

GETTING BACK UP AGAIN

by:

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With so much happening with the world, with daily tasks overwhelming us, the COVID-19 pandemic seems like a thing of the distant past – when, in a passing thought, you’d suddenly realize that the outbreak was already five years ago and it has been two years since the WHO declared an end to this global threat.

Even so, the learning gaps brought about by the prolonged school closures continue to linger and significantly impact the learning rates of our students. Prior the pandemic, the Philippines has gained its reputation as one of the lowest performing in terms of the academe. Results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessments placed the country at the bottom among 78 countries when it comes to reading, Science, and Math. Came PISA 2022, which was released in 2023, Filipino learners were still among the least proficient in the three learning areas.

Learning poverty pre-pandemic was already prevalent, now compound it by the challenges of remote learning, how were the learners now that they were bound in their homes with limited access to education and guidance? Forget about Math and Science because 2022 data revealed by the World Bank that 91 percent of Filipino children are “unable to read and understand a simple passage by age 10.”

Aside from the PISA, the Department of Education utilizes various assessment tools to gather data on student learning. Reading assessment tools like the Early Grade Reading Assessment or EGRA, which was subsequently scrapped and made way for the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment or CRLA (for Grades 1-3), and Philippine Informal Reading Inventory or Phil-IRI for Grades 4-6 are “used to measure and describe

students' reading performance" while the Project All-Numerates (PAN) evaluates pupils' numeracy and Math Skills. National and Regional Achievements Tests were also conducted in 2022 to assess if students achieved the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC) set by DepEd during the pandemic.

In Samal South Elementary School (SSES), a medium-sized public elementary school in the District of Samal, Phil-IRI results from pre-pandemic school years showed the non-existence of non-readers and most were already either in the Instructional and Independent level. However, in SY 2021-2022, only a few were able to reach independence in reading. Recent data from the school's 2024 Midyear Phil-IRI reveal that only 13.47% from Grades 4-6 were identified under Frustration. EGRA and CRLA, on the other hand, also indicate that most students only have mastery on basic components such as letter and sound recognition and less than half of the learners achieved mastery on word and sentence readings and a very select few were able to spell from dictation which now categorized them into full, moderate, and light refreshers. PAN data for SY 2022-2023 indicates that out of 487 students, 30% (147) are non-numerates, 59% (286) are nearly numerates, and only 11% (54) are numerates. Division achievement results of Grade 3 and Grade 6 pupils, nevertheless, demonstrated favorable percentages.

Upon the resumption and the return to normalcy, SSES teachers immediately felt and continually bears the casualty of learning losses that the pandemic has brought upon the learners. Even with shift in curriculum (K to 12 to Matatag), it was still challenging to bridge the gap, having to teach grade-level competencies when they haven't even achieved mastery from their previous year's skill set.

The school, together with the whole Schools Division of Bataan, has already anticipated that the years to come will be highly-demanding, given that learners who will enter school are products of the pandemic that only intensified the great educational divide, and has prepared its lineup of intervention programs to address learning loss. Different division-, district-, and school-wide and classroom-based activities are put up

and after-classes remediation and reinforcement are also provided for those who lag. Teachers attend upskilling and reskilling seminars and regularly conduct SLAC sessions. SSES also incessantly requests the assistance and emphasizes on the continuous support of parents and the community in overcoming this challenge and we believe that with determination and patience, “Muling Susulong ang SSES!”

References:

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