



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**ST FRANCOIS GIRLS' COLLEGE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION**

**(VIRTUAL ADDRESS)**

**Message By**

**Dr. the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly**

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> Febuary, 2022**

## **SALUTATIONS:**

1. The Hon. Stuart Young, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Member of Parliament for Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann's West
2. Mrs Simone Noel School Supervisor 3
3. Councillors Joy Benjamin and Nicole Young
4. Mrs Pasha Seecharan, Principal of St. Francois Girls' College
5. Ms Debbie Bridgemahon, Ag Vice Principal St. Francois Girls' College
6. Chairperson of the 60th anniversary committee
7. All stakeholders PTA and Alumnae Presidents
8. Staff and students both past and present

Congratulations to St. Francois Girls College (SFGC), what a milestone ....60 years of existence!

The dedication, perseverance and unyielding drive to producing young women of quality is a hallmark of this proud institution's legacy. A legacy that is sustained by the staff, parents, students, alumni and various stakeholders who ensure this school produces leaders in every sector in this country and beyond. Congratulations to St. Francois' engineers, band leaders, doctors, digital content creators, lawyers, media practitioners, psychologists, architects and activists, artists and artisans just to name a few. So many of your alumni are already or very much on the path of becoming masters of their careers! Congratulations to this distinguished institution!

The theme for your 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, **'Our gift to the Nation- Celebrating SFGC 60 years of excellence'** is so very apt at a time when our world seems to have forgotten how to celebrate. This College was founded because of a desire to provide equal education opportunities for young girls. It was the solution to an education landscape that was at that time dominated by denominational schools that many were not able to gain entry into. To think that all of this started as an alternative to limited secondary school options way back in 1962 and it is still a premier educational institution now is testament to this school's commitment to excellence. 1962, was

also a pivotal year in Trinidad and Tobago's history as it was the year we gained independence. Coincidental or not both events have impacted the landscape of this country. The first cohort of girls who graduated were the trailblazers, they set the path that students over 50 years later are taking.....a path of excellence.

I imagine that the journey to get to this day was not an easy one. Moreso in the last two academic years where, the students, parents, principal, teachers and support staff navigated completely new territory with the introduction of full time online and blended learning. But according to the saying, God Gives his most difficult tasks to his strongest soldiers.

You have had to adapt over the last 60 years of existence, adapt to new technologies, new demands for different skill sets for which teachers have to prepare students, new modalities of teaching and learning. The world has changed, learning has changed, and our students have changed. They are exposed to exponential levels of information at their fingertips sometimes making them more the teachers than the students in so many areas of knowledge the least of which is technology.

What we must remember as we reflect on the journey taken to date is where we are headed, what is our destination, what do we wish for

these students as the adults of tomorrow in this ever evolving and revolving world.

The Ministry of Education will do its part, and like every other sector, education was required to undergo a host of changes in response to the changing needs of our students. In 2020, we called on the village to give us their views on what needed to change and the way forward. We talked and talked and talked to the village of education stakeholders and are now looking at the future where our children's best chance of success is a quality education. On January 31, we launched the last round of conversations with the public under the theme, Education: the passport to the future. The full quote is in fact from Malcolm X. and is *"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."*

Our task is to ensure this passport allows our students to take any flight they desire, to any destination that would allow them to live a full and successful life. We can no longer define their future, the last two years has shown us that life is uncertain and that only our resilience will move us forward. If we stop when we face adversity, we will never come out of the storm. Press forward, don't only focus on your destination but also on your journey. Do not be deterred by the bumps in the road because sometimes you need to slow down to see what is ahead.

As I close, allow me to leave you with this thought: the uncertainties that you have conquered in the past have assured you that you now possess the strength that you couldn't have known were it not for these hurdles. My advice to you during this time of celebration is to take some time to reflect on your past victories. As you navigate a new course moving forward, remember to adapt. St Francois Girls' College is strong. Continue to be a leader in education and a gift to this nation. Congratulations again and I wish you all the best in the future.

May God continue to bless your efforts as you press forward towards excellence.

Thank you all.