

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
15 January 2008

English proficiency: DepEd's flagship program in 2008

Recognizing the importance of English proficiency as an important building block in learning, the Department of Education has placed it as one of its priority programs for 2008 focusing on schools with low mastery level in the 2007 National Achievement Test (NAT).

NAT measures what the students understand and can do. It covers Mathematics, English, Science, Filipino and Hekasi. To be given priority for urgent interventions are schools which obtained a mean percentage score (MPS) of 34 and below.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo showing great concern that the schools are not producing enough people competent in using the English language, has earmarked P500 Million for teacher-training.

DepEd is currently implementing more focused school governance with 43,000 school improvement plans (SIP) and 187 division education development plans with well-defined targets on learning outcomes. This is in compliance with the directive of President Arroyo for a 30% improvement in the baseline data in English, Science and Mathematics by 2010.

Still the 2007 NAT results showed marked improvements in the average (MPS) in English (12.45%) while Mathematics and Science registered 12.3% and 10.3% improvements respectively.

Jesli Lopus, DepEd Secretary said, "Despite the improving NAT results in English among our students, we believe that we have to push even further to sustain their improving performance. Our bigger goal is to upgrade English instruction among those schools which performed below mastery level."

Based on set targets, intervention in students, teachers, and schools are also being prioritized. Student intervention packages include 1:1 new textbook-pupil ratio in English, Beginning Reading, Remedial Reading, Whole School Approach to Reading and Writing. The feasibility of setting up speech laboratories is currently being planned for 2008 implementation.

DepEd also continues implementing ECARP or Every Child A Reader Program which aims to make children from Grade 1 to 6 able to read as expected at their own level.

Meanwhile, intervention packages for teachers consist of training of mentors/coaches in teaching, reading and provision of lesson exemplars.

PRESS RELEASE

DepEd records show that as of October 2007, some 137,420 elementary and secondary teachers have received training relevant to English instruction in different modes: live-in workshops and conferences facilitated by English specialists; school-based training with mentoring and coaching; and trainings conducted in coordination with teacher-training institutions.

DepEd's National English Proficiency Program (NEPP) which trains English proficient teachers to become mentors to less proficient teachers in their respective schools will continue and be strengthened. To date, 7,300 teachers have received intensive and hands-on training on English proficiency. In turn, these teachers have echoed what they learned to a total of 95,600 teachers in their respective schools under the Teachers Mentoring Teachers program.

DepEd will assess 13,286 elementary and 1,320 secondary teachers in priority schools which are low-performing to determine English proficiency level and to keep track on school progress in reading.

Meanwhile, DepEd bestow awards to Outstanding Reading teachers who emerged after a thorough nationwide search. Special awards are given to outstanding reading teachers in the 13 regions.

Lapus emphasized that English proficiency is critical in learning as other key subjects such as Science and Mathematics use English in textbooks and other reference materials. Pilipino subjects remain in the curriculum and will not be sacrificed either according to Lapus.

Part of DepEd's initiative to improve English instruction is to ink partnership with local and international stakeholders. "The private sector has been one with us in our quest for solutions to the many problems we face in public education," Lapus said.

DepEd's Bureau of Elementary Education is currently developing Lesson Guides in English for Grade 1 to Grade 6 in collaboration with the Ateneo de Manila University. These guides are ready for use by teachers in the coming school year.

As well, the Bureau of Secondary Education addresses the training needs of 18,892 English teachers where 16,625 are English majors while 2,267 are non-majors. These teachers were provided training on mastery reading and writing and current reading pedagogy. The bureau is also preparing video lessons for first year high school for distribution next school year.

Notably, significant contributions in raising the level of achievement in English in Mindanao area were made with USAID-Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQUALLS), AUSAID Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM-ARMM).

"We want more people to get involved. Indeed, it takes a community to create change. It takes all the hands available to regain Filipinos' edge in the English language," he added.

END

PRESS RELEASE