



July 2024

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IN-FOCUS

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The Office of Accountability Research and Evaluation recognized key PSS stakeholders and partners for their contributions to the district's successful reaffirmation of its national accreditation.

Public School System Receives Another 6 Years National Accreditation

The Public School System started examining the accreditation process thirty years ago to improve all public schools on Rota, Tinian, and Saipan.

In the past, accreditation served only as a descriptive process. In contrast, today's rigorous standards and processes place a multitiered emphasis on learning, resources, and leadership.

THE prestigious international accreditation arm of the Public School System, Cognia Accreditation, reaffirmed its national accreditation for an additional six years. This is the eleventh year for the school district to move from a school-based assessment and review process to a multi-school, community-wide one.

To improve all public schools on Rota, Tinian, and Saipan, the Public School System notably began looking into the accreditation process thirty years ago. PSS started embracing external accreditation in 1994 in collaboration with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The first public school to go through the initial school-based accreditation process was Marianas High School.

The Pacific region's first system-wide accreditation was introduced by PSS in the 2013–2014 academic year. PSS became the first district among island entities to accomplish this, according to AdvancEd, the predecessor of Cognia Accreditation, and it should be "a model in the (Pacific) region" for other entities wishing to pursue a system-wide review process. Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho praised the entire PSS community and its stakeholders for this distinction.

Cognia Accreditation announced PSS reaffirmation (renewal) of accreditation for six years early this month. PSS' new six-year term of accreditation will start from May 2024 to June 2030. All 20 schools in the Public School System and the Head Start program received their certificate of accreditation with an expiration date of June 2030.

"This is a validation of our work over the years on how we hold ourselves to a much higher standard, and of the level of effectiveness of our PSS as an institution of learning. I extend my congratulations to everyone – from our policymakers to classroom teachers and school personnel, students, to central office staff, and all of our stakeholders and supporters – for this accomplishment," Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho said.



The Office of Accountability, Research and Evaluation took the lead in recognizing partners following the successful reaffirmation of PSS' accreditation.

He added, "What this means is we have to continue the work that we do, including strategies that help and connect our children and provide optimum and quality learning opportunities."

According to Dr. Camacho, Cognia Accreditation's reaffirmation of PSS' accreditation "provides a nationally recognized mark of quality for our school district."

"Being able to maintain this distinction for 11 years demonstrates to our community our commitment to excellence, our openness to review and feedback, and our desire to be the best we can be on behalf of the students we serve," the education chief added.

Throughout its more than 125 years of service, Cognia, formerly AdvancED, has globally recognized schools that meet rigorous standards focused on productive learning environments, equitable resource allocation for the needs of learners, and effective leadership. Earning accreditation from the Cognia Global Accreditation Commission is a recognition that the school meets Cognia Performance Standards and maintains a commitment to continuous improvement. To earn Cognia accreditation, a school also must implement a continuous process of improvement and submit to external review. Schools in good standing can maintain their accreditation for a six-year term.

'High standards'

"The CNMI Public School System has demonstrated that it has continually met high standards and made progress on key indicators that impact student learning. Maintaining their accredited status for 25 years highlights a commitment to the quality and improvement of the education provided," said Dr. Mark A. Elgart, president and CEO of Cognia.

Cognia said the process of re-evaluating PSS was guided by evidence and was centered on four areas or "Key Characteristics": 1) culture of learning; 2) leadership for learning; 3) engagement of learning, and 4) growth in learning.

"The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness," said Dr. Elgart.



One significant advantage of PSS is its federal investment in educational resources for students.



All 20 schools on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota including the PSS central office, received individual certificates of accreditation from Cognia.

In PSS' "Culture of Learning", Cognia said, "Learning can be best seen through the system's holistic approach towards learning and its alignment to the vision, mission, and values of the CNMI Public School System."

Cognia said interviews and documentation indicate that "stakeholders at various levels are involved, engaged, and felt that they were able to contribute to the process".

"It was clear from interviews that the whole child and the learner's wellbeing are at the heart of the (CNMI- PSS) and are the principles that guide the system," Cognia said. "(S) tudents consistently said throughout the interviews that teachers, counselors, leaders, and community members were both supportive and caring about their academics as well as their non-academic needs and interests," the accreditation findings said.

In the "Leadership of Learning" area for PSS, Cognia took particular notice of how the CNMI Board of Education "serve the citizens of the CNMI Public School System well" by understanding their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that all policies of the district are regularly updated and communicated.

"The board members are dedicated and hardworking community members who hold themselves accountable to the stakeholders of (the CNMI PSS)," Cognia said.

In the third evaluation criteria, "Engagement of Learning," Cognia pointed out that, based on interviews and documentation, it found evidence that "engagement of learning is centered on student's engagement and the rigor to challenge learners' abilities through caring, family-oriented staff committed to learner success."

"In interviews with students and staff, the team observed that instruction was highly engaging, and expectations were rigorous. Engagement at these levels leads learners to succeed in many different curricula they chose," the findings said.

The fourth review area, "Growth in Learning" of PSS, Cognia said the school district "best exemplified this through diverse, thorough, and comprehensive set of program offerings...to further its learners' and staff's wellbeing."

In return, the program offering provides "a plethora of data sets and affords leaders to have a variety of data sources to make decisions for the wellbeing of learners and their staff."

"Teacher and student interviews confirmed that leaders regularly demonstrate this and can provide insightful data to their teams to support their staff in making impactful decisions for learners," Cognia affirmed in its findings.

History

PSS began looking at the accreditation process as a way to improve all public schools on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota nearly 30 years ago.



Certificates of Accreditation were individually presented to schools and programs.

In 1994, it was Marianas High School that became the first school to get accreditation, and it was through the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

The CNMI Board of Education eventually decided to ask WASC to also review all other public schools in the CNMI.

By 1997, WASC assessment included both the public school's physical facilities and curriculum. The accreditation used to be merely descriptive. It merely outlines what WASC observes during its visit to the school.

But since 1997, WASC has been looking into what the students are learning, focusing on learning and improvements and where schools want to go from there.

This continued on until 2013-2014, when PSS made a giant leap by pushing for system-wide/district-wide accreditation, by partnering with AdvancED, which eventually became Cognia.

PSS became the first in the Pacific region to receive a full six-year accreditation in its first year in 2014.

The national reaffirmation visit was conducted in September 2023 and PSS, led by then interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores led key school district stakeholders in the reaffirmation process.

By 2024, PSS became the first school district in the Pacific to achieve a national accreditation reaffirmation.



PSS stakeholders and partners with their individual certificates from Cognia.



U.S. Office of Special Education Program Director Valerie William speaks to the participants at the Pacific Data Collaborative through video conference.

How the Northern Marianas Special Education Program's Success is Fueled by Stakeholder Engagement and Why it Should be Replicated.

'A sense of community' is key to Pacific entity's program success: NMI Special Education Program is Praised by U.S. Special Education chief

ON April 15 this year, U.S. Department of Education Special Education Program Director Valerie Williams praised all the Pacific entities' Special Education Program's success, in particular, among others, crediting stakeholder engagement, which "remains difficult to achieve in some states and school districts in the nation."

Williams said it's the sense of community why the Special Education Programs of the Northern Mariana Islands' Public School System, Guam, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau have "done a stellar job" with their entity's respective programs.



Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho pledged to continue to support the initiatives of the PSS Special Education Program. In the background is PSS SPED State Director Donna M. Flores.

"I believe you, our Pacific entities, have a better handle on building relationships than what we have in some of the states. You have a sense of community and I think you have done a stellar job in getting input, participation, and responses from your stakeholders. What this means is, essentially, is you are 'hearing them out' on how the Special Education Program can continue to better serve our constituents," Williams said.

The OSEP chief also highlighted the importance of regional convening as both critical and essential in raising the level of accountability of services the Special Education Program and service providers afford students with special needs.

Based on the School-Year 2021–2022 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of students ages 3-21 who received special education and/or related services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was 7.3 million. This is equivalent of 15 percent of all public school students.

"What we are talking about is understanding the needs of our stakeholders... their unmet needs (to mention a few). I am not saying it is easy; listening to your stakeholders is not easy but there is respect in what we do as educators," Williams noted.

Williams was keynote speaker on the first day of the "Pacific Data Collaborative", which comprised the Pacific region's Special Education Program state directors, officers, program leaders, and data managers. Williams appeared virtually.

The five-day convening was jointly initiated by the CNMI PSS and Guam Special Education Programs and facilitated by the University of Guam CEDDERS IDEA Data Center (an OSEP-funded technical assistance center), and the global assistive technology company TextHelp®.

This is the first time it has been held on Saipan. This was initiated by NMI PSS Special Education State Director Donna M. Floress.

‘Support’

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho said the collaboration among island entities and partners led to Saipan hosting the largest gathering of special education leaders and decision makers.

“I hold the program near and dear to my heart. I am going to ensure that we are going to support our program within the Public School System and make sure it remains successful. Thank you for your collaboration. Thank you, Director Donna (Flores), for taking the lead on. Welcome to Saipan and to the CNMI Public School System,” Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho told the delegates.

‘Champion’

PSS Special Education Program Director Flores praised U.S. DOE OSEP Director Williams for her determination to support the Pacific entities.

“OSEP Director Williams is really the champion for the Pacific entities,” Flores said.

She also credited the leadership of the PSS Commissioner of Education, Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, and his predecessors for highlighting the importance of the programs for students with disabilities in the Northern Mariana Islands.

“I am proud and happy that we have such good leadership here. We are getting a good support system here, especially with our commissioner and his key management,” Special Education Director Flores said in her opening remarks.

“When we talk about regional and national support, it all starts in our respective entities. We may be geographically isolated, but we have a bigger and louder voice now because of the support we receive from our leaders,” she added.

‘SPED is general education’

OSEP Director Williams reiterated that special education students are part of the general education curriculum.

“As I have mentioned in many of my discussions with all of you, college is for... everyone to, including our students with special needs. This is why we fully support the expansion of opportunities to learn, including our students with disabilities. Our students deserve...to live a full independent life. Our job and what we do is clear: is to get them ready when school is over. If we do that, we are successful. That requires partnership and collaboration, including with our vocational rehabilitation partners,” Williams pointed out.

She added, “On your islands, things go well.”

The OSEP chief also reiterated that one essential key to success in responding to every need of a student with a disability is communication. In particular, to give focus on behavior.

“We believe behavior is a form of communication (a hidden language). It is our job as adults to make sure that we are able to respond to them...that the behavior is addressed...including that they are immersed in an academic setting and that they are learning,” Office of Special Education Director Williams extolled.

She added, “I want to commend our PSS Special Education led by Director Donna (Flores), Guam Special Education Director Tom Babauta, Guam CEDDERS and IDEA IDC for facilitating this dialogue. This is extremely critical because nothing happens in a vacuum. In order for us to be successful, we have to be engaged and be part of the ongoing discussion— that special education students are general education students.”

“I want you all to know that you have all my support for anything you want to do moving forward. I am very mindful of the need for more funding for our program to continue to be meaningful and that we are able to implement our work for our students with disabilities,” she added.



Ranking officials of the U.S. Department of Education gather with the CNMI Public School System and American Samoa Department of Education officials before their meeting.

Federal Education Officials Convenes Public School System, American Samoa Education Leaders in Nation's Capital

EDUCATION officials from the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa convened with the Council of Chief State School Officers Legislative Conference and the U.S. Department of Education on March 20, 2024, "to discuss updates and issues, and how the U.S. DOE and CCSSO can continue its support to school districts in the U.S. territories."

The CNMI Public School System (CNMI-PSS) was represented by Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, Federal Programs Officer Jacqueline P. Che, and State Special Education Program Director Donna M. Flores.

The American Samoa Department of Education was represented by Director Talauega Dr. Samasoni Asaeli,

Fiscal Officer Falaga Tauilili, Business Office Manager Jasper Tuiasosopo, and Communications Director Dr. Josephine Paulo. The session was with ranking USDOE officials: Dr. Patrick Carr, Director of Rural, Insular, and Native Achievement Programs; Dr. Tiffany Forrester, Group Leader, Rural, Insular, and Native Achievement Programs; and Christine Jackson, Senior Risk Consultant, Rural, Insular, and Native Achievement Programs. The CCSSO officials were Melissa McGrath, Chief of Staff; Peter Zamora, Director of Federal Relations and Policy; and Aaron Fettgather, Senior Associate, State Implementation.

The session was part of the three-day CCSSO Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. which was held from March 20 to 22.



AT THE YOUTH CONGRESS REGULAR SESSION

Following its 7th regular session of the 19th Youth Congress at the House of Representatives Chamber in Capital Hill, youth senators representing the public and private schools in the CNMI, engage Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho. The Youth Congress members are Speaker Vinnie Juan Q. Sablan of Kagman High School; Vice-Speaker Peaches Fiona G. Bayot of Marianas High School; Floor Leader Maili Ilareyo'l B. Peter of Mount Carmel School; Legislative Secretary Ysabella Nikonia Rita V. Palacios of Tinian Jr. Sr. High School; Senator Ayden Sean C. Yumul of Grace Christian Academy; Senator Aden Chonne H. Calvo of Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School; Senator Soledad Maria Tudela Sablan of Saipan International School, and Senator Mickyiel Josh B. Cabrera of Saipan Southern High School.



THE CNMI YOUTH CONGRESS

The members of the 19th CNMI Youth Congress: Speaker Vinnie Juan Q. Sablan of Kagman High School; Vice-Speaker Peaches Fiona G. Bayot of Marianas High School; Floor Leader Maili Ilareyo'l B. Peter of Mount Carmel School; Legislative Secretary Ysabella Nikonia Rita V. Palacios of Tinian Jr. Sr. High School; Senator Ayden Sean C. Yumul of Grace Christian Academy; Senator Aden Chonne H. Calvo of Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School; Senator Soledad Maria Tudela Sablan of Saipan International School, and Senator Mickyiel Josh B. Cabrera of Saipan Southern High School were joined by Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho following its regular session at the chamber of the CNMI House of Representatives in Capital Hill.



Rota's Future Seafarers

Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior high School students received a presentation from Capt. Michael Bacher from the Western Pacific Maritime Academy about the ongoing merchant marine program.

Seven students from the school have already met the merchant marine certification credentials, and they are Freya Greathouse, Sophia Songsong, Jonathan Mereb, Alywn Bermeo, Sonjoe Manuel, John Tobongbanua, and Perry Mesngon. Following the presentation, Capt. Bacher, standing second left, and RHI students, were joined by Board of Education Chairman Herman A. Atalig, 7th left, front row, and RHI Principal Annette Calvo, first left, for a group photo.



Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, 2nd left, and Early Intervention Program Director Robin L. Palacios, left, and a team of Early Intervention Program specialists visit a home in Sinapalo Rota, to encourage a family to sign up and avail of free program services.

Rota Leaders to Early Intervention Program: 'Thank You For Serving Our Families and Children'



Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho is introduced by Rota Health Center Resident Director Vanessa Quitugua to Kitone Vukunisaga, a dental therapist. Resident Director Quitugua told Commissioner Dr. Camacho that they are providing free dental services such as the fluoride program, dental, and sealants program for grade 1, 2 and 6 for Rota public school students.



The Early Intervention Program team led by Director Robin L. Palacios, left, is joined by Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, center, at the Rota Aging Center, as they pose with the brochures, flyers and other educational materials about the program.



At the Rota Office on Aging Center, the team of specialist from the PSS Early Intervention Program entertains parents who walked in to sign up of the free early detection program services.

In an outreach to Rota, Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho joined a group of Early Intervention Program staff members under the direction of Robin L. Palacios, and together they successfully registered more than twenty families to receive early detection services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays at no cost.

The PSS Early Intervention Program's "Child Find and Public Awareness" events took place on April 22 and 23.

This year's enrollment of twenty-four families is the highest Rota has seen in recent years.

Towards the goal of early detection of developmental disabilities, the activities include screening outreach for parents, infants, and toddlers at the Rota Aging Center.

In Sinapalo, the bigger of Rota's two residential villages, a different team was making house calls.

Director Palacios was joined by her team of six Early Intervention special instruction teachers, a physical therapist, an advocate, and other personnel. They are Jonisa Sanchez, Peter Mendiola, Aljay Figueroa, Nace Soalablai, and Esther Tilipao.

The Commonwealth HealthCare Corporation has sent in a three-person team to join in the outreach activities. They include Dolores Itibus, Ezeth Smith, and Bessie Hernandez.

The PSS Early Intervention Program has a working partnership agreement with CHCC, particularly in the referral program and needs for children with developmental disabilities from birth to three years old.

Rota Health Center Partnership

Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho, Early Intervention Director Palacios, and Special Instruction Teacher Peter Mendiola met with Rota Resident Director Vanessa Quitugua as part of the two-day "Child Find and Public Awareness" outreach.

Early Intervention Program Robin L. Palacios, left, explains the partnership with the Commonwealth HealthCare Corp., as CHCC/ Rota Health Center Resident Director Vanessa Quitugua, second, left, and Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, third left, and Rota Health Center personnel listen.



Rota Health Resident Director Quitugua, a former educator, acknowledged the success of the EI Program in Rota. She particularly credited the partnership between the Commonwealth HealthCare Corporation/Rota Health Center and PSS Early Intervention Program that led to encouraging more parents and family to sign up for the free programs and services offered by the school district.

The PSS EI Program and CHCC partnership has been in place for over two decades now.

“The change, growth, and movement, especially our families here, to avail of the Early Intervention Program services in Rota is because we see there is that need to serve our community together as partners, and, as partners, we provide whatever critical services our community needs, including for our infant and toddlers (through the Early Intervention Program),” Rota Resident Director Quitugua said.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho said the PSS EI Program cannot do it alone. It needs partners to succeed. “To our medical professionals, our parents here in Rota trust you because of your expertise in your field. When they come to you (for referral of cases to us through our Early Intervention Program) it is because they see your expertise.”

“Thank you for your partnership and thank you for helping us in our service to our children and students. We hope to be able to encourage more parents to sign up for the program.”

Commissioner Dr. Camacho also expressed his appreciation on behalf of the EI Program, to the Rota Office on Aging, through Administrative Officer Valerie Apatang, for supporting the program’s outreach on Rota.



The Rota Office of the Mayor, through Acting Mayor Jim Atalig, fourth right, and chief of staff, Dean Reynold Manglona, third left, pose for photo with Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, Early Intervention Program Director Robin L. Palacios and some of her team members.

Rota Mayor’s Office

The PSS team of Commissioner Camacho, Early Intervention Program Director Palacios and her team met with the Rota Office of the Mayor.

“We are truly happy that you all came down to make sure our children and families are served,” said Acting Mayor Jim Atalig, who is the chairperson of the Rota Municipal Council.

“Thank you for taking care of the children of our small community,” he added.

Mayor Aubrey Hocog’s chief of staff, Dean Reynold Manglona, praised the PSS leadership for ensuring that no child is left behind in Rota.

“It is encouraging to know that the commissioner of education is leading these outreach activities for our children and students. It only goes to show someone passionate about public education,” Manglona said.

In 1986, the Individuals with Disabilities Education act was amended to include Early Intervention Services for Infants and Toddlers with disabilities and their families, otherwise known as Part C of IDEA. Eligible infants and toddlers include children, birth to three years old, who are born with an established condition that has a high probability of resulting in a disability or those children who have a developmental delay. Early Intervention Services are provided for the child and family at no cost and are designed to meet the child and family’s unique needs.



Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho expressed his appreciation on behalf of the Public School System of the municipality of Rota’s continued support to the Early Intervention Program and the school district, as a whole.



Thank You Tinian Partners

On May 9, Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, Cooperative Education Program Director Brandon Aguon and Tinian Jr.Sr. High School Principal Liz Persinzki and Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna joins Tinian private and government partners and the interns. The partners are Ace Hardware Tinian, Huang Shun Corporation, JC Café, Star Marianas Air, Think Tank Pacific Solutions, Tinian Diamond Hotel, Tinian Fuel Services, and Tinian Isla Community Health, and the Department of Public Safety-Tinian.

Through the Cooperative Education Program about 200 Public School Students Complete Internship Program

THE school district honored enduring private and public sector partners that made possible the Cooperative Education Program's decades-long implementation and support for public high school students. The event was led by Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho and Cooperative Education Program Coordinator Brandon Nicholas.

This year, about a hundred companies have participated, reiterating their commitment to working with PSS on its program to expose high school students to early career opportunities through the Co-Op Program. This is the biggest number of business partners gathered by PSS Co-Op Program.

These companies operate across Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

About 200 high school students participated in internships across a range of industries, including business, personal care, food service, hospitality and travel, and various government offices.

At the Saipan Co-Op Program event, Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho disclosed that he, too, was a program beneficiary. Commissioner of Education Camacho said, "I was like you are now: I worked through the whole day, and it opened up opportunities for me," at the PSS Cooperative Education Program Partners Appreciation.

"During my high school years, I benefited from being a student in the Cooperative Education Program. As a result, I worked as an inventory staff member at Duty Free Shoppers, as a gas attendant, a bagger boy, and an intern at the former Nikko Hotel," continues Dr. Camacho.





Thank You Rota Partners

Owners and representatives of the government and private businesses and close to 70 interns of Rota joined by Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, Co-Op Program Coordinator Brandon Nicholas and Principal Annette Calvo on May 27. The partners are 3Kings Market and Harvest, Ace Hardware Rota, Anne's Convenient Store, Bayview Hotel, Budget Rent-A-Car, DCCA Historical Preservation Office-Rota, Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services-Rota, Department of Fish and Wildlife-Rota, Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School, Hago Lamon, Laguna Enterprises, Lucy's Day Care, Luta Green Gold, Marianas Visitors Authority-Rota, MGS Enterprises, OB Salon, Pizzeria Bar & Grill, RNA Crafts Designs, Rota Health Center, Rota Mayor's Office, Sasanhaya Service Station, Sinapalo Elementary School, Sinapalo Safeway, and TEA's Enterprises.

Effective

Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho said the students' successful internship reflects the effectiveness of the program.

"The value of efficacy is felt by our students who experienced the program and carry forward these experiences to their classrooms. And in turn, shares them, and motivates their classmates and peers to follow their lead, and eventually, pursue higher education or career of their choice," Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho told PSS Tinian Co-Op partners.

In praising the Co-Op Program partners, Dr. Camacho said the school district will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure that "our public school students, including our very own here in Tinian, will continue to be served at every opportunity."

Record-breaking

Co-Op Program Coordinator Nicholas said this year is a record-breaking semester for the program.

"We have a full venue, and this is not by accident. Today we celebrate the end of a record-breaking semester for the Co-op Program. This is a win for our islands and a win that we can all celebrate together," Nicholas said.

"(W)ith more students come the possibilities of more successes and, of course, more challenges. I am extremely grateful to have a strong team of teachers that handle the front lines at our schools and do everything they can to ensure that each of our students do their hours, submit their documents and get paid. We're more than a class, and these professionals exemplify what it means to go above and beyond," he added.



Thank You Saipan Partners

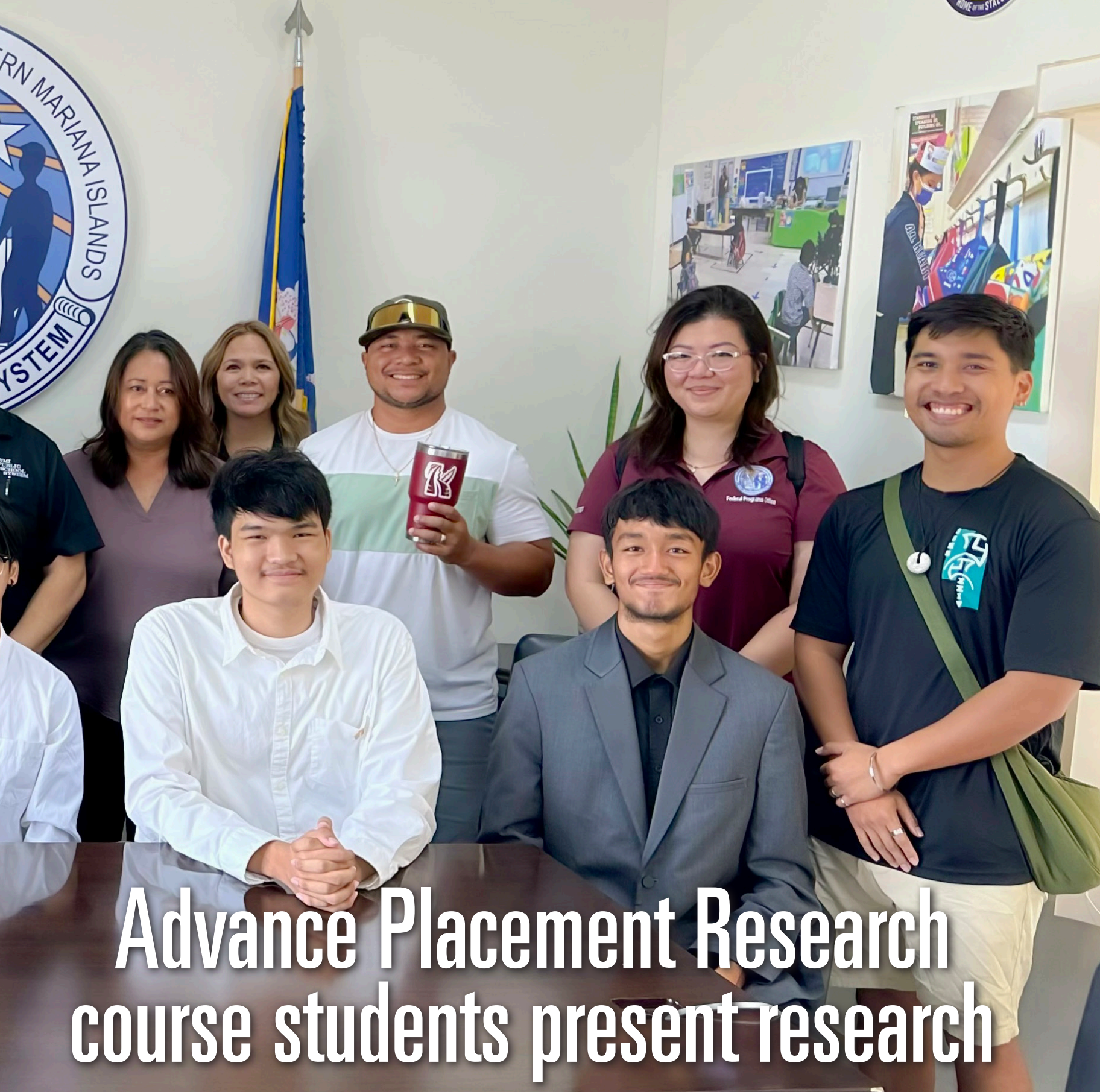
Dr. Camacho and the Co-Op Program Coordinator tendered a luncheon and presented the close to 40 private and government partners with a special plaque of recognition. They are 500 Sails/ 500 Sails Boatyard, American Memorial Park, Cha Cafe & Bistro, Commonwealth Cancer Association, Commonwealth Law revision Commission, Commonwealth Ports Authority, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation, Coral Ocean Golf Resort, Delta Management - Shell Marianas, Department of Public Safety, Gold's Gym, Hafa Adai Roasting Company, Herman's Modern Bakery, Hyatt Regency Saipan, IT&E-CNMI, Java Joe's, Joeten Enterprises, Karidat Social Service, Kensington Hotel, Koblerville Elementary School, Latte Built Fitness, LP Accounting, Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, Northern Marianas Housing Corp., Pacific Islands Club, Pacifica Insurance, Paradise Dental Spa, PHI Pharmacy, Plumeria Steakhouse/Ete Café, Law Office of Robert T. Torres, Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Saipan Southern High School, Saipan World Resort, Salt and Barber LLC, Tasi to Table, and Torres Refrigeration Inc.



Saipan Southern High School AP class students Christopher Mauricio, Aleeza Castro; Tao Jin; Justin Afable; Simon Tang, all seated, front row, and Jared Borja (not in photo) presented their research work before PSS leaders led by Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, standing, center. Joining the students in the presentation were advisers Dr. Dora B. Miura and Kadmiel Rey, and Principal Vince Dela Cruz.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho stresses the importance of research study during his exchanges with the AP research course students Mauricio, Castro, Jin, Afable and Tang. Dr. Miura and Principal Dela Cruz listens.





Advance Placement Research course students present research

S AIPAN Southern High School students of the interdisciplinary research course Advance Placement (AP) presented their academic research work before key leaders of the Public School System, which was led by Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho.

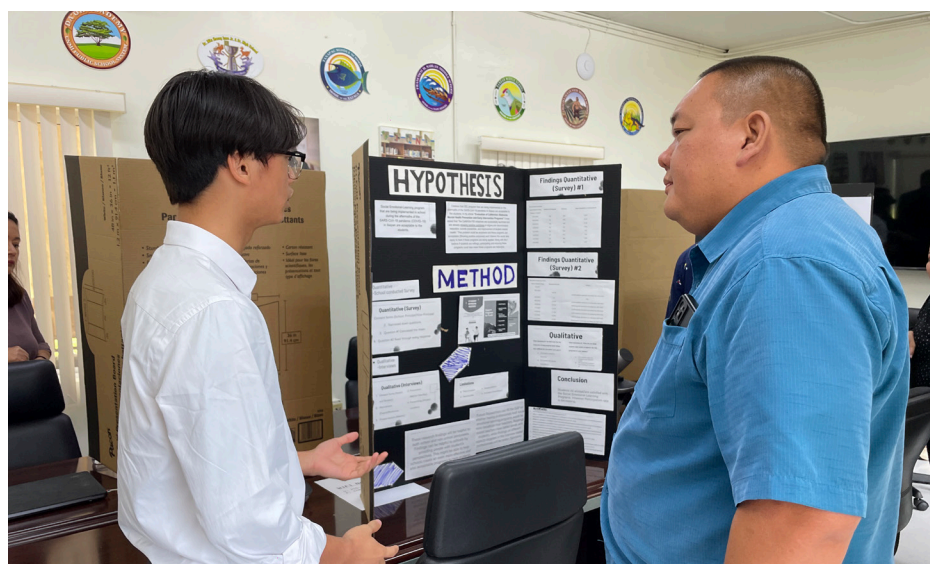
These AP research course class students - Christopher Mauricio (11th grade-early graduate); Aleeza Castro (11th grade-early graduate); Tao Jin (11th grade); Justin Atable (11th grade); Simon Tang (11th grade), and Jared Borja (11th grade) – have immersed themselves in research process and other related work, deeply exploring various academic topics and problems.



SSHS Principal Vince Dela Cruz, Board of Education Teacher Representative and AP research course adviser Dr. Dora B. Miura, and fellow adviser Kadmiel Rey with Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho.



Special Education State Director Donna M. Flores shares the value of the AP research course with research student Tang.



AP research course student Tao Jin discuss his work on the social emotional learning program that are being implemented in school during the aftermaths of the SARS-CoV-19 pandemic (COVID-19) in Saipan with Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna.

These students' research projects covered a wide range of topics, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, theft and burglaries on Saipan, trauma, and mental health. This is a one-year course.

These students were accompanied by two teachers-advisers: Dr. Dora B. Miura, Pre-AP Geometry and AP Research; and Kadmiel Rey, Pre-AP English Language and AP Seminar during their meeting-presentation at the Office of the Commissioner of Education's conference room on Capital Hill.

Education chief Dr. Camacho lauded the AP students for their keen interest in research and exploration.

AP class students explore an academic topic, problem, or issue of individual interest. Through this exploration, the students will design, plan, and conduct a year-long research-based investigation to address a research question.

Twelve Years of Public School System's Educational Technology Training Program

THE 12th annual Educational Technology Training Program (EdTech) program showcase was held by the Public School System's Office of Instructional Technology & Distance Education.

There were close to 200 attendees that include Ed Tech instructors, graduates, PSS Key Management, members of the Board of Education, and administrators from both public and private schools. The event took place on May 18 at the Kensington Hotel Saipan Hall.

The EdTech Program is a year-long training program consisting of five 45-hour certification courses that involve using and integrating technology to improve the quality of instruction and learning. Upon completion of the course, the amount of time put into professional development equates to 225 hours. This year, the program graduated a total of 129 participants. Throughout the program, participants explored the diverse suite of Google tools to support teaching and learning, discussed the importance of empowering students to be proactive digital citizens, and examined student-centered applications to produce a variety of products such as multimedia presentations, infographics, and dynamic videos.

Congratulatory remarks were delivered by Senior Director Jackie Quitugua, from the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and Acting Chairperson of the Board of Education, Maisie Tenorio. PSS and BOE leadership

shared a joint message of pride for the hard work and commitment of all Ed Tech participants from both the private and public schools to grow as professionals and embrace the role that technology plays in supporting learning in the 21st century.

A participant in the program, Kierah Lee, teacher aide from the Head Start Program, shared "I appreciate the chance to challenge my existing knowledge and gain fresh perspectives. All of the apps served a valuable purpose and were adaptable to each occupation, whether we used them for teaching, family partnership advocacy, or administrative work."

Jace Pineda, Classroom Teacher at GTC Elementary School shared "I have learned a variety of skills and tools throughout this program... being able to try out all the different apps/resources that could be used in my classroom -- many of which I was able to try this school year."

Lorraine Catienza, Instructional Technology Director, stated, "We continue to refine the program with our amazing Ed Tech Instructors to improve the quality of learning for the professionals we serve. Our goal is to continue to employ the transformative use of technology to support teaching and learning and prepare our educators to participate and succeed in an increasingly tech-driven world. Our educators are the key to making this goal a reality, so we continue to invest in them."



The 12th cohort of the Public School System's Educational Technology Training Program.

Public School System's Strategic Planning Institute with Student Leaders, Private, Govt sectors

THE Public School System hosted the inaugural Strategic Planning Institute, which brought together key figures from the public and private sectors, policymakers, decision-makers, and student leaders.

The institute was a four-day event with the goal of “looking at the core” needs for the Public School System, with the support of the private and public sectors as “one stakeholder” and the choice of the high school graduates to either pursue a career or a college education.

The event was held from June 17, 18, 20, and 21.

These industry leaders all agree that the largest source of the local workforce are graduates of the Public School System.

Close to about 200 participants attended the event.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho initiated the Strategic Planning Institute.



Dr. Allison Leyland, chief education strategist of the Academic Development Institute, and of the U.S. Department of Education's Region 18 Comprehensive Center Network was the overall facilitator of the four-day event.

Commissioner Camacho and Special Education State Director Donna M. Flores were facilitators for both the morning and afternoon panel discussions.

"The (Strategic Planning Institute) is here to help us establish and realign our goals and direction, an opportunity for us to look beyond who we are today as one community," Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho said.

At the outset, government and private sector leaders have already agreed "to strengthen collaboration by aligning its needs and direction" to that of the school district.

"We are glad that all of our partners are here to help us 're-imagine and re-structure PSS' focus to reflect and align all the government and private sector's needs and programs geared towards education and workforce development," Dr. Camacho added.

"With the current structure that we have in the CNMI, we need alignment," Career and Technical Education Program Director Dr. Jessica Taylor said. We have opportunities for everyone."

"We are here to put together into one focus the priorities that are being shared with us by each government department and the private sector; how we can incorporate that into our long-term plan. In that we hope

to achieve this through Commissioner Dr. Camacho's initiative of bringing all our stakeholders together," said co-facilitator and SPeD State Director Flores.

Data

The panelists in the morning session were Saipan Chamber board of Director Alex Sablan, House Speaker Edmund Villagomez, Department of Labor's Director of Employment Services Eugene Tebuteb, Department of Labor Workforce Investment Agency Director Frances Torres, Youth Congress Speaker Vinnie Juan Sablan, and Cathy A. Toves, representing Tan Holdings Corp.

In the afternoon, the panelists were University of Guam's Senior Vice President and Provost Dr. Sharleen Santos-Bamba, Commonwealth HealthCare Corporation Chief Executive Officer Esther L. Muna, Northern Marianas Technical Institute Chief Executive Officer Jodina Attao, Northern Marianas College executive director to the president Kevin Bautista, Youth Congress Senator Ayden Yumul, State Parent Advisory Council Vice President Rodney Cabarles, Dr. Leyland, and Saipan Chamber's Sablan.

Speaker Villagomez acknowledged that the data that PSS has will guide the lawmakers in providing PSS with its funding needs.

"It's good that there's a program in PSS that talks about collective data and that their decisions are guided by data and not by anything else. That helps us at the legislature make a good decision. I congratulate PSS for that," the House speaker said.



Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, center, and key Public School System personnel are joined by student leaders, and government and private sector representatives following the successful first-ever Strategic Planning Institute.

DOL's employment services director Tebuteb said: "We work with data every day. We see a trend in the workforce. We understand that in the last 20 years there are particular industries that are the most in demand: construction, installation and repair, food preparation, etc... and with the data of PSS, what I would like to see is a better collaboration with the department of labor."

"We need to champion workforce development," he added.

With the CW1 transitional visa for foreign workers in the CNMI ending by 2029, Tebuteb said all stakeholders should strengthen its partnership.

"We are not sure if this (CW1 program) will continue. If our business community demand skills that require their operation, then we have to prepare our children for that. And I concur for our students to be college and career ready"

DOL's Workforce Investment Director, Torres, agrees.

"One takeaway for us here is alignment—aligning our system to effectuate systems that we need to implement, so we can move forward despite the many challenges we see in our community and our economy. There will always be opportunity for all of us," Torres said.

Youth Congress Speaker Sablan praised PSS for the "opportunities afforded to all students in both public and private schools."

At the same time, Saipan Chamber's Sablan said with opportunities, there is urgency to continue "to focus on the workforce needs" of the CNMI.

"PSS and NMC have a phenomenal job of transitioning our students to college and career readiness. (And) parents have to be involved more, but they need to be retooled. We have to collectively find a way to make it happen," Sablan said.

"We also have to look at academies that will help students who need help; look at homes who need help. We are going to be challenged over the course of the next decade, including with artificial intelligence and its possibility of replacing jobs. It will be a challenge."

But right now, Sablan, what is urgent is the "challenge of resources". The rest "will come sooner rather than later."

"From transportation to all aspects of retail, the service industry and all other jobs that are not felt right now but will be felt sooner. It will eventually."



Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho facilitates the institute with Special Education State Director Donna M. Flores.



Over 100 Sources of Strength Peer Leaders and Advisors pose for a photo with CNMI Public School System's Commissioner of Education, Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho.

PSS Mental Health Sources of Strength Student Leadership Summit

OVER 100 students from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota attended the annual Sources of Strength Student Leadership Summit held at the Crowne Plaza Resort's Hibiscus Hall by the school district's Mental Health Program. The SOS Student Leadership Summit and the Proclamation Signing for Mental Health Awareness (MHAM) and National Adolescent Health Month (NAHM) were two important highlight initiatives of the event. They brought attention to the significance of combining student leadership development with mental health awareness through these events. The event sought to empower students on their path of personal development and strengthen support networks within the community.

An important initiative, the SOS Program, enable students to take the lead in promoting mental health and well-being in their communities. It is essential in fostering an environment of openness and support because it provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify warning signals of distress, develop resilience, and seek support. SOS creates a sense of community among students by facilitating conversations, peer-led activities, and outreach initiatives. This strengthens the bonds that bind the school community together.

The day-long event featured a series of breakout activities designed to engage students and facilitate discussions on relevant topics. Activities included school team discussions and mixed team small group discussions. These activities provided students with a platform to reflect, share experiences, and strategize for the

future of their SOS clubs and communities. A Kagman High School student and SOS Peer Leader expressed "SOS has been a positive impact [in] my life. I like making the videos and [positive message campaigns] like writing thank you letters and complimenting people."

Students had the chance to ask questions to adults during a unique HOT SEAT activity at the summit. Marianas High School teacher and SOS Adult Advisor said: "When I first started teaching back in 2008, we weren't talking about Social Emotional Learning. SOS has given me a way to think about what my students are going through. I can talk with them about the SOS strengths wheel and what helped me get through tough times."

A recognition ceremony for SOS Peer Leaders was held, honoring their extraordinary dedication to mental health awareness. They have created a supportive culture in their community and led initiatives with outstanding leadership. Future leaders are inspired to continue promoting mental health because of their enduring impact and service.

PSS Mental Health expresses its gratitude to the PSS Sources of Strength Training Team of Advisors, implementing schools, and participating students for the continued expansion of SOS in the district's mental health program. PSS Mental Health aims to create a nurturing environment that promotes the academic, social, and emotional well-being of all students. Through innovative efforts, we provide students with the tools they need to succeed and flourish in all aspects of their lives.

Progress of Hopwood Middle School's Modular Classrooms, Reconstruction



A worker for the construction of the modular classrooms met with Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho and Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna.

COMMISSIONER of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho and Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna inspected recently the site of five modular school buildings for the largest middle school in the commonwealth, Hopwood Middle School.

These prefabricated school buildings will each have five classrooms and are now ready to be set up at the site where several typhoon-damaged condemned buildings were finally cleared by the contractor responsible for clearing work. The modular structures are funded by the Public School System's share of the American Rescue Plan Act.

With the assembly of the 20 portable and prefabricated classrooms expected to be completed before the August-opening of the new school, Commissioner of Education Dr. Camacho has also said that the formal call for proposers for Hopwood Middle School's reconstruction for new and permanent school buildings was already issued on, May 31.

PSS RFP 24-028 was published publicly on May 31, formally soliciting competitive sealed proposals from individuals or firms interested in the "Hopwood Middle School Construction Project."

"We at the Public School System are excited that both projects are now on schedule. As our students move to new, temporary but conducive modular classrooms this coming school year, it's just a matter of time that the full reconstruction of a new Hopwood Middle School campus will commence. This will allow our students to continue to enjoy a safe learning environment," Dr. Camacho added.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho spoke to students and teachers on the importance of Achieve3000, among other tools and initiatives, that support student learning.



Eckard stated “Congratulations students on another year of amazing reading gains. Achieve3000 is honored to continue partnering with the CNMI PSS. Year after year, we are so impressed with the department, administrators and teachers always putting Students First.”

Achieve3000 is a globally recognized provider of “differentiated instruction and learning acceleration” in the U.S. and 49 other countries.

In the CNMI, public and private schools use Achieve3000 to aid student achievement and success, particularly in reading.

The federal Every Students Succeeds Act, for its part, recognizes Achieve3000 “for demonstrating strong evidence of efficacy based on results from third-party randomized controlled trial study.”

Awardees

The 43 students who were recognized for their top Lexile growth from their schools based on and Achieve3000:

- Garapan Elementary School — Jhon Joseph Salas and Austin Soter Bell
- GTC Elementary School — Lazarus Augustus Moses and Rudith Laluna Camacho
- Kagman Elementary School — Oston Gregory Naputi and Chanel Marie Siruelo
- Koblerville Elementary School — Nevaeh Josie Kateri Cabrera and Suhana Miah
- Oleai Elementary School — Maia Borja and Floreigh Jane Lanoy
- San Vicente Elementary School — Kimberly Lacsina and Jeffrey James Pangelinan
- Sinapalo Elementary School — Ge’selle Estefania Barcinas and Titus Feolino
- Tinian Elementary School — Rickson Quenzy Manglona and Jay Junior San Nicolas
- William S. Reyes Elementary School — Zion Ray Camacho and Hafsa Rahaman

- Hopwood Middle School — Dynno Markel Rivera and Kyla Macabanti

- Chacha Oceanview Middle School — Payton Thomas Pangelinan and Tiana Therese Norita

- Dandan Middle School — Normaine Nate and Ciara Alyssa Villagomez

- Francisco M. Sablan Middle School — Boyu Zhou and Jhon Albert Dilao

- Tanapag Middle School — Malayah Elloisa Loma and BJ Belocora

- Da’ok Academy — Renato Abubo and Tayshawna Rose Lieto

- Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School — Jevin Nerizon (High School), Arafat Sikder (High School), Naysha Teree Barcinas (Junior High) and Hailey Sage Manglona (Junior High)

- Kagman High School — Preston Joel Ngramos and Elle Brie Tudela

- Marianas High School — Joshua Kim and Md. Molla

- Saipan Southern High School — Jasmine Kyle Saluta and Leidy Audry Fhaye Agacoscos

- Tinian Middle & High School — Justice Aldan (High School), Yuan Xiao (High School), and Si Jie Sarah Lin (Middle School)

The classroom teachers honored for their excellence of program use are:

John Aldrich (Garapan Elementary School); Deborah Moore (GTC Elementary School); Celestial Jewel Dela Cruz (Kagman Elementary School); Angela Ruiz (Koblerville Elementary School); Alberta Aldan (Oleai Elementary School); Yvette Tenorio (San Vicente Elementary School); Enterina Calvo (Sinapalo Elementary School); Jenina Manglona (Tinian Elementary School); Ilyssa Geronimo (WSR Elementary School); Kimberly Palacios (Hopwood Middle School); Peter Mesngon (Chacha Oceanview Middle School); Edinna Cepeda (Dandan Middle School); Imelda Bautista (Francisco M. Sablan Middle School); Jane Babauta (Tanapag Middle School); Mercedes Deleon Guerrero (Da’ok Academy); Deseriee Pendergrass (Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School); Leslie Rodolfo (Kagman High School); Leilani Iramk (Marianas High School); Michelle Rasa (Saipan Southern High School); and Kevin Pangelinan (Tinian Middle and High School).



The proud public school students and teachers who have earned the Achieve3000 literacy gains distinction. They are joined by education leaders including Board of Education Secretary/Treasurer Gregory Pat Borja and Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho.

PSS honors 43 students, 20 teachers for Achieve3000 use, reading growth



Board of Education Secretary/Treasurer Gregory Pat Borja praises the success of all public elementary, middle, and high schools on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota on the use of Achieve3000.

ACHIEVE3000 Literacy Program, a globally recognized digital supplemental learning program that helps students improve their reading and comprehension skills, recognized 43 elementary, middle, and high school students who have shown outstanding literacy gains.

Twenty teachers were also honored by PSS for their commitment to using Achieve 3000 in their lessons and for their consistency in doing so.

This was held on May 9.

A Lexile level is a common method used by schools to measure a student's reading ability. The CNMI PSS strives for all students to be at or above grade level in reading comprehension.

At the Literacy Celebration event, State Board of Education Secretary/Treasurer Gregory P. Borja and PSS Commissioner of Education Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho congratulated the students and teacher awardees. Both education leaders expressed their appreciation to Achieve 3000 officials for their continued partnership and support.

Secretary/Treasurer Borja and COE Camacho credited the students and teachers' hard work and achievements. The education leaders also lauded the support and partnership the awardees have received at home and at school.

Joining PSS officials in honoring students and teachers in the Marianas High School cafeteria on Thursday were visiting officials of the McGraw Hill/International Achieve3000 Programs: Patrick Staley, senior director for product and professional services, and Julie Eckard, director for business development. Parents, school officials, other educators and community members also witnessed the celebration.

Staley shared "We are thrilled to continue our journey with CNMI PSS and celebrate another year of student and teacher success. I had the honor of sharing data with the community that saw reading scores improve 66% over a 3 year period for students using Achieve3000. Our mission is to accelerate learning and there is no better example of that than right here in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."