

PRESS RELEASE

DepEd welcomes budget increase; focuses on universal kindergarten

Education Secretary Armin Luistro welcomes the approval of the 2011 national budget which increased DepEd's allocation by 19 percent -- giving the department more elbow room to pursue priority projects that include universal kindergarten in all public schools.

"Yes, DepEd is getting the 207 billion budget for 2011. This represents the biggest increase in years in our annual budget at close to 19% compared with last year's," said Luistro. DepEd's 2010 budget is P175 billion.

In 2011, DepEd is set to implement the universal public kindergarten program for 5-year olds to give new entrants to basic education the proper preparation on the rigors of schooling.

"For the first quarter of 2011, we will focus on providing for universal kindergarten facilities for 5-year olds. I am confident that we will be able to do that especially with the help of many committed stakeholders," Luistro added.

DepEd encourages parents to pre-register children in the kindergarten program this January to avoid the usual enrolment rush in May and June. This is part of the on-going campaign of the department to bring all school-aged children to school. DepEd is confident that it remains on track to meet the country's Education For All (EFA) commitment by 2015.

Studies have shown that the children's positive pre-school experience motivate them to remain in school and complete basic education. DepEd's EFA commitments include the provision of quality program for pre-school and early childhood care for children aged three to five. "A good headstart will give our young learners the boost to embrace learning and finish schooling," Luistro explained.

DepEd is currently doing the groundwork on the 12-year basic education cycle which starts with a strengthened kindergarten program. The proposal to add two more years in basic education is aimed at producing high school graduates who are better prepared for the world of work, self-starting ventures or college studies.

While DepEd is pleased with the budget increase, it believes that it needs to engage the private sector and other community stakeholders to upgrade the quality of the public school system.

"We realize that we would need to firm up more partnerships with the private sector and work on other creative modes to catch up with decades of neglect in providing essential learning inputs especially teacher items and classrooms," Luistro pointed out.

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