

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Lapus: Send all special children to school

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus has given instruction to school officials nationwide to bring some 2.2 million children with disabilities to school as the department intensifies its effort to make Education For All a reality.

Lapus says children have the right to receive appropriate education within the regular or inclusive classroom setting. "All children regardless of race, size, shape, color ability or disability should be accepted in school," he stressed.

To carry this out, DepEd has incorporated in its School Improvement Plan (SIP) a comprehensive education system that includes children with special needs. It has components on child find, assessment, program options, curriculum modification and parental involvement.

Under the system, children with special needs are located through the family mapping survey, advocacy campaigns and networking with local health workers. These children are then visited by Special Education (SPED) teachers to convince the parents to enroll their children in SPED Centers or the nearest school.

The special children also go through an assessment process where their strengths and weaknesses are identified through the use of formal and informal tools. This helps determine their proper grade placement.

Regular schools are provided educational services to children with special needs. These schools access educational services from SPED centers or SPED trained teachers.

According to Lapus, three program options are available to the schools which they may access for the special children. "The first is a self-contained class for children with similar disabilities. This can be mono-grade or multi-grade class handled by a trained SPED teacher," he explained.

Another option, he said, is the inclusion or placement of the child with disabilities in general education or regular class where they learn with their peers under a regular teacher and/or SPED trained teacher who addresses the children's needs.

A third option is having the child report to a SPED teacher who provides small group, one-on-one instruction with appropriate interventions for the child.

The program also includes changes in the curriculum. This is in the form of adaptations and accommodations to foster optimum learning based on the individual's needs and potentials. These involve new ways of thinking and

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developing teaching-learning practices. It also includes service delivery options like cooperative or team teaching and consulting teacher program.

An important feature of the program is the provision of support services from professionals and specialists, parents, volunteers, and peers to children with special needs.

Parents are also part of preparing the children in academic, moral and spiritual development. “This is why we encourage them to volunteer to work in the classroom as teacher aide and providing support to other parents,” Lapus added.

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