



The following is the Message for Education Week from the Minister of Education, Youth and Culture, the Hon Maxine Henry-Wilson

In a society that is confronted with major challenges and atrocities, including blatant disregard for life, personhood and property, education remains an essential means of contending with these and other challenges.

Our teachers are at the pulse of efforts to establish the common foundations for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will foster the culture, of respect and regard for codes of conduct, all of which are essential for the economic, social and cultural development of this country. Therefore, teachers more than ever deserve greater respect and support in this country and should not be taken for granted.

We believe that if the mission of education does not command the respect and support of the entire community, teachers will neither be respected nor supported. All of us must therefore ensure that we protect our stake in the education of our children and make the teachers' burden of responsibility for moulding minds much lighter by our examples and our actions in society.

Our teachers very often have to be helping students to unlearn much of the disruptive behaviours they pick up from other socialising agencies and so-called role models. It is our teachers who have to be working assiduously to help them make sense of this chaotic world and to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.

We must play our part in fostering good values and attitudes for our children to emulate, so that when they go to school, the appropriate foundation is laid on which the teacher can build.

I am calling upon all not to give platitudes on Teachers' Day, but to commit or re-commit to the full support and development of our teachers right throughout the year.

The Government is committed to playing its role in creating opportunities for our teachers to grow and develop both personally and professionally. The education transformation, the Salute the Teachers programme; the Prime Ministers medal for outstanding teachers, the plan to re-tool and upgrade some 17, 000 teachers; the Teacher Performance Evaluation programme; the practice of refunding tuition fees to teachers who pursue further studies and the scholarships provided through

various partnerships are some of the expressions of our commitment to develop a cadre of well trained professionals who can assert themselves in any classroom across the globe.

But not only that, we are committed to creating a teaching environment in which our teachers can work comfortably, feel safe and secure. We are committed to constantly reviewing and augmenting the remuneration to always bring them within market rates so that our teachers can live comfortably.

This year, through several projects and programmes, we are also promoting zero tolerance of violence and indiscipline in schools against both students and teachers; we are determined to rid our schools of the alarming acts of violence and we are warning our students not to allow themselves to be pressured or be misled into abrogating their right to an education in the school of their choice.

I commend the Jamaica Teachers' Association — the pioneers of Education Week — who have also demonstrated their commitment to work with the education ministry in providing opportunities, realising potential and creating excellence in education for both our students and teachers. I congratulate you on your choice of theme for Education Week and applaud you on your endeavours to promote literacy through your newest initiative — Read Across Jamaica.

Finally, I want to remind our teachers to continue to seek creative ways to engage your students in the quest for learning. Today's changing world requires people to draw increasingly upon their education, not only in terms of their level of knowledge, but also in terms of the skills that allow them to adapt to change.

This extends education beyond a single school experience to lifelong learning. Your role is critical in helping students to acquire the education and training necessary for shaping and managing their lives, to learn how to become successful life-long learners, always able to broaden their horizons.

Be steadfast and unmovable in this role, as you continue to help us build this great nation.