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MINISTER OF EDUCATION

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OFFICIAL LAUNCH

<http://www.moe.gov.tt>

CASCADIA HOTEL

MONDAY JANUARY 22, 2007.

I am pleased to present an important new tool for students, teachers, administrators, visitors and the parents of our nation – the website of the Ministry of Education: <http://www.moe.gov.tt/>

The educational landscape of Trinidad and Tobago is now identifiable by a website where you will find accurate information on the reforms currently taking place in our education system.

It is a place for everyone –

- the student who wants to know more about the syllabus or examination dates
- the teacher who needs a new idea on how to help students understand the curriculum
- the parent who needs to assist his/her child with homework or subject choices
- the business person who wants more information on a school event he has been asked to sponsor.

Using moe.gov.tt, citizens at every level can now access information on the structure of the Ministry, our mandate and goals, policies that guide decision-making and our major activities. Information is available on our schools and educational districts, the curriculum, examinations, educational and other support services, financial and other assistance. The site features, among other things, students', teachers' and parents' portals, a media centre, news and events, publications and projects. Students, teachers and parents can now easily find, browse or download standard application forms for job opportunities or obtain application forms for CXC/CAPE.

Students, Teachers, Ladies, Gentlemen and specially invited guests, this website - moe.gov.tt - will give you a precise picture of what the Ministry of Education is, what we do, what we are able to do and what constitutes our Vision, Mission, projections and challenges. This website is harmonious with Government's Vision 2020 which recognizes the need to capitalize on the opportunities of the changing global information age.

Several of the Ministry of Education's recent initiatives are dependant on the World Wide Web which facilitates the sharing of information, ideas, resources and collaboration in project development and implementation. The launch of this website advances one of Government's priorities for expanding use of the Internet.

Let me give you three examples:

- 1 **SchoolNet** promotes the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies in learning. It supports online activities that engage students with meaningful content and exchanges with other students to improve literacy and communication skills. At the Ministry of Education we hope to build a community of practitioners amongst connected schools that will allow for greater collaboration, communication and the online exchange of information. One goal of SchoolNet is to ensure that all schools are connected to the Internet by 2008.

SchoolNet projects will demonstrate how information resources on the Internet can be used as classroom tools for research, and as a medium for collaborative learning. This will better prepare our students and teachers to be information managers and active learners in a knowledge-based society.

SchoolNet will take advantage of the Website to develop an online training and support system for educators, so that they can use technology in an effective and appropriate manner in their classrooms.

- 2 **The National Open School** provides an opportunity for persons of all ages to continue their education and training using modern communication technology. The National Open School is being championed by our Distance Education Unit and will allow for the Ministry of Education to extend access of its programmes and services to the out-of-school population.

Ladies and Gentlemen, learning is a lifelong process and the National Open School of Trinidad and Tobago will establish centres in each education district and will deliver all Ministry of Education Curricula. The National Open School will offer courses to a pre-degree level, ranging from early childhood education, through primary, secondary, technical and vocational education, ICT training, enrichment and leisure programmes and life skills.

The National Open School will have no age restrictions. Flexibility is its hallmark. Open School will take advantage of the technological infrastructure established by the Ministry of Education to support online delivery and support services.

3. **CyberFair:** The Ministry of Education's Schools Cyberfair 2007 which we launch today is the local counterpart of an International Schools Cyberfair –

an award winning learning programme, sponsored by the Global SchoolNet Foundation.

The Cyberfair competition provides an opportunity for our schools and communities to engage in activities that would stimulate awareness and understanding of our history, culture, and other issues. Cyberfair is the largest educational event on the Internet and has brought together more than one million students from over 109 countries. Students will be required to work collaboratively and with community members, conduct research about their communities and use the technology tools to publish a website displaying their findings.

Awards will be given to schools in each educational district and for the best projects in each category. Students will also have an opportunity to review the projects of other schools. To determine the winners, all entries will be reviewed by a panel of local judges.

The CyberFair competition will be based on community research conducted in one of eight categories. Students will be required to design a website that spotlights and showcases:

- 1 Famous or important people in the community
- 2 Local attractions that may be natural or man-made
- 3 Local businesses and organizations
- 4 Local specialties, unique items or things produced, grown, or raised in the community or local or unique sports, games or health programmes.
- 5 Community groups and special populations
- 6 Local historical landmarks
- 7 Environmental awareness and issues
- 8 Local culture, music and art forms that are important elements of the community experience (i.e. dance, festivals, songs, ceremonies, sculpture, painting and crafts).

The winning websites will be showcased at the Ministry of Education's Exposition, on television and in newspaper supplements later this year. Attractive awards and prizes will also be offered. For answers to your questions, you may contact our CyberFair Help Desk at the Distance Education Unit or by following the link on moe.gov.tt.

Within the next few days we expect to have a Web Master on board whose responsibility, among other things, will be to ensure continuous updates of this

website. We look forward to the date, in the not too distant future, when all the schools that have hosted sites on the Internet will establish links with our website.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before I invite you to step into the pages of our website, let me thank all those who have laboured on this project for your commitment and hard work. A lot of time and expertise has gone into this project and I very much appreciate your efforts. Thanks to you, people across this nation will find a more responsive and more accountable Ministry of Education. You now have opportunity to access relevant and topical information on-line and in a more user friendly style. Discover the resources that are just a click away. Enjoy the lively spirit of our education personnel as you keep up with our progress, projects and our programmes.

As web access via mobile phones grows the Internet is helping to satisfy a fundamental human need for knowledge, communication and a sense of belonging. As many of you may have noted over the past few weeks, the Internet has brought unprecedented freedoms to the teachers and students of our schools as well as to millions of people worldwide. I trust that with the launch of this Ministry of Education website that as we create, communicate, organize and influence others we do by sharing content that is appropriate and more so content that improves literacy and communication skills.

I welcome our students, teachers, parents and business community to this site – moe.gov.tt. I now officially present the moe.gov.tt website.

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