

PRESS RELEASE

Luistro to school principals: You are the department

Education Secretary Armin Luistro has called on all principals to be more proactive in managing schools because student performance is a reflection of how well the principals perform their job.

Speaking during the Principals' Forum of the National Capital Region – Philippine Elementary School Principals' Association (NCR-PESPA), Luistro likened the principals to his trusted captains manning the frontlines: "If we were in a battlefield, you are in the trenches, in the thick of battle egging your soldiers to fight on. You are the first line of defense who have the feel of the terrain, the full grasp of the situation and who know the capability of your every soldier."

The forum aimed to enhance the qualities of principals as school managers who are responsible for the learning outcome of students.

Luistro stressed that he and other DepEd officials cannot not take credit for what truly belongs to the principals' - the direct management of schools. "We can only set the direction and provide the vision, support endeavors and dreams. But it is the principals who are truly responsible when it comes to school outcomes and who dictate the tempo of progress in their respective place of assignments."

PESPA is a national association of elementary school heads which supports DepEd's programs and activities.

To date, the secretary has already visited 25 schools unannounced. He would sit at the back row and observe how the teachers conduct classes and if the students connect. This is part of his unorthodox way of monitoring the state of public schools and how they are being run by the school heads.

His school visits also allow him to see know how first hand the resource gaps that need to be urgently addressed.

"In eight of my ten visits, I must admit that I am inspired by what I saw and experienced while observing from the back row. But there were also sad stories that make my heart sink," Luistro shared.

Luistro said that principals should not be confined in their offices but out in the schools where the action is. "Principals, who just stay in their offices and do not personally monitor the situation in their respective schools, do not transform Philippine education. The principals should be doing the rounds, inquiring on the needs of the teachers, feeling their inadequacies, sharing their joy and sympathizing in their grief because principals should be on top of everything that happens in the school," he added.

Luistro explained that principals should possess the capability to translate the vision of the department into reality, of translating plans into action.

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An eternal optimist, Luistro said that, “I always want to see and draw out the best in everyone. To maximize the potential of the young students, we should also maximize the potential of the teachers and the principals.”

The department is pushing for the adoption of the national competency-based standards for school heads; the administration of the national qualifying examination for principals; the development and implementation of programs to enhance the managerial and leadership competencies of principals; the downloading of the maintenance and other operating expenses; and the allocation of resources based on needs.

DepEd sees that education reforms can only happen if the principals are hands-on. They should also be able to inspire their constituents, to energize the people below us and earn the respect of those above them. “Principals should be able to correct, to encourage, to set the standard and to live by example,” Luistro explained.

He added that aside from school administrators, they should also be the “direct link to the community who will open the door for more stakeholders to invest in public education. They should be able to engage the local decision-makers, the private sector, the non-government organizations so that they can be our partners in achieving our school improvement plans.”

All of these are the essence of School Based Management. “These are part of DepEd’s vision to make principals not just educators, but effective managers as well,” he said.

Luistro also noticed the fast turnover of principals, which to him is not the ideal situation. He wants to push that beginning next year, the term of the principal should not be less than three years but not more than five years.

“We have to give our principals enough time to enable them to fully implement what they have set out to do and maybe enjoy the fruits of what they have sown. Let us give our principals their moment to enjoy the dividends from all their physical, intellectual and emotional investments,” furthered Luistro.

“Malaki ang tiwala ko sa aking principals. (I have great trust to my principals.) I entrust you the teachers and the students. Parents entrust you their children. The nation entrusts you the future. Tiwala ako na hindi nyo ako bibiguan, (I am confident that you will not fail me.) because you are the department,” said the DepEd chief.

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