

TIME TO RECHARGE: DEPED'S HEALTH BREAKS FOSTER BALANCE AND WELL-BEING

by:

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In recent years, the Department of Education (DepEd) has recognized the growing need to prioritize the mental and physical well-being of its workforce. The demands of teaching and administrative duties have intensified over time, particularly in the wake of new educational reforms, technological integration, and the lingering effects of the pandemic. Teachers and non-teaching personnel alike often face mounting workloads, long hours, and high emotional labor as they strive to uphold the department's mission of delivering quality education for all. In response to these growing challenges, DepEd's decision to grant health breaks to employees marks a progressive and compassionate step toward fostering a healthier, more balanced, and more resilient education community.

The concept of a health break is simple yet transformative. It acknowledges that rest is not a luxury, but a necessity. For too long, many education workers have equated productivity with constant activity, often neglecting their personal well-being in the process. Yet research has consistently shown that regular rest and recovery enhance focus, creativity, and motivation while reducing stress and fatigue. The World Health Organization (2020) emphasizes that workplace wellness programs and rest periods contribute directly to improved morale and efficiency, proving that caring for employees' health leads to better institutional performance. DepEd's initiative aligns perfectly with this global understanding, making wellness a key pillar of sustainable public service.

The health break initiative serves as a deliberate pause from the daily pressures of the workplace. It allows personnel to rejuvenate their physical and mental state, reflect on their professional journey, and reconnect with their sense of purpose. For teachers,

these moments of rest can reignite passion for teaching and strengthen emotional resilience. For non-teaching staff, they provide relief from the constant administrative demands that often go unnoticed but are essential to the school's operations. Such breaks do not merely promote relaxation; they create space for mindfulness, self-care, and genuine recovery – factors essential to long-term job satisfaction and productivity.

This policy reflects DepEd's continuing effort to institutionalize employee wellness programs. Over the years, the Department has issued various guidelines promoting work-life balance and the protection of mental health. The Civil Service Commission's Memorandum Circular No. 06, s. 2012, reinforces this by encouraging government agencies to adopt wellness activities that nurture employees' holistic well-being. DepEd's adoption of health breaks demonstrates a strong alignment with this mandate and reaffirms its commitment to valuing the people behind the nation's education system. By integrating wellness into organizational culture, the Department sends a clear message: taking care of oneself is part of professional responsibility.

Health breaks are also a proactive response to the realities of burnout and compassion fatigue among educators and staff. A teacher who spends long hours managing large class sizes, preparing reports, and engaging in community activities experiences not only physical strain but also emotional exhaustion. Likewise, administrative personnel who handle continuous workloads without pause risk stress-related illnesses that can affect their effectiveness and morale. DepEd's initiative recognizes these human limitations and seeks to address them through preventive care rather than reactive intervention. In doing so, it promotes a culture that values people as the department's most important resource.

Moreover, health breaks encourage reflection and collaboration within the workplace. When employees take a collective pause, they have the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations, share experiences, and build stronger professional relationships. These small yet powerful interactions contribute to a more supportive and

positive work environment. They also foster empathy and understanding – qualities that ripple outward to learners and the community. When educators and staff feel supported and renewed, they are better equipped to extend that same care and compassion to the students they serve.

The introduction of health breaks also represents a broader shift in the way educational institutions view productivity. True productivity is not measured by the number of hours spent working, but by the quality of output and the sustainability of performance. Allowing personnel to rest and recharge ensures that their energy and creativity remain intact, reducing absenteeism and turnover while improving overall efficiency. This mindset aligns with modern approaches to human resource management, which emphasize holistic wellness as a foundation for professional excellence.

DepEd’s move to formalize health breaks demonstrates visionary leadership and a deep understanding of the human side of public service. It bridges the gap between policy and compassion, ensuring that the welfare of employees remains central to institutional growth. As schools and offices across the country adopt this initiative, the message becomes clear: caring for the educators and personnel who shape the minds of future generations is an investment in the nation’s collective well-being.

Ultimately, the health break initiative is not just a pause in work – it is a movement toward balance, renewal, and sustainability. It acknowledges that those who nurture others must also be nurtured. For DepEd employees, taking time to recharge is not an interruption of duty, but an affirmation of their worth and humanity. When the workforce is healthy and supported, the entire education system thrives. In fostering a culture of rest, reflection, and well-being, DepEd ensures that its people remain strong enough to continue the noble mission of shaping the minds and hearts of every Filipino learner.

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