

PRESS RELEASE

DepEd chief amazed by Zambo LGU education efforts

In his recent visit to Zamboanga City, Education Secretary Armin Luistro could not help but praise the efforts being done by Zamboanga City, with the leadership of Mayor Celso Lobregat, to address the challenges of the city's state of education.

Sec. Luistro's visit to Zamboanga City not only allowed him to personally see the beauty of the city for the first time but also appreciate the efforts put by local government officials to help the national government in its education reforms.

Satisfied with the performance of the city, Luistro was caught saying, "I have only but good praises for the leadership of Mayor Lobregat and the entire Zamboanga City community for putting education on top of their priority."

Luistro also added that Zamboanga City's story is something that should be emulated by cities and provinces around the country.

"Initiatives from the local governments that support the education sector must be replicated. Zamboanga City is one proof that when local government collaborates with the efforts of the national government, the outcome will lead to a more stable society," Luistro told.

In his visit to the mayor's office, Luistro was informed that the city government invested P600 million of its local funds for education.

The DepEd chief stressed the importance of putting education as on top because "education is the greatest equalizer one society needs. An informed society will be eventually liberated from the long-term problems that have been haunting the nation."

Luistro visited Zamboanga City to attend the 2nd Mindanao Bishops-Catholic Education Association of the Philippines Conference held at the Ateneo de Zamboanga University. He was asked to talk about "Education for peace and development in Mindanao: Opportunities, Challenges, and Ways Forward."

In his speech, he focused on the situation in Mindanao, which is traditionally a hot bed of separatist movement and where peace and development still remained elusive. He emphasized that, "education is the key to peace."

"Peace and development are like an ox and a carriage wherein one follows the other. Development will not happen in an environment where peace is always under threat," stated Luistro.

Luistro explained that "an educated populace will have no reason to resort to violence to resolve conflicts. Educated people will try to exhaust all peaceful means to come to an agreement or a mutually acceptable compromise."

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During the event, the secretary challenged everyone to use education as the solution to the endless peace and order problem in the region. “We can begin to understand that we need not shoot people whose belief is different from ours. And that peaceful co-existence is the way of a free and civil world,” Luistro furthered.

While DepEd does not claim to have all the answers to make peace reign in Mindanao, it nevertheless offers “education for peace and development” which is aligned with the Education For All 2015 agenda set forth by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Luistro sought the full support of all education stakeholders. “We cannot give up on education because education remains the key to poverty alleviation and conflict resolution.”

While there, Luistro visited nearby schools unannounced. He went to city-funded facilities at the Talon-talon National High School, Talon-talon Elementary School, Tugbungan Elementary School, Zamboanga East Central School and the Zamboanga City High School-West. In his first 60 days in the department, he has visited schools in Batangas, Nueva Ecija, Cebu, and Metro Manila.

Luistro said his surprise visits allowed him to see the real challenges in the education sector. Surprisingly, despite of the backlogs, he is satisfied with what he has seen in the public schools he visited so far.

“Unannounced school visits allowed me to have a full grasp of the real situation in basic education, particularly public education. With what I have seen, I am happy and impressed with how education stakeholders bridge the gap. Teachers have been so creative and innovative on how they manage large classes; school officials have been great in making ends meet; lastly, my high respect to the local governments that seriously invest in education and bring out the best among their community members,” Luistro said.

It may be noted that DepEd pushes for initiatives in line with President Aquino’s 10-point education agenda. Among the things the government wants for education is to establish a covenant with the local government units.

“We will go around and seek the commitment of local governments to help build classrooms for public schools. We will see how the Special Education Fund is being spent and recommend how local government executives can best utilize it to serve the interest of their public schools,” explained Luistro.

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