

Message from the Secretary



Even before the catch phrase “no one left behind” came into vogue, our Constitution was unequivocal: “The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.”

The Department of Education offers the Alternative Learning System to our youth who are unable to remain in school, and to adults who are unable to finish basic education.

ALS is a major commitment of DepEd and is fully supported by the President. To enhance the ALS program, my Office initiated the Alternative Learning System - Education and Skills Training. I envision that this effort will contribute to addressing the needs of those that formal education has failed to reach, and that it will be one of the legacies of the Duterte administration.

My passion for ALS is shaped by my own life experiences. I was a year old when World War II broke out with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. My family escaped to the hills, and hid in a place which took days to reach. My mother who was a teacher did not let the horrors of war prevent her from teaching. She gathered the children from the mountain villages and taught them to read and write, using banana leaves with their natural lines and sharp bamboo sticks as writing implements. I was among those who listened to the lessons which my mother imparted.

When the war was over, children were tested to know their grade equivalence. I was also tested just because I went along with my aunt. At four years old, I was promoted directly to Grade 2. My experience is a testament that one can get educated without formal schooling.

DepEd did not invent ALS, it has been there all along. Church/faith-based institutions, civil society organizations, civic-minded people, the private sector and families offered alternatives to formal education. During the war, it was kept alive by those who ran "jungle schools" like the Silliman University, and teachers like my mother, who never wavered in their mission to impart knowledge and values.

Government comes in to complement these efforts. And with ALS-EST we go a step further.

This ALS-EST Handbook is a useful guide for all who are active in the ALS program, as well as a source of information for the public which considers education as a major development goal.

I hope that this Handbook will contribute towards a harmonized and unified approach to ALS and towards making quality education accessible to all.



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