

## **SUB-REGIONAL STUDENT ATTITUDE**

### **DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP**

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REMARKS By

Head, OERU- Lorna Callender

Around each child in the OECS there is a circle of projects ranging from the physical to the behavioral. These projects are initiated and coordinated by the Education Reform Unit and are designed so as to make educational improvement in all the OECS member states continuous, relevant and meaningful.

In doing this we are fulfilling the mandate of the OECS Ministers of Education whose meeting in 1990 led to the commissioning of a Task Force and a resulting document *Foundations for the Future*. The 65 strategies suggested in this document direct us in the selection of our priorities when dealing with the reform of education in the OECS.

But our selection is not arbitrary. Also guiding us are personnel from the Ministries of Education in each member state who meet regularly with us to overview our program of activities. Annually our Ministers of Education, who comprise the Reform Council, meet to hear reports of our progress, endorse the plans made and or suggest the new pathways she should follow.

This year, we welcome three new Ministers of Education to our Reform Council – the Hon. Herbert Sabaroche, the Minister of Education in Dominica; the Hon. the Minister of Education in Anguilla and I am pleased to have the opportunity to welcome, on behalf of the Education Reform Unit, to our Reform Council, the Hon. Timothy Harris, the new Minister of Education for St. Kitts and Nevis.

Just over a year ago, we welcomed to our Reform Council the Minister of Education for Grenada and the Minister of Education for Antigua and Barbuda. But the changing of Ministers that occur on the landscape of our coordinating mechanisms overseeing reform is but a small part of the earthshaking educational changes that are taking place worldwide.

These changes of our new Information Age are redirecting us to meet the challenges of making our curriculum relevant, of enhancing our modes of delivery and of more efficiently and effectively managing our Information Systems.

So far, through our circle of projects, we have sought

- To expand our physical environments – *to improve access to education*
- To strengthen management and administration practices – *to improve delivery of education*

- To increase opportunities for teacher education – *to improve quality*
- To harmonize curricula – *to improve relevance and integration*

But I do believe that this project which causes us to be here today, which surveyed the Attitudes Students' have towards School, towards work, towards achievement and towards their future is one of the most important because it speaks to what I choose to call "the soft underbelly of education" i.e. the relationships or internal dynamics of our education system – the energy that drives it to or retards it from achieving the results that all our other projects together seek i.e.

***"To unfold the potential of our people to meet the challenge of small island states existing in a sea of competitive forces."***

I can agree with George Dennison who said, *"We might cease thinking of a school as a place, and learn to believe that it is basically relationships between children and adults, and between children and other children. The four walls and the principal's office would cease to loom so hugely as the essential ingredients."*

With all the technological delights the new millennium will bring, there are some things that will never cease to make inroads in the level of achievement attained by a student, and these are things which our Attitude Surveys have confirmed:

These are, for instance, the encouragement given by a loving parent, the concern shown by a dedicated teacher and the recognition of achievement given by peers and adults alike. Our deliberations must emphasize that we must teach the student even more than we teach the curriculum. William Alexander Percy emphasizes this in his immortal statement

He says: ***As with all great teachers, his curriculum was an insignificant part of what he communicated. From him you didn't learn a subject, but life....Tolerance and justice, fearlessness and pride, reverence and pity, are learned in a course on long division if the teacher has those qualities.***

It is this other side of education that this meeting I think will address. We cannot just repair or replace faulty parts; we must discard, if we have to, the mechanistic practices of institutions and learn from the behavior of living systems. We must shift and look at the invisible level of internal dynamics.

Here's what Leon Lessinger says: *Human beings are full of emotion, and the teacher who knows how to use it will have dedicated learners. It means sending dominant signals instead of submissive ones with your eyes, body and voice.*

So as the educational landscape changes, we, too, at the Education Reform Unit are undergoing changes. Our entire modus operandi is being reviewed and it is our desire to reach our youth and our education systems where it matters most. We will be seeking to learn from you what our future focus should be. How can we give our youth what the new Minister of Education calls "coping competencies 'for the future."

(Story of hurricane.....”We expect to find a new beach”

‘**Education** – not just ‘filling a pail’ but lighting a fire.

Let us light fires, rekindle our spirits and we go out to find the ‘new beach”