

**Feature address presented by Ms Shellecia Brooks during the 2011 Comprehensive Learning Centre Student Award Ceremony [1 March 2012]**

## Expanding your Horizons through Education

*"For learning to take place with any kind of efficiency students must be motivated. To be motivated, they must become interested. And they become interested when they are actively working on projects which they can relate, to their values and goals in life"* - Gus Tuberville, President, William Penn College

Regardless of our age these words are true at every stage of our education. When you become interested in what you are working on, it no longer becomes work. It becomes something you love to do. Learning should not be a chore, and neither should education. You should learn because you want to, not because you have to. Finding your passion is the key to doing this successfully.

When Mrs. York Gumbs asked me to give the keynote address for this award ceremony, I readily agreed. I am relatively new to the inner workings of the Comprehensive Learning Centre but I am very impressed and encouraged by the extent and quality of the programs and modular courses which are offered there.

I have been fortunate to have the experience of both being a student and a lecturer at the Centre. I love to learn and I love to teach. In short, I am an advocate for Education. Thus when I was told the theme for this award ceremony which is 'expanding your horizons through education,' I thought how very fitting for this occasion.

So what exactly does this theme really mean? The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines expand as to increase the size, volume, quantity, or scope of; enlarge. Horizon is defined by the same source as the range of one's knowledge, experience, or interest. Education is defined as the act or process of acquiring knowledge.

Therefore, 'Expanding your horizons through education,' refers to increasing the scope of your knowledge, experience or interest through the process of acquiring or imparting knowledge.

So, what kinds of people trade their free time in front of the television for hours spent learning a new subject area, writing SBA's or preparing presentations? Let me give you a clue. Tonight these people are wearing Black and White. There is no doubt that each of you would have had a different motivation for making the initial step to sign up for a class or classes at the Comprehensive Learning Centre.

Some of you may be looking for a competitive edge or seeking career advancement. Others may be high school students getting a jump on new subject areas or adult learners interested in personal development and improvement your well being.

I am truly inspired when I hear some of the success stories of adult students who came to the centre often with very few or no subjects. Many of these persons after two or three years achieve 7 and 8 subjects and continue to successfully pursue CAPE subjects leading to an associate degree.

I recently had the opportunity to talk to a new student at the centre. This student will be writing three CXC subjects including English at the next CXC sitting. She admitted that raising a family, working full time and studying was a challenge but she was determined to successfully complete her CXC's and go on to CAPE.

In talking to her, what I admired even more was when she spoke of her young son and his thirst for education and about how she encourages him. This demonstrates an important fact that as we seek to expand our horizons through education we should also be seeking to expand the horizons of other persons in our lives.

There are many reasons why you should pursue further education. Some are obvious like the fact that you can and probably will make more money. This of course is a great motivator but there are so many other reasons why you should use education to expand your knowledge, interest and experience. Let us now look at some of these reasons.

- 1) **Increased Opportunities** – There will be more job and promotion opportunities which are available to you. In addition, when you seek to expand your horizons through education you will start to see and experience new opportunities and interests outside of jobs which you may have missed or had not been open to previously.
  
- 2) **Personal Empowerment** – When you seek out education you will start to see changes in your day to day life. You will learn and better understand many things for e.g. knowing how to read and understand a lease. You will also improve other skills such as your money management and time management skills. You will find you are in better control of your daily life.
  
- 3) **More Security in adverse times** – Having qualifications and marketable skills to fall back on is a comfort when things get a little rough. In a fragile economy, nobody's job is safe. If there are concerns at your company about layoffs, then you should enhance your skills so that you are more of a valuable asset to your employers and less likely to lose your position there. Even if your investment in such education does not save your current job, it should make you more marketable in a job search.

- 4) **You can motivate others** – How often do you hear from friends and family that they can't do what you are doing? You can be an agent for change. Your success will inspire many others to follow your path.
  
- 5) **You'll have future opportunities in ways you may not be considering now.** Right now, many of you may not be looking past getting your CXC or Cape Subjects. However, in the future if you do decide to pursue a bachelor's degree or pursue other certifications, you will already have a firm educational foundation under your belt.
  
- 6) **You'll have a strong sense of pride and self.** You may be the first person in your family to pursue further studies or you may come from a long line of graduates. Either way, knowing that you are investing in your educational development will undoubtedly give a lifetime of pride to yourself, your family, and your friends.

**We have discussed the reasons why you should use education to expand your horizons let us now examine how you can expand your horizons through education**

**Firstly**, make lifelong learning your goal. Julie H. Gulliver said 'Let us never be betrayed into saying we have finished our education; because that would mean we had stopped growing.' Don't ever stop growing.

**Secondly**, understand your interests and seek our courses and programs which develop them. What do you hope to achieve by undertaking further studies? If you wish to move into a field requiring a degree, pursuing your CXC's and CAPE subjects and then a university course would be your best option. But if you want to learn the skills necessary to start your own business, a short course (for example, web design or EDPM) or courses which will seek to develop your personal and professional development skills may suit you better.

**Thirdly**, stay abreast of what is new in your industry. Your job may be ever evolving, as is technology, and so you should always be ahead of the game. Understanding newer technology and newer ways of doing things will set you apart from your peers who may prefer to remain stagnant in their knowledge base.

**Fourthly**, understand that there is traditional education and non-traditional education. Embrace both.

As a youth Ambassador I have been given the opportunity to travel extensively. From Trinidad and Tobago to South America to Asia, I have been involved in workshops and conferences where I have been given the opportunity to learn and enhance my personal and professional

development skills. I have learned the art of advocacy, effective communication, teamwork, leadership, governance and much more. I see these as an invaluable part of my education and I have been able to transfer the skills and knowledge gained to all aspects of my life.

During my life, I have also learned that to travel the world and to gain new educational experiences, I need not do more than open a book, any book, or turn on my computer and surf the internet. I love learning and there are so many resources online to learn from. Websites, Blogs, Podcasts...any topic imaginable, any interest you can dream of, there is a world of knowledge online waiting to be consumed by an avid learner such as yourself. Don't limit your education to text books and classes. Expand your horizons to these new forms of education as well.

I recently came across an interesting blog called Sakanu that talked about three types of education. It listed first formal education, that is elementary, CXC, CAPE, bachelors degree etc. This is the most common type of education. Secondly, it listed self taught education, for example, learning through books, seminars, mentors etc. This is a lot less common because it requires a lot of discipline but many athletes, entrepreneurs, musicians master their skills through self-taught education. Finally, according to the blog there is the school of hard knocks and some of you may have been to that school. These are persons who for example may have started their career as a dish washer and over 15-20 years eventually work their way up to managing or owning a restaurant.

Each form of education is extremely valuable and each individual may decide to pursue the type or combination of types of education which best suits them.

I am sure for many of you; your studies thus far have already opened doors – perhaps to promotions, new careers and new personal and professional experiences. Perhaps you now have more confidence to share your ideas in meetings or perhaps you have taken on more leadership responsibility. You are also probably a more analytical, disciplined and independent person. Each of you will have a different experience. What I know for sure is that by pursuing further education, each of you has grown in some positive way.

Peter Brougham said 'education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive: easy to govern but impossible to enslave

To those of you who have been successful in your examinations Congratulations. To those of you who will be sitting exams in a few months best of luck!

I end by encouraging all of you to relentlessly continue your pursuit of education. It is truly the best way to expand your horizons.

