

ADDRESS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE HAZEL MANNING

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

BPTT/Ministry of Education

Secondary Entrance Assessment
Awards Ceremony

2007

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VENUE: UWISPEC, St. Augustine

The special honour, delight and privilege are mine this morning to address to you, the crème de la crème of students who wrote the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) 2007.

Today we celebrate your significant accomplishment and we congratulate you all for making it with flying colours. You are scholars and by your sterling performance you have created an indelible impression upon the minds and hearts of your peers, parents, teachers, and the Nation as a whole.

Let us recognise our honourees with a lusty round of applause.

Addressing occasions such as this is always challenging, because there is so much that one is tempted to say in congratulating our young students.

We all remember our graduations, but don't remember much of what was said. So today, I'll follow the advice of a former distinguished leader who once said that for times like these: ***Be brief! Be sincere!***

Today I speak to the students...as you enter secondary school in 2007 you are entering a very different world.

We at the Ministry of Education have worked long and hard over the last six years to:-

- Create new curriculum for secondary schools
- Deshift....junior secondary schools
- Develop policies for quality in our education system
- Provide new opportunities for students and

- Facilitate improved performance at all levels of the education system. For example, you will find that the Continuous Assessment Process (CAP) continues to track your performance in secondary school as well, with National Testing being done at Form 3.

Students, you will also have the opportunity to be a member of the Student Council in your school thereby enabling you to engage in the practice of democratic principles.

Student Councils are now part of our new School Based Management approach that allows students to have a say in the management of their schools. I encourage you to support or form the Student Council in your new school; join or start school clubs, for there is much that you can learn from such activity.

You will also be able to benefit from the new secondary curriculum in many ways. In addition to the traditional subjects, those of you who are specially gifted in music or sports, or have a love for theatre and dance will be able to do these subjects all the way to CXC and CAPE even gaining scholarships in these areas.

You will find teachers using computers and other new technology in the classroom and you will see this happening more and more over the five or seven years of your high school life. This is because of a major computerisation programme now in place.

The Ministry of Education is ensuring that both primary and secondary schools have:-

- Computer labs
- e-beams in the classroom and
- Media labs and that your teachers are well trained through university training programmes, Computer Training and many other professional development workshops.

On entering your new school's compound, you may also find construction, maintenance and repair work in progress.

This is because school buildings are being upgraded to provide the rich facilities needed for you to benefit from the new curriculum such as:-

- Pan Theatres
- Dance Studios and
- Upgraded playing fields. In addition, the Ministry of Education has a continuous repair programme and currently, work is ongoing in approximately 396 Primary and Secondary schools.

However, all this building and repair work have one reason and one reason only - to afford all students equity and accessibility to quality education.

The repairs are necessary to ensure that all our students and their teachers can work in safe places, with the necessary labs, facilities and equipment for the subjects you wish to study.

In so doing, we hope that you would experience greater academic success as you prepare yourselves to eventually contribute to your country and make your mark on the world stage.

Many of you will meet schools already equipped with ultra modern facilities and equipment to provide an environment that allows you to be critical thinkers and problem solvers, but above all innovative people with an entrepreneurial spirit.

We recognise that you children of the 21st Century and will be young men and young women in 2020 and so we hope that you embrace the ICT facilities; the media labs and state of the art equipment in your schools to prepare you to effectively participate in creating a healthy, progressive nation, that is aspiring to developed country status by 2020.

So far you have applied your knowledge in a logical, rational manner and have been rewarded with tremendous success. What's next for you?

One writer stated "knowledge becomes wisdom only after it has been put to use".

We recognise that you, the students are the heartbeat of the education system. If you are to put your knowledge to use, your environment must facilitate this. Therefore to better serve you, your teachers and parents, we are restructuring and decentralising the Ministry of Education and bringing special services closer to you.

One such service is Student Support. We all know that sometimes along life's journey, things get difficult. Students and parents can now benefit from the many programmes including a parenting programme of the Student Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education.

The Student Support Services Division also provides you with access to timely academic, personal, social career guidance and counselling and advice to parents.

Undoubtedly, you the students we honour today are the new leaders in your schools. I want to remind of the saying:- ***Those to whom much is given much is expected.*** You therefore have a responsibility to less fortunate peers in your schools and communities.

You therefore need to know that the Ministry of Education also has programmes for:-

- Students at risk
- Students with learning and physical challenges
- Students with psychosocial and behavioural difficulties.

As a leader in your school, you can help improve the quality of school life knowing you can help others to understand that there are many Coordinators

- Social Workers
- Diagnostic Specialists
- Special Education Instructors
- Special Education Resource Aides
- Guidance Counsellors and other specialist personnel now in the education system to support and help all our students to succeed.

During your secondary school life, you will meet many wonderful teachers and so I hope that when you think of careers, some of you will think of becoming a teacher one day.

We now have an exciting teacher training programme at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure that all our students benefit from highly trained and capable teachers in the 21st century. We want teachers who are committed to ensuring that all our students receive five and a half contact hours every day in keeping with the policy of the Ministry of Education.

As you consider careers in education, I want you to know that in addition to the traditional subject areas, the education system now requires a constant supply of specialist teachers in Physical Education the Arts and our History as well of the many new and exciting careers in education that require:-

- Child psychologists
- Education economists, education planners
- Architects who specialise in school design
- School social workers and
- School computer personnel to name a few

As you look to the future, I want to encourage you to become lifelong learners and individuals of strong moral character. As one writer puts it “Character, like sweet herbs should give off its sweet fragrance when pressed”.

Continue to give off that sweet fragrance that brings you here today and fill the world with the scent of your excellence.

To parents, I want to leave just two special words. They are:- ***Be Present***

- Be present in your children’s lives now more than ever before
- Be present physically, let them see you demonstrate the behaviour and attitudes you’d like them to adopt
- Be present emotionally to guide and support your children through the turbulent teenage years.

At this formative stage in their lives, they need you more than ever to support, affirm, motivate and delight in them as they overcome the challenges of the journey of life.

Today, as we gather in the oldest university in Trinidad and Tobago I hope that our students will be inspired to see themselves at one of our country's three universities at the end of their secondary school life which is simply another leg in the relay of life's journey. I encourage you to run this leg to the best of your ability so that you are well prepared for tertiary education and ultimately being a good citizen.

Congratulations on your achievements. Congratulations to all who helped you to reach this day- your teachers, parents, family and friends

Remember to thank them and to thank the God of your belief asking that His guiding hands continue to bless you and steer you safely in the times that lie ahead.