

FILLING THE GAPS OF LEARNING LOSS: FULFILLING TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITY

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Nearly three years since COVID-19 virus has been declared by the World Health Organization to be a global pandemic, which led to a temporary closure of industries, borders, workforce, and even schools in order to mitigate virus transmission. This has challenged the education sector to deliver learning materials to students despite the threat of the pandemic.

Department of Education has introduced different teaching styles which include synchronous and asynchronous learning while other schools initiated a radio-based education to reach students living in far-flung areas. Although it was challenging, the education sector has geared up and teachers were able to fulfill their duties to educate young learners.

Now that the government has been easing restrictions due to the presence of vaccines and herd immunity is likely to achieve, schools in the Philippines have once again opened for face-to-face classes nearly three years since the pandemic began. A new challenge is waiting for teachers to overcome: filling the learning loss caused by the pandemic, helping learners adapt and adjust to their new environment, and introducing new teaching and learning styles in the post-pandemic era.

Here are a few strategies to help teachers, as well as students, bridge the gap of learning loss:

1. Identify the gaps. As the school year 2022-2023 opened for in-person classes, one of the priorities of the teachers is to identify and measure students' learning in order to help them keep up with the lessons according to their grade level and age.
2. Identify their strength and weaknesses. In order to identify which subject area they are most difficult with, we must first identify their strengths and weaknesses to help them develop and achieve their full potential.
3. Introduce creative assessment. In order to measure their learning, teachers must assess the level of learning each student gained. To help students more participate, introduce a creative way of assessing their learning. Assessment is not always about exams and recitations, you may include new styles to engage more students and encourage them to participate in class. It is a reminder that classrooms can also be a place for fun.
4. Acknowledge their emotions. Children tend to hide their emotions, especially, if they feel that they are being left out. As the second parent of the child in the classroom, it is the teachers' responsibility to respond to their questions, provide guidance, and help them with difficulties. Let them know that classrooms are a safe place and teachers are always ready to listen, all feelings are valid and it is never their fault to be wrong.
5. Let them breathe. Information overload can sometimes be overwhelming, especially since they are now facing a new environment in the new normal. Provide ice breakers, study breaks, and rest periods during lessons to help them relax and absorb each lesson. This will help them relax their minds and continue processing the next lesson.

The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily closed borders and affected different sectors, but it has also opened a lot of opportunities and important lessons in life. It made us realize that learning doesn't stop in the four corners of the classroom, it has proven that resourcefulness and resiliency can help one's survival.

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