



REMARKS BY

**THE HONOURABLE JEROME K.
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**MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY**

AT THE

**2016 BAHAMAS PRIMARY SCHOOL
STUDENT OF THE YEAR
AWARDS CEREMONY**

AT

**GOLDEN GATES ASSEMBLIES WORLD
OUTREACH MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL**

SATURDAY, 21st MAY, 2016

6:00 PM

Salutations:

Dr. Davidson Hepburn and Mrs. Jacqueline Bethel, Co-Patrons of The Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Foundation;

Bishop Ross Davis and Mrs. Davis

Dr. Ricardo Deveaux, President and CEO of The Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Foundation;

Mr. Vandyke Pratt, Chairman of The Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Foundation;

Executive Leadership of The Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Foundation;

Board of Directors of The Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Foundation;

Distinguished Judges of The Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Foundation;

2016 Awards Committee of The Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Foundation;

Parents, Teachers, Family, Friends;

And our esteemed 2016 Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year Nominees,

Good Evening.

This year marks my seventh consecutive year attending this prestigious event. Two times as a parent and five times as Minister of Education. I once asked the Prime Minister why he decided to appoint me Minister of Education. He said there were two reasons; first I had served as Deputy Chairman of the College of The Bahamas from 2002-2007 and transitioning to the University of the Bahamas was high on his agenda and my son Jared was awarded Primary School Student of the Year so I must know something about educating young people. I told him the only problem was that my children got their looks and brains from their mother who was a scholar in her own right and I would only claim whatever athletic talents they possessed.

Looking back over the past six years has given me reason to pause and reflect. I have watched with delight, pride and a heightened degree of patriotism as the children from this program have excelled to

heights beyond even what I imagined. They stop me in schools, in the streets and in airports. I see them at school award ceremonies, national award ceremonies, spelling bee competitions and national scholarships ceremonies. The point is these are the best and the brightest in our country. They are all WINNERS! No matter what happens tonight you are all winners.

I thought back to my first year as Minister when I was leaving the room after the ceremony and a parent who was disappointed their child had not placed higher attempted to give me a copy of their child's portfolio, which I politely refused and explained that I had absolutely nothing to do with the selection process and all of the judges give of their time freely and are persons in our community of impeccable character and high integrity. Give our judges a round of applause.

I reflected on the speech my son Jared gave in 2011 in this place at the end of his tenure where his theme was "if you can dream it you can achieve it". He

stated that he had just returned from his first CARIFTA swimming championships where he left with only 1 bronze medal despite the fact that he was hoping for a gold and spoke about the lessons he learnt from that experience and encouraging the finalists in 2011 to never give up. It's amazing what we can learn from our kids. Sometimes they set goals for themselves well beyond even our imagination. As parents, guardians, teachers and mentors we must support and encourage them. Jared stated during that speech he wanted to swim at the Olympics and become a doctor. Personally back then I did not see how that was possible knowing the commitment both require. But I have come to appreciate we should never underestimate our children especially the ones that sit on this stage.

Jared has recently returned from his final CARIFTA games with 4 gold medals, a silver medal and a CARIFTA record. At 17 he is very close to the qualifying time for the Olympics which God willing I have no doubt he will be there in 2020. Me too!

I tell this story really to encourage these students to think BIG and never give up on your dreams and also to implore the parents to let them dream wherever their minds take them. Always encourage and support them in their dreams not ours.

It's always difficult as Minister of Education to speak to an audience such as this. We have model students who are well rounded. They are exceptional individuals and you really don't appreciate how truly exceptional they unless you can compare them to your other kids who are exceptional in their own right.

Then I know the sacrifice first hand that parents make to create an atmosphere for these children to be the best that God intended them to be. So I know you are model parents and guardians. So we have model students and model parents so as Minister of Education there is not much for me to say because you get it! You understand your responsibility as

parents and the importance of education and producing well rounded children. These children are dedicated and committed to excellence.

I thought however I would share with these future leaders some of the lessons I've learnt over the past 50 years, as a parent of almost 20 years, a husband and lawyer of almost 25 years, an entrepreneur of 35 years and a public servant of close to 10 years.

I want to start with God. **Always put God First.** Everything you have accomplished and will accomplish will only be through the Grace of God. Never forget that. If you remember nothing else from my remarks remember this simple truth.

Always speak the truth! Never be afraid to tell the truth. If you ask my kids today what are the only things daddy would have beaten you for they will say without hesitation lying and being rude. That's it. Never for telling the truth no matter how bad it is.

Always give more than you receive. You have been blessed far beyond your own understanding. I don't mean just giving things away. It could be a smile, a helping hand, helping someone understand a difficult problem, sharing what you have with someone in need. You have been blessed and to whom much is given even more is expected. Whatever you give will come back ten-fold.

Never think you are smarter than everyone else. **Be Humble!** There is a difference between being confident and being full of yourself. If you think you are smarter than the plumber or mechanic, you try and figure out how water runs through your house or how a car gets from A to B and how to fix the pipes when the water stops running or fix the car when it stops running. Some of us don't even know how to tighten a loose battery cable and we have all kind of degrees.

Never compare yourself to others. There will always be greater and lesser persons depending on what means you are using as a comparison. Tall, short, big, small, good with books, good with your hands, long hair, short hair, red, yellow, black or white it really doesn't matter. Be yourself and be true to yourself.

Everything in life happens for a reason. Everything in life is as it should be. You will not understand everything that happens to you. Many things will be beyond your understanding at the time and only time will reveal the reason. Remember you always learn more from your failures than your successes.

Where you start in life is not where you will end up and the career you start with may not be the one you finish with. So always have an open mind and be prepared for the opportunities when they arise. All I wanted to be in life was a businessman. I started my first business when I was 13 and when I graduated

from school at 16 some 35 years ago I was earning quite a bit of money even by today's standard. I never thought back then I would be a lawyer and become a public servant let alone a Minister of the Government. None of that was of interest to me then.

Which brings me to my next point. **Money isn't everything!** Find what you love, follow your passion. There are a lot of unhappy rich people. And there are a lot of people who don't like their jobs. That's why I tell people I love my job, definitely not because of the pay or perks but because I've found I love to serve and directly influence and guide the future direction of our country. I love the fact that my team at the Ministry of Education and I are improving our educational system and making it more relevant to our national needs and making our students more competitive globally. So find a job or profession you love so you can't wait to get up in the morning to go to work.

Take responsibility for everything that happens to you. The good and the bad and never blame others for any misfortune or set back you will experience. Everything in life is as it should be.

Be slow to trust and quick to forgive. This is a difficult one! I can tell you that the quicker you learn this the more enjoyable your life will be. Bitterness will stifle your calling in life, sap your energy and impede your creativity. So learn to “Let Go and Let God!” What did Jesus ask the Lord to do when he was being nailed to the cross? Lord “FORGIVE THEM!”

Lead by example! You are all leaders. Remember much is expected of you and everyone will be watching you and looking for you to lead them. Embrace it with a sense of dignity and empathy.

My final point is, **Life is short don't waste one day.** Even at your age you can make a huge impact on

your country and indeed the world. But never take yourself too seriously.

Run your own race, while honouring your mother and father, set your own course and follow your dreams but never forget to take time to smell the roses and taste the sweet fruits of your success. Pursue excellence in everything you do, so at the end of the day when you go for your just reward, the God you serve will look upon you and the life you lead and say “well done thy good and faithful servant”.

In closing, I wish to thank Dr. Ricardo Deveaux and his distinguished team for having the vision and the desire to recognize the students who have distinguished themselves as the “Who’s Who” in Bahamian primary schools. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all the individuals who have bought into Ricardo’s dream and have become contributors, especially the Nassau, Bahamas Pan-

Hellenic Council for your continued endorsement of this initiative.

And finally, to the nominees, always remember this day. To the student who will bear the title of the 2016 Bahamas Primary School Student of the Year, I congratulate you, and I want all of you to know, that I am extremely proud of you. I wish you continued success and God's richest blessings and guidance as you travel your road of excellence and success.

Congratulations, Thank you and good night!