

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Madrasah Education **DepEd invests in peace building in Mindanao**

In an unprecedented move, the Department of Education has started to grant financial assistance to private madaris (Muslim schools) that adopted the Madrasah curriculum which has both Islamic studies and standard basic education subjects taught in all public schools.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said the mainstreaming of Madrasah education in our system of basic education will give our Muslim schoolchildren an education that is culturally-sensitive, Islamic friendly and will give them equal work opportunity. "This is DepEd's significant contribution in building a culture of peace in Mindanao through education," he added.

A total of 36 private madaris with 3,834 Muslim pupils have qualified for financial assistance of P5,000 per enrollee per school year which started in school year 2008-2009. The guidelines are contained in DepEd Order no. 81 series of 2007.

DepEd has earmarked P20 million from its 2008 budget as financial assistance to private madaris to encourage Muslim educators to adopt and implement the standard Madrasah curriculum.

Secretary Lapus led the ceremonial turnover of the financial grants to the private Madaris today at the DepEd Complex in Pasig City. It was attended by DepEd partners, representatives from member countries of the Organization of Islamic Conference and other DepEd and ARMM key officials.

In the ARMM region, 26 madaris from Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Shariff Kabunsuan and Tawi-tawi qualified after a thorough and rigorous screening and validation, There are two in Davao City and eight in Cotabato City and General Santos City.

The financial assistance for each recipient Madrasah shall be for specific purpose: 80% will go to pay the salaries of teachers handling secular subjects and 20% will be for the improvement of classroom and other school facilities.

This is the very first time ever in the history of Philippine education that private madaris are mainstreamed as a component of National System of Basic Education following a single curriculum for basic education, common to both public schools and private Madaris.

"We purposely designed the Madrasah education to be able to respond to the needs and realities of our Muslim learners," Lapus explained.

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There are two types of curriculum prescribed in Madrasah Education -- the Enriched Curriculum for Public Elementary Schools and the Standard Curriculum for Private Madaris. The former has been implemented in all DepEd regions nationwide for Muslim students and is known as the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program. Islamic culture and language can be preserved among Muslim children while they are enrolled in public schools.

The Standard Curriculum for Private Madaris, approved in 2004, aims to put in place an educational system that is appropriate for the Muslim population.

The Standard Curriculum combines basic secular subjects with religious subjects such as Qur'an, Aqeedah and Fiqh, and Seerah and Hadith. Through this curriculum, the Filipino national identity is promoted even as the Muslim's cultural heritage is preserved.

Lapus stressed: "With such a curriculum, the Philippines will have a Madrasah education system where students from private madaris can transfer to public schools and vice versa. It will likewise give them equal chance in employment opportunities."

The education chief added that this year, DepEd shall expand the program by renewing the financial assistance to the current 36 madaris which are expected to accept grade 1 new entrants by school year 2009-2010.

"We shall also accept new applications from other private madaris and will continue to do so until all madaris shall have adopted the standard Madrasah curriculum," he said.

"We all want peace and we want it now. With this curriculum now in place, we are actually building the foundation for national understanding and unity. And hopefully lasting peace."

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