Good Morning. I’m honored to be here to share in the opening of this world-class facility. And I’m happy to welcome the preschool and elementary students out of the “Barn” and into the Marie Jean Philip Building at the Learning Center.

I can’t think of anyone more deserving of this honor than Marie Jean Philip. Her name is synonymous with leadership, innovation and inspiration. She embodied the values of individuality, education and opportunity for all – pioneering the establishment of American Sign Language as a standard language in colleges throughout Massachusetts. Today, in a testament to her will and spirit, this building will serve as a haven for learning and opportunity for every student that enters its promising halls.

As public officials, educators, parents and community leaders, our greatest responsibility is to ensure that every student enters a promising workforce and world. Every child deserves a world-class education that challenges them to not only succeed, but to excel – an education that prepares them for a lifetime of independence and success.

In the last three decades, great advancements have been made in deaf education thanks in part to the opening of innovative educational centers like TLC and advancement communication technologies. Before these reforms, educators assumed that deaf students could not perform at the same academic level as hearing students. I’m proud to say that you’ve proven them and the rest of the world wrong.

Education takes you out of a world labeled deaf and hearing and into a world filled with opportunity and promise – a world that welcomes your talent, your uniqueness and your contribution.

A place where being deaf doesn’t define your identity, but enhances your legacy. You are learning bilingual and bicultural skills that develop a strong self-identity in both hearing and deaf communities. By taking advantage of the excellent education you are receiving here, you are sending a clear message to the hearing world. One that
says, “Listen Up.” I have words. I have a voice. I have skills and a lifetime of opportunity before me.

When I look around this room I see the faces of bright, young students. But I also see future doctors, artists, and teachers. I see our future. I see no one who is handicapped. No one who is inferior.

Marie Jean Philip refused to see deafness as a limitation, but rather as a liberation – the liberty to break barriers, brave new frontiers, and challenge the status quo. Your identity is not marked by being deaf – it’s marked by the tremendous talent, energy and spirit each of you have – it’s marked by your contributions and your commitment to be yourself.

Helen Keller once said, “It’s for us to pray not for tasks equal to our powers, but for powers equal to out tasks, to go forward with a great desire forever beating at the door of our hearts as we travel toward our distant goal.”

Desire will take you only so far. But desire – partnered with education and opportunity – will bring you even closer to reaching your goals and dreams. I wish you the best of luck in this new school and in achieving all of your dreams. Thank You.