Leading with Purpose: Igniting Passion and Unlocking Potential

Remarks by Dr., The Most Honourable Kevin Greenidge, F.B., Governor, at the

St. Mary's Primary School Student Leaders Investiture Ceremony

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Good morning, boys and girls!

Now, that sounds like a school full of future leaders!

Let me begin by congratulating all the students who are being invested today as prefects, form captains and house captains.

Today is a special day for you, your families and your school.

Your teachers have selected you because they see something special in you. They believe you have the ability to lead, to set an example and to make St. Mary's Primary School a better place.

And you are joining a proud tradition. Your school has been educating young Barbadians for more than 200 years. Think of all the children who have passed through its classrooms, and the difference they have gone on to make in our country.

Today, you have an opportunity to add your own chapter to that history.

But let me tell you something very important.

Being selected as a leader does not automatically make you a good leader. What you do with that opportunity is what matters.

You see, I have a title too. I am the Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados.

Now, that sounds like a very important job, doesn't it?

And it is!

But does having the title of Governor automatically make me a good leader?

Of course not!

Every day, I have to earn the trust of the people I work with. I have to listen, make difficult decisions, treat people fairly and set the right example.

And guess what? Sometimes I make mistakes too. When I do, I must be willing to admit them, learn from them and do better.

That is leadership.

Your theme today is "Leading with Purpose: Igniting Passion and Unlocking Potential."

Those are some big words, but their meaning is quite simple.

Let me explain what they mean to me.

Leading with Purpose

First, leading with purpose means knowing **why** you are a leader.

If you are becoming a prefect, is your purpose to walk around telling other children what to do?

No!

If you are becoming a house captain, is your purpose simply to make sure your house wins every competition?

Certainly not!

And if you are becoming a form captain, does that mean you are better than the other children in your class?

Absolutely not!

Your badge is not a crown. It is a promise.

A promise to be fair. A promise to help others. A promise to do the right thing, even when nobody is watching.

Your purpose is to serve, to help and to make a positive difference.

When you see a younger child struggling to carry something, help.

When you notice someone sitting alone during lunchtime, invite that person to join you.

When you see someone being treated unfairly, have the courage to speak up.

And when you have a responsibility, carry it out properly, even when nobody is watching.

Your school's own creed expresses this beautifully:

"As many hands build a house, so many hearts make a school."

Think about what that means.

A school is more than buildings, classrooms, desks and books. It is the people who make it a place where children feel safe, valued, encouraged and excited to learn.

And each of you has a part to play in making St. Mary's that kind of school.

That is what leading with purpose looks like.

Igniting Passion

Now, let us talk about passion.

Passion means caring deeply about something and giving it your very best effort.

Think about something you really enjoy. Perhaps it is cricket, football, netball, dancing, singing, drawing or playing a musical instrument.

When you love doing something, you practise. You try to improve. Even when it gets difficult, you keep going.

Leadership requires that same commitment.

A good leader brings energy and enthusiasm to everything they do.

But here is something important.

Passion is not just about being excited when you receive your badge today. It is about showing that same commitment tomorrow, next week and throughout the school year.

It means doing your best even when the task is not exciting.

It means encouraging your housemates after they lose a competition.

It means helping your classmates succeed, even when nobody gives you a prize for doing so.

The best leaders don't just work hard to achieve their own goals. They inspire other people to believe that they can achieve great things too.

And that brings me to the final part of your theme.

Unlocking Potential

What does it mean to unlock potential?

Potential is the ability inside you to become something more than you are today.

Think about a small seed.

When you hold that seed in your hand, it may not look like much.

But with the right soil, water, sunlight and care, that little seed can grow into a magnificent tree.

The potential to become that tree is already inside the seed.

And it is the same with you.

Every single child in this room has potential.

But sometimes we cannot see our own potential. Sometimes it takes someone else to recognise it first.

Let me ask you something.

How many of you have ever found something at school difficult? Perhaps mathematics, reading, spelling or even speaking in front of your classmates?

Put up your hands.

Well, look at that! My hand is up too!

Let me tell you why.

When I was a young boy, I spent part of my early life in a children's home. Money was tight, and I did not have some of the opportunities that other children enjoyed.

At Wesley Hall Infant School, I found myself in what they called an R class.

The R stood for remedial, a class for children who needed extra help with their schoolwork.

But something important happened.

A teacher named Mr. Hood looked at me and saw something that others may not have recognised.

He believed I could do more.

He took an interest in me and helped me move into the regular class.

Later, at Wesley Hall Primary School, another teacher, Miss Nichols, made an important difference in my life.

When it was time for the Eleven Plus examination, what you know today as the Common Entrance, she looked at the secondary schools that had been chosen for me.

She believed I could aim higher.

So, she changed those choices to schools that reflected what she believed I had the potential to achieve.

Think about that for a moment.

These teachers did not give me some special talent that I did not already possess.

They helped me discover the potential that was already inside me.

They believed in me, sometimes more than I believed in myself.

And their encouragement made a difference.

But my journey was not always easy.

When I attended The Alleyne School, I was not one of the top students. In fact, by the time I reached Fifth Form, I was on course to leave secondary school without a single examination certificate.

Imagine that!

The person standing before you today as Governor of the Central Bank nearly left secondary school without passing any examinations.

But I decided that my story would not end there.

I approached my principal and asked for another chance.

He gave it to me.

I worked harder than I had ever worked before. I studied, made sacrifices and stayed focused.

And when I eventually sat my examinations, I passed all eight subjects with the highest grade.

I went on to university, became an economist and eventually became Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados.

Why am I telling you this?

Certainly not to boast.

I am telling you because where you start in life does not determine where you finish.

There may be someone sitting here today who struggles with mathematics.

Someone who finds reading difficult.

Someone who is shy and afraid to speak in front of others.

Or someone who sometimes thinks, "I am not as clever as the other children."

Let me tell you something.

Never allow your present difficulties to determine what you believe is possible for your future.

And remember, courage does not mean that you are never afraid. Sometimes courage means trying something difficult, asking for help or admitting that you do not understand.

I needed help along my journey, and I received it.

Mr. Hood helped me. Miss Nichols encouraged me. Other teachers and mentors supported me as I grew older.

And here is something else I have discovered.

Even today, as Governor, I still have people who guide, encourage and mentor me, both personally and professionally.

You never become too important or too successful to learn from others.

But there is another side to this story, and it is especially important for those of you receiving your badges today.

Just as others helped me discover my potential, you now have an opportunity to help other children discover theirs.

You might notice a classmate who is very good at drawing but is too shy to show anyone.

Encourage that child.

You might have a friend who keeps making mistakes in mathematics.

Help that friend practise.

Or perhaps someone in your house loses a race and feels disappointed.

Remind that person that losing one race does not make them a failure.

Sometimes, the most important thing a leader can say is simply:

"I believe in you."

Those four words can change someone's life.

I know, because people said them to me.

And as you grow older, remember this too: when someone reaches out a hand to help you, take it. And when you find yourself in a position to help someone else, reach back and offer your hand.

That is how we build stronger schools, stronger communities and, ultimately, a stronger Barbados.

My Challenge to You

So, as you receive your badges today, let me leave you with three simple challenges.

First, lead by example.

Do the right thing, even when it is difficult. Be honest, respectful and fair. Remember that your schoolmates will learn more from what you do than from what you tell them to do.

Second, lift others up.

Do not use your position to make anyone feel small. Help others feel valued, included and capable.

A good leader does not need to make other people feel less important to feel important.

Third, never stop learning and growing.

You will make mistakes. We all do.

When that happens, acknowledge them, apologise where necessary, learn the lesson and keep improving.

And let me say something to the students who are not receiving badges today.

You are important too.

You do not need a badge to show kindness, courage, honesty or responsibility.

You do not need a title to help someone.

And you certainly do not need permission to become the best version of yourself.

Every one of you can be a leader.

Conclusion

My young friends, today you are receiving something special.

Your teachers are placing their trust in you.

Make that trust count.

When you return to your classrooms tomorrow, remember that leadership is not about how many people listen when you speak.

It is about how many people feel encouraged, supported and valued because of the way you treat them.

As you go through this school year, ask yourself three questions:

- Did I set a good example today?
- Did I help someone today?
- Did I do something today that made my school a better place?

If you can answer yes to those questions, you are already becoming a good leader.

And remember this:

The badge you receive today may one day come off your uniform, but the character you develop through leadership can remain with you for the rest of your life.

To our new prefects, form captains and house captains, congratulations!

Lead with purpose.

Bring passion to everything you do.

And help unlock the tremendous potential within yourselves and those around you.

I believe in you.

Your teachers believe in you.

Now, believe in yourselves, and show us what you can do.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.