

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DepEd Focus on Schools with Low Mastery Scores

The Department of Education has ranged a host of intervention programs to upgrade English instruction in elementary and high school with special focus on schools which registered in the low mastery level in the 2007 National Achievement Test.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has instructed DepEd to zero in on schools which tested low in mastery in the 2007 NAT. A student is considered in the low mastery level if the mean percentage score (MPS) is between 15 to 34 in the 100-item test per subject.

Earlier during the DepEd presentation in Malacanang before the members of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, Education Secretary Jesli A. Lapus outlined its programs that were designed to upgrade English instruction. This include the training of teachers to teach English which as of October 2007 totals 137,420 teachers nationwide.

The NAT, which measures what the students in Grade 3 and second year high school know, understand and can do, covers Mathematics, English, Science, Filipino and HEKASI.

The 2006 results for elementary students showed an MPS in English of 60.78 percent, a big jump from the 54.05 in 2005 -2006.

For high school students, 2006 NAT results recorded an MPS of 51.81 percent, up from 51.20 percent in 2005 - 2006.

The NAT result in English for Grade 3 students was an MPS of 59.56 percent, a 10 percent improvement over 49.98 percent in previous year.

“Despite the improving NAT results in English among our elementary students, we believe that we have to make an extra push to sustain their improving performance,” Lapus said. “Our bigger goal is to upgrade English instruction among those schools which performed below mastery level,” he added.

Some 265 high schools which performed badly or those whose MPS ranged between 15-34 are the focus of intervention with the hope of achieving average mastery to moving towards mastery by 2008.

In the elementary division, DepEd is eyeing to upgrade the performance of 1,899 schools which are also at low mastery levels and achieve average mastery in the 2008 NAT.

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Lapus stressed that English proficiency is critical in learning as other key subjects such as Science and Mathematics use English in explaining concepts.

DepEd implements a more focused school governance with 43,000 school improvement plans (SIP) and 187 division education development plans with well-defined targets on learning outcomes. This is in compliance with the directive of President Arroyo for a 30% improvement in baseline data in English, Science and Mathematics by 2010.

Meanwhile, DepEd continues implementing ECARP or Every Child a Reader Program which aims to make children from Grades 1 to 6 able to read as expected at their own level. DepEd has likewise directed schools to beef up school libraries and implement different reading strategies to instill love for reading at an early age.

DepEd will also continue to hold the national Read-a-Thon contest which gives cash prize to students who emerged Best in Story Telling, Best in Oral Interpretation, Best in Vocabulary, Best Team Readers and Best School in Reading. Likewise, DepEd gives awards to Outstanding Reading Teachers who emerged after a thorough nationwide search. Special awards were also given to outstanding reading teachers in the 13 regions.

Moreover, master teachers and department heads demonstrate effective English teaching methods to other teachers thereby upgrading the teaching capabilities of participants.

DepEd records show that as of October 2007, some 137,420 elementary and secondary teachers have received training relevant to English instruction in different modes: live-in workshops and conferences facilitated by English specialists; school-based training with mentoring and coaching; and trainings conducted in coordination with teacher-training institutions.

DepEd's Bureau of Elementary Education is currently developing Lesson Guides in English for Grade 1 to Grade 6 in collaboration with the Ateneo de Manila University which is ready for use by teachers in the coming school year.

Relative to this, the Bureau of Secondary Education addresses the training needs of 18, 892 English teachers where 16,625 are English majors while 2, 267 are non-majors. These teachers were provided training on mastery reading and writing and current reading pedagogy. The bureau is also preparing video lessons for first year high school for distribution next school year.

The DepEd's National English Proficiency Program (NEPP) resulted to the intensive and hands-on training of some 7,300 teachers on English proficiency. In turn, the teachers echoed what they learned to a total of 95,600 teachers in their schools under the Teachers Mentoring Teachers program.

Part of DepEd's initiative to improve English instruction is to ink partnership with local and international stakeholders. Very significant contributions in raising the level of achievement in English in Mindanao area were made with USAID-

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Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQUALLS), AUSAID Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM-ARMM).

Various private sector interventions under DepEd's Adopt-a-School Program have yielded positive outcomes.

ABS-CBN's Knowledge Channel has helped post an 8% increase in the achievement level of student- beneficiaries while Text2teach with the Ayala Foundation and Nokia resulted in a 5% increase in the achievement level in English and Science of school beneficiaries.

Other similar initiatives include the establishment of Library Hubs which are already in place in 35 divisions. The local government units provide the building to house the books while DepEd purchases the reading materials and furniture.

Private businesses also do their share such as the Bright Minds Read program of the Ronald McDonald House of Charity being implemented in 977 schools and benefited 9,360 Grade 1 pupils. The Summer Institute of Linguistics also chip in through its Reading Books for Indigenous Pupils which is now available in 7 divisions.

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