special Education.

### **2009 TO 2014: TEACHER EDUCATION TODAY**

The School of Education has a student population of approximately 900 students and 31 teaching faculty with Master and doctoral degrees. The School offers Primary and Early Childhood Education certification with specialty options in Special Education. Secondary and workforce professional training are offered in more than 17 specialty areas.

### **MANAGEMENT**

The School has significantly enhanced the organization, management, and implementation of field practice activities. An information technology framework was designed and implemented for information management and sharing. The School also maintains a technology platform for the posting of courses. A formalized succession-planning model was implemented to facilitate the smooth transition of leadership within the School.

### **STANDARDS**

The acceptance and continuance policy was approved and implemented by the School's administration. The quality of faculty evaluations was significantly enhanced to complement preparations for faculty promotion exercises. The School also created a mechanism for the implementation of the Master's degree writing competency examination and developed quality assurance measures relevant to the management of teaching and field practice.

### **RESEARCH**

The School established the framework for the creation of research partnerships between teacher education faculty at COB and other tertiary institutions at the graduate faculty level. Faculty are actively involved in research at the national level and their studies have been published in national and international peer-reviewed academic journals. Some research has been supported through grants from the College's Research Unit. Faculty are actively engaged in local and regional educational research consultancies and projects geared toward educational reform. A research-mentoring framework for teacher education faculty was also introduced.

### **PROGRAMME REVIEW & DEVELOPMENT:**

A new B.Ed. in Early Childhood Education K3–Grade 3 was developed and approved by the College's Academic Board and implemented. Additionally, the M.S. in Reading with Inclusive Education was approved by the College's Graduate Programmes Review Board and implemented in the Fall 2012 semester with collaboration between local and international faculty. The first cohort of 19 students graduated in December 2013. A Master's degree in mathematics education was also developed and a significant number of courses in the B.Ed. programmes were revised and approved by the College's Academic Board. Other Master's degrees in Education were offered in collaboration with various universities abroad through the Office of Graduate Programmes. Special education offerings at the Northern Bahamas are in demand and are funded by the Ministry of Education. Programme review is ongoing.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHING & SERVICE:**

The school increased the complement of fulltime faculty with highly qualified individuals who were able to make significant contributions in research and publication,

English and business methodology, special education and assessment, religious education and workforce education. During this period the management of faculty advisement portfolios was also enhanced. Accountability measures to improve the quality of teaching practice supervision were implemented. An additional four faculty completed terminal degrees.

### **PARTNERS**

Partners with the School of Education include the Ministry of Education T.G. Glover Lab School; programme development in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and private school teachers; Bahamas Government's sponsorship of all participants in M.S. degree in Reading with Inclusive Education programme; the reestablishment of the relationship between the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) and the College; and the extensive involvement of Ministry of Education's subject officers, teachers and heads of departments in the supervision of teaching practice.

### **GRADUATION**

A Teachers' Commissioning Ceremony was launched by the School of Education in May 2010, as a part of the College's official graduation activities, to usher teachers into their new profession. While the graduation ceremony is a time of celebration, the aim of the commissioning ceremony is also to have teachers articulate a verbal oath or pledge of service. During this ceremony the graduands were commissioned to provide exemplary teaching service throughout their teaching career.

The School of Education also created and published the Teachers' Pledge for the inaugural event in 2010, at which the Minister of Education Desmond Bannister, gave the commissioning address. He outlined what is expected of teachers as instructional leaders, mentors and role models.

Throughout the past four decades, the Division of Teacher Education / School of Education has indeed achieved many important milestones and will to continue its very important role in training the nation's teachers and education administrators as its vital contribution to national development.

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