

The Minister of Education, the Honourable, Patrick Faber defined challenge as 'the opportunity to rise to the occasion'. Three years ago, the students you see sitting here today in all their resplendent glories, challenged themselves to rise to the occasion, that long occasion was three years of studying for an associates degree. I am sure the class will concur with me when I say that their last year at WJC was the best of the three years they have spent here.

The school year started in August 2008 with 191 students. Of which 34 were third year students who expected to graduate in 2009. Unfortunately, not all rose to the occasion of hard work and dedication which such a success would entail, and three have elected to spend another semester within the walls of WJC in order to achieve the success that they desire. Michael Jordan has been quoted as saying 'I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career, I've lost almost 300 games, 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life....and that is why I succeed'. Some of our students have taken that game winning shot and missed, but they are encouraged to take another shot, and another until they succeed. Many of our graduates can attest to this, the class of 2009 is made up of ten students who transferred to WJC in order to complete their associate degree, after being told that they had used up all their chances at other institutions. But like Michael Jordan, they continued to take aim, and finally, they scored.

SELF DEFENCE WORKSHOP FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS: In August 2007, Wesley Junior College was the victim of an armed burglary. A number of men were employed for our protection, but they were of no deterrent to the burglars. On October 18, 2008, WJC organized its first Self Defense Workshop for women and girls. Eighteen females including the President, Dean, and the Administrative assistant of WJC were trained under the able leadership of Ms. Renee Wentz to defend themselves. All would-be burglars need to be aware that our hands and feet are now lethal weapons. I would like to express my thanks to the Women's Department for sponsoring this event.

On the evening of November 18, 2008, the WJC community ceased all work and joined together to enjoy a cultural evening /duets talent show. This event was organized by the student government lead by Mr. Rhyan Welch. The judges for the WJC duets were Ms. Ann Marie Williams, Ms Jenny Lovell and taking the place of Santiago Castillo was our own Marvin Kellyman. The judges were astounded at the wealth of talents displayed by our students and encouraged them to participate in the next televised duets competition.

SPORTS: WJC boys displayed outstanding achievement in basketball, lead by Mr. Lincoln Jones and big john, John Marsden. The team reached the national competition and won the third place trophy. This is a spectacular achievement when one notes that most of these boys also worked full time. For the first time a female volleyball team was fielded, we are looking forward to seeing great things from them in the future.

OPEN EVENING: WJC held its first open evening on April 2, 2009. The late Steve Irwin, the crocodile hunter once said ' I believe that education is all about being excited about something. Seeing passion and enthusiasm helps push an educational message' The passion and enthusiasm flowed from our students as they went about preparing for the first Open Evening. They invested a lot of time, energy and their own financial resources in applying the knowledge gained in marketing, economics, mathematics, Spanish, ancient civilization and Business Finance and Accounting to practical situations. There were displays of business ventures such as a spa, a bakery, and specialized restaurants. If you had attended, you would have been educated in how to interpret your light bills, make secure investments and purchase your own home with an affordable mortgage.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: Another first for WJC this year was the implementation of community service. All students are now required to do 15 hours of community service in a service area of their choice. Social Responsibility is difficult to teach, and an educational system is not worth a great deal if it teaches young people how to make a living but doesn't teach them how to make a life. Towards that effort, our second year students embarked on community service from February

to April of this year. WJC students could be found working in the Orange Walk hospital, at the Ladyville community centre, at Port Loyola library, the Dorothy Mendez children's home and WJC campus.

How did our students respond to this mandated community service? I will answer this question by quoting from the reflective essays submitted at the end of the community service period. **(Please refer to the PDF file [Community_service.](#))**

The mission statement of WJC states that it seeks to influence its graduates towards positive citizenship, community service is one area in which we try to live out the mandate of our mission statement.

Finally, to the graduating class of 2009: I will actually miss your presence at WJC. (I must be getting old). Audrey's voice will no longer be heard in the office complaining that the lecturers are stressing her out; there will be no more delicious hot tamales from Sarah, Rhyan will no longer be able to gaze in wonderment at our Office assistant, and we no longer have to walk in fear that Jane could arrest us at any moment. I enjoyed the enthusiasm with which you approached your work, the family-like ways in which you supported each other and your scintillating presentations. You have set a standard of excellence which I hope future graduates will emulate.

John F. Kennedy once said, 'let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream, which, when fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation. So, My beloved graduates, go forth with God and fulfill all your dreams. Yes you can!!