

PRESS RELEASE

DepEd explores partnership with private schools

Education Secretary Mona Valisno announced that the Department of Education is studying other options to decongest schools while additional classrooms are being constructed or repaired.

"We want all school-aged children to be in school and this increases class size prompting us to do classes in shifts. We are finding other cost effective ways to reduce the volume of students in classrooms," said Valisno.

"As one option, we will talk to private school owners to arrange for reasonable fees if we transfer some students in their schools," Valisno narrated. "This is one way to reduce classroom-student ratio in public schools particularly those in highly urbanized areas where available land for construction is limited."

"Another option is to support private education who will be willing to take in some selected public school students through a form of scholarship that can be part of the expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) or another scheme of financial support," she adds.

If this scheme cannot be accommodated in DepEd's budget this year, Valisno said that other means may be explored. "We can look into an option where the tuition of the scholar will be considered as a donation by the private school under the Adopt-a-School Program. Through this scheme, the school can avail of tax incentives equivalent to 150% of the value of the scholarship."

Under GASTPE, graduates from public elementary schools are given an opportunity to finish their education in private high schools. For those in Metro Manila, their tuition fee subsidy is P10,000 and P5,000 for those in other areas. DepEd reports that they currently have a total of 720,000 beneficiaries. A P6 billion budget is proposed for 2011 to reach the target of one million beneficiaries.

"This is line with our vision to see to it that "every Filipino child is assured of the opportunity to get high quality education that will make him or her a whole person, a responsible citizen, and lead him or her to a successful entrepreneurial venture," she said.

Amidst the inevitable problem of shortage of classrooms Valisno directed education officials to campaign for the enrolment of all students in their areas. They were told to accommodate all children of school age in the more than 45,000 public schools nationwide. This includes out-of-school youths who are coming back to formal education.

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