



**Address by
The Honourable T. Desmond Bannister, M.P.
Minister of Education**

**At
Eight Mile Rock High School
Prayer Luncheon**

Thursday, 4th February, 2010

**At
The Eight Mile Rock High School
Eight Mile Rock, Grand Bahama**

1: 00 pm

SALUTATIONS:

Mrs. Vernae Grant; Member of Parliament, Eight Mile Rock Constituency;

Mrs. Elma Garraway, Permanent Secretary;

Reverend Ann Grant,

Mrs. Mary Cooper, Acting Director of Education – Grand Bahama;

Mr. Hezekiah Dean, District Superintendent, High Schools;

Mrs. Sandra Edgecombe, District Superintendent, Primary Schools;

Mr. Keith Barr, Principal (Acting) Eight Mile Rock High School;

Mr. Quentin LaRoda, Area Vice President, Bahamas Union of Teachers;

Other administrators,

Teachers;

Distinguished guests

Good afternoon.

I am delighted that I can be here on this occasion just a few weeks after my initial visit (in December 2009) at your invitation.

I thank all of the persons, who saw fit to invite me here today offering you some words of encouragement.

In my attempt to do this, I reflect on the words of Henry Adams, the grandson and great-grandson of two United States Presidents when he stated, **“A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops.”**

Unlike so many professionals, educators are judged for a lifetime on their performance in the classroom. No matter if they remain a teacher all of their lives, or move on to another profession, they are always regarded as ‘teacher’ – whether it be a great one or a not so great one.

I urge you therefore to see yourselves as beacons of lights that must continue to shine brightly however long you remain in this profession because there are so many persons counting on you to do your best.

Although teachers it seems are assailed daily with criticisms, every parent, business, religious and civic leader (the same critics) are depending on you to teach our children and shape their lives so that they can become productive and upstanding citizens in our nation.

They know you have the capacity to do it because teachers have always done it despite the odds. So while it seems as if the world is against teachers particularly as they look at all that is wrong with the education system; be assured that all learned citizens of our Bahamas know that there are difference between civility and insanity in our country.

My hope is that you do not become overwhelmed, discouraged or distracted from your purpose in life which is to educate children, shape their lives and inspire them to reach their full potential. I also wish that you take some time to uplift one another and, remind each other of the good in the teaching profession.

See yourselves as farmers who if they become discouraged by the loss of crops from droughts, pestilence, market forces and other variables that affect their businesses and all left the profession – who would feed the world; In your case, ‘Who would teach the children?’

I would rather not dwell on the troubles that Eight Mile Rock High School has endured in the past, except to say that we must see these occasions as opportunities to learn and to do the right thing in protecting our children from the dangers within, and an outside our school borders.

Failure to do the right thing must not be the status quo because it means being unpopular and an outcast.

We must do right by our children and it **must not** be acceptable to ignore the problems they are facing whether it is at school or in the community. We must do the right thing at all times and not be concerned about our friendships and or **“taking bread out of people’s mouth”** as the saying goes. The Ministry of Education will support you, and will certainly protect you when only when you do the right thing.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that **“A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”**

Somewhere outside of these walls there are children - many now adults who have imprinted your influence in their lives. They are doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, politicians, chefs, athletes and other professionals too numerous to mention.

When you have doubts about your purpose in this life look at the lives that you have molded and smile; and continue to the same again and again.

Good bless and fortify you for many years to come in the teaching profession.

Good afternoon.