

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CATCH-UP FRIDAYS

*by:*

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Education is not just about acquiring knowledge; it's about nurturing character, fostering empathy and preparing individuals to contribute meaningfully to the society. The Department of Education, led by Vice Sarah Duterte introduced and implemented "Catch-Up Fridays." Its main purpose is to make every child a reader. To give ample time for children, especially non- and struggling readers, to have more time to practice and strive hard to learn how to read with the assistance and guidance of their teacher. As an alternative to the present class routine and schedule, learners will be engrossed in reading books, stories, and other reading materials to improve their ability to read text and be able to understand their good morals, make them more conscious of their physical and mental health, and familiarize them with peace education so that it will lessen the ongoing issues that address bullying.

As for the DepEd Memorandum on the Curriculum, the first part of the day will concentrate on reading, and the afternoon session will focus on values, health, and peace education, including the homeroom guidance program. Catch-Up Fridays is a learning approach designed to rejuvenate the social and other appropriate skills to occur the goal and objective of the Basic Education Curriculum as specified in the memo. Deped stated that all Fridays shall be intended to project "Drop Everything and Read." Since the main objective is to make it easier for learners to read, this learning activity will not be graded. Learners will be monitored through their reflection journals, wherein they will write about their reading experiences and what they have learned. Children can also express their thoughts, views, and learning by writing stories, journals, personal essays, and other types of writing that show and express their inner thoughts and feelings.

DepEd provided the quarterly themes and subthemes for all grade levels for Values, Health, and Peace Education, following the amended MATATAG Curriculum announced in August 2023. According to a 2022 World Bank report, 91 percent of Filipino children aged 10 have difficulty reading even a simple text. For this reason, the time allotted for the NRP provides children with a chance to focus on reading lessons and activities that will increase their reading level with appropriate printed materials that suit their reading abilities.

There are many strategies and techniques that teachers can use to make reading lessons more effective and enjoyable for learners, such as Project Dear “Drop Everything and Read,” in which learners can make a choice of what stories they want to read. One more approach is “Read-A-Thon,” which inspire learners to read as many books and stories as they can according to the given time and deadline. DepEd also recommended using interactive learning activities during pre-reading activities, like singing songs and reciting poems connected to the story that they will read. Interactive games can also be considered as an option to make learning more fun and enjoyable. Using charts and flashcards are also recommended, wherein there are words or syllables on them that can be found in the story. During the reading, teachers can pause for a while to ask some questions about what they have already read. They can also instruct their learners to do role-playing that portrays the characters and their favorite scenes in the story.

Undoubtedly, Catch-Up Fridays is very effective and can ensure that children can learn better because the teacher can give them more attention and more activities that are appropriate to their reading abilities. The teacher can also group their learners according to their reading abilities so that it is easier for her to determine which activities will be given to different groups of learners. Reading has many benefits for every child. Apart from the necessity of this skill educators should rekindle learners love and interest for reading and learning.

Salute to all the teachers who make these Catch-up Fridays more effective and enjoyable for children.

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