

PRESS RELEASE

## **DepEd posts unprecedented zero drop out rate**

An unprecedented zero drop-out rate from first year to fourth year high school has been observed in at least four provinces nationwide as the Department of Education intensifies its efforts to address the occurrence of children dropping out of school.

The four provinces which reported a zero drop-out are Zamboanga Sibugay, Cotabato, Southern Leyte and Romblon. Masbate, for its part, has recorded a drop out rate of 0.95% in its five national high schools. DepEd is still collating data in other provinces.

The feat has been achieved through DepEd's Drop Out Reduction Program (DORP) which uses various approaches to significantly reduce if not totally eradicate the problem of drop-outs.

Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Mona Dumlao-Valisno said DORP is a valuable tool for the Philippines to enable it to meet the United Nations goal of Education for All (EFA) by 2015.

"We have experienced remarkable success in reducing the drop out rate in many high schools because of our effective intervention programs through DORP," she added.

Valisno stressed that DepEd has to work extra hard to be able to reach and bring back to school some 5 million more school-aged children who are out of school and not only the drop-outs."

DepEd's target is to cut drop out rate in Philippine public schools to 7.13 percent for School Year 2009-2010.

This is far lower than the national drop out rate of 12.51 percent when DORP started in 2005-2006. The 2010 target reflects a consistent decline from the 8.35 percent drop out in SY 2006-2007 and 7.45 percent in 2007-2008.

DORP was designed to address the problems faced by students which prevent them from completing their elementary and high school education. Many students cannot report to class regularly because of various reasons such as work, financial problems physical handicap, family and health issues, among others.

According to Director Lolita Andrada of DepEd's Bureau of Secondary Education, DORP has several programs that rescue students, considered at risk of dropping out (SARDO), from discontinuing their schooling and being considered a school failure.

"We have to come up with innovative measures to bring back to school those in the brink of dropping out and those students in difficult circumstances," Andrada stressed.

The Open High School Program (OHSP) is a distance education program that allows working students or previously out-of-school-youth (OSY) to continue studying using a specialized module.

The Effective Alternative Secondary Education (EASE) provides an innovative learning tool that allows students to pursue lessons outside school using modules. Some children may have to be temporarily absent from class because of justifiable reasons such as natural calamity or an illness.

The Schools Initiated Interventions (SII) is the most effective help for SARDOs since the school itself fits the kind of help a student needs according to his unique circumstances. The SII has enabled schools to determine, based on interview, specific problems of students or the real causes for dropping out.

"We assess the problem of students based on the result of FICS- Family, Individual, Community, or School assessment. Not all those who are dropping out are poor students. Rich students may also be vulnerable," said Prudencia Martinez-Sanoy, DepEd education program specialist and DORP coordinator.

Through this, some schools found out that certain students were undergoing difficult situation such as going through pregnancy or experiencing abuse from family members.

A total of 1,176 public high schools now have Drop Out Reduction Program (DORP). This number represents 17.68 percent out of the total of 6,650 high schools nationwide.

The schools in Zamboanga Sibugay that posted a zero drop-out rate include national high schools (NHS) in Balangao, Guinoman, Imelda, Kasigpitan, Nanan, Symbol, and Talusan.

In Cotabato, the zero drop out schools are the NHS in Badiogan, Nabalawag, Pikit, and Matalam. In Southern Leyte, these are the NHS in Esperanza, Libas, Nava, Ichon, and Esleta, In Romblon, these are the NHS in Agnipa, Ferrol, Sta. Fe, Concuera, and San Jose .For four consecutive SYs now, other Romblon high schools of Tanagan,Cambalo, Mayha,and Esteban Madrona. Ferrol have been posting zero drop out rate while the high schools of Agnipa and Sta. Fe has gained zero drop out record over the last three school years.

The division of Masbate also recorded a very low drop out rate of only 0.95 percent particularly in the high schools of Dimasalang, Feliciano Samonte,Puro, Iniwaran Integrated, and Liong.

High schools that recorded a less than one percent drop-out rate in Zamboanga Sibugay were NHS in Olutanga, Pantaleon Cordiera, Pioneer, San Antonio, and Basalem.

"Because of the success of DORP in high school, public elementary schools are initiating their own program for Pupils at Risk of Dropping out (PARDO)," Sanoy said.

Dr. Violeta Alocilja, Southern Leyte schools district superintendent, said that the School-Based Management (SBM) practice of empowering the school heads has given them more options to address the problem of students dropping out of school. "For instance, we believe that the SII is more effective for us in addressing drop out rates among elementary students," Alocilja explained.

As proof of this, in Benguet Division, elementary schools in 14 districts are already "dorping."

DORP was first tried out under the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP) implemented in 2000-2006 which was co-financed by the Asian Development Bank.

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