

East London Pupils Go Head-to-Head for Speaking Prize

LONDON – 21 June 2012 - Wahida Tasnim, a 14 year old student from Mulberry School for Girls was last night named winner of the Bank of America Merrill Lynch 2012 Student Presentation Skills Final.

Tasnim impressed the audience after delivering a passionate speech on climate change. She beat stiff competition from the eight other finalists, following a series of competitive heats and semi-finals at schools across Tower Hamlets. Each finalist gave a speech on an issue facing the future of the financial world and presented to Tim Loughton MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, who opened the event. The finalists showcased their skills to a judging panel led by Jonathan Moulds, chief executive officer, Merrill Lynch International, and including Marcelle Speller, founder and chief executive of Localgiving.com.

The final, now in its eighth year, was held at Bank of America Merrill Lynch's city headquarters and involved students from Bow School, Mulberry School for Girls, and Swanlea Business and Enterprise College in Tower Hamlets.

Other subjects presented by the students included: government and taxes; using credit cards responsibly; skills for life – my role model; how I'm helping my community; and inequality.

The competition forms part of the Financial Education and Employability Programme, supported by Bank of America Merrill Lynch, which runs in schools across Tower Hamlets for students aged 12 to 16 years.

Camilla Fletcher, head of Philanthropy, EMEA at Bank of America Merrill Lynch said: "The Financial Education and Employability Programme is a leading education initiative in the UK. At the bank, we understand the importance of providing young people with opportunities that will help them develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes and prepare them for the world of work."

Loughton added: "We were all thoroughly impressed by the high standard of the young speakers. They clearly worked incredibly hard on their presentations. Their passion and knowledge of some very complicated subjects demonstrates the effectiveness of this education programme as well as the importance of helping young people learn more about finance and careers whilst they are still at school."

Tasnim said: "I chose to speak about climate change because it's a topic I feel really strongly about. I believe that the planet needs to be saved but to do that I need to raise awareness about climate change, which this presentation has allowed me to do. I really enjoyed taking part in the programme and it has definitely made me a more confident public speaker. I'm really proud to have been able to present this evening, and to be chosen as the winner among such great contestants."

Bank of America Merrill Lynch's philanthropic programmes are designed to help develop sustainable communities around the world by leveraging employee involvement and engaging stakeholders. The bank has also recently announced a goal to provide US\$100 million in grants and programme-related investments to nonprofit organisations, community development financial institutions and other non-governmental organisations promoting low-carbon and resource conservation solutions.

The Financial Education and Employability Programme is delivered in partnership with Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership and has seen 4,500 students successfully complete the programme since its inception in 2005. The initiative has won 10 awards including the BITC Example of Excellence for Education Award and the Lord Mayor's Dragon Award in 2011. Over the past seven years, GCSE grades, including English and Maths, have increased by 141 per cent (Swanlea School), 100 per cent

(Mulberry School) and 72 per cent (Bow School) against a national average increase of 27 per cent.

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