

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DepEd set on reaching all school-age Pinoy

The Department of Education has embarked on Project REACH to bring to school some 5.6 million children and youth who are not in school and therefore run the risk of compromising their future.

“Despite Philippine education being free and compulsory, we still have a staggering number of school-age children and youth out in the streets who face exploitation in all forms,” said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

Project REACH (Reaching All Children) banks on partnership with other sectors in the community to “find them, reach them and keep them” in school.

For school year 2007-2008, some 2.2 million children aged 6 to 12 years old and 3.4 million 12-15 years old out-of-school youth or a total of 5.6 million are reported to be not in school.

Studies also showed that there is a drop out rate of 6% in elementary and 7.5% in the secondary level.

Lapus noted that getting children to enroll is already a big challenge and keeping them in school is even more daunting. Poverty is identified as the biggest factor that keeps children and youth from enrolling or regularly attending school.

According to Lapus, Project REACH has two major components: Child Find and Innovative Interventions.

Child Find will be initiated by the principal in collaboration with barangay councils who will conduct community assembly, family mapping, school-barangay posting and stakeholder assembly.

“Community involvement is critical here in identifying school-aged children in each family and in bringing educational intervention right at the barangay level,” Lapus stressed.

The project demands all community stakeholders to extend assistance even beyond the workplace and even beyond their working hours when necessary to minimize, if not, eradicate potential school drop-outs.

The second component identified innovative intervention programs to find and keep children in school. This component is comprised of two sets of interventions – the demand-side and the supply side. The demand-side interventions involve assistance from DepEd partners.

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These include adopt-a-child project, supplementary feeding, scholarship grants, community voucher and subsidy programs in partnership with parent teacher community associations.

The supply side intervention, on the other hand, are DepEd-initiated and funded. It is focused on the enrichment of existing intervention programs and the provision of alternative education delivery modes.

DepEd launched Project REACH during the National Educators Congress at the Baguio Teachers' Camp as the department comes halfway through its 2015 target year to achieve its Education For All goals.

"We intend to fully mobilize our education officials and personnel in intensifying working relations and social ties with our partners in education," Lapus stressed.

Project REACH embarks on a combination of strategies for networking and linkages employing creative "catch and hold" interventions, capitalizing on strong school-stakeholders partnership.

Every barangay zone will post basic education-related school/community statistics for everyone accountable for the movement of children in school.

Project REACH bridges and strengthens the capacity of the school, the local government units, and other government agencies mandated to deliver basic services to its citizens.

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