



March 2023

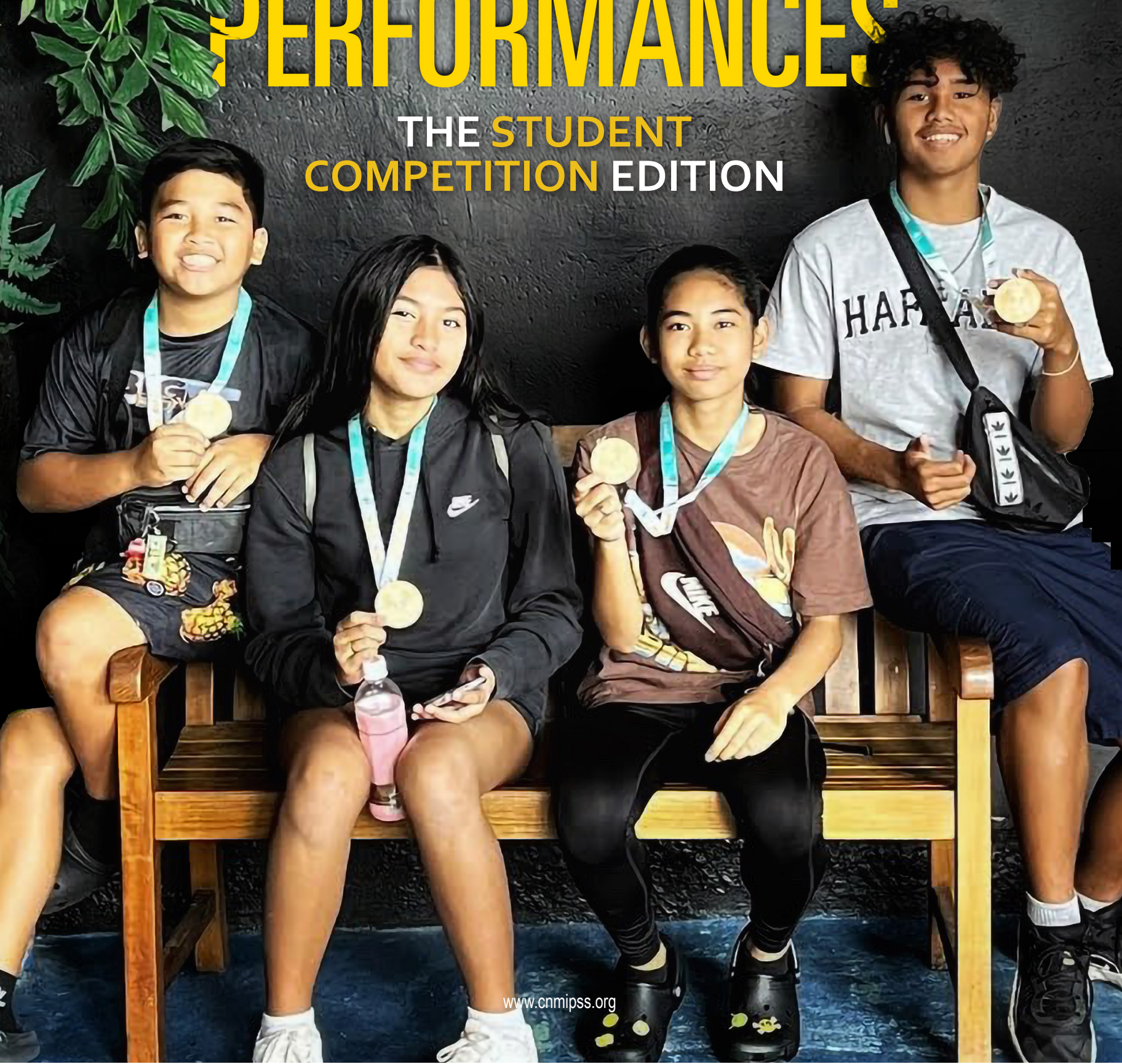
CNMI Public School System

# STUDENTS FIRST

• Accountability • Responsibility • Transparency

## GOLDEN PERFORMANCES

THE STUDENT  
COMPETITION EDITION



# TOP PERFORMING STARS

FOR over a decade now, the Tumon Bay Music Festival has produced young musical and performing stars in the region, and, in particular, from the Commonwealth. Since its establishment in 2005, it has become a platform that celebrates the region's unique and rich rhythm and sounds and forged young musical and performing artists.

At the latest edition of the competition - the 2023 Tumon Bay Music Festival - the CNMI's representatives - students from the Public School System and their counterparts from Saipan's private schools - have set the standard higher.

The students' various performances broke records, winning more golds than previous years. The 2023 TBMF ran from March 2-6, 2023.

They're the region's best, yet again.

Presented by the Guam Philharmonic Foundation, Inc., the competition was launched in 2005. The Public School System has been sending competition representatives since 2008, along with their private schools counterparts. PSS supports the private schools' participation in the competition through federal grants on student competition.

## Marianas High School

For several consecutive years now, Marianas High School, the perennial gold medal winner in small ensemble category, has again won the top prize for said category.

The MHS Glee Club Rhythm 'N Harmony won the top prize for the small ensemble category.

"On behalf of the Guam Philharmonic Foundation, Inc. Un Dangkulo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase for your outstanding artistic contribution at the 2023 Tumon Bay Music Festival", the gold plaque-award reads.

The gold medal winner in the small ensemble category was also the Command Performance recipient. The command is a judges select for a repeat performance during the closing concert ceremony.

MHS high school category choir also won another gold.

The award was presented on March 4, 2023.





## Hopwood Middle School

Hopwood Middle School won multiple golds and silver medals.

In the color category, Princess Nicole Rigua, competed and won gold in her “How Far I’ll Go from Moana”. Her performance made her the recipient of the Command Performance (Judges’ Choice to do a repeat performance at the Closing Concert Ceremony);

In the small ensemble category, Princess Nicole Rigua and Lurlene Correne Odal, who performed, “End of the Line from The Theory of Relativity”, won the gold award.

Jamie Anne Deblois’s “Part of your World from The Little Mermaid” won the Silver Award.

Jheams Cyrhon Sagana, “For Forever from Dear Evan Hansen” bagged her the silver award.

Its reggae band, HDMP - 10 Roof Tunãda, took the silver award in the Jazz, Rock, & Beyond” category. The band is comprised of Wilfredo Libante II (vocals), Jay Ruwaynggeg (Bass), and Numolong Pino (Keyboard).

Libante also won silver in the solo category.

Another band of Hopwood, HDMP TenFold, a contemporary rock band, won silver in the “Jazz, Rock, & Beyond” category. Members of the band consists of Emerson Brillo (lead guitar), John Capangpangan (rhythm/lead guitar), Alfonso Ligaya (Bass), and Princess Nicole Rigua (Vocals)

Hopwood Middle School Glee Club, a 12-member group, took silver with an excellent rank. They performed three music pieces during the choral category. The members are Rhian Courtney Alfonso (8th Gr.), Rhima Viel Alfonso (6th Gr.), Jamie Anne Deblois (8th Gr.), Samantha Diyco (8th Gr.), Alexa Ralene Panganiban (8th Gr.), Princess Nicole Rigua (8th Gr.), Jheams Cyrhon Sagana (8th Gr.), Aaliyah Jae Santos (8th Gr.), Lurlene Correne Odal (8th Gr.), Seano Pangilinan (8th Gr.), Andri James Sonio (8th Gr.), and Diosyl Soriano (8th Gr.).

“Despite the limited time dedicated for rehearsals and with most members having little to no stage performance experience, HMS is proud of the group’s 1st public appearance and its high achievement, and will continue to support their endeavors in the future,” Vice Principal and coach Karen Manuel said.



## Agape Christian School

Agape Christian School won multiple awards in various competition categories.

Its choral group, Agape Joyful Singers, won silver.

The two-piece lady vocal group, JEMMASICCA duet, won silver.

Student Jireh Wang won the top award (gold) and command recipient.

Another student, Peter Peng, won gold in the piano solo category.

Gushing (Chinese Zither) by Summer Lio won gold and command award recipient. Like was also invited to perform in the encore award ceremony.



## Saipan Community School

Saipan Community School has achieved yet again another successful competition performance at the 2023 TBMF.

The SCS Ukelele Ensemble received gold in the solo and ensemble competition. This group is comprised of Byul An, Hannah Chae, Erine So, Morgan Finco, Celine Park, David Park, Emma Sablan, Jose Sablan, Joan Song, Annabella Tudela, Joshua Yoo, and Sharon Zhang.

"This ensemble represented SCS's 23-year-old ukulele/music program that aims to instill the love of ukulele, music, and performing in all its students. Larry and Kui Lee have been the father-son directors and teachers of this hardworking, fun-loving group for the past four years. The SCS Ukulele Ensemble and Band are grateful they were invited back to the TBMF and are blessed to have the opportunity for these performances and exciting learning experiences," SCS said.

The SCS Small Ensemble won silver. This group is proud to represent Saipan Community School's 35-year-old Band Program. This group is comprised of Joshua Yoo, Vivian Chun, Byul An, Celine Park, Joan Song, William Guo, Elijah Pangelinan, Richard Zhao, David Park, Jose Sablan, Ji Hun Park, Patrick McDonald

The SCS Quartet received Silver in the Tumon Bay Music Festival. This quartet is a group of talented musicians: David Park, Vivian Chung, Joan Song and Byul An.

The Saipan Community School Jazz Band received Silver Ranking. The group members are Joshua Yoo, Byul An, Joan Song, and Celine Park, William Guo, Elijah Pangelinan, Richard Zhao, David Park, Jose Sablan, Ji Hun Park, and Patrick McDonald.

Four SCS soloists won during the festival— and all earned silver rankings each: grade soloist Joan Song, Byul An, Celine Jeong Bin Park, and Vivian Jiyu Chung.



## Saipan International School

Saipan International School's Olivia Hwang competed and won gold in piano. She expressed appreciation to everyone who made her journey to the competition possible.

"I'd also like to thank my parents, Mrs. Yun, Dr. Ron, Ms. Milli, and Ms. Melisha for their help throughout this process. It took almost a year for me to hold a gold medal in the ceremony and feel proud of myself. Your faith has been a source of inspiration and encouragement for me, and I want to thank everyone for providing me with this opportunity. Thank you and I will be striving to achieve another gold medal for TBMF 2024!"



# Public School Students Win Big in 2023 Chamorro Language Competition



**T**HE Public School System's team to the annual University of Guam's Chamorro Language Competition stage a strong and solid performance in various categories, reaping a total of 38 medals — a massive performance result that nearly surpasses the school district's combined 2019 and 2020 medal hauls.

Guam, with over 36 public schools, took 26 overall medals.

Held at the University of Guam's, the 2023 Inacha'igen Fino' CHamoru - or the CHamoru Language Competition - is the largest competition in the Marianas that promotes the indigenous language. This was held for two days, on March 13 and 14, at the UOG Class Lecture Hall and the UOG Calvo Fieldhouse.

This year's competition theme is "I Fino' CHamoru: Gi Minenhalom Taotao Tãno gi Inabiban Hinemlo' yan Grãsia" (The Chamoru Language: Through The Wisdom Of The Indigenous People In Praising Heawlring And Grace).

Sixteen schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota sent their respective representatives to the annual competition.

"I am very grateful and proud of the result of the UOG Chamorro Language Competition that took place recently in Guam. Our CNMI PSS-CCLHS students from 16 schools traveled to Guam for an opportunity of a lifetime, especially the students who have never traveled out of CNMI. The learning from this experience will hopefully help our students to understand the value



of speaking their mother tongue and I am also hopeful that they will continue to appreciate, value, practice, and promote their indigenous languages both in Chamorro and Carolinian. This is one way that the CCLHS Program fosters and promotes the revitalization of our indigenous languages with our young children," said PSS-CCLHS Program Director Jonas Barcinas.

He added, "Now that we are free from the pandemic, our students and teachers are able to spend quality time practicing and preparing for this annual competition. This is where students compete in different categories and divisions."



and using the language in and out of the classroom as well as engaging with their parents and elders,” explains Program Director Barcinas.

### Surpass

The annual competition has become a centerpiece of the PSS Chamorro Language and Heritage Studies Program of PSS. Since 2017, the program has been led by long time educator Jonas Barcinas.

This year’s result has surpassed previous year’s performances, particularly in the previous two years before the pandemic.

In 2020, the PSS students-delegates took home 24 medals. With only 10 participating schools in the annual UOG Inachá’igán Fino’ Chamorro Language & Cultural Performing Arts Competition held, PSS students managed to capture 10 first-place finishes, 6 second-place finishes, and 8 third place finishes in various categories. It was learned that the CNMI-PSS team topped its Guam counterpart with most medal won in the annual competition that time.

In 2019, PSS-CCLHS team took 15 medals total: 9 first place medals, 3 second place finishes, and 3 third place finishes

In 2018, public school students took 21 medals.

This year, PSS sent its biggest competition participants: a total of 208 student-delegates. The PSS students, competed in Drawing-(K-12), Essay-(K-12), Oratorical-(9-12), Poetry Recitation-(6-12), Proficiency-(HS), Storytelling-(K-5), Male/Female Singer-(MS/HS), Kantan Chamorríta Style of Singing-(9-12), Song with Dance (9-12), Dramatic Interpretation (9-12), Children’s Choir (ES/MS), Chant-(9-12).

The CNMI school district has been competing since 2004 when the competition was first launched.

### Immersion Program

According to Program Director Barcinas, the CCLHS program continue to grow, with the support of PSS and Board of Education leadership. Student success in the annual competition is part of the growth, he said.

Director Barcinas has also praised Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada for his “initiative to improve and support the indigenous languages program in all schools.”

“(What Commissioner Ada put forward) is key and that he continues to be of support of all our activities, including and especially our annual UOG Chamorro language competition that took place earlier this month. He (Dr. Ada) initiated that we start the Immersion Program in all elementary campuses starting in Kindergarten and as the year progresses, we would like to build the program in our first grade through the fifth grade,” Program Director Barcinas said.

“We thank him for making the indigenous language at the forefront of his initiative,” he added.

The implementation of the PSS-CCLHS Immersion Program in the elementary is aimed to increase the number of public school students learning to speak proficiently the indigenous language. The priority, adds, Barcinas, is to “revitalize the program with the need to engage more students to appreciate, understand, value and practice indigenous language.”

“This way, it will help promote the importance of learning



# Competition Winners

## Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School

Principal: Raena Camacho  
Coaches: Joann M. Torres,  
Jennie P. Magofia, K'nilis Tuhuweitae  
Angel F. Camacho - Drawing, **3rd Place**  
Caysa Marchadesch - Drawing, **1st Place**  
Jovie Sablan - Storytelling, **2nd Place**  
Rayiana R. Kaipat - Storytelling, Alternate

## Kagman Elementary School

Principal: Ignacia Demapan,  
Coaches: Mariama Leemarvin,  
Cynthia Cepeda, Lareyna Camacho,  
Sirena Santos, Mike Muna, Janerline Saimon

## Children's Choir

Vinase Agulto  
Ava Arriola  
Jonah Babauta  
Ethanial Cabrera  
Dixie Camacho  
Serenity Carino  
Abrianna Cruz  
Kylie Fleming  
Hailey Mafnas  
Azaleah Magofna  
Kaheah Manglona  
Radtreshon Obispo  
Aiden Pangelinan  
Aiden Rabago  
Emmaraech San Nicolas  
Gianna Tudela  
Tuid Yamada  
Vincent Rios - Drawing

## Koblerville Elementary School

Principal: Naomi M. Nishimura  
Coaches: Alma Villagomez & Greg Blas  
Chaperones: Ruslyn Carmen B. Saito  
& Ignacia O. Torres

Dovianne Victoria Tudela  
**Storytelling, 2nd Place**

## Children's Choir, 3rd Place

Jentylyn Apas  
Joshua Apas  
Aria Eugenia Basa  
Nathyn Jhae Blas  
Lindsay D. Bocago  
Victoria Ma'ina Castro  
Inessa Maria Diaz  
BM Fred  
Movans Heben  
Aven D'Jon Iglesias  
Johanane Eleionai Imperial

Kianna Tina Kikku  
Kayleen Lippwe  
Celine Danielle Mondido  
Lovar Jude Ngesbekei  
Chace Logan Reyes  
Bethany Talei T. Rios  
Lika Malia Terlaje  
Ariah Jade Villagomez  
Ayden Jacob K. Villagomez

## San Vicente Elementary School

Principal: Paulette Tomokane  
Coaches: Antonette Ayuyu & Joaquin Camacho

Khaiceel Barcinas - Drawing, Storytelling  
**3rd Place**

Khaileel Barcinas - Drawing, Storytelling  
Mirai Castro - Storytelling  
Jayke Ogo - Storytelling

## Sinapalo Elementary School

Principal: Daisy Quitugua  
Coaches: Dawno Agbayani & Alvina King

Kelissa Hocog- Storytelling  
Airah Magofna - Oratorical Reading,  
**2nd place**  
Ekeshia Pinaula - Po'ema, 3rd place  
Branden Asher Reyel - Male Singer  
Josity Untalan - Female Singer, 3rd place

## Tinian Elementary School

Principal: Lou Connie Manglona  
Coach: Angie Fitial  
Chaperones: Lorena Cabrera,  
Melton Atalig, Elloy Fitial  
Support Parents: Thealani Atalig,  
Marvieluz Syed, Kerry Borja

Choral Reading  
Amorisha Arriola  
Calen Borja  
Niesa Borja  
Naveah Cabrera  
Kunin Cepeda  
Kiara Cepeda  
Alice Chen  
Piper Christian - also Oratorical Reading,  
**3rd Place**  
Carther Cruz  
Niziah Dela Cruz  
Thomas Erickson  
Emar Gammad  
Armina Hossain  
Janean King

Celeste Monkeya  
Austin Muna  
Tonia Pascua  
Precila Roldan  
Nusrat Syed  
Cian Sylvestre  
Cathy Xia

## William S. Reyes Elementary School

Principal: Lynn Sharon Mendiola  
Coaches: Carmen B. Sablan-He  
& Marlon Cabrera

Edrich Armia - Drawing  
Tristan Olita - Drawing  
Charles Reyes - Drawing  
Hudson Igisomar - Storytelling

## ChaCha Ocean View Middle School

Principal: Carla A. Sablan  
Coaches: Rose Sharon T. Jones  
& Ronnie L. Aguon  
Chaperone: Le'ah Murphy, Vice Principal

Mary Amog - Oratorical Reading, **1st Place**  
Cyrena C. Ada - Poetry Recitation, **1st Place**  
Manuel Degracia -  
Middle School Essay Participant  
Berlani Juana Indalecio -  
Middle School Essay, **2nd Place**  
Toviann S. Masiwemai -  
Middle School Essay Participant  
Melva Nelly Quitugua -  
Middle School Essay Participant  
McKelly A. Reyes -  
Middle School Essay, **1st Place**  
Vincent Reyes -  
Middle School Male Singer, **3rd Place**  
Tia-jo' Seman - Middle School -  
Female Singer, **1st Place**

## Dandan Middle School

Principal: James Sablan  
Coaches: Judi Castro and Elaine Cabrera

Choral Reading, **3rd Place**  
Jordan Jude Agulto  
Jason Arriola, Jr. - Male Singer, **2nd Place**  
Lizelle Aubrey Blas  
Lilia A. Brien  
Angelina M. Camacho  
Sofia Cariaso  
Matua Fejeran  
Aldyann J. Igisaiar  
Riana Norian Jicko

Kilena D. Kaipat  
Kyrie S. Palec  
Prashika Pandey  
Jared D. Reyes  
Alton Sablan  
Ysharei Sanje  
Jacris Jay Selepeo  
Kelly Hope Selkor  
Ayanna Stole  
Ciara A. Villagomez

### **Francisco M. Sablan Middle School**

Principal: Cherlyn Osung  
Coach: Gloria Rasiang  
Chaperones: Ezekiel Macario  
& Catherine Acera-Cabrera, Vice Principal

Choral Reading, **2nd Place**  
Somayah Blas - Poetry, **3rd Place**

Caitlyn Burgo  
Calen Acera-Cabrera  
Konah Camacho  
Maria Camacho  
Rexy Dornonila  
Sisther Fred  
Amber Guevarra  
Aiden Gimed  
Que'ana Limes  
Jared Manahane  
Elizha Maratita  
Ailana Mendiola  
Elika Mendiola  
Marcus Nego  
Elerie Rose Reyes  
Vangelyn Serrano  
Gidana Sharry  
Hopwood Middle School  
Principal: Victorino Borja  
Coaches: Donald Mendiola, Rebecca Sablan,  
Victorino Borja, Ruby Hocog,  
Victor Cabrera, Didiich Tudela,  
Connie Camacho, Kimberly Palacios

Jose R. Iguel - Poetry, **2nd Place**

Choral Reading, **1st Place**  
Destynee Aguan  
Beatrice Arkoh  
Evan Cabrera  
Miyako Celis  
Jamie Deblois  
Geeliana DeLeon Guerrero

Rayana Ichihara  
James Lao  
Alvin Lazar  
Ha'ane Manibusan  
Jeane J. Merjilla  
Lurlene Odal  
Seano Pangelinan  
Princess Rigua  
Jheams Sagana  
Aquinna Santos  
Jim Sison  
Andri Sonio  
Jonathan Vargas  
Toby Yan

Chant, **1st Place**

Majerson Assito  
Caleb Joshua Cabrera  
Julie Cobacha  
Johnlane Dela Cruz  
Hope Trinity Hocog  
Alisha Hossain  
Twayne Kapwich  
Akiko Lyvonne Macaranas  
Manuel Mangarero  
Shiloh Pelisamen  
Jayden Reyes  
Claude Ruben  
Branson Santos  
Damien Santos - Male Singer  
Paulette Somol  
Chelsea Sonoda  
Dewayne Teregeyo  
Doreane Viana Tudela  
Elisa Yleisa  
Caleb Yug

### **Tanapag Middle School**

Coaches: Christiana Duenas & Oliver Iguel  
Jon Pinaula - Male Singer  
Triana Sablan - Female Singer

### **Tinian Jr/Sr High School**

Principal: Lizabeth Hofschneider  
Coaches: Velma Reyes, Jerome Reyes,  
Eric Reyes

Ysabella Lenteja - Poetry, **3rd Place**  
Patrick Manglona - Essay, **3rd Place**  
Le'trisha Palacios - Female Singer, **2nd Place**  
Jayden Reyes - Male Singer, **1st Place**

Dr. Rita Hocog Jr./Sr. High School  
Principal: Denise R. King

Coach: Therese Manalang

Denicia Lizama - Poetry, **3rd Place**  
Aden Calvo - Oratorical Reading

### **Kagman High School**

Principal: Benjamin Jones Jr.  
Coaches: Elsie San Nicolas Johnson

Oceana Tegeita - Poetry, **1st Place**  
Issa Tegeita - Poetry  
Liza Marie Agulto - Female Singer, **2nd Place**  
Zared Nekaifes - Male Singer, **3rd Place**

### **Marianas High School**

Principal: Mr. Jonathan Aguon  
Coaches: Anita & Alvin Sablan, Candice Muna,  
Luis John Castro

Ranasia Bocago -  
Dramatic Cultural Interpretation, **1st Place**  
Jeyanna Crisostomo -  
Dramatic Cultural Interpretation, **1st Place**  
Aisha DeLeon Guerrero - Dramatic Cultural  
Interpretation & Song and Dance, **1st Place**  
Sohayla DeLeon Guerrero - Dramatic Cultural  
Interpretation, Song & Dance & Speech,  
**1st Place**  
Amber Fitial - Song & Dance, **1st Place**;  
Poetry Recitation, **2nd Place**  
Ricky Fitipol - Song & Dance, **1st Place**  
Dayna Hocog -  
Dramatic Cultural Interpretation, **1st Place**  
Gianna Lizama -  
Dramatic Cultural Interpretation, **1st Place**  
Melva Mafnas -  
Dramatic Cultural Interpretation, **1st Place**  
Isa Manabat - Dramatic Cultural  
Interpretation, **1st Place**  
Eliza Manglona - Song & Dance, **1st Place**  
Justin Pangelinan - Song & Dance, **1st Place**  
Tricia Rabago -  
Dramatic Cultural Interpretation, **1st Place**  
Tyler Sasamoto -  
Dramatic Cultural Interpretation & Song  
& Dance, **1st Place**  
McGarett Songao - Song & Dance, **1st Place**  
Mandy Tenorio - Song & Dance, **1st Place**;  
Female Singer, **3rd Place**  
Nicolas Terlaje - Song & Dance, **1st Place**;  
Proficiency, **2nd Place**  
Jenissa Ilo - Alternate/Support





# STEM Fair Integrating Students Skills, Innovation

**T**HE CNMI Public School System's latest edition of the annual Island Wide STEM Fair has attracted over a hundred of competition participants, showcasing creative talents and innovations of students.

Held on March 11 at the Chacha Oceanview Middle School in Kagman, a total of 111 research experiments showed how students successfully integrate science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills and knowledge into their work.

"Our students today are very eager to discover things that affect our daily lives and we, at the school district, including our private school partners, will continue provide them the opportunity to showcase their exceptional talents and skills," Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada told Students First.

Commissioner Ada said what increasing number of student participants attest how they continue to take advantage of the technologies and knowledge made available to them by the school district to produce

valuable projects and findings.

"PSS would like to congratulate all the entries to this year's STEM Fair. PSS would also want to acknowledge the students' teachers and parents for providing guidance and support to the participants in the exhibit. It's one of the best STEM Fair I've ever seen," education chief Ada added.

The competition hosted 111 public and private school students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 from Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

The top student winners from the General STEM and High School Research Categories will have an opportunity to compete abroad in Guam's Island Wide Science Fair, Thermo Fisher Scientific-Junior Innovative Challenge, and International Science and Engineering Fair.

## Results

The winners of respective competition categories are:

For High School Research International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). First place was Yelin Hetina Park of Saipan Southern High School with her research project called "Detecting Coral Bleaching in CNMI: vice Machine Learning and Deep Learning". Second place is Mount Carmel School's Eunkyu Hong, Ethan Militante, and Paul Santos' research on "Pollution is not Equal To Solution".

Marianas High School's team research of Precious Valerie, Steffanie Nicole Hann, and Angel May was third place. It is entitled "Paper de Musa".

For 9-12 General STEM, the winners are: First Place was Linxi Cai with her research work entitled "Finding the effects of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions on Saipan's Costal Environments".

Second place winner was Marianas High School's Camille Alannah Sablan's research about "Kills 99.9% of Bacteria ?!". Another MHS student, Gwanpil Son, was third place with "Analyzing Muscle Activity" research work.

In the Grades 6-8 General STEM Category, the winners are: Alexis Salundaguit of Hopwood Middle School with the research work "Orally or Injected". Second place winner was Chacha Ocean View Middle School's Vicente Jesus Leon Guerrero's "The Power of Wind" and third place winner was Brilliant Star Montessori's Selina Santiago with the research work on "Cleaning Dirty Water".

Winners for the Grades 3-5 General STEM Category are all from public schools: first place is Tinian Elementary School's Braiden Tutor's "Creating Biogas From Your Pantry", second place is Sinapalo Elementary School's Javier Sahagon's "Hydroponics: Growing without Soil", and third place is San Vicente Elementary School's Dre Cabrera with his "IRONic Breakfast" research.

The Kindergarten to Grade 2 General STEM category winners are: Sinapalo Elementary School's Aven Ihu King's "STRONG SHAPES". Second place winner is Northern Marianas International School's Ayumi Palacios with her work "What type of food allows mold to grow fastest?", and third place is Koblerville Elementary School's Autumn Basa's "Carbon Sugar Snake".

In the Grades 2-5 Paper Airplane Competition, Huaen Chen of Agape Christian School, Dilen Quitugua of Kagman Elementary School, and Logan Daniel of Koblerville are the first, second and third placers, respectively.

The MINA STEM Environmental Award overall winners for respective categories (grade level) are: (K-2) Garapan Elementary School's Joaquin Kevo Leomo's "Free Power from Water"; (3-5) Tinian Elementary School's Braiden Rutor's "Creating Biogas from Your Pantry"; (6-8) Francisco M. Sablan' Middle School's Jude Burgos' "FAIR TOWER: The Incineration Plant"; (9-12) Mount Carmel School's Jude Burgos' "Flame-Y Manure", and for High School Research categories, there were two winners: Saipan International School's Yelin Hestina Park's "Detecting Coral Bleaching in CNMI: via Machine Learning and Deep Learning", and Marianas High School's team of Precious Valerie, Steffanie Nicole Hann and Angel May's "Paper de Musa".

The Island Wide STEM Fair committee also extends its appreciation to parents, teachers, and administrators for guiding our students' interests, learning and demonstration of science and engineering research projects.

"On behalf of the IWSF committee, we would like to share our sincere appreciation to the Volunteer Judges, Kagman High School JROTC, CNMI PSS AmeriCorps, Saipan Southern High School National Honor Society, Triple J Catering, Marianas Islands Nature Alliance, and ChaCha Oceanview Middle School Staff for their contributions towards a successful event," IWSF committee.

"Special thanks to Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred Ada, BOE Teacher Representative Dr. Dora Miura, OCI-Senior Director Ms. Jackie Quitugua, ARE-Senior Director Dr. Rizalina Liwag, CTE Director Dr. Jessica Taylor, Interim Federal Programs Officer Jacqueline Che, Facilities Development Management Office, and State Infrastructure Technology Office for their continuous support," the committee added.



# Dolphins, Manta Rays Reign Supreme

**M**ARIANAS High School and Saipan Southern High School earned multiple championships in various interscholastic leagues sanctioned by the Public School System's Athletic Department in partnership with the different national sports federations.

In the boys high school division of the Interscholastic Outrigger Canoe Race Series 2022-2023 ran by the Northern Marianas National Paddle Sports Federation, the Manta Rays took the championship after dominating the 500m, 1,000m, and long distance races. Southern duplicated that feat in the co-ed division, while the MHS Lady Dolphins clinched the girls division championship.

In the Northern Marianas Badminton Association-organized /TakeCare Badminton Interscholastic League, MHS 1 and 2 claimed the championship and runner-up honors after prevailing over Agape Christian School's two squads in the final round.

MHS then completed its string of title wins in March after its varsity team nosed out the No. 1 seed Kagman High School in the finals of the IT&E Interscholastic Basketball League, 56-55.

Meanwhile, the girls middle school soccer and boys middle

school volleyball competitions wrapped up in March.

Saipan International won both contests with the Lady Geckos prevailing against Hopwood Middle School in the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association's Interscholastic Soccer League finale, 2-1. In the Interscholastic Volleyball League that NMI Volleyball Association conducted, SIS topped Agape Christian School in the championship game, 21-10, 21-19.

In other interscholastic competitions, the PSS-Northern Marianas Athletics All Schools Track and Field Championships kicked off its series of qualifiers for elementary, high school, and middle school divisions.

Over 1,000 students both from public and private schools in the three levels joined the qualifiers for running, jumping, and throwing events. Students will be battling for slots in the finale that will be held in May at the Oleai Sports Complex.

Over at the MHS Gymnasium, the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation kicked off its last basketball competition for the 2022-2023 season—the boys middle school division of the IT&E Interscholastic Basketball League. Twelve teams are entered in the league.



# Students Tell Librarians: 'Thank You Very Much For Everything You Do For Us'

**O**N behalf of the nearly ten thousand public school students in Commonwealth, a group of Chacha Oceanview Middle School students praised public school librarians “for not only giving us new books, but the opportunity to discover new things and for everything that you do for us students”.

Students Anastacia Minor, Maya Jung, Mary Among, Gregorio Rodriguez, Lucia Deleon Guerrero, Elle Tudela and Akieko Atinisom, all Chacha Ocean View Middle School students, highlighted the Board of Education’s proclamation of the month of April as the National School Library Month”.

“Thank you for doing everything that you’ve done for us, from giving us new books to new things to learn and discover. We really want to thank you all,” said the students during the event held on March 27.

The proclamation honored all of Saipan, Tinian and Rota public school librarians who were all present yesterday at the ongoing professional

development held at the Chacha Ocean View Middle School library. The PSS Office of Curriculum and Instruction facilitated the professional development.

Board of Education Secretary/Treasurer Gregory Pat Borja signed the proclamation. He was joined by Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and Senior Director for Curriculum and Instruction Jackie Quitugua.

### Champions

In his remarks, Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada encouraged all public education stakeholders including parents to honor librarians “even just to great them every morning or every time you drop off and pick up your children at school”.

“From the spoken words to the snippets of notes you share to our students make a lot of difference. You are all creative and intelligent,” Dr. Ada said.

The respected librarian retired in 2015.

Kagman High School and former PSS State Librarian of the Year and State Teacher of the Year Maria Ornes also expressed her appreciation to PSS leaders and school administrators.

“We thank you our administrators for letting us do our job providing us with support and resources,” Ornes said.

Ornes also praised the PSS Instructional Technology Department led by interim director Lorraine CatiENZA. “The technology resources and support is phenomenal,” Ornes said.

“From the support of our commissioner of education to Senior Director for Curriculum and Instruction Jackie Quitugua, we are just very appreciative for everything that we have: functioning libraries and resources need to give whatever support our students and staff needs,” Ornes added.



“This is how much of an important influence you all are to our lives”.

“Librarians, you are champions to our students” the education chief added.

On a personal level, Commissioner Ada paid tribute to a librarian that has had an important impact in his professional growth-- the late Richard Gramlich.

“I hope you know Richard Gramlich. He was a true friend. We both started out work at PSS together,” Dr. Ada said of Gramlich. Gramlich arrived Saipan in 1993 and worked as a classroom teacher before retiring his more than two decades with PSS as a librarian for San Vicente Elementary School.

“Today, I would like also to dedicate this proclamation to him... wherever he is at. He was the librarian that had an impact in my life,” Dr. Ada said.

Senior Director Quitugua, whose office overseas school librarians, praised PSS librarians for “being self-directed”.

“I want to commend all of you our hardworking and committed librarians for being self-directed— for making everything happen,” said Senior Director Quitugua.

For the last two years, PSS librarians have been directing and leading activities, including professional developments for their group.

Quitugua also praised them for the successful staging of the 31st Annual Pacific Island Association of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (PIALA) Conference held from December 4-, 2022 on Saipan.

“You all took the greater lead and thank you for making it happen,” Senior Director Quitugua said.

# With New Officers, School District Vows Increased Parental Engagement

**T**HE Parent Advisory Council elected its new officers for the calendar year 2023 and extends appreciation to its outgoing officers for their service and advocacy to engage more parents into school activities that promote their child's learning.



From left to right: Amberlynn Romolor (PAC Vice President), Angie Ana Hocog (PAC Treasurer), John Oliver Gonzales (PAC President) and Rodney Cabarles (PAC Secretary)



With PTSA coordinator, Liela Yumul, left, with the outgoing officers: Elvira Mesngon (PAC VP/ RHI President SY21-22) and Alisa Pangelinan (PAC Secretary/ OES President SY21-22)

"These esteemed parent leaders will serve as an integral part of our school system serving as the voice of our children and families. Their role as parent leaders will also support our Public School System's initiatives that strengthens parental engagement, through opportunities that will provide them with a better understanding of their role to support our school district's endeavors," said Liela Yumul, the school district's family and community engagement coordinator.

PSS, she adds, will continue engaging parents with its work that will "building a positive rapport that will result in equal educational opportunities for all students."

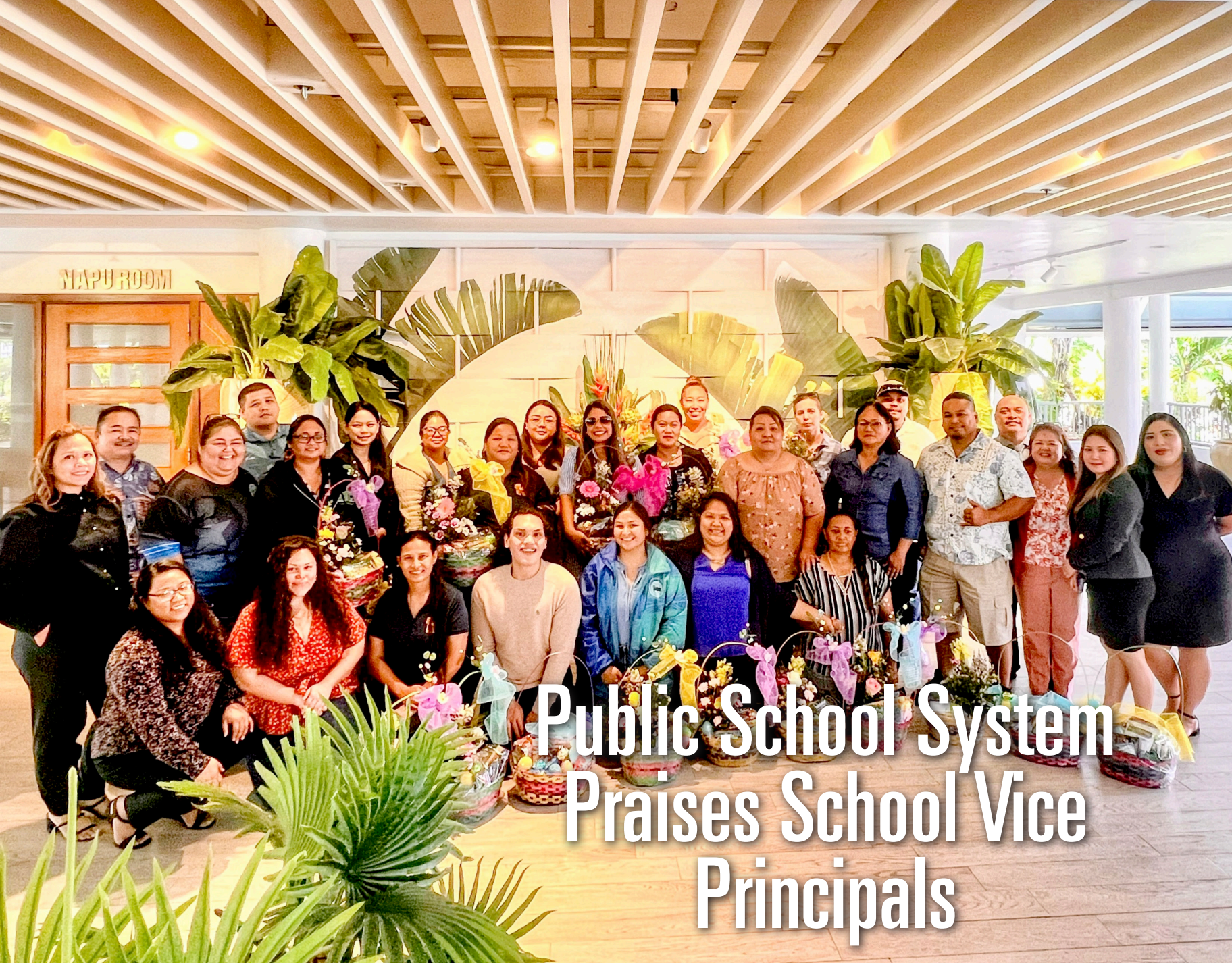
Elected 2023 State PAC officers are John Oliver Gonzales (President/ Kagman Unified Schools PTSA President), Amberlynn Mendiola Romolor (Vice President/ Garapan Elementary School PTSA President), Robert Cabarles (Secretary/Tinian Jr/Sr High School PTSA President), and Angie Ana Hocog (Treasurer/ Sinapalo Elementary School PTSA President).

Yumul, on behalf of the district leadership, extends her gratitude to the outgoing officers: State Parent Advisory Council (PAC) officers, Elvira Mesngon (Vice President), Alisa Pangelinan (Secretary) and Kiki Igitol Benjamin (Treasurer).

"The three honorary officers undoubtedly served as empowering parent-partners not only at their children's schools, but for the entire school district. Each of their advocacy efforts have supported families who are our primary stakeholders for the school district," Yumul told Students First.

The PAC was created more than a decade ago as an advisory group to the commissioner of education, in identifying unmet needs within the Commonwealth relating to student education, academic progress, and academic achievement. It is also tasked to plan and coordinate state-wide activities that promote parental engagement and community involvement in student learning.

The PAC also works with the office of the commissioner in promoting the welfare of school children and. Youth in home, school and the community, assume active worship and advocacy roles in support of student learning, work with the district in the development of Title 1 parent involvement policies, and forge and foster strong home and school partnerships, among others.



# Public School System Praises School Vice Principals

**T**HE school district's vice principals were praised "for their effective leadership role partners of our schools, students and parents." This, as the school district observed Vice Principals Appreciation Week by honoring them and initiating a professional development session.

"They are the pillars of our school district— our support system, the right and the left hand of our school principals, the support of our students and our parents, (both the) largest stakeholders of public education in the CNMI," Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said.

School principals from Rota, Tinian and Saipan have acknowledged the role their respective school vice principals play. Often times, they "they go above and beyond what is expected of them", the school administrators said.

Francisco M. Sablan Middle School Principal Cheryl C. Osung said it is the unique perspective that vice principals bring to the school the helps school operates smoothly.

"What I can specifically say for my vice principal and even our past vice principals, they serve an amazing and much-needed leadership role in the school because they have a unique perspective of being effective, by being connected to our students, teachers and parents. Just having that partner in leadership, and, we, as principals, are able to step back to see what the school needs..." FMS Principal Osung told Students

Firstin an interview.

"I can say this to all vice principals: They work hard, they collaborate with one another... and I know they communicate with their fellow vice principals (leveraging their knowledge) in helping get things done with their respective schools," said Principal Osung, saying that vice principals as co-school leaders, they make everything work easier.

"The weight of the school is also on their shoulders and they hold it really well..., they are there to help us solve problems," adds Principal Osung, as she praised her vice principals, Catherine Acera Cabrera.

According to Hopwood Middle School Principal Vic Borja, this year's vice principals week celebration was special and different.

"This year feels very different specially with the pandemic that has happened ...our vice principals, for me, they are backbone of the schools and showed leadership and collaboration especially during the pandemic," Borja told said separately.

Praising his two vice principals - Benjamin Seman and Karen A. Manuel - Principal Borja added: "They help me do my job. Without them, my brain will explode. They support the kids, the staff and the parents."

Borja understand the challenges and difficulties that these



education professionals face on a daily basis. “As a former vice principal myself, I know what they go through. I am very grateful for them. I have 2 vice principals: Benjamin Seman and Karen Manuel. We are very fortunate to have this dynamic duo who work very hard and I really want to say thank you for all that they do and to every vice principal, ‘Happy Appreciation Week’”.

The longest school administrator, Dr. Ignacia Demapan of Kagman Elementary School acknowledged that in her three decades service to the school district, the vice principals are “the critical and needed support of our schools”.

“All vice principals in our Public School System are really critical and needed. As a school principal for the longest time, I really cherish their output and contributions... they are there so we can make things happen: improve our school culture, climate and student achievement,” Dr. Demapan told Students First in an interview.

She added, “ I really (have to admit it)...without vice principals, I would have not survived especially during critical times that I needed help.”

Tinian Junior Senior High School Principal Lizbeth Hofschneider said the schools cannot afford without having a vice principal. “Just to put it in perspective, (my vice principal) Nikita Mendiola is a team player and the best right and left hand we could have. This is notwithstanding how compassionate she is an achiever— she helps us accomplish our goals. Imagine having without a vice principal, how can we as a school community operate?”

Tanapag Middle School Principal Hilda Rios said a school principal can only be as effective as her or his vice principal: “Any principal is only as strong principal with a strong vice principal. The same is true also for our (vice principals): are only as strong as if we are their to provide that correct guidance.”

“I am extremely grateful for all the vice principals, not just Tanapag Middle School. Everywhere, they are the unseen workers that many of our kids do not see the work that they do,” Principal Rios said in an interview.

“Let us make sure that not only this week but everyday that we remember that they are backbones of our principals,” Principal Rios told Marianas Variety.

Garapan Elementary School Principal Derwin Johnson said: “It’s really about partnership, collaboration and teamwork that our vice principals provide us, the school, our students and our parents. They believe that we can accomplish a lot if it’s a shared responsibility— and we cannot do it alone without their support”.

Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School Principal D. Tanya King said Rota’s lone public middle and high school is fortunate to have a vice principal that understand the island’s school-community culture.

“The vice principal is integral to the entire composition of the school. There is insurmountable amount of work that requires the principal to have that person as your second hand who can help in so many area. The work of our vice principals is beyond invaluable,” said Principal King, a former Board of Education member.

She added, “I would like to say my greatest appreciation to Annette Calvo for everything that she does, does it meticulously, with fidelity and truly cares about the school because that is her island. The sentiments that I am expressing are also those of the teachers and staff, as well. Happy Vice Principals Week Mrs. Calvo, we love you.”

Another school administrator, Dandan Middle School’s James Sablan, praised school vice principals for being a multitasker. “The vice principals are the unheard of or the unseen person that always supports not only school administrators but also the students, the teachers in whatever needs from instruction, discipline, and tech support. They have always been or willing to step up in order for our school to meet what is needed.”

He told Marianas Variety that he too had his struggles when his school was without a vice principal many years ago. “As a school administrator, without them, I am not able to run the school properly. I have had years, I had no VPs, it was just struggle. With VPS, I have someone I can talk to, get advice from and guidance”.

Last Wednesday, Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada an his team initiated a professional development.

Held at the Pacific Islands Club, professional development and training was done in partnership with several key CNMI and federal government agencies.



# PSS' State Longitudinal Data System Showcased at US Conference



**T**HE Public School System's Dr. Annette Pladevega-Sablan and Jeaniffer Cubangbang made a presentation on "Modernizing the CNMI's Data Visualizations" at the 2023 State Longitudinal Data System Best Practices Conference on Feb. 22-24 in Alexandria, Virginia.

Pladevega-Sablan is the SLDS program director of PSS while Cubangbang is its SLDS technical manager. SLDS is "designed to help districts, schools, and teachers make informed, data-driven decisions to improve student learning."

Pladevega-Sablan and Cubangbang's presentation highlighted the innovative methods used to improve data visualization in the CNMI, promoting data-driven decision-making to enhance education outcomes.

In addition, their presentation showcased the various data visualization tools that have been implemented by PSS to streamline data interpretation and inform evidence-based decision-making.

Pladevega-Sablan and Cubangbang also discussed the challenges PSS faced during the modernization process and the solutions adopted to overcome them.

Their presentation provided valuable insights into the benefits of modernized data visualization and its potential to revolutionize education outcomes.

"The SLDS Best Practices Conference provided a platform for us to share our experiences in modernizing data visualization in the CNMI," Pladevega-Sablan said. "Our presentation highlighted the importance of innovative data visualization

techniques in improving education outcomes, and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to showcase the strides we have made in the CNMI."

According to Cubangbang, "Modernizing data visualization is revolutionizing data interpretation in the school system, providing educators with accurate and reliable information that can help inform decision-making and drive education outcomes. We are pleased to have shared our experiences with other education professionals at the SLDS Best Practices Conference."

She also noted that meeting with the CNMI's vendor, DbDriven, which is based in Fredericksburg, Virginia, "was an opportunity to meet face-to-face to discuss challenges and solutions as well as the future of the project, and training stakeholders in the CNMI possibly sometime this summer."

She credited the visualizations they showcased at the conference to their partnership with DbDriven.

The 2023 SLDS Best Practices Conference was a collaborative event during which education professionals from across the United States and its territories shared their experiences in using their SLDS to drive evidence-based decision-making and improve education outcomes. The other staff members of the CNMI's SLDS program are George Palican, data governance manager; Ferdinand Ngirmekur, data privacy specialist; and Shawna Indalecio, project specialist. To learn more about the State Longitudinal Data System, go to <https://slds.cnmipss.org/>.



# Public School System Invests in High-Quality Instructional Materials Professional Dev't

**C**LOSE to three hundred of public educational leaders from Saipan, Tinian and Rota participated in the High-Quality Instructional Materials Professional Development that was successfully conducted from April 3 to 6 by one of the nation's top education technology company.

The Public School System has partnered with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) for said professional development, with the goal of aligning the school district to that of the nation's direction of ensuring that all students have access to the resources and rigor needed at the right moment in their education.

The four-day training was held at various facilities in Koblerville Elementary School. All school principals, vice principals, and select classroom teachers and key program officers from the PSS' central offices participated in the training. The select teachers are called the teacher-trainer and were part of the "training of trainers school-level teacher" group, which, in turn will be tasked

to initiate similar training to their fellow classroom teachers during the PSS-wide professional development.

Starting today, all of Saipan's classroom teachers from Kindergarten to grade 12 will undergo a professional development. Tinian public school teachers will be on Tuesday and Rota public school teachers.

"The training is called High-Quality Instructional Materials Professional Development Alignment with Implementation. It is for our instructional leaders - from central offices, school leaders and select classroom teachers who are to train their peers starting today," Senior Director for Curriculum and Instruction Jackie A. Quitugua told Students First.

Quitugua's team has worked with HMH in bringing the professional development in the CNMI, to mirror that of several states and school districts in the nation who have already invested in high-quality, standards-aligned curricula and professional learning.



Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said that following his meeting with his counterparts—members of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), he learned that school districts in the mainland have already invested in high-quality instructional materials to support student learning and success.

“The buzzword in the nation right now is highly qualified instructional materials. This is the new buzzword—which is part of the change and transformation,” Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada said in his remarks with key education leaders on Friday.

“This is the beginning of the transformation of our curriculum into a systemic curriculum,” the education chief added.

According to the Council of Chief State School Officers, it was only in 2017 when the organization of a cohort of interested states launched the High-Quality Instructional Professional Development

Network. The states are Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Texas.

### ‘Expert: Invest in people’

Amy Derithik, HMM’s Vice President of international customer acquisition and success, said the success of every school district is “to invest in its people.”

“Curriculum is really important. But if you don’t invest in your people, you will never get the return of your investment,” Derithik said. “We are taking time to make sure that your school administrators are well trained and they understand how our schools are supposed to lead. Transformation is hard.”

According to her, “PSS has the commitment to a system-wide approach” to be a successful school district comparable to other successful district’s in the nation/

“I am going to tell you, that you that PSS is starting at a level that makes it very, very manageable. We were talking about it this morning (Friday). And we were talking about it that the CNMI has the building blocks to really be successful,” Derithik said. “And what I am seeing is, the region is looking at you. They are watching because of your students and teachers’ (strong) performance. Everyone is talking about the work that you (PSS) is doing.”

“This year is a make or break year for you. And you have the building block for you and will continue to support you all that process.”



# Lawmakers Extends Support to School District

**M**EMBERS of the Senate and the House of Representatives that attended the Public School System Legislative Summit on March 31 were presented with the actual state of the Commonwealth's public education system.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada describes the summit as "an honest conversation about how our CNMI... schools can truly change from a systemic perspective".

Lawmakers assured PSS of their support, particularly in ensuring that funds earmarked for repair, rehabilitation and constructions of school facilities are met and completed on time.

They have also expressed concern that some of these projects will "sunset", with which funding will lapse by the Sept. 30-end of the current fiscal year, and the delay, in part, is caused by regulatory requirement, processing and other factors on the federal government's side.

"What can the legislature do to help PSS...?" Senator Celina Babauta told PSS officials. "Can you let us know what the legislature can do to help PSS move these projects... and get them completed.

She added, "I am offering my office's assistance to expedite the completion of these projects. I am sure that my colleagues will feel the same."

Rep. Marissa Flores has applauded PSS' Capital Improvement Project and Federal Programs Office in ensuring that there is working internal system that monitors the progress work which identifies the areas of delay. "We will work with you PSS," she said.

Senate Health and Education Committee Chairman Sen. Donald Manglona and House Committee Education Chairman Rep. Manny Castro had reached out to Commissioner of Education Ada, requesting for a joint PSS-legislature summit to discuss the status of all public education initiatives and projects.

Joining Senators Babauta and Manglona during the summit were several lawmakers that include Senator Dennis Mendiola, House Speaker Edmund Villagomez, Vice Speaker Joel Camacho, Floor Leader Rep. Edwin Propst, Education Committee Vice Chairman Roman Benavente, and Reps. Marissa Flores, Vince Aldan, Angelo Camacho, Diego Vincent Camacho, Joseph Flores, Thomas John Manglona, John Paul Sablan, and Ralph Yumul.

The Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) for the



COVID-19 disaster and head of the Public Assistance Office, Patrick Guerrero, was also in attendance.

## Transparent

Commissioner of Education Ada said the legislature has been supportive of PSS needs and will continue to work together. "I agree with (all of) you with how you call can help us. We are willing to sit down with all of you and go over every details on our project records making sure that we don't leave any stone unturned to be able to meet all project completion dates. We need everyone's support and that's why we are here....," Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada said

Dr. Ada also updated the lawmakers that following his meeting with the Council of Chief State School Superintendents (CCSSO), he met with US Congressman Gregorio Kilili Sablan to discuss on PSS's FEMA-related and-funded projects. "I met with our Congressman and he is very aware of our FEMA situation. He is working with us in helping us communicate with FEMA," Commissioner Ada said.