



BRIEF REMARKS

BY

THE HONOURABLE T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M.P.,
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

on the occasion of:

**The Primary Principals Association's Appreciation
Banquet**

AT

Sheraton Hotel
Cable Beach
Nassau, The Bahamas

Saturday 22nd, May 2009

8:00 p.m.

Salutations:

Mrs. Elma Garraway –*Permanent Secretary*

Mr. Lionel Sands- *Director of Education*

Ms. Leanora Archer –*Deputy Director of Education*

Mrs. Patricia Collins –*Deputy Director of Education*

Mr. T. Milton Lewis – *President of the Primary Principals' Association (PPA)*

Mr. Wenly Fowler – *Vice- President of the PPA*

Assistant Directors of Education

District Superintendents

Other Ministry & Department of Education Officials

Executive Officers & Members of the Primary Principals' Association
(Past & Present)

Principals & Other Administrators

Dedicated Teachers

Honourees

Good Evening!

I am indeed delighted to join you in celebration of our nation builders, and to extend congratulations to the twenty one (21) Honourees selected by the **Primary Principals' Association** for their outstanding contributions in the field of education. Honourees, this recognition should demonstrate to you that your efforts have not gone in vain, but have been positively acknowledged, not only by your colleagues, but by your students as well. You undoubtedly inspired your students to do and to be more through your positive influence on them.

“Service: Fuelled by an Attitude of Excellence” is your chosen theme, which I must say has been demonstrated quite successfully by our Honourees. This theme should serve as sound advice for educators everywhere, particularly for those who aspire to this level of recognition. Educating our nation’s children is the highest form of service that can be provided, and as educators it is important that you give your very best effort not only when you are aware that you are being watched, but even when the spotlight is not on you. In order to give the best service, you must equip yourselves. You must continuously network, question, analyze, read, research, and improve yourselves through

professional development and the cultivation of a good work ethic to ensure that you remain at the top of your profession.

We, at the Ministry of Education are in pursuit of the best and brightest minds for our classrooms. The quality of teachers that we are able to attract to the teaching profession is critical to the results that we are able to realize in education. We believe that our children deserve no less, and that if they model themselves after such teachers, our nation's educational system would be impacted in a most positive way.

We are aware of the problems of low literacy and numeracy levels in our students, as well as issues related to discipline. To combat this, the Ministry of Education has taken a back to basics approach where we have placed our focus on the **“Three R’s”** which comprise: *Reading, Writing* and *Arithmetic*, along with the added values of *Respect* and *Responsibility*. In examining the literacy levels for the 2009 **Rigby Reads Diagnostic Assessment**, which is used to determine the reading levels of our students, we have seen that our students are weak in comprehension and phonics, and that many of them are not reading at their grade level.

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 area of Numeracy there has been a slight improvement, however, areas of concern included: Mathematical terminology and symbols, and difficulties with high order topics such as Probability. In the area of Literacy, for the GLAT exam it was noted that students struggled with the exam itself because of reading deficiencies. They were reported as having mastered low-level simple recall questions, and demonstrated competency in sequencing, and in differentiating facts and opinions. Higher level thinking skills, however presented a problem.

In fostering an attitude of respect and responsibility, we have informed our students that anti-social and deviant activity will not be tolerated on our schools campuses. Certain measures related to cell phones, gum chewing, and the Safe School Manual have already been implemented and we intend to implement additional rules and guidelines to improve student behaviour. Ladies and gentlemen, the Ministry takes its responsibility of providing our students *“an opportunity to receive an education that will equip them with the beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and skills required for work*

and life in a democratic society, guided by Christian values” very seriously. We do not intend to fail one, but would work diligently to see all succeed and *“achieve their dreams through excellence in education.”* We encourage all stakeholders to join us in giving our students the best possible opportunity to succeed.

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” It was former South African President and civil rights leader, Nelson Mandela who once uttered these words. This evening’s Honourees in the persons of: Kingsley Black, Sheila Black, Rhonda Braynen, Annabelle Burrows, Deborah Coleby, Mary Culmer, Venderlin Dames, Genenvieve Evans, Vernetha Gilbert, Virginia Johnson, Deborah Mackey, Gene Mackey, Marjorie McIntosh, Delthis McKenzie, Sharon Rahming, Catherine Rose, Anna Rolle, Lavern Rolle, Marilyn Rolle, Ivy Sands, and Kim Williams have certainly made their mark in this profession by leaving a positive impression upon the lives of their students and colleagues. As adults, I am certain that we can all recall a teacher from our past who would have left such an impression upon us, and so I ask all of us here become more actively involved in the lives of the youth of our nation.

Remember that one day they will be in the positions of leadership. Let us do our part now to ensure that our future is secure and left in capable hands.

I applaud the Primary Principals' Association which is *“dedicated to the promotion and improvement of education for children and youth, and to strengthen the role as educational leaders for the primary school principals in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.”* Your steadfast focus in bringing the achievements of our educators who have demonstrated best practices to the public's eye is a most worthy initiative. No doubt the association will continue to thrive under the leadership of Mr. Lewis and his wonderful and competent team of Executive officers. With that, I appeal to the business community, churches, civic organizations and all others to join us as stakeholders in transforming our nation through education.

Parents, I ask that you play a special role in this effort by not leaving it all to the teachers, but by supporting and reviewing with your children the values and knowledge imparted to them while in school. Always conduct yourselves in a respectful and responsible manner so that in addition to their

teachers, you may also serve as positive role models for them.

To those Honourees who are still serving, I ask that you renew your commitment and seek to find creative and innovative ways to impart knowledge. Encourage your colleagues to also walk the same path of excellence that you have. To those who have retired, I give you the challenge of mentoring a younger teacher who may benefit from your years of experience. Honourees, each of you undertook the mammoth challenge of becoming educators, and have accomplished much. Once again, congratulations.

Author, Alex Noble once said, ***“If I have been of service, if I have glimpsed more of the nature and essence of ultimate good, if I am inspired to reach wider horizons of thought and action, if I am at peace with myself, it has been a successful day.”*** Educators, let us do the best that we can with each day that we are given. On behalf of the Government of The Bahamas I thank each of you and ask God’s blessings upon you.