



BRIEF REMARKS

by

THE HONOURABLE T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M.P.,

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

on the occasion of the:

Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT)
Teacher of the Year (TOY) Reception

at

**Government House
Mount Fitz-Williams
Nassau, The Bahamas
7:00 p.m.**

21st April, 2010

Salutations:

- (1) Mrs. Elma Garraway – Permanent Secretary
- (2) Mr. Lionel Sands – Director of Education

- (3) Deputy Directors, Superintendents & other Senior Officers of the Ministry of Education

- (4) Mrs. Belinda Wilson –President of The Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT)

- (5) Father Sebastian Campbell –Vice President of BUT
- (6) All other Executive Members of BUT

- (7) Presidents & other Executive Members of Affiliated Unions
- (8) Past Presidents of the BUT

- (9) All other invited guests

Good Evening!

Ladies and gentlemen, gathering in celebration of our nation builders is an activity that I always look forward to with eager anticipation. This occasion is particularly pleasing because the dedicated educators before me have been recognized by their peers, as having risen to the highest standard in their profession through the valuable contributions they have made to our students and country. Therefore, it is indeed fitting that we take this moment in time to say thanks, and to acknowledge the outstanding work of our **Teacher of the Year Honourees for 2010-2012.**

Honourees, you serve as positive role models for educators everywhere, particularly at a time when teachers may be exposed to negative publicity. Indeed, there are a few bad apples, but the vast majority of our teachers are hard working, caring, goal oriented persons who have committed themselves to educational excellence in their personal and professional lives. Additionally, they want the same for their students. We do not intend to allow the few to cast a dark shadow on those who offer the greatest form of service to humanity- that of teaching.

“The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” These are

the words of American author, William Ward who must have been talking about individuals such as our honourees who can proudly take responsibility for the advancement of the profession in this country. You have been assessed and selected because you have the ability to: motivate students of diverse backgrounds; demonstrate respect for colleagues, parents and students; participate in required activities, and complete your duties in a timely fashion with excellence. The standards you have set in lighting the flame of knowledge and creativity within the hearts and minds of our children serve as an inspiration to us all. To the eleven (11) overall District winners: Robertha Lindsay (Abaco), Abigail Ralph (San Salvador), Sheree Heastie (Eleuthera), Lakitia Braynen (Grand Bahama), Afrika Karamo-Miller (Grand Bahama), Rosemary Burrows (Long Island), Jerome Forbes (MICAL), Lynn Gibson (New Providence), Triver Culmer (New Providence), Latoya Burrows (New Providence), Andrea Simms-Adderley (New Providence), and all other District school winners – we regard you as our **heroes**.

We, at the Ministry of Education are grateful for the partnership we share with the Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT). It was under the presidency of Mr. Donald Symonette that the *“Teacher of the Year Awards”* was first

introduced. Ten years afterwards, the Ministry of Education became the lead sponsor which resulted in *“The National Teacher of the Year Award Programme”* which is held bi-annually. The objectives include: highlighting and rewarding the accomplishments of teachers while motivating them and showcasing their teaching talents. Kenneth Romer, Barbara Dorsette, Joan Knowles, Stacy Stubbs, Roderick Rolle, Yorick Sands, Tamika Cartwright, and Marcia Musgrove as past winners at the national level have all set and left their mark.

Honourees, with much praise comes much responsibility. This evening you have gathered under the theme: *“Transforming Lives, Actualizing Potential”* which encourages you not only to uphold the high standards set by yourselves and those who have gone before you, but to steadily improve upon them. You now have an even greater responsibility to improve the lives of your students through maximizing their learning and achievement levels. Your job of nurturing their minds must include instilling within them a respect for country, people and property. How can you enhance both your students as well as your personal and professional achievement levels? You may begin by:

- Writing articles and books;
- Conducting research and presenting your findings;
- Attending meaningful professional development courses;
- Sharing what you have learnt with your colleagues;
- Upholding positive values and high ethical standards;
- Becoming lifelong learners;
- Actively listening to feedback from your students;
- Actively seeking ways to make learning more interesting for them;
- Remaining abreast of the latest developments in education;
- Becoming technologically savvy; and by
- Inspiring others to enter the profession.

As we put renewed focus on the 3- R's of reading, writing and arithmetic, I challenge you make a bigger effort in improving the low literacy and numeracy levels of our students. You are all familiar with the *Rigby Reads Diagnostic Assessment* which is used to determine the reading levels of our students. This test has recently shown that our students are weak in comprehension and phonics,

and that many of them are not reading at their grade level. The results from 2009 indicate:

- Grade 2 –the majority of students are reading on grade level (62.5%).
- Grade 4 –the majority of students are reading at Grade 2-7 Level (16.05).
- Grade 5- the majority of students are not reading on grade level (86.03%).

In looking at the *Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT)* for grades 3 and 6 for the school year 2009, it has been reported that in the areas of Numeracy there has been a slight improvement, however, areas of concern are:

- Mathematical terminology and symbols;
- The fact that many students are taking short cuts in their work by not showing how they arrived at their answers; and
- Students seemed unfamiliar with high order topics such as Probability.

In the area of Literacy, the biggest problem reported was that students seem to struggle with the exam itself because of reading deficiencies. Students were reported as having

mastered low-level simple recall questions, and demonstrated competency in sequencing, and in differentiating facts and opinions. Skills which required higher level thinking, however, proved problematic for students.

As Master and Senior Teachers, and as Teachers of the Year, how can you help us achieve our goal of enhancing the literacy and numeracy levels of our students? Let us work diligently to: increase the graduation rate of our 12th graders, and to raise the achievement levels in all subjects. Ladies and gentlemen as seek to build a more literate citizenry, and to provide more accountability to the public, these are issues that you must concern yourselves with.

The Ministry of Education welcomes the day when we can see every public school in The Bahamas staffed by Bahamian teachers only. We are extremely grateful to our foreign teachers who themselves provide invaluable service, however, there are too few young Bahamians entering the profession of teaching, and going into the areas where they are most needed, such as the core subjects of English Language and Mathematics. As a Government, we need to

take an in-depth look at the reasons for this, and make a concerted effort to change it. Drawing the *brightest* and the *best* minds to the profession will mean that it will have to be seen as a rewarding and viable option at the end of the day. Honourees, you are great examples of what can be accomplished by a teacher. Putting this spotlight on you this evening tells the world that we are proud of you for a job well done, and that we wish to see others enter the profession and aspire to such great heights.

I commend the Bahamas Union of Teachers for continuing this tradition of recognition because as these educators touch the lives of their students, so too are you touching their lives through this event. To other stakeholders who have assisted in bringing this ceremony to fruition, I thank you. Your support, questions and ideas are always welcomed as we seek to provide our youth with every opportunity to grow and develop. Let us, in moving forward reaffirm our commitment to the success of all students and to transforming our educational system in a most positive and powerful way.

Thank you.