

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Lapus: ‘Oplan Balik Eskwela a success’

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said that the opening of classes went smoothly because of the efforts undertaken by various Balik Eskwela convergence partners.

“We have institutionalized community involvement in education through Oplan Balik Eskwela,” Lapus said. “Our competent handling of school opening preparations can only be attributed to this sense of community that we at DepEd have been espousing for years.”

Starting with the annual National Schools Maintenance Week or Brigada Eskwela, the education department called on all education stakeholders in the community to help spruce up public schools in time for school opening.

“We did not want our students to allot their first two weeks in school to cleaning classrooms and repairing school furniture. We want our school children to have more time for learning,” Lapus added. “Brigada Eskwela’s success shows how well we Filipinos appreciate our role as education stakeholders.”

Close coordination with key Oplan Balik Eskwela convergence partners was critical to the department’s school opening preparations. With the assistance of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), stalls in front of public schools were ordered removed and the traffic situation in the metropolis was closely monitored. As ordered by Lapus, all DepEd NCR schools division superintendents worked with their counterparts in NCRPO in resolving security and safety concerns in their respective schools.

“We had to focus on Metro Manila because of its population density. And the participation of NCRPO and MMDA in this inter-agency effort was critical to making our public schools crime-free and our traffic situation eased in the National Capital Region,” said Lapus.

As the Balik Eskwela Command Center closed yesterday, the education secretary also reported that the number of complaints and queries forwarded to the Balik Eskwela Command Center decreased from 113 on June 1 to only 35 on June 5.

“This is due to the speed with which we solve cases that were brought to the attention of our command center. This is simply our way of responding to the needs of students and parents so that all children will be encouraged to go to school,” added Lapus.

The number of complaints on fees also went down, from 27 on June 1 to four on June 4. As of June 5, 684 out of 687 complaints and queries have been

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resolved. Most of the cases forwarded came from the National Capital Region, with 380 queries and complaints.

“We thank the parents for having forwarded their concerns to us through our Balik Eskwela command center. Without the cooperation from the public, we would not have solved these concerns promptly,” the DepEd chief noted.

Together with Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Francisco Duque III, Lapus reminded parents and students that hand washing is the simplest way to prevent the further spread of the Influenza A(H1N1) virus, and he even demonstrated to public school students the proper way to wash hands during his visits to Rizal High School and Highway Hills Central School on the first day of classes.

The DepEd chief thanked all Balik Eskwela convergence partners that have helped DepEd during this year’s Balik Eskwela operations.

DepEd has tapped the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Health (DOH), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), Department of National Defense (DND), Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services and Administration (PAGASA), the Philippine National Police (PNP), Manila Electric Company (Meralco), Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), Manila Water and Maynilad.

“We could not have prepared for school opening without the all out support of our convergence partners,” the education secretary said.

Oplan Balik Eskwela is DepEd’s annual nationwide campaign to prepare for school opening. Through this campaign, DepEd seeks to address common problems encountered during school opening, provide information, and coordinate with government agencies, communities and other education stakeholders.

The Oplan Balik Eskwela Command Center ceased its operations last Friday, June 5, after providing quick response to complaints and queries for two weeks. The public can continue to send their complaints, suggestions and queries to the Department of Education through its text messaging service by sending DEPED FDBK name, address, and query to 2622 or 09194560027.

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