



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

**On the Occasion**

**of the**

**Bahamas Association of Independent Secondary  
Schools'  
Thanksgiving Service**

**Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2010  
St. Barnabas Anglican Church**

**Baillou Hill and Wulff Roads**

**10: 00 am**

**His Excellency, The Governor General  
General, Arthur D. Hanna;**

**Mrs. Elma Garraway, Permanent Secretary,  
Ministry of Education;**

**Mr. Lionel Sands, Director of Education;**

**Executives of Parent Teacher Associations  
of BAISS member schools;**

**Principals;**

**Teachers;**

**Students;**

**Other distinguished guests,**

**Good morning.**

**It is still the beginning of a new year and so I am pleased to have the opportunity to convey wishes for a Happy New Year and may most, if not all of your goals and aspirations be achieved in 2010.**

**I wish also to extend heartfelt appreciation to the organizers of this event for inviting me to share in this special occasion of the Bahamas Association of Independent Secondary Schools' Thanksgiving Service. It is fitting to give thanks to God and have him centered in our lives, our homes and our schools. We in The Bahamas sometimes take for granted the freedom that we have to worship and praise God in any arena that we choose. In many countries it is illegal to say prayers at school or even national events because some persons might be offended.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, the freedom to worship God is something to be treasured and appreciated. While I am not here to sermonize you this morning, I feel compelled to express those thoughts because the reality is that when students do not know God, it is very difficult for them to know or possess qualities that will keep them on the straight**

**and narrow path. Whether you believe it or not all good things come from God.**

**I salute the BAISS for coming together as body to coordinate the sports programmes of various independent schools which later evolved into what it is today; a body whose objective is to promote and encourage Christian education in our society. I am delighted that BAISS' also has as its objectives:**

*To provide a forum for sharing ideas and information among member schools for the enhancement of Bahamian education and cooperate with all national and international education authorities in the proper development of education in the proper development in our society.*

**This tells me that the BAISS is about standards and supporting the overall delivery of quality education in The Bahamas. I encourage, you to continue your mission and the Ministry will support you in your endeavour.**

**As Minister of Education, I am proud of the achievements of all students throughout The Bahamas and it makes my heart glad when students achieve; whether they attend an independent or public schools.**

**The reason for this special pride is because, we are all citizens of The Bahamas and your success is of national importance. Yes, St. Augustine gets to boast about being an academic and sports powerhouse, Queen's College and St. Andrew's have made some inroads in sports in recent years while contributing to overall academic successes of our educational system. Just yesterday, at the National Examination Awards, two students from St. John's College were recognized for earning the best BJC results among Independent Schools in the country. All member schools in the BAISS can boast of students that have brought them acclaim in past years.**

**Students, when you succeed it results in a rippling effect impacting your families, church, school and community.**

**The biggest winner in this entire story is the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. When you, our students achieve and succeed it offers us that hope that you will someday assume**

**leadership in medicine, politics, education, the civil service and the private sector and bring a level of competence that will take us further than we are today.**

**This is the kind of thinking that you should start to develop at an early age – What is my role in the national development plan of my country? How am I going to make life better for all citizens? Students, it could have very well have been The Bahamas that encountered the same disaster that our neighbour, Haiti is experiencing at the moment. What role would you play in such a situation?**

**If you see yourself assisting others during a time of despair, then you are a leader! If you see yourself putting the needs of others above your own then you are a leader! If you are willing to dig someone out of rubble with bare hands then you are a leader!**

**I wish to say to you today that leaders do not always have knowledge, but they should always have compassion, because that is what Jesus Christ represented while he was on earth. Our Lord with all his powers never yearned for the spotlight or power but sought to bring comfort to those around Him, particularly, the poor and the downtrodden!**

**Let us remember that in our quest to succeed that our desires should include making our homes, our communities and our country a better place for those who are not so fortunate or perhaps not as capable as we are. I urge you to a get good education, but always remember that we fulfill one of God's greatest commandments when we help our brothers and sisters.**

**Tied to the humanity that we would like to see you develop is a spirit of true patriotism. This year we will celebrate our thirty-seventh anniversary as an independent country, but this national milestone seems to be of little importance in the lives of many Bahamians. There exists an attitude that we always had freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of movement in The Bahamas, therefore the benefits of achieving nationhood are not commonly known or appreciated.**

**History reflects we did not always have these basic rights, and unfortunately many persons do not have a high regard**

**for Bahamian culture outside of Junkanoo. There are many persons who do know the history of Majority Rule and the role that our Governor General, His Excellency played.**

**We must learn our history as we learn the fundamentals of Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic. We must also learn that each island in our archipelago has its own unique characteristics which contribute to our overall identify of as a people.**

**In April of this year, we will celebrate Patriotic Day in public schools throughout The Bahamas, I trust that the BAISS will join us in this celebration which is geared to instilling national pride in our students and an understanding of our history and those who built our modern Bahamaland.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, I trust that you leave this place rejoicing in God's goodness and with it a renewed spirit of gratitude to do service for your fellowmen and country. Continue to do well in your studies as you prepare yourselves to serve and lead in this great nation, The Commonwealth of The Bahamas.**