



CNMI Public School System

# STUDENTS FIRST

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December 2023

## Public School Students, Staff Deliver in 2023 Pacific Games

### Rocball marks 40th Year in Public School System

Rocball has been an annual sporting event played on a Public School System campus every year in the CMNI since 1983

### PSS is one of 8 school districts awarded by inaugural Support America's School Infrastructure Grant

The Federal Programs Office, along with the Facilities Development and Management department, successfully secured a new grant designed to support infrastructure development of the CNMI Public School System.

### PSS transitions to leading-edge database systems, Tyler Technologies

Bringing transformation to Finance, Federal Programs Office, Procurement & Supply, Human Resources Office, 20 Schools

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# 10 teams to compete for title as Rocball marks 40th year



## Long-time NMI educator Jim Feger invented Rocball

**R**OCBALL has been an annual sporting event played on a Public School System campus every year in the CNMI since 1983. And when there have been years when a lack of commitment, facilities and/or funding for intramural and interscholastic sports existed for one reason or the other, there were teams and leagues of players year after year and decade after decade competing in Rocball games for a lunch time and after-school activity outdoors on the grass, on the beach, in a parking lot, and in a gymnasium.

Rocball was defined years ago as “Saipan’s Own Sport” by the local newspapers. But Rocball players have been and continue to be from all parts of Micronesia and beyond. One of the most important attributes about the sport of Rocball is the impact it had on changing the anemic competitive features of side-out volleyball for Rocball’s system of rally point scoring and unrestricted hitting. It wasn’t until after Rocball gained international recognition on the CNN World Report in 1993 & 1994 that FIVB changed volleyball with Rocball rules of play. That issue was documented by a letter from FIVB in 1999 in response to a certified letter sent from Rocball to FIVB in 1995.

Since 2010, there have been Rocball games played at the local and national levels in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Rocball certificates of registration were issued to other countries that included Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. Kenya, Tanzania, Liberia, Spain, and Argentina. There have been two international sport forums that have involved the sport of Rocball in Zoom meetings from here in Saipan. One meeting was held in Argentina and the other international forum was held in Pakistan.

This year there are 10 teams that will compete for the Rocball championship: Nesian Power, Charii Fahn, Topshakas, Border Control, Spicy Locals, Bolley Ballerz, Rizzler Rocball Association, Quest, Aces, and Boddies.

The 10-team round-robin event is for 45 games, but teams will be eliminated after their third loss. The playoffs will include the four teams with the best win and loss record. There were two weeks of Rocball practice games held at Marianas High School during lunch time to teach new players about the game’s rules and refresher games for last year’s players. This year’s Rocball games will begin on Jan. 4 with the teams Nesian Power and Charii Fahn.



Gold medal winner  
Isaiah Aleksenko.

# PSS students, staff deliver in 2023 Pacific Games

**T**HREE CNMI Public School System students and one teacher won medals for Team Marianas in the 2023 Pacific Games held in Honiara, the Solomon Islands from Nov. 19 to Dec. 2.

Marianas High School's Isaiah Aleksenko, Kouki Watanabe, and Taiyo Akimaru and Koblerville Elementary School Special Education teacher Raymond Santos combined for 7 of the 13 medals that Team Marianas collected from the Pacific Games—the multi-sports competition that featured top athletes in the Pacific and Oceania regions.

Aleksenko won a gold medal in the 200m butterfly swim and a bronze in the 100m butterfly event.

The 17-year-old was also with Akimaru in the 4x100m free style relay team (other members were Juhn Tenorio and Kian Pajarillaga) that clinched a bronze in the final race. In the 4x100m medley relay race, Aleksenko was with Watanabe, Tenorio, and Pajarillaga and the quartet also had a bronze medal finish in the event.

In the weightlifting competition, Santos was entered in the 55kg weight class and delivered three medals for Team Marianas. He won a gold in the snatch category, a silver in total weight, and bronze in clean and jerk.

Team Marianas Chef De Mission Nick Gross, who is also the PSS Athletic Director, thanked the CNMI Public School System leadership and the then Interim Education Commissioner Donna Flores for supporting PSS students and staff's participation to the Pacific Games.

PSS students and staff and the rest of the 102 delegates of the NMI to the Pacific Games had to be away from home and be excused from their classes and work for more than two weeks, as they left Saipan last Nov. 15 and returned last Dec. 3.



The CNMI Swimming Team during the 2023 Pacific Mini Games.



Special Education Teacher Raymond Santos delivered three medals in weightlifting.

# PSS provides strong support to Team Marianas



Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan with Interim Commissioner of Education Donna Flores.

ONCE again, the CNMI Public School System showed its strong support to NMI sports as it allowed the participation of its students and staff in the 2023 Pacific Games held in Honiara, the Solomon Islands.

Over 100 athletes and officials represented Team Marianas in the 2023 Pacific Games and the bulk of them were students and several PSS employees. PSS had representatives in athletics, soccer, golf, canoe, weightlifting, and swimming competitions in Honiara. Student-athletes and PSS staff were able to represent the NMI in the 2023 Pacific Games after taking an off from their classes and work for more than two weeks.

“Thank you to the leadership of the CNMI Public School System for your kind consideration in allowing our students and staff members to compete in Honiara. Our team did very well on and off the competition venues, survived many challenges, and came out to give Team Marianas one of its best performances, if not the best, in the Pacific Games,” said Team Marianas Chef De Mission Nick

Gross, who himself had to be excused from his duties as athletic director of the CNMI Public School System to take care of Team Marianas in Honiara.

Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan, meanwhile, acknowledged the strong partnership between the CNMI Public School System and the NMSA and how it benefits the students and NMI sports. PSS and NMSA and its member national federations have been working together in the continued implementation of the different interscholastic sports programs across the NMI. School-based competitions serve as NMI sports’ grassroots program where athletes and coaches are discovered, developed, and trained to prepare them for national team duties and other career pathways in sports, such as coaching and officiating. More importantly, the partnership with PSS, through the interscholastic program and the system’s support to local and regional tournaments, create more opportunities for students and coaches to compete and learn more skills and encourage them to live an active lifestyle by getting involved in sports.

# Successful AP Data Dialogue Brings Stakeholders Together

THE CNMI Public School System recently hosted a successful AP Data Dialogue, bringing together AP educators, coordinators, and school and district administrators, for insightful discussions to enhance the Advanced Placement (AP) program. Held on January 8, 2024, the event fostered meaningful conversations about critical aspects of AP education.

AP courses, known for their rigor and college-level content, offer high school students the chance to earn college credit and academically prepare them for higher education. Developed by the College Board, AP courses cover a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, sciences, humanities, and languages.

Key highlights from the event included discussions on AP data, where participants identified trends, successes, and areas for improvement. Educators shared success stories and addressed challenges, providing valuable insights to school administrators and district-level staff.

The event also emphasized available training opportunities for AP teachers to ensure they are well-equipped with pedagogical methods and online resources to enhance the quality of AP instruction. Pre-AP and AP teachers exchanged best practices to elevate the overall quality of AP education in the district.

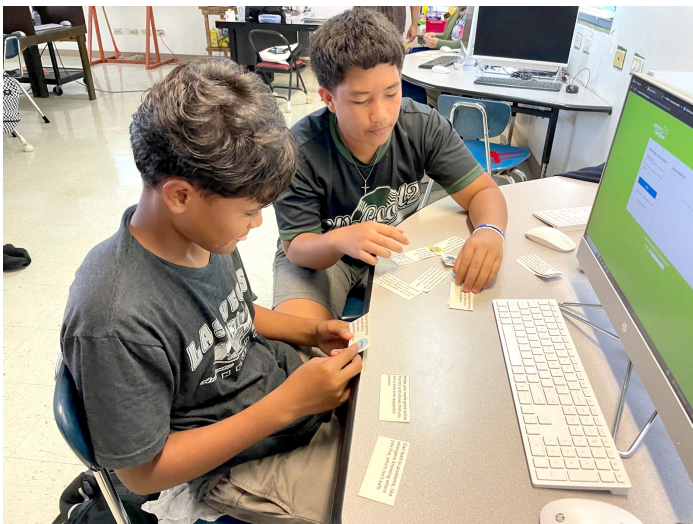
The CNMI Public School System commends the active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders in the AP Data Dialogue. The district remains dedicated to using the insights gained to further enhance students' educational experiences through the AP program.



AP Statistics Teacher, Michelle Taisacan, addresses the audience on the significance of offering and expanding access to AP courses.



AP Program Projects leads, Lorraine Catienza and Dr. Riya Nathrani (seated first, second left) are joined by AP teachers, coordinators, school leaders, and district administrators to discuss AP Program data highlights.



# Digital Literacy Skills Presentations Across CNMI Schools

**T**HE CNMI Public School System continues to make great strides in enhancing digital skills literacy across all schools on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Through the Office of Instructional Technology and Distance Education, school leaders and classroom teachers are able to request grade-level and topic-specific digital skills presentations to meet the varied needs of learners.

Elementary-level presentations include topics on media balance, online safety, cyberbullying, digital citizenship, and protecting one's digital footprint. Middle school presentations focus on areas such as communicating safely online, finding balance in a digital world, and digital media's impact on the brain. High school presentations focus on the health effects of screen time, evaluating online information, protecting online reputation, and addressing clickbait and disinformation.



Since the opening of the school year, a total of 33 presentations have been conducted with a total number of 764 students participating in various digital skills presentations. These presentations aim to build a strong digital literacy foundation to include ways to critically assess online information, communicate effectively online, and learn how to navigate the digital landscape responsibly and safely.

The CNMI PSS believes that students need to be equipped with the necessary skills to navigate a constantly evolving digital world. By prioritizing digital literacy education, the CNMI PSS is committed to providing students with the tools they need to succeed academically and socially.



MHS students Jenny Zhang and Yejin Son during the finals.



MHS' Princes Habal and Julia Taitano strategizing during the competition.

# Marianas High School students win inaugural 2023 High School Moot Court Competition

**M**ARIANAS High School juniors Princes Habal and Julia Taitano won the inaugural 2023 High School Moot Court Competition which was held on December 6-7, 2023.

Sixteen other students from Saipan Southern High School, Dr. Rita Hocog Inos High School and MHS participated in a 10-week program that culminated in a two-day tournament that was held at the Guma' Hustisia. The students have learned how to argue in a court of appeals by participating in workshops, drafting legal briefs, and practicing analytical skills.

During the finals, students presented arguments on behalf of their clients in the mock case Sablan v. Anatahan High School, in which a school official found an antique fishing spear during an unconsented search of a student's truck. Competitors must answer two legal questions: if searching the truck violated the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and if the fishing spear qualifies as a dangerous or deadly weapon.

The final round of competition saw Habal and Taitano going up against fellow MHS Dolphins Jenny Zhang and Yejin Son.

The winners, Habal, and Taitano, have earned the right to represent the CNMI in the national moot court competition at UC Santa Barbara in 2024.



Student competitors, justices and judges, and Public School System officials led by then-Acting Commissioner Jacqueline Che gather at the conclusion of the 2023 High School Moot Competition at the Guma Hustisia on December 7, 2023. Dr. Bobby Cruz, the State Education Agency Director for PSS Mental Health was the keynote speaker.



Unlike the mock trial competition, the moot court competition deals with appellate cases.

In the fictional case, Sablan is a high school student who was expelled from Anatahan High School after a school official discovered an antique fishing spear during a search of his truck without valid consent.

For the competition, students wrote legal briefs and then made oral arguments regarding two legal questions: whether or not the search violated the 4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and whether or not the spear was a deadly or dangerous weapon.

In the finals, Habal, Taitano, Zhang and Son took turns presenting their oral arguments to Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro, Justice John A. Manglona, Justice Perry B. Inos, District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, and Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy.



From left, Supreme Court Justice John Manglona, Federal Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy, left, Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro, and Federal District Court Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona.



Marianas High Schools' Jenny Zhang, Julia Taitano, Princes Habal and Yejin Son are congratulated by NMI judicial and Public School System officials led by then-Acting Commissioner of Education Jacqueline Che, left, following the conclusion of the 2023 High School Moot Court Competition finals on December 7, 2023. Dr. Bobby Cruz, the State Education Agency Director for PSS Mental Health, was the keynote speaker.

To Support I

# PSS is one of 8 school districts awarded an inaugural Supporting America's School Infrastructure (SASI) Grant Program from the US Department of Education's Federal Programs Office, Facilities Development and Management

**T**HE Federal Programs Office, along with the Facilities Development and Management department, successfully secured a new grant designed to support infrastructure development of the CNMI Public School System: the inaugural Supporting America's School Infrastructure (SASI) Grant Program.

PSS is one of only eight school districts in the nation to have been selected as recipients of the grant offered by the US Department of Education.

The grant award amounts to \$4.99 million. This was a competitive grant that FPO-FDM worked on.

This inaugural grant was initiated by the PSS Federal Programs Office, led by Federal Programs Officer Jacqueline Che, and FPO's State Program Officer-Director of Grants Management & Compliance Peter Arriola and assisted by then-FDM Director Martha Kintol.

Arriola was the lead grant writer for the SASI grant application.

FDM is under the Office of the Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services, Eric Magofna.

The grant application was announced and open for competitive application last June 5, 2023, for all school districts in the nation. The application process ended on August 18, 2023.

## School districts

Joining the CNMI- PSS are the Alabama State Department of Education, Arizona Department of Administration, California Department of Education, Oregon Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Rhode Island Department

ment of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Virginia Department of Education.

"We are just very fortunate that we have a hardworking (Federal Programs Office) team led by Jacqueline Che and her team who worked alongside our Facilities Development and Management (FDM) in securing this highly competitive grant," Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores said in announcing the grant before the Board of Education's Fiscal, Personnel and Administration Committee.

In a separate media release, the US Department of Education said: "The Biden-Harris Administration announced eight new grant awards...totaling more than \$37 million over five years under the Supporting America's School Infrastructure (SASI) program and one new grant for \$10 million over five years under the National Center on School Infrastructure (NCSI) program. This \$47 million investment, issued by the U.S. Department of Education, bolsters the capacity of states to support school districts in improving school facilities with the goal of more equitable access to healthy, sustainable, and modern learning environments for all students."

The announcement was made by US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona during a visit to Virginia with Ranking Member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott, and U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

## Objectives

The PSS share of the SASI grant will enable three primary objectives: 1.) the creation of a comprehensive 10-year

# Infrastructure

# Awarded by US Dept. of Education's SASI School Infrastructure Grant Planning and Management key to securing windfall.

School Facilities Master Plan; 2.) the transition to a cloud-based facilities' maintenance management system; and 3.) the establishment of an innovative maintenance training program for district staff. This project, inspired by the indigenous Chamorro term "Minetgot" meaning resilience, aims to encapsulate this very essence of strength and adaptability.

Given the district's present constraints and the limited resources available on the islands, there exists a pressing challenge: effectively assessing and addressing our infrastructure needs to bolster the quality of public school education. Project Mintetgot, in its essence, strives to fulfill this gap.

The proposed 10-year School Facilities Master Plan embodies Minetgot, focusing on resilience and long-term sustainability through strategic sub-plans for Capital Improvement, Routine Maintenance, Preventive Maintenance, and Deferred Maintenance. The plan aims to reduce emergency repair expenses, extend the lifespan of our facilities, improve energy efficiency, and ensure that our facilities meet modern safety and accessibility standards.

The transition to a cloud-based facilities maintenance management system will centralize our data, automate routine operations, enable real-time reporting, and prepare us for a resilient future.

Project Minetgot also prioritizes human resources, recognizing the proficiency gap within our Facilities Development & Management Office (FDMO) and school-level support teams. By investing in developing an effective maintenance training program, we aim to enhance the safety and longevity of our facilities and contribute to job satisfaction and reduced staff turnover.

## Fast Facts

- Along with PSS, the other grantee school districts are the Alabama State Department of Education, Arizona Department of Administration, California Department of Education, Oregon Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Virginia Department of Education
- The SASI program is the first in the US Dept. of Education's history.
- It's intended to increase state capacity to support underserved school districts to improve their school facilities. States receiving SASI funds will be able to conduct school facility needs assessments in high-need school districts; hire new staff; and develop or improve public school infrastructure data systems, among other actions.
- PSS submitted its competitive grant application when it was announced June 2023.

# PSS Head Start Policy Council's 2023–2024 Members



The 2023-2024 Head Start Policy Council Members.

## Outgoing Members Praised

**T**HE Head Start Policy Council recently held its annual Head Start Policy Council Turnover Meeting to transition membership, expressing gratitude to outgoing members and welcome new members. The outgoing council was successful in the program's refunding application approval, supplement grant applications, participation in the federal monitoring review, and PSS Accreditation process.

The PSS Head Start/Early Head Start Program would like to thank the SY 2022-2023 officers Kevin Tudela, Chairperson, Maritoni Duarte, Secretary, Edelyn Pinaula, Treasurer; members Lunesa Borja, Vincent Cruz, Mardel Atalig, Jodine Hossain, Nasima Uddin, Alison Cruz; Community Representatives Derek Sasamoto, Tonica Barcinas; alternates Joyce Cabrera, Yolanda Manibusan, J Lynn Cepeda, Lorena Rabauliman, Mariah Ngirbabul, Jeanette Awas, Ronica Atalig, Eric Dona, Nurun Nahar, Ashley Villanueva, and Eva Rose Cabrera; and CNMI State Board of Education representative, member Maisie B. Tenorio.



Outgoing HPC Chairperson Kevin Tudela

The SY 2023-2024 council will be led by officers Georenda Satoshi, Chairperson, Nasima Uddin, Vice Chairperson, JLYnn Cepeda, Secretary, Derek Sasamoto, Treasurer; members Ashley Villanueva, Minerva Wabol, Raynna Mality, Darcy Masga, Jsieleena Cabrera, Amor Tamayo, Anthonette Manglona, Billy Calage, Velvet Mendiola, Fenli Zhou, Necie Evangelista; Community Representative Tonica Barcinas; alternates Marvieluz Syed, Ronel Macalinao, Jolina Polly, Diane Lontoc, Gita Malik, Raynalynn Aldan, Jennifer Ada, Gina Rudolph, Dexter Brennan; and CNMI State Board of Education representative, member Maisie B. Tenorio.

The Head Start Policy Council is a formal leadership and policymaking role for parents and community members which is a part of the program's leadership structure. Through the council, parents have a voice in decisions about how the program spends money, what children do in their classrooms, and how the program works with community partners.

When parents take on leadership roles, it benefits not only the program but also their children. Children experience healthier development both at school and at home, and they learn more. Parents, on the other hand, can become more confident, gain new skills, and connect with other parents and staff. Additionally, program staff can learn about the strengths, interests, and needs of the children, families, and communities they serve.



The 2022-2023 Head Start Policy Council Members.

# Building parent leadership

## School district provides budgetary expenditures training for parents



THE Public School System continues to support parents in amplifying the need for increased engagement in their child's learning. At the same time, the school district recognizes the need for meaningful parent leadership in schools, and this can only occur when they gain knowledge and skills to help shape the overall direction of the school's programs and student achievement outcomes.

On December 27, 2023, a work session on budget expenditures for Parent Teacher Student Associations and School Leaders (PTSAs) and school leaders from all the 20 elementary, middle, and high schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota was held.

This was organized by the school district's Family Engagement and Community Involvement (FECI) Program together with the Federal Program Office. The FECI Program Director is headed by Director Liela Yumul.

The school district's Federal Programs Officer Jacqueline Che gave a thorough presentation on federal funding guidelines for expenditures and allowable costs that can be used to engage parents and families to support student learning.

It was a very productive work session with both PTSA and school leaders, who were able to develop a cohesive plan to spend funds using school data and evidence-based strategies focusing on parent and family engagement using the guidelines presented by the PSS Federal Programs Office.

"Parents leadership is successfully achieved when they are part of that responsibility in decisions being made that affect their child—our public school students. We are very fortunate that we continue to see an increase in parental engagement and that our school district will continue to provide support to ensure that we maintain this healthy collaboration," FECI Program Director Yumul said.





The PSS Finance team led by Director Arlene Lizama were praised by Interim Commissioner Donna Flores for its hard work that led to the successful transition into the new cloud based financial systems. Joining the team are the Tyler Enterprise ERP team Project Manager Caroline Wine and implementation consultant Sean Grogan.

# PSS transitions to leading-edge database systems, Tyler Technologies

## Bringing transformation to Finance, Federal Programs Office, Procurement & Supply, Human Resources Office, 20 Schools

**A** MILESTONE. This was what Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores described when the Public School System's formal transition to the Tyler Technologies/Tyler Enterprise ERP, a cloud-based software that improves and automates the financial management system of the school district.

After nearly three years of planning and training, at exactly 2 pm on January 4, PSS-Finance department has switched to the most modern software integration system that will include financials, human resources, procurement, and federal programs related systems of PSS' central office.

Prior to the transition, PSS had been using the JD Edwards System for decades.

Interim Commissioner Flores was joined by PSS Director of Finance Arlene Lizama, Tyler Technologies Project Manager Caroline Wine, and implementation consultant Sean Grogan, as PSS Treasurer Elia Marie O. Santos logged on to the system, officially migrating PSS Finance's system to the leading edge, cloud-based Tyler Technologies.

By the third week of January of this month, Tyler Enterprise ERP will be rolled out throughout the school district's 20 elementary, middle, and high school campuses on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Tyler Technologies/ Tyler Enterprise ERP is the nation's leader in integrated software that has done over 40,000 installations, and serves 25 percent of all school districts in the entire United States, according to Caroline Wine, project manager.

"We are glad to have the opportunity to empower the CNMI PSS to be stronger in all that they do for the community," said Project Manager Caroline Wine.

Aside from PSS, the CNMI Department of Finance and the Commonwealth HealthCare Corporation are the only entities in the Commonwealth that have implemented this cloud-based automation.

Interim Commissioner Flores acknowledged the value of PSS' investment in the new automated Tyler Technologies/ Tyler Enterprise ERP.

"This will definitely streamline all financial-related activities that happen on a daily basis at PSS. It is a more elaborate and efficient system that provides improvements," Interim Commissioner Flores said, adding that it addresses the recommendations of external auditors in further improving PSS' financial management systems.

"This is essentially strengthening our accountability and reliability systems, which addresses recommendations of

our external auditors," Flores explained.

The interim commissioner of education also praised the team of PSS Finance Director Lizama.

"I really want to acknowledge the hard work of our Finance Director Arlene Lizama and her incredible staff who have taken the lead and extra time in building the system. Without their help, it would not be possible at all for our school district," Interim Commissioner Flores said.

"The Federal Programs Office, particularly Nadia Pua, who worked alongside our Finance and Procurement and Supply team to ensure that we are able to seamlessly migrate from our old system to this newest cloud-based system," Interim Commissioner Flores added.

"This is a milestone for the Public School System. This is a great undertaking that took a lot of persuasion, research, and hard work by our dedicated staff into making this possible. This is as a result of taking the right direction with technology," she added.

PSS began looking at investing in a modern and automated system three years ago by looking at digital transformation and less reliance on paper.


"Definitely, the Tyler Enterprise ERP System will streamline all financial system, especially budgeting and forecasting for PSS," said PSS Director of Finance Arlene Lizama.

"This raises our level of accountability by providing more transparency in what we do," Director Lizama added.



Going 'Live'. the Public School System has formally migrated into to Tyler Technologies/Tyler Enterprise ERP, an innovative cloud-based software that improves and automates the financial management system of the school district. Witnessing PSS Treasurer Elia Marie O. Santos, seated, as she formally logged on to the new system were Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores, Finance Director Arlene Lizama, Tyler Enterprise ERP Project Manager Caroline Wine, and implementation consultant Sean Grogan.



A photograph of a classroom. In the center, a woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a light blue polo shirt, is looking down and smiling at a young girl. The girl is wearing a blue shirt and has her hair in a ponytail. In the background, there are educational posters on the wall, including an alphabet strip (A-Z) and a colorful calendar. In the foreground, another young girl with dark hair is sitting at a desk, looking towards the left. A laptop is visible on the desk in front of her.

**Education leaders:  
Donna Flores  
competently  
steered PSS with  
steady leadership**

**S**HE displayed remarkably high level of professionalism, respect and steady leadership that hears and listens to her peers,' BOE Chairman Antonio L. Borja

Education leaders and policymakers praised Donna M. Flores for ensuring that there was continuous and stable school district leadership for nearly five months.

"We are very fortunate that we live and work in a community where education is important, and this has continued on uninterrupted in the last five months when our current Special Education Program Director, Donna Flores, has led, guided and gave her heartfelt commitment and leadership to our Public School System as interim commissioner of education," Board of Education Chairperson Antonio L. Borja said.

BOE Chairperson Borja thanked Flores for stepping into the interim role following Dr. Alfred B. Ada's resignation due to health reasons.

"Along with our public education stakeholders, I am grateful to Director Flores for stepping up at a time when we need a leader who can continue to steer PSS with its initiatives and programs, work with all our schools, with our parents and community. Quite frankly, her service to our school district couldn't be more emphasized by how she displayed a remarkably high level of professionalism, respect and steady leadership that hears and listens to her peers," BOE Chairperson Borja said.

BOE Secretary/Treasurer Gregory Pat Borja, who is also the current chairperson of the BOE Fiscal, Personnel and Administration Committee, described Flores as "very competent" who took her additional responsibility "very seriously."

"I think Ms. Flores was very competent at what she did. She took her responsibility very seriously. She helped look at the system from a very big picture point-of-view, to see what changes are needed to help (PSS) run more efficiently, and I think she covered that," BOE Secretary/Treasurer Borja said.

"I thought that she did a great job. I'm really thankful to her for stepping into that position: I know it was a challenge...coming into a position such as that when things or some uncertainty is on the line. But again, she basically filled her own shoes. I think she's going to be leaving those shoes for someone else to fill now," BOE Secretary/Treasurer Borja.

He added, "We're sad to see her go. However, to me personally, I'm happy to see her return to the Special Education Program because she is needed there because she has wealth of experience and expertise in that field as well. All in all, I want to thank her because she did a great job".

## Expertise

School leaders have recognized Flores for her ability to communicate with all stakeholders, and this is because of her breadth of experience.

"Her biggest strength is her willingness to listen to people and not to judge immediately. To listen is to let the schools run schools, and let the principals run the program," said Vince Dela Cruz, the high schools principal representative and current Saipan Southern High School principal.

Principal Dela Cruz describes Flores as "a down-to-earth person who understands the schools' situation."

"She knows her role... as a support system. Although she is the leader of the system, she understands that she is there to support the programs and the schools," adds Dela Cruz.

Middle Schools Principals Representative James A. Sablan has worked with Flores for years now, describing her as a "high level of professionalism and a strong leader."

"To be honest, she was able to steady the ship. There was no chaos during her time, nothing had changed. She succeeded in continuing the current trend," explains Sablan, who is also the principal of Dandan Middle School.

Her "calmness and willingness to listen" ensured that schools operate continuously without interruptions. "She held it up very well because of her strong sense of professionalism and work ethic. She has worked with us (for the past five months) to make it easier for us to run our public schools."

Elementary Schools Principal Representative Paulette Tomokane said,"Mrs. Donna Flores is well-recognized for her unwavering support throughout her term as Interim Commissioner of Education. She played a crucial role in supporting our educational system to move forward with the least disruption. Her leadership, expertise, and collaboration inspired trust and confidence among the school and central office leaders. Her collaboration and trust-building efforts ensured that all stakeholders felt valued and included, leading to improved outcomes. Her willingness to listen and approachable demeanor are qualities I truly appreciate as a principal and elementary school principal representative."

Tomokane is also the principal of San Vicente Elementary School.

## Respect

In her last key management meeting last Friday, Interim Commissioner of Education Flores thanked the entire school system leadership and the BOE for the respect afforded to her.

"Thank you for all your support, for giving me respect and respect for this office. We are all here to serve our children and the community. I couldn't have done it without respect for the job that I do, and for what we do, as a PSS community. I would have done it for you." Flores told PSS' key management.

She added, "Let's welcome Dr. Camacho. He is excited and is looking forward to working with all of you."

The BOE is the policymaking and governing body of PSS. The BOE hires and has the supervisory authority over the commissioner of education.

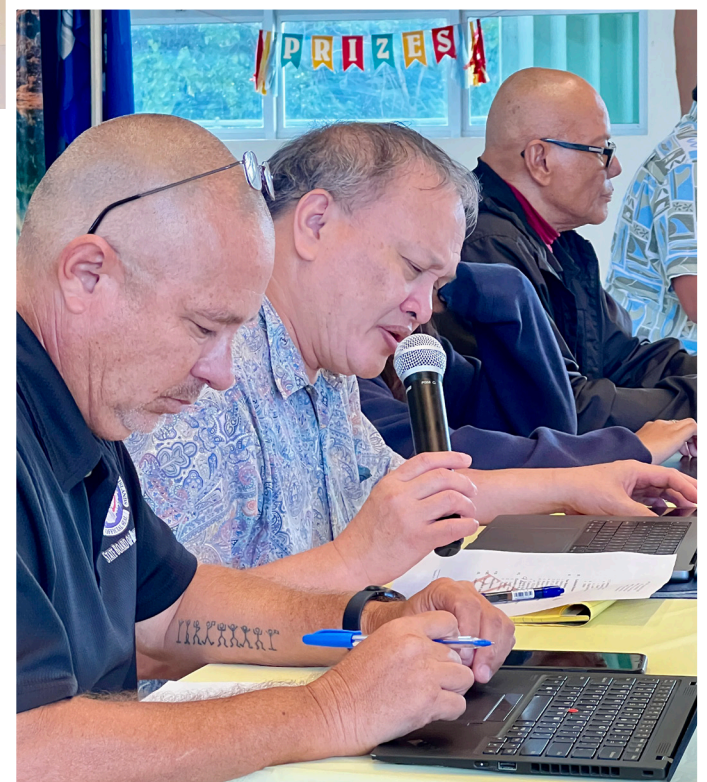
Dr. Lawrence Camacho, the new commissioner of education, will formally assume his post today (tomorrow, Monday).

Flores currently serves as the PSS-SPED Director. On September 3 last year, the Board of Education was unanimous in its selection of Flores as interim commissioner of education. She did not apply for the position when the BOE announced the application process for the commissioner of education, who also serves as the chief state school superintendent.

The SPED Program is the single largest program under PSS, with its stakeholders accounting for about 11 % of the overall PSS student population. Its employees, for their part, represent 21% of PSS' total workforce.



ON BREAK. BOE Chairman Antonio L. Borja, BOE Vice Chairman Herman Atalig, BOE Member Andrew L. Orsini and Student Rep. Jane Nicole Mozunder.



Board member Andrew L. Orsini speaks while Secretary/Treasurer Gregory Pat Borja and Vice Chairman Herman Atalig listens.



BOE Chairman Antonio L. Borja and Vice Chairman Herman Atalig in yesterday's BOE meeting in Rota.



Chairman Antonio L. Borja stresses a point, as Teacher Rep. Dr. Dora B. Miura and Board Member Maisie B. Tenorio listens.

# BRINGING THE BOE TO THE PEOPLE OF ROTA



behind Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores is joined by her key management team that includes Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, Federal Programs Officer Jacqueline Che, Human Resources Officer Lucretia B. Deleon Guerrero, and Finance and Budget Director Arlene Lizama during Wednesday's Board of Education meeting in Rota's Sinapalo Elementary School cafeteria.

**T**HE policymaking and governing body of the school district, the Board of Education, held its regular board meeting on December 11 at the Sinapalo Elementary School cafeteria in Rota.

The current BOE leadership has agreed to hold its regular meetings on a rotational basis on all three islands, with the aim of giving the public the opportunity to participate and observe how their education policymakers work for them.

"The role of the BOE is very important in how we do as one school system. I truly appreciate everyone coming over to Rota because this is one important aspect of how we want to be both transparent and accessible to our community," Chairman Antonio L. Borja said.

Federal Programs Officer Jacqueline Che, Human Resources Officer Lucretia Deleon Guerrero and Finance and Budget Director Arlene Lizama listens intently during yesterday's regular BOE meeting

