

PRESS RELEASE

**DepEd, partners to recognize eco-friendly schools**

The Department of Education (DepEd) has partnered with the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) through the Environmental and Management Bureau (EMB), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and SMART Communications, Inc. to respond to the call to action in safeguarding Mother Nature through the conduct of the 2010 National Search for Sustainable and Eco-friendly Schools.

“The perennial calamities that hit our country depict not only the universal concern for global warming but also remind us of the responsibility of every citizen to contribute to its eradication. Hence, this is among the things the department is doing for its share,” said Education Secretary Armin Luistro.

The department has issued Memorandum 480, series 2010, to announce the launching of 2011 National Search for Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Schools aimed at encouraging schools/academic institutions to become more actively involved in environmental issues at a practical and local level. Also, it intends develop skills and understanding among students, faculty and school administrators in initiating active responses, and increasing community awareness and participation on environmental concerns.

Sustainable and eco-friendly schools may be described as environment-friendly schools that have initiated and integrated in their instruction, research, extension and/or administration, programs which are environment-related.

Luistro mentioned that by virtue of RA 9729, otherwise known as Climate Change Act of 2009, DepEd is mandated to mainstream the climate change concepts into the Basic Education Curriculum and deliver correct and updated information.

The education chief also added that, “the department mobilizes our schools to increase awareness among our students and to exert efforts in government’s thrust against global warming.”

It may be noted that environmental conservation and protection are among the key themes under the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDES) that has been declared for the years 2005-2014.

Education for sustainable development centers on awareness of sustainable development issues, enhancing knowledge, influencing values and attitudes, and encouraging responsive behavior and learning that leads to action. Information is a major component of education and a continuous campaign for massive environmental awareness is indeed necessary. Moreover, under the country’s local response to the UNDES, included in the National Environmental Education Action Plan for Sustainable Development is a national program that encourages the establishment of sustainable and eco-friendly schools.

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“Schools are a vital part of basic learning and remain a powerful vehicle for change. It is just but appropriate to tap schools in this climate change/global warming-related initiative,” explained Luistro.

The following can be adopted in pursuit of sustainable eco-friendly schools: developing environmental policies for the school; physical cleanliness, orderliness and beautification of the school; energy conservation and demand management; water conservation/water management (maintenance of potable water); paper conservation/paper recycling; waste reduction, waste segregation, recycling and composting; air, water, and soil pollution control; seedling production/vegetable gardening and marketing; reforestation and/or nursery establishment; establishment of a botanical garden; herbarium; establishment of a bio-park; and environmental audits of school’s operations and facilities.

Schools can also explore integration of environmental themes into the school curriculum; conduct in-service environmental training for faculty members; develop environmental support instructional materials; offer environmental degrees/certificate programs; environmental and natural resource-related research works and studies; promote linkages and exchanges on the environment with the following sectors: national government agencies, non-government organizations, religious organizations, local government units, business and industry sector; environmental awareness and community education, hold green fairs and environmental exhibits/sale of green products, hold seminars and/or symposia/conferences, hold eco-tours or ecological destinations, healthy lifestyle campaigns; and climate change adaptation and mitigation programs.

All elementary and secondary schools nationwide are encouraged to join the search. Deadline for the submission of entries is on April 29, 2011.

Luistro calls upon all our people, especially those in the academe and all education stakeholders, to support this endeavor and practice *bayanihan*. “Global warming and climate change are now inevitable concerns. We can only do so much if we work together to eradicate the destructive impacts these phenomena can bring to the world. We should live as good examples of how we can contribute all that we can against global warming by seriously educating ourselves and doing whatever is required of us” stressed Luistro.

The search was first launched in 2009. Nine schools were declared as national champions, the top 3 being Peñablanca East Central School in Cagayan for Elementary; La Castellana NHS in Negros Occidental for High School; and Palawan State University in Palawan for College.

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