

## **Speech of Elsie Addo Awadzi at Awards Ceremony for AIS MYP and DP Students**

**7<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

The Head of School

Faculty, and Staff of AIS

Parents, Guardians, and Students

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to be invited to be Special Guest Speaker for the MYP and DP Annual Awards Ceremony today.

For nearly sixty years, AIS has produced several generations of great leaders who are today making a difference in various capacities in Ghana and all over the world, thanks to excellent education and the core values of faith and discipline inculcated in its students.

I congratulate the school administration, faculty, and staff, for their dedication to quality education over the years. I also applaud the contributions of parents, guardians, and alumni, for their tireless efforts to support the school and our students in diverse ways.

We are here today to celebrate the achievements of our MYP and DP students. All too soon, another school year has ended and all the hard work, dedication, and discipline you put in day in, and day out, have borne fruit. You have earned a good break for the next couple of months.

So, whether you are college bound like DP 2 students or whether you're in MYP, your parents and family, friends, and your entire AIS community are very proud of you and of your achievements.

**Today I want to encourage you to Dream Big and Change the World.**

AIS gives you an incredible world-class education in academics, and non-academic fields like sports, drama, music, public speaking, MUN, languages etc. This is your launch pad to greatness! I did not have these opportunities growing up, so you can do much better than me. **Remember that the knowledge, skills, and exposure you have receive here at AIS are just the beginning. What you do with all of that is up to you.**

Our investments in your education and your wellbeing must produce greatness that makes a difference in the world. Remember that you are God's gifts to your families, communities, Ghana, the world, and the Kingdom of God. It takes a village to raise all of you and you must make your Village proud.

So please Dream on ..... and dream big... Let your dreams motivate you to solve the problems you see and bring about the change you want to see. Everything you enjoy today was invented by someone and it started with a dream.

How big should your dreams be? As big and as wide as the ocean.... Reach for the stars

**Song: "When you dream, dream big, as big as the ocean ... when you dream it might some true ..."** Let your dreams propel you to action to change the world for good.

But to change the world, you need to:

- Know yourself.... Your identity. the world will want to tell you who you are.. but you must remind yourself always of who you are in Christ Jesus. God made you - dark or fair, big or small tall or short .. you were made in His own image and likeness and for His glory. You are unique and he made you special for His purpose. Repeat after me, "I am important, I am worthy, and I have greatness in me".
- Believe in yourself always and be confident! Have a positive mindset and not be negative. In a world where you can be anything, choose to be great. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.
- Have a vision for your life. It is not too early now, whether you're in MYP 1 or DP 2. Let your dreams give you meaning to your life's journey.
- Be the change you want to see.... Solve problems and don't just complain.... Invent, create jobs, etc.
- Don't be afraid to start small.... the journey of a 1000 steps starts with a step. Start with what you have – your time, talents, skills, and work on your dreams step by step.
- Make wise choices. Your actions and inactions are all choices you make. Your choices have consequences. Some mistakes live with you forever and in today's internet and social media age there are digital and online records that could haunt people forever. Most employers, banks, and others search for online records on people.

- Be courageous, and take risks but be wise. Do not be afraid to lead with truth, courage, and seek justice. Be bold to challenge long-held beliefs that have enslaved people, but please do so respectfully.
- Do not be discouraged when you don't get what you want or work hard for. Try again... keep trying and keep doing the right things without losing focus....and you will succeed.
- Remember that the world starts at your doorstep. Charity begins at home and with yourself. You can't change the world if you are not changing things in your room, home, for good.
- Changing the world starts with kindness, respect for yourself and others, good manners...humility (not timidity) and selflessness. Transformational leaders lead with integrity and selflessness to impact the world for good.
- Don't do things for fame or money.... Do it for love and for humanity. Fame and money will chase you when you are not looking for them.
- Be careful about the company you keep.... choose your friends wisely .. choose your role models and mentors wisely...evil manners corrupt..."show me your friend and I will show you your character"... "birds of the same feather flock together".
- Gratitude - don't take things for granted. Be thankful for what you have and be thankful for what others sacrifice for you.

Let me leave you with a few examples of people who were not afraid to dream big and do what they could to change their world.

1. Born on a plantation around the year 1820 to slave parents, Harriet Tubman began to change her world when she was only 12 years old through her desire to see justice done. At that age, she saw someone who was an overseer of slaves attempt to throw a heavy weight at a slave who was running away from bondage. Harriet stepped between the enslaved person and the overseer— and the weight struck her head, leaving her with physical and emotional scars. At that tender age, she was not afraid to stand up for what was right. She would later escape from slavery herself and later lead several slaves to freedom before the American civil war and later became a nurse and a women's right activist. Tubman is one of the most recognized icons in American history and her legacy has inspired countless people from every race and background. In Harriet Tubman's

own words "Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to **change the world.**" —Harriet Tubman.

2. Thomas Edison is credited with many inventions including the lightbulb, after many failed attempts. One author described him as a man with "curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit" who at the age of 12 already had a job selling snacks and newspapers to train passengers and soon produced and published his own newspaper which he printed on a moving train and performed chemistry experiments on the train. By 15 years he started his own workshop working on more inventions. Edison had the ability to apply himself, and often said "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."
3. Kofi Annan, a young boy born in Kumasi, Ghana, on 8 April 1938, went to be UN Secretary General from January 1997 to December 2006 and served the world.
4. Yours truly, Me, a little girl born in Takoradi and who grew up in Burma Camp and went to an All-Girls high school in Korle Gonno run by catholic Nuns and the Government, is today a Deputy Governor of Ghana's Central Bank.
5. Remember Biblical figures who did great things even as young people. David in the Bible who fought Goliath the giant and who later became King of Israel. Daniel and his friends the 3 Hebrew boys who refused to bow to a pagan King and refused to stop praying to God even to the point of being put in the den of lions. Joseph who was sold into captivity by his brothers out of jealousy but with diligence and good character became the Prime Minister of Egypt later on in life. Mary, a young well-behaved teenage girl who became the mother of Jesus, the saviour of the world. Esther a young orphan girl whose obedience to her guardian Mordecia helped her to become a Queen of Persia and later saved the Jewish people from mass destruction. I could go on and on. I know you will read your Bibles and find many more young heroes and sheroes that you can look up to.

So, you see, you really have no excuse. Seize the moment and take advantage of the opportunities available to you here and prepare yourselves to lead the future. Gathered here today as part of your AIS community including your distinguished parents and guardians who were once young boys and girls like you...in fact for many, less privileged than you are today. It has taken all of us decades of hard work, discipline, sacrifice, determination, focus, and the grace of God. With these qualities and by the grace of God, you too can be anything you want to be. Even the sky cannot limit you unless you limit yourself.

You have better opportunities today to excel and change the world for good, so we your AIS community are rooting for you and praying for you to become the great leaders of tomorrow that will make this world a better place.

Remember that you have the responsibility to excel, become excellent citizens of this world and very importantly, you have the responsibility to come back as alumni to support AIS in one way or the other to invest in future generations of students who will also go out and change the world for good.

If you remember nothing else from my speech, remember to know who you are and believe in yourself. Remember to dream as big as the ocean and remember that each of you has something unique in you that the world is waiting for to become a better place. Remember to love and respect yourself and love and respect others. Be kind, be selfless, be courageous, and always stand up for what you know deep inside you is right, even if you feel alone. You're never alone. You've got God and your Village rooting for you. May God continue to guide and guard you and help each of you fulfil His purpose for you.

God bless you. May you be the leaders starting right now who shape and change the world for good.

Love you all!