



**REMARKS BY**  
**THE PERMANENT SECRETARY**  
**THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**On the occasion of**

**PRESENTATION OF BOOKS FOR THE**  
**2010-2011 ACADEMIC YEAR**  
**BAHAMAS READING MENTORING**  
**PROGRAMME**

**TUESDAY, 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2010**

**2:15 PM**

**BRITISH COLONIAL HILTON**

**Salutations:****Her Excellency, Ms. Nicole Avant;****Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs, Ms. Julissa Reynoso;****Lieutenant Commander Smith (who is stationed at Embassy and reports to U.S. Northern Command – who are responsible for this most generous donation of books);****Mrs. Patricia Collins, Deputy Director of Education;****District Superintendents;****Senior Officials of the Ministry of Education;****Staff of the United States Embassy;****Ladies and gentlemen,****Good afternoon.**

**It is with great pleasure that I greet you on this wonderful occasion on behalf of the Minister of Education, The Honourable T. Desmond Bannister who is unable to be here because he is attending Cabinet. The Minister, I am certain is pleased by what is about to take place here today and would say that this is indeed a great day for Education in The Bahamas.**

**On behalf of Government and the people of The Bahamas I would like to thank our partners at the United States in Embassy in The Bahamas, and U.S. Northern Command (US NorthCom) for their continued generosity and their support of education in the Bahamas. You may recall, that it was only a few weeks ago that US NorthCom donated over \$6,000.00 in educational supplies to Woodcock Primary School.**

**This humanitarian outreach, I am told was inspired by President Barack Obama, who called on Americans and U.S. Embassy staff around the world to honour those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, by taking part in a service activity in the local community. We were delighted then as we are today to be the benefactor of our neighbour's support and generosity.**

**We also grateful for the fact that former US Ambassador, John Rood initiated a reading programme at Woodcock Primary School allowing volunteers from the embassy and other community leaders to read to the students there each week. This idea was later expanded through the vision of former ambassador Ned Siegel to primary schools throughout New Providence, Grand Bahama, Cat Island, Eleuthera, Exuma, Abaco, South Andros and Harbour Island All-age School.**

**It is worthwhile to mention that in Harbour Island the books for 'Read to Lead' are provided by a winter resident, Mrs. Judy Savage who also marshalls the volunteers comprised of both local and winter residents to facilitate the programme at the school.**

**The reality is that 'The Read to Lead Bahamas Reading Mentoring Programme' is a marriage of several wonderful ideas and programmes that have at one time been initiated to boost literacy in our schools and expose our children to the joy and benefits of reading.**

**There are some who may feel that good ideas for the advancement of nation should come from within a country, but Irish playwright and economist, George Bernard Shaw aptly states that:**

***“If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples, then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.”***

**The Read to Lead Programme is a something that we all support because we know that it is excellent project and the end result is that our students' education is being strengthen through reading.**

**The Read to Lead Programme has grown from a handful of volunteers from the embassy to thousands throughout our Commonwealth. Our children are also reaping the additional benefit of being exposed to outstanding community leaders from both the private and public sector, and those have made a tremendous contribution to the development of The Bahamas and are now retired but still giving.**

**We know that this programme has made a difference when we see seventh graders at C. H. Reeves Junior High School lobbying their principal to institute the programme at their school. Although the programme was established for primary schools, these students who just recently graduated from primary school realized the impact it had on them and had the fortitude to say we want it at C. H. Reeves.**

**Ambassador Avant, I speak assuredly when I say that Minister Bannister would say that it is music to our ears when we hear junior schools and hopefully, senior schools requesting that the Read to Lead Programme be established on their campuses. I am certain that it would cause a small bit of a logistical nightmare for Mrs. Collins and her team but at the end of the day, the benefits would far outweigh the logistics.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, there are so many persons and corporate entities who have given of their time to make this programme a success. There are many volunteers who have gone beyond the scope of the programme to do more, so that our students can realize even more than just a reading session.**

**Many positive relationships have been formed out of this programme and we know this from letters written by our students that they have found role models from our volunteers. They see kindness in people; just ask the students of Mabel Walker Primary who eagerly awaited their grandfatherly volunteer Mr. Arthur Skippings each Wednesday. Some corporate volunteers take this programme so seriously that they roster their staff on weekly basis rather leave it to chance; others have donated books or assisted with beautification projects at the school.**

**Another benefit that has emerged from this programme is improved reading levels among our students which have translated into better scores in the GLAT and other national exams.**

**Let us be mindful that we are ensuring our own future when we do our best for our children; hence we continue to strive for the success of the Read to Lead Programme. Thank you all for your role in this endeavour and it is my privilege, along with our two student representatives present, to accept these books on behalf of our children.**

**Good afternoon.**