

SUSPENSION OF IN-PERSON CLASSES: IN THE HANDS OF SCHOOL AUTHORITIES DURING THE DRY SEASON

by:

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In response to the continuing heat wave disturbing various areas in our country, the Department of Education (DepEd) stated that school administrators are allowed to append in-person classes to safeguard the health of learners and the workforce, especially the teachers.

This is what the Department of Education echoes DepEd Order 037, Series of 2022, titled 'Guidelines on the Cancellation or Suspension of Classes and Work in Schools in the Event of Natural Disasters, Power Outages/Power Interruptions and Other Calamities, under the Memorandum No. 2023-077 dated April 20, 2023.

Aside from being given the authority to cancel or revoke in-person classes and it is also in its place to execute modular distance learning (MDL) modes amongst extreme heat during summer months that may risk the health of the learners and staff.

This DO 037 may also execute this order in situations such as natural disasters, calamities, and human-induced threats to make sure learning will not discontinue and that its competencies and purposes are achieved. With "extremely high temperatures" as among the legal grounds for class cancellation, it is now flexible for us to determine whether to teach them inside the classroom or implement MDL for the sake of their health.

If we took this for granted, some of our learners will have difficulty in breathing and may complain that the afternoon temperature is too much for them to bear, and it is not conducive to them absorbing comfortably what their teacher teaches them.

I am with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) recommendation in urging the DepEd to study in returning to the former school calendar, disputing that public schools are incapable to grip great temperatures all through the summer season.

As we look back, the DepEd ordered last May 11, 2020, they decided to schedule the opening of the school year 2020-2021 from June to August 2020, because of the pandemic that affect the life of the community especially in education.

Regarding the continuous learning of the learners the school division superintendents will monitor schools' implementation of MDL throughout the class suspension and communicate their concerns to regional directors.

There are reports of some learners losing consciousness or being dizzy in the mid of their classes because of the extreme temperatures and lack of ceiling fans to reduce the heat.

In the district, the principals/school heads have been prompted by their authority and accountability to cancel in-person classes and modify alternative distribution modes during extreme heat, especially if the condition now puts the learners' health and safety at risk.

Having this discretion to the school heads, I hope they will inform their staff ahead of time to avoid miscommunication regarding this matter.

This memorandum was based on PAGASA warning the public for hotter days during the summer season plus the incident reports came from the DepEd about the condition of the learners during classes.

Last May 1, 2022, the country recorded the highest heat index ever happened in Pangasinan and Dagupan with an all-time high of 55 degrees Celsius.

With today's situation health is of utmost priority to everyone.

References:

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