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## DepEd further strengthens Special Education

In line with the year-long celebration of the centennial of Special Education (SPED) in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has started implementing new programs to strengthen teachers' capabilities to better respond to children with special needs.

Aside from the ongoing training given to teachers of children with hearing impairment, visual impairment and mental retardation, DepEd will provide additional enrichment courses to educators handling children with learning and multiple disabilities.

"Different techniques and a unique approach are required in the teaching of children who experience learning difficulties and have special needs," Secretary Jesli Lapus pointed out. "It is imperative that our educators continue to develop the abilities required in their profession and are updated in new developments in special education."

As part of the enrichment program, participating teachers initially take 18 units of specialized courses that may lead to a graduate degree. The courses are taken over a period of two summers from partner universities which are Philippine Normal University in Luzon, Cebu Normal University in the Visayas and Holy Cross College of Davao in Mindanao.

In addition, early intervention in childhood education is now being implemented. Most notable of these current initiatives is the launch of the Filipino Adaptation of the Portage Guide to Early Education.

Adapted to the Filipino culture, the guide contains card files and checklists. The checklists help parents determine whether the current learning skills of the child are ahead, on track or delayed. Depending on the findings, card files are also provided with activities and strategies to supplement or enhance the children's acquisition of functional daily skills.

Moreover, principals, educators and parents participated in workshops on the manual's usage in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Copies of the manual-- in both English and Filipino translations -- were also distributed to the different regions.

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