

**Message to Mark the Opening of the 2018-2019  
Academic Year  
By Hon. St. Clair “Jimmy” Prince  
Minister of Education, National Reconciliation and Information  
September 3, 2018**

Educators, principals, teachers, parents and guardians and all of our students, I am delighted as the Minister of Education, to welcome you to this new academic year, 2018-2019. It seems as if it was just yesterday that we began the 2017-2018 school year. The summer vacation has passed very quickly and a new academic year has begun.

As we reflect on the last academic year, it is only fitting that we pause to express gratitude to God for His guidance and protection on our colleagues, friends and loved ones. Through the challenges we have emerged with new strength and vigor to start another school year.

The Ministry of Education wishes to thank all our stakeholders who continue to support and assist us over the course of time. Education is our priority; therefore, we thank you for standing with us and doing all in your power to support the children of our nation as they continue to strive for excellence.

Let me take this opportunity to welcome our returning principals, teachers and students back to the classroom and to extend a

special welcome to our new students at the Early Childhood Centres, those in Kindergarten and all the students who are going to new schools or new classes. I wish you every success as you begin a new chapter in your young lives. There is no need for you to worry since you are in the hands of capable teachers who are concerned about your well being.

Principals and teachers, your task is a critical one, as it is said that teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions. Your role as principals and teachers put you in the position to make a global impact from where you are. Marian Wright Edelman said: "Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it". This speaks to your responsibility as educators, to impact the life of every student who passes through your hands, their parents, and community and by extension, the world. I therefore implore you, to do all in your power to make a positive impact on the students who are registered at your schools.

Instilling values of tolerance, kindness and brotherly love in the children of our nation is essential. There is greater need for our parents, teachers, counselors and churches to work more closely together to make a greater impact on our students, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels where additional support is required.

Our schools must provide a safe and comfortable place for children to learn as every child has the right to be educated. Therefore, I impress upon our school leaders the need to implement and emphasize the principles and practices of the Ch

Child friendly schools are:

- Proactively inclusive – seeking out and enabling participation of all children
- They are academically effective and relevant to children's needs for life and livelihood knowledge and skills,
- These schools are healthy and safe for, and protective of, children's emotional psychological and physical well-being,
- They are gender-responsive in creating environments and capacities fostering equality
- And they are actively engaged with, and enabling of, students, family and community participation in all aspects of school policy, management and support to children.

As we speak of challenges, a few persons who were with us last school year unfortunately are no longer with us. The Ministry of Education expresses condolences to the families who have lost children and family members through tragic circumstances. Also, some of our teachers are ill and cannot be in their schools at this time. Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with all of

you as you cope with loss or recover from illness. We wish for you a speedy recovery.

To those who have retired, the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines express our thanks for your faithful service to this nation. You are Nation Builders and we wish you well as you continue to contribute to this nation through other means.

Again, we take the time to congratulate our successful students who sat the CAPE, CSEC and CCSLC Examinations. Your success is the nation's success and we are proud of your achievements. I encourage you to continue to strive for excellence as you climb the ladder of academic achievement.

Students, you have a responsibility to yourself, your parents and teachers to make the best use of the opportunities that have been provided for you to receive an education. The Government is doing its best with its limited resources to provide you with quality education and opportunities that are unknown to some of our parents. I therefore implore you to stay in school and take learning seriously. Listen to your teachers and show them the respect they deserve.

Finally, I must acknowledge the work that is done by the Ministry of Education and our officers who work assiduously to ensure that

schools are ready for our students. Thank you for your hard work.  
I wish us all a safe and productive school year.