

PRESS RELEASE

## DepEd pushes for creation of Bureau of Special Education

The Department of Education is pushing for the creation of a Bureau of Special Education to attend to the education of children with special needs (CSN) and people with disability (PWD).

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said that only 2 percent of Filipino children with special needs are able to get support from the government unlike in other countries where they get 100 % state support.

“We believe that the creation of a specific unit that will take care of the unique needs of special children is urgent,” Lapus pointed out. He added that although CSN and PWD comprise a minority, they remain a significant 13 percent of all children’s population.

Senate Bill (SB) 2020 mandates the creation of at least one special education (SPED) center for each school division (one each in 17 regions) and three SPED centers in big school divisions.

Lapus has asked Malacanang to certify as urgent Senate Bill (SB) 2020 as the government has to look after these children who are not yet provided with appropriate educational services.

SB 2020 has been approved on second reading, and its Lower House counterpart, HB 6740, has been approved on third reading.

“Most people have not yet recognized that certain CSNs or PWDs have very distinct talents and skills. And their integration and mainstreaming into the society will contribute significantly to national development,” Lapus stressed.

Based on School Year 2004-2005 estimates, there were 5.49 million CSNs in the Philippines or 13 percent of all children’s population. Of this number, an estimated 4.2 million were PWDs while 1.27 million were gifted children.

However, enrollment of these children only totaled to around 15,000 as of SY 2004-2005. This enrollment rate already represents an 88 percent growth from SY 1995-1996 when enrollment was only around 8,000.

“The need is so stunning that attending more intensively to this ignored sector would need more support from the national government and its many agencies,” Lapus explained.

Children with special needs (CSN) are those who are autistic, gifted or talented, mentally retarded, visually impaired, hearing impaired, orthopedically or physically handicapped, learning disabled, speech defective, children with behavior problems, and those children that encounter health problems under the formal educational system.

PRESS RELEASE

“All CSNs, irrespective of the degree of sensory, physical, or intellectual disability or needs, will have the opportunity to be educated in the most educationally-enhancing environment consistent with the provision of a quality education that best meets their needs,” SB 2020 stipulated.

Under the bill, special day care centers will be put up near existing SPED centers with the support of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

The bill provides for special instructional materials which may transcribe traditional instructional materials into Braille, large-type prints, or audio-tape without penalty or royalty. Computerized forms of these instructional materials may also be produced.

The bill also spelled out that private institutions participating in these programs may avail of tax deductions, loan assistance and technological or scientific assistance.

The bill provides for a P600 million yearly budget for five consecutive years for the SPED program, while a separate P20 million yearly fund from the President’s Social Fund and from the Philippine Gaming Corp. will finance the founding and operation of the BSE.

A child is considered to have a need to train in a SPED center if he differs from the average child based on mental characteristics, sensory abilities, neuromuscular or physical characteristics, social abilities, multiple handicaps, or has a developmental lag.

Rudy Mina, DepEd SPED program specialist, said there are already 227 SPED centers all over the PHilippines including 16 in Manila and six in Quezon City. However, the budget released for SPED which was 84 million as of 2009, was insufficient in order to cover for the big need to put up SPED centers in hard-to-reach places.

For instance, it has been difficult to put up SPED centers in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) specifically in Lanao provinces or Basilan or in Ifugao in the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

DepEd is scheduled to train 350 SPED teachers this year.

**END**

PRESS RELEASE

# PRESS RELEASE