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Brigada Eskwela Hall of Famer banks on active community involvement

Public school students now can well focus on their regular subjects during the first day of classes in June as schools gear up for another successful staging of Brigada Eskwela, a nationwide schools maintenance program.

The Department of Education mobilizes Brigada Eskwela stakeholders – including the private sector – to contribute their time, efforts and resources to ensure that public schools are physically ready for the opening of classes.

Students of Daniel R. Aguinaldo National High School (DRANHS) in Davao City affirm the full community support. The school was awarded 'Best Brigada Eskwela Implementer' for three consecutive years and hailed as one of the Hall of Fame Awardee last year.

"Now our students come to school eager to learn even on the first day," shares DRANHS Principal Segundina Ramos. "Brigada Eskwela was a big help because our partners enable us to fully prepare the schools even if we only have three staff/ utilities to maintain a big school."

Among the school's accomplishments in 2008-2009 Brigada Eskwela are 90 newly-painted classrooms, blackboards, repaired armchairs and comfort rooms. The school had its roof extended for its 4th year makeshift classrooms to shield the student from direct sunlight.

Its fourth year PTA allocated some P66,000 for the electrification project while some P120,000 went to the covered pathway project to connect two buildings. Also, the parents shelled out P30,000 for the paints, plywood, nails, paint brush and other incident expenses.

According to Ramos the volunteer work extended by some 5,000 parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders when translated to monetary terms would conservatively amount to P1,875,000.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus enjoined other schools to continue to rally support from other education stakeholders. "Inform them of your current efforts and needs. And make them active partner in all your projects to further the cause of education," he said.

Ramos admitted that they have various schemes to hype Brigada Eskwela. "We have a caravan which visits the four barangays in the vicinity of the school. With our megaphone, we announce the importance of bayanihan and being actively involved in the education of their children," she explained.

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After the repairs and cleaning, they eat together in banana leaves. Parents bring the viands and the teachers cook the rice. They also have Brigada King and Queen where they award the most popular and committed participants in the Brigada Eskwela during the closing ceremonies.

Ramos also commends DRANHS' teachers. "My teachers are inherently hard working and supportive. It is their way of showing respect to the program and to the institution," she explained.

Brigada Eskwela is slated annually a week prior to the school opening in June. It is spearheaded by DepEd's Adopt-A-School Program (ASP) that facilitates the department's partnership with the private sector. From only 31 per cent participation rate in 2003, Brigada Eskwela is now being participated in by all public elementary and high schools nationwide.

Brigada Eskwela regional committees selected the top schools based on their monitoring and evaluation of the participating schools and using the criteria of teamwork (40%), repair and maintenance work (40%), resources generated (15%), and other factors (5%).

DepEd bestowed the Hall of Fame awards to 16 schools.

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