

Speech for Coley's Mountain Primary School Graduation Exercise 2007

Specially invited guests, Principal Mrs. Millicent Watson, teachers, parents, graduates and well-wishers. I am very honoured to be here today.

As I thought about what I would say this afternoon, while looking at an old photograph and reminiscing, my mind went off on a journey, taking me back 32 years in time. 32 years ago I posed for that picture on the dirt playing field with the sun in my eyes, along with my grade two classmates and our teacher Ms. Morgan. It could have been just before lunch time as the sun seemed to have been very hot. I wondered, What did we learn that day? What games did we play during lunchtime? Was it Dandy Shandy, Hopscotch or Jump rope? Who did I play with? Did I carry lunch that day or did I buy bun and cheese with syrup from Ms. Ceris' or Maas Frenny?

As I came back to reality and my eyes found their way back to my computer screen, then wandered to my desk, my office and the large painting hanging on the blue wall before me, it struck me that no one in that picture, none of us, knew what he or she would be doing on June 24, 2007, today. But here I am today a representative of the grade 2 class of 1975 addressing the graduating class of 2007. Can you believe it? It all seems like a dream, but it isn't. Time waits on no one, irrespective of who you are.

Like you graduating here today I walked to school each day rain or shine, from Topsham to Coley's Mountain, Monday to Friday. (Although some of you might now go by taxi). We sang 'We build our school on thee or Lord' at devotions conducted by Mr. Sanderson and had great fun jumping through the rails on the back step of the library. But how quickly times flies? Here you are heading to high school where a whole world of learning is awaiting you.

Young men and young women, I want to challenge you this afternoon. I say to you, **You can be successful because you hold the keys to your destiny. (Repeat)** The two most important words here are **successful and keys**. Let me see a show of hands of those who want to be successful. (Response, comment). Let us first define success. What is success? Who is a successful person? Success is the accomplishment of an aim whether it be wealth, fame, status or position. A thing or a person that turns out well. It is a favourable outcome. Successful people come out on top. They get the promotions at work, get the awards for achievement (like a GSAT scholarship), get special treatment from others, achieve scholastically, travel to distant lands, drive nice cars, live in the best areas, they are accomplished athletes, entrepreneurs and entertainers. They are the envy of everyone. What's the secret?

Second we need a working definition for key. A key is something of vital importance , a thing that gives or prevents access to something. It can also be a solution. **Repeat for emphasis.**

So we have defined success and key.

I want to share with you the four keys to success.

The first key to success is **Knowledge**. Knowledge is defined as awareness of or familiarity with a person, fact or thing. It is also a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. I will speak about knowledge from two angles. There is **knowledge of self and knowledge of a subject matter**. Lets start with knowledge of self. To be successful you must have a knowledge of who you are as a person. You must know you strengths. What are your talents, what do you enjoy doing? Know your weaknesses and know your limitations. Don't plan on being a medical doctor if you hate being around sick people and you can't stand the sight of blood.

You must also know what is good for you and what is not. (like following the wrong crowd – otherwise called bad company). That's bad for you.

It is also critical to know what you want to accomplish and this is true at any stage of one's life, its never too early. What are you going to accomplish in the short term, medium term and long term? You must have a plan for your life. Things will change, and that's O.K. But if you don't know where you are going then any road will get you there.

Knowledge of a subject matter is very important. Here I want to make it clear that I refer to specialized knowledge and not general knowledge. There is not much that you can do with general knowledge. Is like being a jack of all trades and a master of none. Let me give you an example to explain. If you wanted to open an Accounting Firm then you would most definitely need to have specialized knowledge in

accounts or if a Medical practice specialized knowledge in medicine would be necessary.

But let me hasten to say that specialized knowledge alone is not enough because there are many highly trained specialist who are no good to themselves or the society. **The term Knowledge is power is a joke. Yes you heard correctly. Knowledge is power is a false statement. Knowledge is only potential power. The use of organized or specialized knowledge + a definite action plan to use the knowledge to attain success = Power**

The second key is to be '**Extraordinary**'. To be successful you must be an extra ordinary person. **Average won't cut it.** Otherwise everyone would be successful. You must have high personal standards which you should not compromise. Demand it from yourself and also from others around you. You have to go the extra mile. You will be the student who takes the initiative to answer additional questions that were not required by the teacher. You will be the one to investigate a new topic because you want to know more, although no one asked you to.

To demonstrate the concept of being extraordinary let me share with you a story.

Years ago an elderly nun was dying in a poor country many miles from her home. This nun had spent her whole life in the missions, bringing hope and help to the poor. On her deathbed, the priest giving her the last rites said: 'Are you afraid to die, Sister?' The dying nun replied: 'No, not afraid Father, ashamed to die because I didn't do enough for God.' Here was a woman who spent 55 years of her life working for God, and

she felt that her efforts were not enough. That's an extraordinary person. Extraordinary people never stop trying to do more. They go the extra mile, and guess what, its never crowded along the extra mile.

Always remember that the difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little 'extra'.

When Colonel Harlan Sanders left home with his pressure cooker and his special recipe for cooking Southern Fried chicken, he received over 300 rejections before he found someone to believe in his dream.

Because he rejected rejection over 300 times, there are now 11,000 KFC restaurants in 80 countries around the world.

Be extraordinary!

The third key is '**yearning**'. Yearning is defined as a strong emotional longing..... It is that burning desire, that fire in your belly that makes you want to achieve. Yearning is the launching pad for your dreams. It's the starting point of all achievement. Consider it the airstrip from which your dreams take flight. And never you underestimate the power of your dreams. Dreams are powerful! So dream big dreams and reach for the stars. And when you dream, dream in colour. Visualise yourself as being successful, which is to say 'Begin with the end in mind' and imprint this image in your mind.

Remember 'if you can dream it you can achieve it' BUT 'you have to believe it' and you have to believe in yourself.

Back in August of 1997 after completing a Master's degree in Business Administration with Nova SouthEastern University, I returned home after my final course to face a dead-end job. There was no scope for promotion, and I felt disappointed that my talents were not being recognized. And I wondered when I would get 'my break'. But breaks can be made to order. And that's exactly what I did. I decided to open my own company doing what I know best. Instead of trying to get a big job with a big company I would become the owner of the company and provide the jobs. That should take care of it I thought. So I got to work on my master plan and made the mistake of sharing it with friends. Almost everyone told me that it was a bad idea and why it was a bad idea. I think telling them was the bad idea.

They said the economy was not doing well, where would the capital come from, we had enough IT companies and the time was not right. But I did not listen, because I knew what I wanted to do and I knew it would be a success. But, they were not totally wrong, it was difficult. In fact it was very difficult. In the first year I felt like giving up on several occasions, but my desire to succeed kept me going. Ten years later SSP APTEC, the company I started is one of the leading Information Technology companies in Jamaica. And it feels good.

Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe it can achieve.

The fourth key is to be **steadfast**. To be steadfast is to be consistent, persistent, constant, firm and unwavering. It's the combination of desire and will power which is an irresistible pair.

The majority of people are ready to throw their aims and purposes overboard, and give up at the first sign of difficulty. A few carry on despite all odds until they attain their goal. Steadfastness is based upon definite causes, among them:

Definiteness of purpose: Knowing what one wants is the first and perhaps the most important step towards the development of steadfastness. A strong motive forces one to surmount many difficulties.

Desire: It should be easy to acquire and maintain steadfastness in pursuing the object of ones desire.

Self-reliance: Belief in one's ability to carry out a plan encourages one to follow the plan through.

Definiteness of plans: Organised plans though they may be weak and totally impractical encourages steadfastness.

Accurate Knowledge: Knowing that one's plans are sound based upon experience or observation encourages steadfastness

Will-power: The habit of concentrating one's thought upon the building of plans for the attainment of a definite purpose leads to steadfastness

Habit: Steadfastness is the direct result of habit. The mind absorbs and becomes a part of the daily experiences upon which it feeds. Too many

people refuse to set high goals for themselves, or even neglect selecting a career because they fear the criticism of family and friends who may say 'Don't aim so high, people will think you are crazy.'

The secret is told in the story of the struggle of Fannie Hurst whose persistence conquered Broadway. She came to New York in 1915 to convert her writing skills into great riches. For four years Ms. Hurst walked the sidewalks of New York. She spent her days labouring and her nights hoping. When hope grew dim she did not say 'All right Broadway you win' She said 'Very well, Broadway, you may whip some but not me. I'm going to force you to give up.

One publisher, the Saturday Evening post sent her thirty-six rejection slips, Thirty-six rejection slips, before she broke the ice and got a story across. The average writer, like the average person in other walks of life would have given up when the first rejection slip came. But she kept pounding the pavement for four years because she was determined to win. After that first story the payoff came. The spell had been broken. From that time on Publishers beat a path to her door. Money came so fast she hardly had time to count it. Then the movies discovered her and money came not in small change, but in floods. Its always easier to give up. But if you cannot be steadfast then you have to revisit your yearnings. They say a small fire gives little heat but a large fire gives much heat.

Maybe your desires are not strong enough to sustain you for the long haul. If that is the case then dream bigger dreams. What if Fannie had given up? She could have.

Never, Never, Never give up. Because its always too soon to quit.

If you meet a hundred persons and ask them what they want most in life, ninety-eight of them will not be able to tell you. If you press them for an answer they will probably say, happiness, money, security, fame, power. But most of them will not be able to precisely define these term, or give the slightest indication of a plan of action to attain the vaguely expressed wishes. But success does not respond to wishes only to definite plans backed by definite desires through steadfastness. You have to determine you interests, values and goals for the future. Determine the lifestyle you want as an adult and **understand the** components necessary to achieve those outcomes.

Behind every great story of achievement is a story of education, training, practice, discipline, and sacrifice.

Be steadfast in reaching your goal.

Recap the main points

The four keys to success are K- Knowledge, E- being Extraordinary, Y- yearning and S- Steadfast . **The first letter of each word spell the word K-E-Y-S.**

Final Point

With these four keys you can open any door. Use them!