



“Education: A Transformative Agent for Our Students’ Strong and Promising Future.”

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**Graduation Speech for Wagina Community High School
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Introduction

Good day to you all – principal, teachers, parents, and my dear students. I am honored to speak here today as your guest speaker at Wagina Community High School’s graduation. This is a special day for our school leavers, and I am proud of each one of you. Today we celebrate your achievements, and we look forward with hope to your future — a future made stronger and more promising by the education you have received. I want to share a message of encouragement, hope, and dreams – not only for you, the graduating students, but also for your parents and the whole community. My goal is to speak in simple English from the heart, so that everyone can understand and feel the meaning.

Honoring Our Heritage and History

First, let us remember who we are and where we come from. Wagina is a unique and proud community. Many of our people originally came from the Gilbert

Islands (now part of Kiribati) and were relocated here in the 1950s and 1960s by the British. Your parents and grandparents arrived on these shores with hope and faith, seeking a better life after hardships like drought and famine back in their old islands. They built a new home here on Wagina through hard work and unity. They kept their culture and identity – you have continuously maintained your identity as “people of the sea,” carrying on the Micronesian traditions of your ancestors.

In the past, your community was well represented in education and even in government leadership. There was a time when students from Wagina excelled in high schools, and some went on to serve in important roles for our country. This shows that you have the talent and potential to succeed. It also reminds us that education has been a transformative force in Wagina’s story, enabling people from our community to reach such heights and serve our nation. Today, I know things are more difficult. Wagina is a remote island, and sometimes you might feel left out or marginalized. Services like health and higher education are not easily accessible here, and many of our young people stop schooling after secondary level. It’s important to acknowledge these challenges. However, being a small or distant community does not mean you have small dreams or small potential. With education and determination, you can still rise, and you can still achieve great things.

The Value of Education and Knowledge

One key message I want to share is about education and knowledge. Education is very important – but when I say education, I do not mean only getting a fancy degree or certificate. Education is not just about a paper qualification; it is about gaining knowledge and skills. It’s about learning new ideas and understanding the world better. There is a saying from our Kiribati culture: “Te reirei bon te matau ae kookona.” In English, this means “Education is a magic hook and key to knowledge.” Think about that for a moment. A hook and a key are tools – a hook helps you catch something, and a key helps you open something. In the same way, knowledge and learning will help you “catch” opportunities and “open” doors to a better future for you and your community. This is how education acts as a transformative force in your life — turning your aspirations into reality and leading to a strong future.

Even if you do not go to university, you can keep educating yourself in many ways. Read books, learn from elders, practice skills, and stay curious. Every bit of knowledge you gain is powerful. It could be learning how to improve your seaweed farming techniques, how to run a small business, or even how to use new technology. All these forms of learning are valuable. The more you know, the more you can do. As the Bible says, “Wise people are hungry for knowledge.” Gaining wisdom will help you make good decisions in life. In this way, every bit of learning strengthens you as an individual and gives you the power to transform your future and uplift your whole community.

[Dream Big: An Inspirational Story from Wagina](#)

Sometimes, you might think, “Can someone from our small island really achieve big dreams?” The answer is yes, absolutely! Let me share with you a true story of someone from Wagina who achieved something remarkable. Her name is Dr. Tammy Tabe, and she comes from right here in Wagina. Just a few years ago, Tammy became one of the few Solomon Islander women to earn a PhD (doctorate degree). Imagine that – from our community to a university in Norway, and achieving the highest level of study! Her educational journey transformed her life, taking her from our small island to the global stage. It wasn’t an easy journey for her. In fact, she said herself that there was no secret to her achievement, except hard work and determination, and that nothing is impossible if you do your best.

Tammy’s path was challenging – she had to study for many years, sometimes far from home. She once said, “The education journey is never easy, but sacrifice, hard work and determination are essential to endure the challenges encountered. Giving up should not be an option... Believing in yourself is also very important.” These are powerful words from someone who walked the road of education. Her success shows that you, too, can reach high if you persevere. For Tammy, education was the key that unlocked her potential and transformed her world. Not everyone will get a PhD like Dr. Tabe – and that’s okay. Your dream might be to become a teacher, a nurse, a business owner, an engineer, or a skilled farmer. Whatever your dream is, the same principles apply: work hard, do not give up, and believe in yourself. Nothing is impossible with effort and faith.

Dr. Tabe also said she hopes her story can inspire young Solomon Islanders, especially women, to pursue further studies whenever they have the opportunity. I

hope her story inspires you today. She is proof that being from Wagina is not a barrier to success. It is part of your strength. If one of our own can achieve such heights, then why not you? So I encourage each student here: dream big dreams. You may come from a small island, but your dreams can be as big as the ocean around us.

A Message to the Parents and Community

Now, I want to speak directly to the parents, families, and community leaders here. First, I acknowledge and applaud you for the hard work you do. Many of you earn a good living through seaweed farming and fishing, and you provide for your families. In fact, Wagina Island has become the largest seaweed producer in our country – about 90% of Solomon Islands’ dried seaweed exports come from Wagina’s farmers! That is something to be proud of. You have shown that with dedication to your work, you can create a successful livelihood here.

As parents, you might wonder, “Why is education so important if we are already doing well in farming or business?” The answer is that education can help you do even better. Imagine what you or your children could achieve if you add knowledge of business, finance, or new farming methods on top of your hard work. For example, learning some business skills could help you get better prices for your seaweed, find new markets, or save and invest your earnings wisely. Even experts say that providing farmers with business training and other skills will improve their self-reliance and success. In other words, knowledge will strengthen the good work you are already doing.

I also want to encourage you, as parents, to support your children’s education as much as you can. I know it can be challenging – sending a child away to school in town or paying school fees is not easy. And yes, when a teenager goes off to further their studies, that’s one less pair of hands to help on the farm or around the house. But think of it as an investment in a stronger future for your family. When your son or daughter gains knowledge and skills, they will bring benefits back to the family and community. They might come back and help improve the seaweed farming operations, or start a new business that creates jobs for others, or become a nurse or teacher who serves our people — all of which will help transform and uplift our community.

“Education is not only about getting jobs in the city — it is about bringing knowledge back to improve life in the village. Every graduate who returns home with new skills helps lift the whole community. When our young people learn new farming, business, or technology skills, they build a stronger and more self-reliant Wagina.”

In other words, each educated young person becomes an agent of transformation, helping to strengthen the community and shape a more promising future for Wagina.

To the parents: Education is a gift you can give your children that will last a lifetime. Encourage them to be curious and to keep learning. Show them that you value knowledge. Maybe you yourselves can take opportunities to learn new things – attend workshops if there are any, or even simple things like learning to use a smartphone to connect with markets. Every bit of learning helps. You have already proven you are smart and resourceful by building a thriving community here. With more education, you can take it even further. Combine the traditional wisdom of our culture with the new knowledge of the modern world, and there is no limit to what Wagina can achieve.

How the University Can Partner with Rural Communities

At the Solomon Islands National University, we believe that education must reach every island, every village, and every person who seeks to learn, because we know it can transform lives and communities, building a strong future for everyone. We are working to make higher education more accessible to rural communities like Wagina through flexible learning centers, distance education, and community-based training. Our goal is to bring the classroom closer to you — so that even those who cannot travel to Honiara can still study, earn qualifications, and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. The University’s programs are designed to ensure that no one is left behind, no matter how far from the capital they may live.

We are also expanding our short courses and outreach programs to bring practical training directly to rural areas. These include skills in small business management, sustainable fishing and farming, climate adaptation, and marine resource management. Such courses are meant to strengthen local livelihoods, improve

productivity, and encourage innovation within communities. For Wagina, where seaweed farming and fishing are vital, these programs can help improve production quality, explore new markets, and ensure that your local industries grow sustainably.

Another important area is scholarship and mentorship support. The Solomon Islands National University recognizes the unique challenges faced by students from remote and outer island communities, including our Micronesian community here in Wagina. I am pleased to share that the University Council has informally discussed the possibility of establishing dedicated scholarships to support students from Micronesian backgrounds who wish to pursue higher education. The University is prepared to consider such opportunities as part of its ongoing commitment to inclusion and equal access. We want to see more of your sons and daughters become teachers, health professionals, engineers, and leaders who serve both locally and nationally. Education transforms lives — but opportunity must first be made available. That is why we are determined to identify and support students with potential, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent them from achieving their dreams. In doing so, we hope to empower even the most remote learners to transform their lives and communities through education.

Finally, the University is building partnerships with rural communities for research and innovation. Our lecturers and students are eager to collaborate on community-based studies — such as improving seaweed farming methods, addressing climate challenges, or documenting traditional ecological knowledge. We see the University as a bridge between traditional wisdom and modern science — a place where the strengths of both can come together to create new opportunities. By working hand in hand with rural communities like Wagina, we can ensure that learning is not just something that happens in classrooms, but something that transforms everyday life.

Embracing Faith and Looking Ahead with Hope

Wagina is a spiritual community, and our faith is very important to us. In times of difficulty and in times of joy, we turn to God. We must remember that God is with us on this journey. When your ancestors came to this island, they carried their faith with them. That faith gave them strength to overcome the unknown. Today, we should carry that same strong faith as we pursue education and development. The

Bible teaches us many lessons about knowledge, hope, and perseverance. One verse that comes to mind is Jeremiah 29:11, where God says: “For I know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” What a beautiful promise! It means that God has a plan for each of you here – a plan full of hope and a good future. We need to trust that plan and do our part by working hard and using the gifts God has given us. Education is one of those gifts — a tool that God provides to help transform your life and fulfill the hope and future He promises.

Another thing our faith teaches is the value of talents and not wasting them. There is a story in the Bible about a master who gave coins (talents) to his servants and expected them to make good use of them. In the same way, God has given each of our young people here talents – some have brains for science, some have skillful hands for crafts, some have kind hearts for helping others. These talents are like seeds. They need to be nurtured, often through learning and practice. If you bury a talent and never develop it, it doesn’t grow. But if you work on it, with God’s guidance, it can multiply and bless you and your whole community. In other words, through education and diligence, even a small talent can be transformed into a great blessing for you and your community.

So, let us keep faith at the center of our pursuit of knowledge. Pray for guidance in your studies and work. Pray for strength when things get hard. With God’s help, your family’s support, and your own determination, you can overcome obstacles and turn challenges into opportunities. Remember the words of Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Believe that, and you will find courage when facing challenges. Our spiritual values – love, unity, honesty, and perseverance – go hand in hand with education. Together, they will light our path forward.

Conclusion

As I conclude, I want to leave you with a few key thoughts to remember:

- **Never stop learning.** Knowledge is power, and education – in any form – is the magic hook and key that will unlock your future. Even outside school, keep learning new things every day.

- **Work hard and don't give up on your dreams.** There will be challenges, but as we heard from Dr. Tammy Tabe, “giving up should not be an option” – nothing is impossible if you do your best.
- **Trust in God and believe in yourself.** You are not alone – your community is with you, and God is with you. Pray for guidance and have faith that with God's grace, all things are possible.

To the graduates of Wagina Community High School, congratulations on your achievement! Today you stand at the shore of a new sea – the sea of your future. Set your sails bravely, and remember that your education is the vessel that will carry you across that ocean toward your dreams. To the parents and community, thank you for supporting these young people. Keep encouraging them to aim high. Let us all continue to work together – community, school, and faith – to ensure that our young generation has the knowledge and values to transform our community and build a bright tomorrow.

I have great hope for Wagina's future. With the education and values you have gained, I believe that future will be strong and promising. You have proven yourselves as resilient “people of the sea,” and I believe you will navigate whatever waves come your way. Dream big, work hard, keep your faith strong, and always remember that you have the power and the knowledge to shape your own future. May God bless you all and bless our beloved Wagina community.

Thank you – and once again, congratulations to our graduates and their families. Go out and achieve your dreams!

E'raba, leana hola.