

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DepEd: schools to open as scheduled

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus today announced the opening of classes will push through on Monday, June 1, as he assures the public that the Department of Education (DepEd) is closely coordinating with the Department of Health (DOH) on the Influenza A(H1N1) virus.

The education chief emphasized that DOH is the lead agency on this matter and DepEd is yielding to the health department's directive on whether or not classes are to be suspended because of this health concern.

"We have been working closely with the Department of Health, and based on their recommendation, there is no need to postpone the opening of classes because of this issue," Lapus said.

"At DepEd, we have also been actively promoting health education in our schools," he added. "And we are now implementing our own Anti-Influenza A(H1N1) campaign to make sure that all our field offices and schools are well informed of and well prepared for this health concern."

Lapus issued DepEd Memo 238, directing regional and division offices and schools to implement the campaign. Task forces have been created even at the district level to oversee the campaign, including mapping out contingency plans with DOH and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

DepEd school health and nutrition personnel are instructed to intensify health education particularly in the area of prevention and control of common diseases.

Aside from this effort, DepEd has been working closely with its Oplan Balik Eskwela convergence partners in preparation for the opening of classes.

"With the cooperation we have forged with our convergence partners, we are confident that this year's school opening will be smooth and orderly."

The Oplan Balik Eskwela Command Center at the DepEd Central Office in Pasig City is open to the public until June 5 to handle walk-in queries and complaints from the public. The public may contact the command center Hotlines 6361663, 6331942, 6340222, 6359817, 6363602, 6364880, 6366550, 6387529, 6387530, 6387531 and 7065332.

They may also send their name, address and query through SMS to 09194560027 or 2622.

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