



Annual
Report 2025

2025 TEACHING AWARDS LIST



 BERMUDA
EDUCATION
NETWORK

2025 TEACHING AWARDS
FINALIST

Stephanie Hughes

West End Primary School
Reading Teacher

Making a Difference in Education

BEN is on a mission to strengthen teaching and learning in public primary schools.

The needs are urgent. Right now, less than 50% of children in public primary schools are reading on grade level. Our Summer Learning Programme provides critical remediation to prevent children falling further behind and in 2025 we took steps to scale up other early intervention programmes:

- **The BEN Book Club** introduces children aged 3–5 to the joy of reading through engaging story time events. It empowers parents with tools to support literacy at home, while providing free picture books and themed learning experiences for young learners.
- **Horizons Vocabulary Voyages** extends this journey for Primary 2–Primary 5 students, offering curriculum-linked field trips, gardening activities, and rich mentor texts that deepen vocabulary and comprehension.

Our Network brings teachers, parents and donors together for a shared cause: ensuring every child is a confident reader by the age of eight.

BEN has earned the trust of schools and donors to successfully implement programmes and training. We have spent over 15 years building deep connections with public primary teachers. In 2025, 73% of classrooms participated — a level of demand unmatched by any other education programme on the island.

We invest in the people who make the greatest difference in children’s learning — their teachers. Through our Teaching Awards, BEN actively identifies and celebrates outstanding educators. Since 2017, more than 80 public school teachers have been recognised and welcomed into a growing network of educational leaders who champion innovative, thematic learning approaches across schools and community institutions.

Together, we are building a connected ecosystem of support—one that empowers educators, engages families, and ensures every child in Bermuda has the foundation they need for future success.

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OUR MISSION

BEN is a literacy advocacy group whose mission is to strengthen teaching and learning in Bermuda's public schools.





Brief History of Organisation

Bermuda Education Network (Bermuda registered charity #899) was founded in 2010 and has spent over 15 years connecting education with real-world experiences. Our first initiative, the **Math Springboard Programme**, combined academic support with workplace exposure, introducing students to Bermuda's international business sector. Today, many of those students have gone on to successful careers as underwriters, actuaries, and brokers—an enduring testament to the power of early opportunity.

In 2016, BEN strategically shifted its focus to primary education, launching the **Horizons Programme**—an experiential learning initiative that now reaches students from P2 through P5 in every public primary school. Alongside this, we provided summer camp bursaries and sailing opportunities, ensuring access to enriching experiences for young learners.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, BEN mobilized quickly—working with PTAs to provide 258 computers to families lacking access to online learning, and funding targeted reading support for students who had fallen behind.

Literacy has remained at the heart of BEN's work. In 2021, we supported the development of the **BEN Book Club**, an early language initiative now serving over 30 families each month. In 2022, we launched our own Summer Learning Programme, delivering intensive reading intervention to children falling behind.

Since 2017, BEN has expanded our network through our annual Teacher Awards. The process of selecting finalists provides inspiration to the community and introduces new recruits, helping to build the professional learning community that we need to expand opportunities for students and teachers in the public schools.



Community Need

BEN exists to address educational gaps. Today less than half of Bermuda’s public primary school students read at grade level. The highest priority for the public primary schools should be to reduce the number of children at risk of reading failure.

1. FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Children need to acquire foundational skills in order to “crack the code”. According to the Science of Reading, this process starts with the alphabet and phonemic awareness and should be followed by a systematic phonics program which teaches basic letter-sound correspondence and gradually builds word recognition and retrieval skills. BEN’s Summer Learning Programme provides intervention to support students who are not reading at grade level at the end of P3.

2. CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

At the same time as learning how to decode, children need to build their bank of knowledge in order to make sense of what they are reading. Starting with our BEN Book Club for pre-schoolers, and continuing with the Horizon’s Programme, we build content knowledge and vocabulary through field trip experiences and authentic texts which include rich science and history themes.

3. STANDARDS INFORMED

Teachers and parents need help understanding what reading skills students should acquire at each stage of their educational journey. BEN’s reading programmes are created by literacy experts and are designed to ensure that students are mastering standards appropriate for their grade level.

4. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Those responsible for teaching reading need to understand the Science of Reading and have opportunities to learn about how to prevent reading challenges. BEN’s Literacy Connect series brings together educators responsible for reading instruction and supports them with professional development about language and reading.

5. DATA TO INFORM INSTRUCTION

BEN uses reading assessment data to help select students for support, tailor the remediation to meet their needs and design our programmes. We measure accuracy and automaticity rates for word reading and screen for other reading and language challenges.



OUR PROGRAMMES

In Review



HORIZONS

Horizons brought learning to life in 2025, connecting Bermuda's public primary students with books, places, and hands-on experiences that made the curriculum real. Through rich community partnerships and curriculum-linked expeditions, the programme helped classrooms learn far beyond the school walls.

216 expeditions | 3,104 student learning experiences

SUMMER LEARNING

The FortitudeRe Summer Learning Programme gave students a strong literacy boost in 2025 through targeted, small-group support, individualized instruction, and engaging hands-on learning. By expanding to include both P3 and P4 students, the programme continued to build reading, writing, and confidence at a critical stage of development.

3 weeks of literacy intervention | Expanded to support both P3 and P4 students



SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME:

BEN's Summer Internship Programme gave aspiring educators meaningful, paid classroom experience in 2025, helping them build confidence, practical teaching skills, and a deeper understanding of student learning. Through school placements and summer programme teaching opportunities, interns gained hands-on experience while contributing directly to student success.

8 paid interns | 2 learning environments: school placements + summer programme

LITERACY CONNECTIONS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES:

The Literacy Connections PD Series empowered educators in 2025 through collaborative, research-informed learning that strengthened early literacy instruction across Bermuda. With a focus on practical strategies and reflective practice, teachers deepened their ability to support confident, capable readers.

16 educators engaged | Featured in-person session with co-author Patricia Paugh



TEACHING AWARDS:

The 2025 Teaching Awards celebrated exceptional educators across Bermuda's public schools, shining a spotlight on the impact, innovation, and dedication happening in classrooms every day. More than a recognition event, the awards continue to elevate the profession and strengthen Bermuda's growing professional learning community.

71 nominations received from 80% of public schools | 10 finalists recognized

BEN BOOK CLUB:

BEN Book Club continued to grow in 2025, bringing families together each month to build early language, vocabulary, and joyful reading routines at home. By pairing high-quality books with learning and playful literacy activities, the programme helped lay the foundation for lifelong reading success.

Up to 12 books gifted per child each year | Monthly family literacy sessions





HORIZONS PARTNERS 2025

Kaleidoscope Arts Foundation, The Sloop Foundation, BZS, Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (BUEI), St. George's Historical Society and St. David's Historical Society at Carter House and the AgraLiving Institute.



Horizons Programme 2025

Big Adventures, beautiful books, broader vocabulary

The Horizons programme continued its vital role connecting classrooms to communities through books and experiences. We provided real world exploration through coordinated field trips and place-based learning experiences across Bermuda.

HORIZONS CURRICULUM PARTNERS:

Teachers are encouraged to access BEN's online lesson resources and to sign up for up to four field trips per academic year. The continued enthusiasm from both students and educators highlights the programme's enduring value and impact.

In 2025, Horizons delivered 216 expeditions for students from Primary 1 through Primary 5.

We provided 3104 free learning experiences to over 1000 students, covering partner fees and transport costs in excess of \$100,000 to ensure that Bermuda's best learning experiences are accessible to all regardless of background or school resources.



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CONYERS



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GROUP





Bermuda Education Network (BEN) was proud to be selected as a Fortitude Re 4 Good Community Partner in 2025 and we continued to deliver targeted summer literacy intervention for public school students. Designed to support students at a critical stage in their literacy development, the programme strengthens foundational reading and writing skills through structured instruction, individualized tutoring, and engaging enrichment experiences.

Our 2025 programme took place at Somersfield Academy and Bermuda Centre for Creative Learning (BCCL) and offered three-weeks of learning for P3 and P4 students. This expansion

to P4 students underscores BEN's commitment to sustained intervention, recognizing that many students benefit from consistent, targeted instruction beyond a single summer.

The programme emphasized the development of essential literacy competencies, including decoding, fluency, transcription, spelling, and written expression, while also fostering vocabulary acquisition and oral language skills. Students received individualized attention through small-group and one-on-one instruction, participated in hands-on learning activities, and engaged in arts-integrated experiences through BEN's partnership with Kaleidoscope Arts Foundation. Together, these elements created a supportive and dynamic environment that nurtured both skill development and student confidence.

The Summer Learning Programme also advanced BEN's broader commitment to educator development by offering valuable, hands-on experience for teaching interns. Through the continued support of Fortitude Re, the programme not only improves literacy outcomes for students but also contributes to building a strong pipeline of future Bermudian educators.



Teacher Development

The second year of our Literacy Connections PD Series went in a new direction by offering a monthly book club. 16 educators signed up for the monthly discussions led by BEN's literacy consultant, Natalie Roberts culminating in an in-person workshop with the co-author of Learning to Be Literate Patricia Paugh.

"This book club strengthened my understanding of literacy and gave me practical ways to think more intentionally about how I design literacy instruction."

- Stephanie Hughes, West End Primary

"The authors and conversations with teachers in this course have reignited in me a fire to trust my ability to teach reading responsively with the goal of empowering learners to deepen their ability to understand and be critical of their world. I feel better armed with a broad range of instructional strategies that I can deploy as needed in my own teaching and evaluation of literacy strategies."

- Heather Trimingham, Primary Educator.



Summer Internship

Offering pre-service educators an opportunity of employment during the summer is a critical piece of our teacher development programme.

In 2025 we offered eight interns paid employment during June and July and we are grateful to our school partners West Pembroke and St. George's Prep for their part in providing teacher placements to two aspiring educators. All interns received training from our team, hands on experience in a camp setting and the opportunity to practice instruction in a student-centered environment with advice on hand from highly experienced teachers.

"With limited opportunities for classroom practice in Bermuda for students studying education, The Bermuda Education Network's Internship Program is the perfect place to dip your toes into teaching." - Ines Bolarinho Intern 2024, 2025

"Interning with the Bermuda Education Network gave me the confidence to take initiative and continue my journey in teaching." - Sofia Vezina, Intern 2025



Teaching Awards

The Bermuda Education Network Outstanding Teaching Awards sponsored by Allied World recognize educators who demonstrate outstanding commitment, impact, and innovation in their work.

The 2025 Teaching Awards received a total of 71 nominations were received from across the public schools. 10 finalists were selected:

- Kelly Massa – P2 Teacher, Somerset Primary
- Sara Westhead – Digital Literacy & IGCSE English Teacher, Whitney Institute
- Denika Wade – Social Studies Teacher, Whitney Institute
- Zola French Ray – ASD Class Teacher, West Pembroke Primary
- Terry Henry – Music Teacher, Northlands Primary & Paget Primary
- Suzette Cheeseman – Deputy Principal & Reading Teacher, St. David’s Primary
- Stephanie Hughes – Reading Teacher, West End Primary
- Shayla Morton – P5 Teacher, Francis Patton Primary
- Karen Trott – Learning Support Teacher, Purvis Primary
- Tabathia Roberts – P1 & P2 Teacher, East End Primary

The 2025 winner, Zola French-Ray, was announced at an awards ceremony held at Cloud at the Waterfront. The event was attended by the Governor, HE Andrew Murdoch, Minister of Education, Crystal Caesar, the US Consul General, the Shadow Minister of Education and other education leaders. Mrs French Ray was recognized for her work with students on the autism spectrum and her strong commitment to family engagement and advocacy. Awards were also presented to Terry Henry for School & Community Spirit, Shayla Morton for Family Engagement, and Kelly Massa and her colleague, Simone Basden for Outstanding Teaching Team reflecting the important contribution that para-educators can make as part of a classroom team.

The Teaching Awards play an important role in recognizing exceptional educators and elevating teaching achievements while also helping BEN to build our professional learning community.



BEN Book Club

keeps getting bigger and better!

A thriving monthly early-years book club that strengthens home-school literacy, builds community, and supports parents in reading with young children.

BEN's early years programme increases opportunities for families to support reading with young children. At each monthly session, every family receives a personal copy of the featured book to take home, ensuring that families can continue to reinforce vocabulary and encouraging positive associations with reading, helping to build a lifelong love of books from an early age.

“My daughter absolutely loves BEN Book Club and looks forward to it every single month. The books she's introduced to through the club stay in constant rotation at home, and she often asks to repeat the activities we've learned together. What makes this experience so special is how the readers and Mrs. Muhammed truly bring each story to life, reinforcing important lessons through engaging, hands-on activities that stick with the children long after the session ends. As a parent, I love it just as much. It's thoughtful, impactful and something I'm incredibly grateful exists for our children.”

Research shows that a child's vocabulary at age four is a strong predictor of later reading success. The goal of the BBC is to expose children to new topics and vocabulary and to broaden their background knowledge. Caregivers learn about how important it is to develop listening skills and to talk about stories.

Throughout the year, the BEN Book Club distributes up to 12 books worth \$160 per child.

We are grateful to Fortitude Re for volunteering as story readers and BUEI for their provision of an indoors venue in 2025.

The books are carefully selected to expand a young child's general knowledge, while also enriching language.

Following story time there are fun phonemic awareness activities to reinforce rhyming, alliteration and syllables and support reading readiness.

2025 books:

- The Wonky Donkey by Craig Smith
- Cora Cooks Pancit by Doprina Lazo Gilmore
- Chocolate Mousse for Greedy Goose by Julia Donaldson
- Farmyard Hullabaloo by Giles Andreae
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen
- One Potato Two Potatoes by Adam & Charlotte Guillain
- Dinosaur Roar by Paul & Henrietta Strickland
- How to be a Pirate
- Five Little Pumpkins by Ben Mantle
- An Island Bedtime Story by Lucy Toland Murphy
- How to catch a star by Oliver Jeffers





The Network

In 2025, BEN proudly welcomed three new team members whose expertise and dedication strengthened our impact. Alexandra Calauro took over the role of Teacher Development Project Manager responsible for the 2025 Teacher Awards and professional development initiatives including the Summer Internship, Ellen McVeigh, with a background in primary education, joined us from Ireland as Horizons Programme Manager, leading BEN's year round literacy programmes; Ines Bolarinho, a former BEN intern, now serves as marketing assistant, enhancing communications, outreach, and community engagement.

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Ellen McVeigh
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Tiffany Bean
J'ree Burgess
Shunna Muhammed
Ines Bolarinho

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HORIZONS PARTNERS

Agra Living Institute
Kaleidoscope Arts Foundation
Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute
Bermuda Sloop Foundation
St. George's Historical Society
St. David's Island Historical Society

2025 SUMMER PROGRAMME TEAM:

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2025 Donors

GENERAL OPERATING

\$100,000

Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy

\$50,000

Oakley Capital Investments

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

\$100,000

Allied World

READING PROGRAMS

\$150,000

Fortitude Re

SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM

\$30,000

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AUDITORS

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COMPUTER DONATION

Red Laser

Bermuda Education Network Financial Highlights

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025

TOTAL INCOME	BD\$ 676,406*
Programme Expenses	
Experiential learning programmes	BD\$ 171,639
Reading Programmes	BD\$ 182,791
Teacher Development	BD\$ 87,984
Total Programme Expenses	BD\$ 442,414
Payroll Expenses (incl. marketing consultancy)	BD\$ 63,300
Operating Expenses	BD\$ 33,041
Audit Fees	BD\$ 23,137
TOTAL EXPENSES	BD\$ 561,892
Surplus	BD\$ 114,514

* Includes \$50,000 of donations deferred for 2026 programmes



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