

Mayor of Kingston, Senator Angella Brown-Burke, has challenged educators to be mindful of the social goals of education, noting that it provides the opportunity to instill values and teach critical life lessons.

“Often, when we are in the classroom or talking about education, we forget that education has a social goal,” the Mayor said at a back-to-school conference held on Aug. 8, at the Jamaica Conference Centre, downtown Kingston.

She stated that lessons about justice, democracy, honesty, integrity and participation can be taught in the classroom.

“We have the opportunity and responsibility of instilling moral values, of moulding and defining what integrity is, of determining how competence is built, not just celebrating those, who are obviously competent or more gifted, but also pulling those who are weaker and giving them the tools to realise their potential and bring them further to the front of the line,” she stated.

Mayor Brown-Burke said that students are gaining their social consciousness by what is happening in the schools. “They look at how discipline is administered, how classmates, who are outspoken are treated; who gets to participate; and how children, who are less fortunate are treated by administrators,” she pointed out.

She urged educators to consider what lessons are being taught and how they can empower students.

Custos of Kingston Hon. Steadman Fuller, who also addressed the conference, implored educators to become more creative in developing a strategy to engage parents, grandparents and guardians on the importance of their responsibilities as “stakeholders-in-chief in the education of their children, grandchildren and wards.”

He noted that their active involvement with the parent teachers associations (PTA) is

paramount, as it is the medium by which they will be kept informed on the academic and personal development of their charges. “We need to assist them in developing a culture of taking the initiative of being up to speed on their charge’s progress,” Custos Fuller said.

The all-day conference, held under the theme: ‘Empowering Youth Through Partnerships: Get It Right The First Time,’ included principals, chairmen of school boards and other education officials and stakeholders from the Ministry’s Region One.

Among the objectives were: to update stakeholders on the Ministry’s policy directives, initiatives and programmes; provide a forum for the public to have direct interface with the Ministry; elevate the value of education in the public domain; and ensure an orderly reopening of educational institutions for the 2012/13 academic year.