

## ADDRESSING LEARNING LOSS IN ELEMENTARY GRADES AFTER THE PANDEMIC

by:

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When schools in the Philippines closed in March 2020, millions of elementary learners suddenly found themselves outside classrooms. For over two years, children relied on self-learning modules, online platforms, or radio-based instruction, depending on what was available in their communities. While these efforts helped sustain learning continuity, many teachers noticed that by the time face-to-face classes returned, a significant gap had formed. Learners in the elementary grades, especially those in reading and numeracy, were not performing at the level expected of their grade. This phenomenon, now widely referred to as learning loss, remains one of the most pressing challenges in education today.

The impact of this loss is most visible in the lower and intermediate grades where foundational skills are built. Teachers reported that some Grade 4 learners struggled with reading fluency similar to what should have been mastered in Grade 2. In mathematics, basic computation like multiplication and division posed difficulties even for upper-grade pupils. These gaps are not simply academic; they affect children's confidence, classroom participation, and readiness for higher-order learning. For many Filipino learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, the pandemic widened inequalities that already existed before.

Addressing learning loss requires both urgency and creativity. Many schools have adopted catch-up programs that focus on strengthening literacy and numeracy. Remedial reading sessions, peer tutoring, and small-group activities are now common strategies used to help struggling learners. Teachers also adjust lesson pacing by revisiting essential

competencies from previous grades before moving forward with new topics. The MATATAG curriculum rollout gives further support by streamlining content, allowing teachers to spend more time on core skills rather than rushing through overloaded lessons.

Technology, which once served as a lifeline during the pandemic, also continues to play a role in recovery. Some schools use AI-powered reading apps or interactive math games to provide personalized practice. However, access remains unequal, especially in rural areas, so many teachers still rely on low-tech but effective solutions like story-based reading activities, math drills with local examples, and home reading partnerships with parents. These community-based approaches ensure that no learner is left behind simply because of lack of gadgets or internet access.

Equally important is addressing the social and emotional side of learning loss. Many children returned to school carrying anxieties, low self-esteem, and disrupted social skills. Teachers, therefore, are not just catching up on lessons but also rebuilding learners' confidence and resilience. Activities that encourage collaboration, creativity, and values formation help children re-engage with school positively. In this way, learning recovery becomes holistic restoring not only knowledge but also the joy of learning.

The challenge of learning loss is undeniably daunting, but it is also an opportunity. It reminds educators, policymakers, and communities that education is not just about finishing lessons but about ensuring every child understands and grows. If schools continue to combine targeted interventions, responsible use of technology, parental involvement, and emotional support, Filipino learners can overcome the setbacks of the pandemic. What matters most is a collective commitment to help children regain what was lost and to ensure that, moving forward, no crisis will ever stop their right to learn.

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