

A STRIDE TO REMEMBER BEST PRACTICES IN BRIGADA ESKWELA

by:

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This just hit. Every year, starting 2017 all the schools that I've served were hailed or included in the top 5 best implementing schools in Brigada Eskwela. Recently, we have won the first National award or recognition of Bataan in Secondary level. So, I thought and I guess it is fitting that I share this journey to everyone. Instead of them asking or texting, I decided to put them into writing; to share some tips on how to achieve such feat. But for me to do this we need to go back in time so I can explicitly share these practices over the years

In 2017, when I was assigned as officer-in-charge in Saysain High School, a neophyte for that position, the feeling was half nervous, half excited. Nervous because it is my first to lead a school; excited because I have ideas that I which to apply. I stayed there for 1 year and three months and during those short days of stay, we made history. Saysain High School won its first two awards in Brigada Eskwela. We bagged fifth place on my first year 2017, third on the following year 2018 before I got transferred. We won also in the gulayan sa paaralan contest another first in the school as well.

I think the secret to this is the school's tagline. Saysain High School CARES. Having a tagline gives the school a clear sense of direction, a purpose. I made sure that everyone knows the reason behind this tagline. A school with a heart ready to serve its clientele. Just the word cares explain its objective. A verb which is singular in meaning which connotes unity. The school as a whole work together. United in all its endeavors. This is the starting point. We care first for each other. We care for the welfare of the students and we care for the community. I cared first, then everyone else follows. I made sure that the

teachers are happy working in the school. Coffee break is one of schemes that I used to achieve this goal. They just stayed there inside the principal's office waiting for their coffee to be served. In the course of the coffee break, chatting and laughing are main ingredients which will eventually lead to brainstorming and planning

To further show my care for them I used another scheme, surprises. I tapped the SSG officers to provide birthday surprises for the teachers. Even during the teacher's day celebration, it was a month-long celebration. Why did I do this? Because for me the most important persons in the school community are the teachers because they are the field reporters getting the latest news that needs to be aired.

They are the soldiers directly carrying out your command to win the war. If they feel glad about themselves, happy and contented, feel good about the project if they know the objective of the program it is a hundred percent success.

The second best practice is the Hi and Hello Dilemma. School Heads are mobile persons in the school. That's the reality of being a principal. We come and go. Sooner or later, we'll be transferred to another station. So, I have to maximize the time so that when I get transferred, I will leave a mark on that school, a history that they will never forget. And so, it was, and so it did.

Next comes my beloved school, Mabayo High School. I served as a school teacher there for 8 years then got promoted. After 5 years, I went back as an administrator of the school. The services that I've done in all the schools that I've been started in Mabayo. Dealing with the community here is a bit easy for they know who I am. I have established myself in the community because I do believe that it is not enough that they know that you are kind sometimes or perhaps most of the time the people need to see it.

During my stay here we have conducted various community services. The very striking one was the Kahit Isang Araw Lang Para kay Lola at Lola wherein all the senior citizens of the barangay were invited to the school to receive free grocery packages, free

food and free entertainment just for them. The SSG officers and faculty partnered with the Bible Readers Society International and UNTV your Public Service Channel to raise 25 thousand pesos for the aforementioned gifts for the 114 senior citizens.

That's the third, community services. Because we care for the community, we reverse the scenario. Instead of us always asking for their help, we provided them with some. We've started a free store in Mabayo High School. The teachers gather or seek for used clothes or food supplies from alumni, NGO's, LGU's then placed them in a room. Parents will come-in, register then take what they need not what they want. We did this quarterly during the Parent Teachers Conference or PTCO. Medical Check-up was also conducted. Sing and Dance tutorials, and many more.

All these were contributors to our goal to strengthen the relationship with stakeholders especially with the parents. Then, during the brigada eskwela we made history. We had a great increase in attendance of volunteer workers and donors. Best of all we made it to the regional level fifth place winner. Although my stay in Mabayo High School was the shortest so far, 11 months, it was all worth it.

July 2019 up to present, I was again transferred to Nagbalayong National High School. Within three years, I have served three different schools. It's like every year I have to start all over but it's okay because after 14 years, I was given a chance to serve my barangay. Challenging? Definitely yes! For this school has been known to excel in various fields and categories. Then again, my style is the same, a year-long preparation, this is the fourth best practice. The minute I set foot into the school that I will serve, the preparation for brigada eskwela commences. First, I will observe and carry out the initial projects by the former school head as a respect to him or her. Then, I will court, my teachers and the community. Put and set discipline among students. Encourage them to partake voluntarily. Know the strength and weaknesses of the teaching and non-teaching force. Let them see my view so that we will have one perspective.

But of course, after a year, the pandemic happened. Everything was in a trance. Stay home. Avoid face to face contact with persons. This comes the fifth best practice. Your Mind set. As a school head and BE coordinator, we have to see the beauty in everything. Stay positive amidst this crisis. That there is a reason for all these things for God let this happen. So, instead of worrying about a lot things, I remained hopeful. I spend my idle time in school doing what I always love to do, gardening. After all, this school is my second home I have to take care of it. Luckily for me, it's just a bicycle away from my place. Even though Brigada Eskwela 2020 was cancelled I took this opportunity, since no student will come to school, my focus then was to improve the physical condition of the school with me and some of my utility and security personnel. Because of this positive mind set we continue to strive, think and provide Program, Projects and Activities or PPA's for the students, for the community and for the school. This gave rise to the following PPA's

Oplan DAKILA or Delivering Approaches for Kto12 Instruction and Learning Achievement, Coastal Clean Up, Monthly virtual Activities per Department, Virtual Graduation, Gulayan sa Tahanan sabay sa Paaralan, Donation Drive, Food Pack and Grocery donations, Contactless attendance through QR code, Project DEED wherein volunteer teachers will do house to house visitation to aid those students having difficulty in doing their modules especially in SHS practicum.

Surprisingly, during that same year, before 2020 ends, there was an announcement regarding the search for best implementing school that will represent the division to the regional level. The preparation for this contest was not easy but it was not difficult either. Because we did not stop to do what is right for the school. Since no teachers and students are present during those times, there were still reliable personnel who showed their concern for the school remained intact. We provided activities which we think are doable in those trying times. We had gathered resources from all walks of life.

As a result, Nagbalayong National High School was hailed as the Best Implementing School in school year 2020-2021. And this school year, 2021-2022 Nagbalayong National High School was awarded as the Best Implementing School in Brigada Eskwela in the region. It was a great feeling. It was uplifting. It was humbling. God let these things to happen. Thus, all praises and glory are to Him. But we are not done yet. There is another goal that the school will try to achieve, to be a Hall of Famer in Brigada Eskwela. Thus, we still need to stride.

All these we did and still, continue to strive because of our passion. We find pleasure and satisfaction in doing these things and I know all of us have that kind of feeling. In the end, I do believe that our designation is rightfully crafted to us school heads. We are the school principal. As public servants; we are the principal servants of the school.

I remember RD Capulong's program- Better Schools. He said, better schools need better school heads. They need better teachers. For us to improve the schools that we serve the school head and all the teachers should be the first to work it out. Every member in the school community is important to attain the desired dreams and aspirations of the school.

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