



BRIEF REMARKS

by

**T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M.P.,
MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

on the occasion of the:

Abaco District Awards Recognition Service

at

**New Vision Ministries
Marsh Harbour
Abaco, The Bahamas
10:00 A.M.**

29th, January 2010

Salutations:

1. Reverend Patrick Paul – President of The Bahamas Christian Council
2. Mrs. Elma Garraway – Permanent Secretary
3. Mr. Lionel Sands – Director of Education
4. Mr. Clarence Cleare – First Assistant Secretary
5. Mr. Christopher Smith - Ag. Director of Security
6. Mrs. Lenora Black – Superintendent Abaco District
7. Mr. Cephas Cooper – Senior Island Administrator
8. Mr. Benjamin Pinder – Island Administrator –South
9. Mrs. Velma Cooper -Asst. Administrator –Central
10. Mrs. Cox – Island Administrator –North
11. Government Heads of Departments
12. Ministers of Religion
13. Chamber of Commerce Representatives
14. Rotary Club Representatives
15. All Other Stakeholders
16. Administrators/ Principals/ Teachers/ Parents
17. Honourees

American philosopher, Alan Bloom once said, ***“Education is the movement from darkness to light.”*** Students, these words are fitting for such an occasion as this, since today, you are much more enlightened having chosen a path out of ignorance through diligence to hard work, and steadfast focus on your educational goals.

I am delighted therefore to extend congratulations to you on the occasion of the **Abaco District Awards Recognition Service**. This is my first trip to Abaco as the Minister with responsibility for Education, and I really cannot think of a better reason for visiting. It is heartening to see so many of you here today who hail from both the public and private schools from the Primary School through Secondary levels. I know that some of you would have reached this milestone in your lives through much sacrifice, and in some cases not having adequate resources. Rest assured that you remain an inspiration to us all for having risen to the challenge of ***“achieving your dreams through excellence in education.”***

Your theme, ***“Excellence: A Prevailing Attitude”*** is meant to give you advice and encouragement at the same time.

Students, we want excellence to dominate everything that you do, so much so that it becomes second nature. We want you to integrate excellence of character and in your educational aspirations as we seek to inspire and support you. Your theme should hold that much meaning for you, and you should use it as a reminder throughout your lives. We have very high hopes for you and are happy that you are disproving those who speak negatively about you. In this very room lies so much talent and knowledge that I am confident our country will be left in quite capable hands in the future. While you have proven yourselves to be the brightest and the best in the Abaco District, I wish to challenge other students who may not be honoured here today to work a little harder and apply yourselves a bit more so that next time you will be sitting in the seat of honour. You can do it starting from today.

Boys and girls, young men and women, we, at the Ministry of Education and the dedicated administrators, teachers and parents of the Abaco District constantly seek positive outcomes for you. Through your schools' core and optional subject offerings, along with extra curricular activities, we hope to improve *student learning and achievement*.

Therefore, we encourage you to continue to take advantage of the educational opportunities at your various schools be they private or public.

Just last week, I was privileged to attend the *Annual National Awards Presentation & Exhibition Ceremony* in which students from both public and private schools who sat the BJC and BGCSE Examinations in 2009 were awarded for their prevailing attitude toward excellence. It had certainly paid off for our students in public and private schools. I was especially happy to note that amongst them were some of your peers from Forest Heights in the persons of: *(if students are there maybe they can stand)*

- *Tyler Albury* – 5A's, 1 B & 1 C (BJC)
- *Alysia Boyce* – 5 A's, 1 B, & 1 C (BJC)
- *Deanza L. Cox* – 5 A's, 1 B, & 1 C (BJC)
- *Cicely Gomez* – 5 A's, 1 B, & 1 C (BJC) and
- *Taj Anderson* – 3 A's, 4 B's, & 2 C's (**BGCSE**) Forest Heights Academy.

Zandria Wells from Abaco Central High School is to be singled out for her performance in the BJC's, as well as Elaine Fenelus from S.C. Bootle High School for her BGCSE passes.

Let me say how proud I was to see these exceptional students walk across that stage to receive their various certificates and awards. Next year I would like to add at many more students in both of these categories. This is my challenge to you students in the Abaco District whether you are from independent or public school. I think of Deangelo Ferguson, graduate of C.V. Bethel Senior High School who in 2008 received the best BGCSE result in the country with 8 A's. This speaks to the excellence that is found in the public schools as well.

Today, in addition to these top performers in the BJC and BGCSE's we also recognize the top performers in the Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT), a diagnostic test to determine the level of our students. We recognize:

Grade 3 GLAT:

- *Ebony Hanna, Jenna Williams and Jazper Dawkins*
(Agape Christian School)

Grade 6 GLAT:

- *Johnalee McIntosh* (Cooper's Town Primary),
Rebecca Roberts (Amy Roberts Primary), *Devin Rolle* and *Isaiah Seymour* (Central Abaco Primary)

Recognizing that excellence comes in many forms, I wish also to acknowledge the performances of the top male and female athletes for the district who are:

- *Kenneth Murray* – Top Male Athlete, and
- *Chyanne Turnquest* – Top Female Athlete

Students let me add that all of you are winners whether your accomplishments be in the academic arena, in the performing arts, or in sports, we commend you for having attained such a level of success and being so honoured. In all you do maintain an attitude of excellence.

Students, in addition to your academic and sporting successes, I wish to stress even more forcefully the importance of being a person of excellent character. You must be honest. You must be responsible and you must have respect, not only for yourself, but for others, your school, and your country. Let these values guide your everyday actions. It is easy to think that we are above rules and regulations put there as guidelines for proper conduct. I know that you are all familiar with Christian Massive's rap song called, "Pull Ya Pants Up Boy." Remember that when you walk the streets in your various uniforms, you are representing yourself, your family, your school schools and

your dedicated administrators and teachers who work there. By your actions or conduct, you also reflect your homes and the training you receive there. Behave responsibly and make us proud by coming to school ready to learn and properly attired. Once you get there, put steadfast focus on the five R's of: **R**eading, **wR**iting, **aR**ithmetic, **R**espect and **R**esponsibility as many of you have done already.

I would now like each of you to take a look around the room at the administrators and teachers from the various schools, and your parents along with other stakeholders. These are the persons who would have assisted you, and I want you to give them a round of applause for believing in you, and for providing the necessary funds, time and guidance in support of your journey to excellence. Administrators and Teachers, I applaud you for your commitment and leadership. Continue to uplift our students and be great role models for them. Remember, teachers touch the future. Many of us would not be where we are today were it not for the dedicated service of many caring teachers. Those words anonymously written certainly prove to be true. Many of us would not be where we are today were it not for the dedicated service of a teacher.

Parents, I commend you for knowing that the success of your children, in great measure, depends on the moral and financial support that you give them. Get even more intimately involved in their education by regularly attending PTA meetings, School Board meetings, and by visiting your children's school to check on their progress. Work in closer partnership with the Ministry of Education for the success of your child. We all want the same thing for our children and that is to see each of them receive an education that promotes the highest standards and produces students who are intellectually curious, compassionate, responsible and capable of making a meaningful contribution to the country's productivity, prosperity and peace. I also thank the many stakeholders who often work behind the scenes but lend support in tangible ways to make our educational system an excellent one.

As we go forward, I ask that we all do our part to help in the growth and development of the youth of our country. Let us live up to our individual responsibilities of arming them with the necessary tools to one day competently govern our wonderful country, The Bahamas.

Students, once again, congratulations and I wish you continued success in all areas of your lives.

Thank you.