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SPEECH BY THE SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, MR. CHAI CHONG YII, AT THE SILVER JUBILEE DINNER OF THE ASSUMPTION ENGLISH SCHOOL AT THE BOYS' TOWN HOME HALL, BOYS' TOWN, BUKIT TIMAH ROAD, ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 1978, AT 7.30 P.M.

It gives me great pleasure to participate in your celebration of the silver jubilee of the Assumption English School. An occasion like this is a suitable occasion to reaffirm old ties. It is also an occasion to look back at the achievement of the past and to take stock of the present situation so as to see the way ahead more clearly and to work with confidence and conviction.

Your school has played an important role in the education of young men in Upper Bukit Timah area. It has come a long way from the days when it was known as Boys' Town. It has now shed its old image and is fulfilling its rightful place as a significant educational institution in Singapore. The Gabrielite schools have always provided a high standard of education for their pupils and I am confident that Assumption English School will continue to maintain its standards. To achieve this, much will depend on the efforts of the principal and the teachers to guide and nurture the young minds. A major task facing you is how to further improve your overall performance so that your school will grow from strength to strength. This is a formidable task and I am sure that with your concern and dedication, you can see the way to achieving it.

This brings me to a point quite often missed. The best educational policy depends for its success on its enlightened implementation at the school level. No amount of planning will achieve results if the schools do not play their part well. It might be said that the business of education is really in the schools and whether educational policies succeed or fail, only the schools can decide. The Ministry of Education lays down broad policy in the light of national requirements, but it is the schools that translate this policy into actual action in educating our children. It is crucial that the schools discharge this grave responsibility well if Singapore is to continue to forge ahead with confidence of success. I cannot over-emphasize the crucial role

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of the schools in the success or failure of Singapore as nation. I would like you to think carefully over this and to see in what way you can increase your contribution in this important aspect of nation-building.

There is a further point. Schools can offer their best only if they are strongly supported by parents and the community at large. We must not forget that schools are social institutions and their vitality is in large measure the vitality of the people that support it. It is important for every school to reach out to the community and be socially relevant in order to win the regard of the people. While it is important to turn out successful students, it is equally important that the schools become a part of the surrounding community, a focal point that helps to cement people together. The community on its part has the responsibility of helping the school succeed. This does not mean only that it should support it financially. Rather, it should identify itself with the school and enter actively into its role in this crucial partnership.

Education is an issue larger than classroom instruction. Parents, for instance, must complement the work of the schools by guiding their children and sustaining the work of the principals and teachers when the pupils are at home. Only in this way can positive results be achieved. All too often, the whole task of education is left to the schools and parents fail to make use of the opportunity to reinforce and consolidate their work. I am glad to see so many members of the community here tonight, for this attests to the interest and concern they have towards the welfare of this school. This augurs well for its future. It is my hope that this partnership will translate itself into real terms and parents and teachers work together to achieve the common goal of education.

Finally, it leaves me with the pleasure of congratulating Assumption English School on its silver jubilee and I wish it all the best in the years ahead.
