

Media Statement

Friday, 2nd February 2024

Approved for Immediate Release

O'Neill: Congratulations to the Students, Parents and Teachers on the Start of the 2024 Academic Year

"To the hard-working teachers; parents of students and our students at schools, colleges and universities, I wanted to make special mention to all of you and congratulate you on the start of the 2024 academic year kicking off around our country this week," said former Prime Minister and Member for Ialibu-Pangia, Peter O'Neill.

"To the hundreds of thousands of our children and young people: education is a privilege denied to many and I encourage you to make every moment count. Concentrate in class; enjoy making friends and playing games and sports; do your homework without being asked and make every effort you can to learn everything you can.

"Do not worry about what other people think too much. Be concerned mostly that you focus on your learning and be kind to others. Help others out at school and be respectful of your parents and teachers."

"To the parents who have made the effort to get your children off to school this last week: thank you for your commitment. Parenting is not easy and being able to put money aside and get your children off to school does not go unnoticed. Your sacrifices in time, money and effort are truly worth it. Keep it up every day and you will see your children blossom under your guidance."

"To the thousands of dedicated teachers, librarians, assistants, administration staff, grounds people, cleaners, cooks, and school bus drivers: I appreciate you have prepared well for school to start this week and encourage you to teach and support our children in the large and the very small schools in both urban and rural areas of our country.

"What you do really matters to our children and our country."

"I also wish to acknowledge the critical role of our Christian, Private and Public School and DoE and DHERST Principals, administrators, inspectors and curriculum developers."

"Our literacy rates fallen to now just 63%, the lowest in the Pacific. We have a lot of work to do this year to ensure that our children can read and close the gap on this bare minimum educational outcome."

"The standards we set should be the standards we keep lifting the quality of educational outcomes so that our children can leave the education system ready to undertake further studies or work."

"I have read stories and enjoyed seeing the many photos of children off to school for the 2024 academic year. It is a very exciting time for everyone, and I did not want to let the week pass by without recognising the start of studies and wishing you all the very best and encourage you to make the best of the opportunity."

"Congratulations again to everyone who kicked off school this week and to those who missed out, there is still time to enrol and join in next week!"

Hon. Peter O'Neill, CMG, MP

Member for Ialibu-Pangia

Party Leader, People's National Congress Party