



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

**To
Newly-Appointed Teacher Assistants**

**Friday, 8th January, 2010
The Foyer
Ministry of Education
Thompson Boulevard**

2: 00 pm

Mrs. Elma Garraway, Permanent Secretary;

Mr. Lionel Sands, Director of Education;

Ms. Sherrylee Smith, Under Secretary;

Deputy Directors of Education, Mrs. Leanora Archer and Mrs. Patricia Collins;

District Superintendents;

Senior Education Officers;

Other officers;

Our new Teacher Assistants;

Good afternoon.

I extend a warm welcome to all of you and best wishes for a Happy New Year. It is my hope that you be more resolute in your commitment to achieve all of the goals that you have established for yourselves in 2010.

I also trust that we have all returned here, with a sense of urgency and a recommitted spirit to advance the cause of education for the more than 53,000 students and over 3,500 teachers and administrators in our public education system.

We must remember to work collectively to carry out our mandate which is: *“To provide all persons in The Bahamas an opportunity to receive an education that will equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes required for work and life in a democratic society, guided by Christian values.”*

Additionally, we must all be ever mindful that our collaborative efforts are required to ensure that our educational system meets the needs of all of our citizens, particularly those from pre-school to secondary school.

We must be aware of the external challenges that sometimes prohibit us from executing this important mission, these however must not deter us from doing our best to educate our students who we hope will ultimately contribute meaningfully to our Bahamas upon leaving school.

Consequently upon the announcement of the Government's six month job programme, we welcome the 250 newly-appointed Teacher Assistants throughout The Bahamas to the Education family. We expect that you would see your role in the education system as an important one and not one to be taken lightly because of your status and your title.

You have been assigned to work with the most precious of our citizens – our primary school students and therefore it is imperative that you arrive at work each day, willing to serve; to employ patience and to assist the Teacher you have been assigned to work with all that you have to offer.

You were selected from among thousands of applicants and therefore much is expected of you. In some cases you were selected because of your achievement in English Language and in others because of your proficiency in Mathematics or in both subjects. Other characteristics that we looked for were the fact that you have a pleasant and positive demeanour and a willingness to follow instructions and the inclination to treat children with care and attention and finally are on record as law abiding citizens.

You have also had training through your District Superintendent to further assist you in your duties. I am told that the training involved:

- insights into literacy and numeracy methods;**
- Understanding schools and how they function;**
- Performance expectations with emphasis on how to perform the job;**

- **Understanding how children learn, classroom management inclusive of alternative methods of discipline;**

Let me firstly congratulate you for meeting the criteria and for been selected, however, you will discover as you go along that education is very different from when you were a student in the classroom. You must come to work each day fortified with patience and care for the children that you interact with because they are at the age where they need all the care and support they can have. Some of them need it more than others, therefore you must be cognizant of their vulnerability and not do anything to diminish their self-esteem.

These students will automatically attach themselves to you because by their very nature they see the world as filled with good people. Leaders in the classroom are privy to these children's confidence therefore you must be respectful of this and not use the knowledge they have shared with you for any other reason than to be helpful. I urge you to develop a healthy relationship with the Teacher you will be working with - for your success as a Teacher Assistant will depend on it.

Another important asset required in this programme is respect for authority. Whenever you are offered some advice it does not mean that anyone thinks any less of you, so be mindful that order must exist to achieve excellence in education.

Finally, I wish to thank all of the officers, teachers and administrators who have been instrumental in instituting this programme in time for the start of the new school term. What we have accomplished in the short time of preparation afforded is a testament to our commitment to our students and our country.

Teacher Assistants I wish you the best in this experience and look forward to working with you as you aid in the delivery of quality education to our primary school students over the next six months.

Good afternoon.