

Education



WORK



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New Ministers first two months at Ministry of Education



Dr. the Hon. Tim Gopeesingh is greeted by Permanent Secretary, Maurice Suite while Minister in the Ministry, Hon. Clifton DeCoteau and Chief Education Officer (Ag), Yvonne Lewis look on.

On 28 May, 2010, after the General Elections of 24 May, 2010, Dr. the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh was appointed as the Minister of Education and the Honourable Clifton DeCoteau was appointed as Minister in the Ministry of Education of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

By Monday 7 June, both Ministers officially took office and began in their ministerial portfolios. Since that date, the Ministers of Education have held meetings with stakeholders, both internal and external to the Ministry of Education, to chart the way forward.

The Ministers have also received courtesy calls from the High Commissioners of Great Britain, and Australia; the Ambassadors of: Venezuela, Spain, China, Egypt, and Guatemala over the course of the last weeks at the Minister's office, Alexandra Street, St Clair.

An Interministerial Committee has been formed to realise the promise of the laptops proposed to be given to students successful at the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) Examination 2010 during the General Election campaign of 2010. This Committee consists of Dr. the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education; the Honourable Clifton DeCoteau, Minister in the Ministry of

Education; the Honourable Therese Baptiste Cornelis, Minister of Health; the Honourable Prakash Ramadhar, Minister of Legal Affairs; the Honourable Mary King, Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs; the Honourable Rudrawatee Nan Ramgoolam, Minister of Public Administration; the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

In their official capacity as Ministers of Education both have also been invited to several official functions across the nation, such as the finals of the Flavorite Peppy Spelling Bee 2010, held at Queen's Hall, St. Ann's, at which Minister Gopeesingh delivered his first feature address as the Minister of Education. Minister DeCoteau attended the Robert Village Hindu School's graduation ceremony for students of 2010 and delivered the feature address. He did the same in Mayaro at the Mayaro Past Pupils Association Award Ceremony held to honour students of Mayaro-area schools for 2010.

The Minister of Education of Trinidad and Tobago is also the President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO and, as such, was host to the Director-General's Regional Consultation on the Preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2012-2013 and SIDS Future Forum which took place at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre from 5-8 July, 2010. These meetings were attended by the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, Representative of the Director-General of UNESCO, Hans d'Orville. There were delegates present from all of the National Commissions for UNESCO in Latin America and the Caribbean. A cocktail reception was also hosted by the President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO on the evening of 6 July, 2010 on the Savannah Terrace of the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre which was attended by the delegates and stakeholders of the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago. - NS

Twitter and the Distance Learning Unit

At present twitter is being used as a platform to launch educational links for learners within the education system. It has been instituted to facilitate communication between learners, tutors and the Distance Education Unit of the Ministry of Education as the conventional classroom is transformed into an open forum of wireless, modern communication.

Twitter has been heralded as one of the fastest mediums of communication that is clear, concise and easy to use. It also encourages global networking and is an effective and simple medium to introduce new and emerging technologies to learners. Twitter is versatile in that even if inaccessibility to computers may be an issue for some learners, almost all possess mobile phones with multimedia capabilities which will facilitate texting or blogging so information is always readily available. As a result, twitter is seen as a multifaceted media device that enables greater learning and communication among our various students. - CM



tweet it!



Ministry of Education partners with Flavorite Foods for the Peppy Spelling Bee 2010



First prize winner, Shevon Prescott of Scarborough SDA

The final round went into overtime and had the entire audience of students, teachers, officials and well-wishers at the Queen's Hall auditorium on the edge of their seats. Four boys sat in the front row on stage. Four had to spell until there was an elimination...and only the top three were left.

June 15th, 2010 was the culmination of almost a year of the 3rd annual Roving Peppy Spelling Bee and Play Park going to all eight education districts in Trinidad and Tobago. They had come from Cedros, La Lune, Cumana and Morvant and many other towns to represent their schools and districts as finalists. At the beginning of that day, the original 16, Standard three finalists on stage had a record, to date, of 100% percent accuracy in spelling during the competition.

The programme started with entertainment as students performed an cappella rendition of the calypso, "Dip and Fall Back" by Marac Baptist School; an all-girls group from Cumana R.C. School sang "Let the Flowers Bloom Again"; and a soloist from the Bamboo Government School sang "Edelweiss". Then the Spelling Bee finalists were called onto the stage to applause. All present then stood for the national anthem, school pledge and the prayer and invocation were led by Sandy Bengochea (Sandee Communications), the master of ceremonies for the day's proceedings. Throughout the year, at each of the 32 qualifying events, the talent of the students was celebrated as they entertained at intervals during the rounds of the spelling bee with choral singing, poetry and other forms which allow expression of language and words.

This was the first official function at which Dr. the Hon. Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education spoke. The Honourable Minister congratulated Flavorite Foods for being the sole sponsor for this venture for the third successive year. He also advised and encouraged all parents, saying that no matter what the circumstances at home, to please send the

children to school. Minister Gopeesingh reflected on his own education, and said that it is a lifelong process which never stops until you die. He also urged parents to leave a legacy of education more than property, or a house. Congratulations were extended to all 16 finalists, as he said they are all finalists, so that there were no winners or losers, and wished them continued success. In closing, he asked each parent to have a dictionary by their child's bedside, to assist with the learning process.

The rounds of the spelling bee went on for several hours with breaks and entertainment intervals. The absolute final four approached the microphone one by one, with words being spelt with precision so that the degree of difficulty (of the words given) was forced to increase and there was some faltering and finally, inaccuracies. In that way, a final decision was made by the panel of judges.

The top prize winners were: 1st Prize – Shevon Prescott – Scarborough S.D.A.; 2nd Prize – Gervan Benoit – Nelson Street Boys R.C. 3rd Prize – Tyrique Jonas – Fatima/Curepe R.C. School. The first place winner took home a challenge trophy in addition to his other prizes. All were presented on the stage and the School Supervisor for Tobago, Gerard Franklin spoke at the end of prize-giving, as one of his students took the top place. At the end of the day, the announcement came that there were two truckloads of ice-cream outside! There was pandemonium, and then the rows and rows of students shuffled out to the tents in single file. – NS

The schools of the 16 finalists are:

Grosvenor Presbyterian School
Cumana R.C. School
Torrib Trace Presbyterian School
Marac Baptist School
St. Brigid's Girls R.C. School
Cedros Government Primary School
St. Peter's Private Primary School
Anstey Memorial Girls Anglican School
Mc Bean Presbyterian School
Palmiste Government School
Curepe Fatima R.C. School
San Juan Presbyterian School
Nelson Street Boys R.C. School
Lower Morvant Government Primary School
Scarborough S.D.A. Primary School
Moriah Government Primary School



Participants of the workshop

Train the Trainer

The Restructuring and Decentralisation Action Unit concluded its month long training and participatory workshop entitled, "Train the Trainer" at the St. Borromeo, Roman Catholic Church on 10 June, 2010. The impetus behind this initiative was to train senior officials who belong to crucial departments in the Ministry of Education (MOE) to impart their knowledge about the way in which decentralisation is to be implemented at the district level to their staff members. Decentralisation refers to the transfer of functions from the centre (head office) to regional or branch offices. This process will enable better management of schools, improved organisational performance and quality educational services. According to Ernst Williams, principal consultant and facilitator of the workshop, decentralisation has benefits for all involved in the education process. "Firstly, parents will have greater resources at their disposal and will see improvement in the academic performance of their child as a result of reduced dropout rates and repetition rates. Secondly, teachers will be able to boast of a more opening and welcoming school environment as decisions for each school will be suited to its specific needs. Thirdly, at the administrative level, there will be improved effectiveness and success of schools and improved supervision and evaluation."

Participants shared what they expected the decentralised process to achieve. Some of the responses included: a focus on better student outcomes and school improvement, the creation of an ideal Caribbean citizen (who would have been the direct result of successful decentralisation), improved integrated educational services (externally and internally), more cohesion among the various units in the MOE, a greater integration of seamless education into the entire process, greater commitment to the tasks ahead and a strict sense of accountability. The workshop was interactive as trainers were enthused and prepared to learn, ready to convey to their knowledge to fellow co-workers to ensure that the idea of decentralisation would soon be manifested into reality. – CM