

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 21, 2008

Lapus welcomes DILG's funding support to public schools

Supporting the call of Education Secretary Jesli Lapus for other sectors to help bring school-aged children to school, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) recently directed the local government units to provide supplemental funding for public schools through the local school boards.

In Memorandum Circular No. 95 sent to provincial governors, city and municipal mayors, vice governors and DILG regional directors, DILG Acting Secretary Austere Panadero urged the local school boards to provide funding for at least during the first two months of the school year when the Parent, Teacher, Community Association (PTCA) collections are not yet available.

Among the services which require regular funding are pre-school classes, utilities, security and janitorial needs.

"The support of the DILG to pay for basic school services is most welcome as we try to get more schools to accept 5 to 11 years old to enroll and stay in school," Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said.

In a study released earlier by the National Statistical Coordination Board, the percentage of children enrolled in primary school went down to 83 % in school year 2006-2007, from 90% five years earlier. The dwindling number of school enrollees is attributed to widespread poverty aggravated by rising cost of fuel and food.

In the same memorandum, Panadero also enjoined the local executives to support DepEd and the community in ensuring that school-aged children actually enroll in school.

According to the Education Chief, "improving school attendance is the responsibility of the entire community. Parents, local government units, and the local school boards should work hand-in-hand with DepEd in increasing participation rate and, consequently, reduce drop-out incidence among school children."

Lapus has earlier called on the LGU's city and municipal councils to come up with an anti-truancy ordinance that will compel parents to constantly keep their children to school.

Among the measures currently implemented by DepEd to ease the financial obstacle to parents and keep children in school are the no collection and no uniform policy, school feeding program and alternative learning systems for learners outside of the formal school system.

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DepEd also reiterates that from preschool to grade 4, no collection of fees shall be allowed throughout the school year. From grade 5 up, authorized fees – such as Red Cross, Boy and Girl Scouts of the Philippines, and PTCA fees – may be collected but only on a voluntary basis.

Studies show that students who have enough preparation in pre-school up to grade three are most likely to stay in school longer.

Meanwhile, DILG also advised the LGUs to consider the public school's budgetary requirements in reviewing and revising approved local school board budgets as well as other priorities which have been identified in schools' improvement plans.

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