

# STUDENTS FIRST

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## TEACHING AND LEARNING RECOVERY

### School District Prepares to Transition Back to In-Person Learning

#### How Mandated Antigen Testing Prevents Infection Spread in Schools

- In Maintaining Safe Learning Schools, Enhanced Measures are in Place
- Striking A Balance Between Mental Health and Physical Well-being Matters to A Child's Learning and Development



**By Alfred B. Ada, Ed.D.**

Commissioner of Education  
&  
Chief State School Superintendent

**A**S I reflect in the last two and a half years of my leadership, kindly allow me to be the first to pay tribute to the success to ALL PSS staff and the governing board of the Public School System. The work and dedication of serving our students is inescapable. We all know the principle of serving ALL students, equitably. It is innate. For several months, I took journal notes from the beginning as your Commissioner of Education. COE playbook is nonexistent but the only reference I had was my facilitative leadership skills in reaching out to the key management and the school principals as we use common sense to configure teaching and learning with curve balls that came our way in this pandemic.

Things fell apart, but our attitudes or mindsets toward circumstances can always be inclined into positive directions. Here are some of my thoughts from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic: five lessons I learned about my leadership:

**First**, I was selling myself short. I am built with resilience reservoirs. While many experts were selling us the idea that somehow we were devoid of resilience and that we

needed to learn all about it to help ourselves and our staff and students, I discovered that we actually have a built-in coil of resilience in our spirits. **Second**, I learned that although as a leader I value order and security, none of us were ever in control of anything during the pandemic and the “wait and see” stance was revealed as a strength. Immature leadership thrives on the need to know everything in order to plan and succeed, but all through the pandemic, I discovered that my strong suit was hidden in my ability to let go and let be. **Third**, the BOE, Key Management staff and I are a powerful source of support in our school community. We built a strong community, despite the fear of the pandemic...despite the fear of the pandemic. We are a doer. WE PSS Faculty and Staff are doers and we have the “Do It Yourself (DIY)” attitude as our way through this pandemic. Yes, we can, was my pandemic motto! Everyone followed. Whether we organized classrooms, got rid of clutter, limit the number of students on campus, Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health Services, mitigating learning loss, constant communication through social media, communicating with the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP), the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and following the 80% vaccinated student population, our willingness to press on is what makes us great leaders. **Fourth**, as a leader, I have come to learn that “normal” is whatever it takes. Waking up and immediately logging on to a computer became normal. Seeing students in unexpected places doing their school work or rediscovering their artistic strengths made me embrace our new normal. As PSS leaders, we fully accept that normal is whatever it takes to meet the needs of your students and staff. **Lastly**, we are fearless leaders, teachers and staff. PSS leadership is focused on vision, but also serving daily, as we lead in the moment. As we have matured in our leadership, we have become more aware of self and practice self-care and this was very important in the last year and onward. We must give ourselves boundaries to see the importance of self-care as well.

Many educators throughout the world are challenged to step up to the plate and take a swing at this pandemic curve balls. I realized that whoever is at bat, teachers and staff are able to swing hard and make contact with the students and the community. The goal is to swing the bat at the hardest and make it home...No team will ever succeed without the power of TEAMWORK. To all the PSS governing body, the Board of Education, Faculty, Teachers and Staff, I salute you for staying on course and be a part of the winning team. We belong to the CNMI Public School System where we place, STUDENTS FIRST, in order.

# Resilience in Education Leadership





# How PSS-mandated Antigen Testing Prevents Infection Spread in Schools

**T**HE rapid antigen testing that the CNMI Public School System has initiated and mandated – since August this year – has proven to be a useful tool to reduce transmission in all of the 20 public elementary, middle and high school campuses on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

With the January 3-transition into face-to-face learning, the use of antigen testing will remain an important tool to protect students, teachers and staff and the school community, as a whole in any onward spread of infection.

“Our rapid antigen testing is a useful screening tool that prevents the spread of (COVID-19) cases into our places of learning,” Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said.

Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini agrees.

Based on the latest November 29-data of the mandated antigen testing jointly conducted by PSS and the Commonwealth HealthCare Corporation/ Office of the Governor’s COVID-19 Task Force, only 1 percent or 83 students who were tested positive were identified during the first day in the reopening of the schools.

“They were not borne in schools. The surge of positive numbers is circulating within the community, and not from the schools,” Chairman Orsini said. “The schools are the safest for students returning for the face-to-face instructions.”

This has been proven effective as our joint PSS-Governor



COVID-19 Task Force/ CHCC successfully prevented any outbreaks in our schools.

“Our transition to face-to-face learning assuage any worries of our parents. We have a system in place, we have professionals (nurses) and support from our partners (COVID-19 Task Force) who will continue to support our drive to ensure that we have

safe learning spaces,” the education chief said.

He added, “As we begin anew, we will remain vigilant with our efforts in ensuring that our students will continue to learn and health and well-being are our utmost priority.”







# Public Schools Remain Safe Place for Learning In Maintaining Safe, Conducive Schools, Enhanced Safety Measures in Place as In-Person Learning Set to Begin

**A**s the school district gears up for the January 3-transition into in-person learning, a critical and essential component of its work is to ensure that all learning facilities continues to be safe and conducive for all stakeholders of public education.

Even with its rich student academic programs and high degree of commitment to community and parental engagement, the CNMI Public School System also invest a portion of its resources in the management and maintenance of all its facilities across all Rota, Tinian and Saipan.

There is already that culture of responsiveness and community-centered service that PSS has implemented. With dedicated public schools' maintenance staff, the CNMI-PSS further empowers and strengthens their roles by focusing on what the school district is now keen at promoting: enhanced safety measures on all school campuses.

"We assure (all our stakeholders, especially our students and parents) that we continue to do everything we can to provide a safe environment for all

of you," Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said, as he praised the hard work and commitment of all PSS staff and personnel in preparing for the January 3-transition to face-to-face learning.

"We have been working with our partners with the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, and following all stringent health and safety protocols to ensure that when we transition, our classrooms are safe and secure for our students, staff and the community, in general," adds Dr. Ada.



The PSS Office of Administrative Services led by Associate Commissioner Eric Magofna has been taking the lead in working with various schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota in carrying out the needed deep cleaning and sanitation work.

This is on top of the stringent COVID-19 health protocols that have been put in place on all public elementary, middle and high schools.

There is also the mandated antigen testing which is done in partnership with the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth HealthCare Corporation and the PSS-Family Engagement Program.



# With January 3-Transition to In-Person Learning It's About Bringing Back the Classroom Experience — and Rebuilding Learning Losses

**T**HE pandemic has shown everyone what will be necessary and what can absolutely do without: there is no substitute with the impact that a physical classroom can have on a child's growth and learning.

From learning from each other to making friends, and form crucial bonds with their teachers, school-aged children are in particular need of in-person learning. This is part of the their mental and emotional development — and it can't happen in isolation or at home, alone.

When COVID-19 struck the CNMI in 2021, the school district restarted (implemented) online/distance learning throughout the remainder of the school year. This was to ensure the protection of all students, staff and the community, as a whole.

However, a year after the pandemic, assessments conducted by the CNMI Public School System's Office of Accountability, Research and Evaluation revealed how the pandemic impacted student

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# School Mental Health Project HALIGI AWARE

**W**hen the CNMI Public School System launched a new program to encourage students, families, and staff to avail free mental health referral services, it was designed to be responsive to the social and emotional learning aspect of all public education stakeholders.

“When the pandemic hit us, everything shifted. It also caused trauma and stress, not just ourselves but mainly to our students and staff,” Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said.

With PSS School Mental Health initiated under the Project HALIGIE Aware, the school district expanded its mental health awareness and access to care.

PSS School Mental Health came out of Project HALIGI AWARE, an acronym that stands for Healthy, Affirming Locally-Inclusive Grant Initiative for Advancing Awareness and Resilience in Education.

Haligi is the foundation pillar of the indigenous Latte Stone homes. This project will connect home and community to schools and create a positive culture for ALL students through the multi-tiered system pyramid.

## Services we provide

The program provide for services for all students, from focusing on promotional mental health content to early intervention services, and more direct one-to-one services

**Tier 1** is the Universal tier, meaning services for ALL. It is focused on promoting mental health for ALL our students, families, and staff. Some examples of these are training, webinars, PTSA outreach presentations, KKMP or social media discussions, or even the screenings given at registration.

**Tier 2** are early intervention services designed to prevent risk factors or early problems from getting worse, such as creating support groups for students who need specific support.

**Tier 3** are targeted services and are more direct services done on a one-to-one basis. These are supported by a professional who works directly with a student and their family, or it might be working with partnering agencies for counseling or therapy.

## Successes

The PSS Project HALIGI AWARE School Mental Health team has made tremendous efforts and success towards mental wellness for students and staff by collaborating with student activities and clubs in schools and the community. These efforts help bridge the school system with community resources and partners. In addition, the team continues to advocate for the mental well-being of our educators with training and workshops.

The program has partnered and collaborated with all of the schools Youth Advisory Panel, Tasi to Table fishing club, and GSA Clubs.







For teachers, counselors and staff, continuous workshops on stress management and coping skills are provided.

It has a successful and ongoing collaboration with various agencies that include CHCC Community Guidance Center, Kagman Isla Community Health Center, Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Department of Youth Services, PRIDE Marianas & PRIDE Marianas Youth, and Saipan, Tinian and Rota Mayor's Offices.

The program also support community outreach initiatives such as Mental Health Awareness, PRIDE and LGBTQIA+ Awareness, Suicide Prevention Awareness, and Domestic Violence Awareness.

Training and support program are also provided. They are Stress Busters for Teens, Be Kind to Your Mind Webinars, Mental Wellness Matters, and Diversity and Inclusion.

The program also provides direct services and intervention on Curriculum and Clinical groups and Coordinated Referrals, among others.

### What's ahead in 2022

The PSS Mental Health Program continues to be proactive in supporting mental wellness for the dis-

trict. A preview of what our upcoming programs and initiatives look like in the new year includes:

Supports for the reopening of schools in January 2022, among others: Rollout of more curriculum and clinical groups in schools, virtual evidence-based support groups for teachers and staff, continued coordinated referrals, increase promotion and outreach via social media, re-broadcasting of mental health table talks series, and more community outreach

Several upcoming programs will be rolled out. They include Virtual Parent Hub of Mental Health Resources, Sources of Strength Peer Mentoring Program, Grief Recovery Support System, and Teen Mental Health First Aid.

### How to reach us?

You can reach us Monday through Friday (Business Days) from 7:30am to 4:30pm by

Phone 670-664-3822  
 Email [mentalhealth@cnmipss.org](mailto:mentalhealth@cnmipss.org)  
 You can also follow us on Social Media  
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If you are in immediate distress or are thinking about hurting yourself, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline toll-free at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or the toll-free TTY number at 1-800-799-4TTY (4889). You also can text the Crisis Text Line (HELLO to 741741) or go to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

In addition, for emergencies please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room .



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learning: the pandemic has undone years of educational gains of the CNMI public schools.

With the January 3-reopening of its classrooms, all of Saipan, Tinian and Rota 20 campuses are setting its sights towards recovering learning losses.

"It's no secret that student learning has suffered during this pandemic-driven environment," a school principal said.

Another school leader acknowledged that the "successes we've achieved in the last decade" were all "wiped out" when the pandemic forced public schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota to pivot into remote learning.

"The gauge of our students learning and growth is through our state-mandated and-recognized assessments. And it shows how our students suffered during the year the pandemic removed them from in-person learning," adds another school administrator.

### **Pandemic-driven Learning Data**

Result of its 2020-2021 Assessment Report STAR Reading Proficiency showed how the pandemic has impacted learning across all grade levels.

Quantitative findings for the STAR Reading Results for elementary students, from Grade 1 to 5, showed that 54 percent are below the reading proficiency benchmark. The same STAR Reading Assessment showed that 46 percent of elementary students are at or above reading proficiency.

For middle school students – or students from Grades 6 to 8 – results showed how public school students fell short in reading as a result of the pandemic.

Only 33 percent of middle school students are at or above reading proficiency benchmark based on STAR Reading Assessment, while 67 percent are below the reading proficiency.

Another telling impact of the pandemic on student learning in the CNMI is the high school-aged bracket: Grades 9 to 12.

Data culled from last year's assessment showed that 33 percent of high school students are at or above reading proficiency while 67 percent are below the proficiency level.



At Garapan Elementary School, students participate in the singing of the National Anthem in this September 17, 2021 photo.





# High-Impact Tutoring To Recover Pandemic Learning Losses

**T**HE school district is about to roll out a powerful strategy to recoup—and regain pandemic learning losses: high-impact tutoring.

While this is no small task, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said the school district will implement the initiative to accelerate learning and close learning gaps, and promote learning recovery when all public school transitions back to face-to-face learning.

This will be implemented by the start of the third quarter of the school year, which is on January 10, 2022.

“This will not mitigate learning losses but is actually designed to complement and support our existing curriculums to accelerate student learning recovery,” Commissioner of Education Ada explained.

The high-impact tutoring will provide a one-to-one tutoring or small groups of peer tutoring to students from grade levels that were identified in the 2020-2021 Assessment showing the impact of the pandemic learning losses.

This innovative program is funded under PSS' share of the federal Education Stabilization Fund, which is a component of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2020.

With PSS' focus of providing learning opportunities to all identified public school students and provide support for learning loss and instructional loss this school year, the High-Impact Tutoring Program supports the district's goals.

The goals are: (1) each student will receive equitable, rigorous, relevant, and evidence-based instruction and support to meet their academic, social-emotional and wellbeing targets; (2) student growth to be guided by instructions and services informed by data and continuous improvement, preparing them for college and career; (3) students will receive instruction and support from high performing personnel; (4) students benefit from an efficient, effective and fiscally-responsible school system, and (5) students will develop positive social-emotional skills in a caring, safe and inclusive environment.

This initiative is an expansion of the High-Dosage Peer Tutoring Program that was launched last summer. This innovative learning support gave some 237 student-tutors the opportunity to assist lower grade public school students (K-12) for this pioneering initiative.



# Mental Health Matters for Rota Public School Stakeholders



**R**OTA'S public school administrators, teachers and staff received a much-needed mindful and self-care-centered event that was initiated by the school district's HALGI AWARE Mental Health program. Twenty five PSS staff participated in this mindful and self-care-centered event.

Through its CNMI-PSS Mental Health Rota team, the Mental Health Matter event was staged on December 13 on two locations: at the East Dock and Pizzeria for all of PSS Head Start, Sinapalo Elementary School, and Dr. Rita H. Inos Junior-Senior High School staff and personnel.

Marvin Tamangided, Rota LEA Community Project Man-

ager, led the opening activity to create self-care spaces and meditation. He gathered participants to stretch, do light yoga, and create spaces for mindfulness and positivity. Afterward, participants were invited to share caring connections by participating in conversation starters and tabletop games.

This was a night filled with positive self-connections and a safe space for our PSS family to relax and reflect. Overall, participants enjoyed the calming atmosphere, mindful activities, and networking

A key highlight of the successful event was the self care spaces and meditation jointly conducted by Tamangided and Vannah Hocog, Behavioral Heal Specialist.





# Extended Learning Time How to Strike A Learning Balance Through Sports

**T**HE CNMI Public School System believes there is meaningful value of sports in the learning and development of a child. In this era of pandemic, maintaining good physical wellbeing is the needed balance of a child's holistic development.

The school district's Athletic Program sees the paramount need to continually promote healthy learning habit of every public school student through physical and sporting activities, according to Nick Gross, the Public School System's Athletics Program Director.

When the school district transitions back to in-person learning, the PSS Athletics Program will resume sporting activities. This will part of the extended learning time program of the CNMI Public School System.

Gross disclosed that it is the intent of his department to offer the following programs by the resumption of in-person learning to both public and private schools:

**Elementary (K-5):** Outdoor, 6v6, co-ed volleyball tentatively planned to begin on Saturday, January 22 (Venue TBA) and conclude with a tournament on Saturday, February 12.

Program Director Gross said they will then move directly into the co-ed basketball season with competitions planned to begin in mid-February with a concluding tournament in early-mid March.

**Middle (6-8):** Girls volleyball competition will resume play on Tuesday, Jan 18 followed every Tuesday through February 22, while the boys volleyball start is scheduled for Thursday, January 20 and continuing the following Thursday's through Feb 24. Tentative plans are to conduct the season-ending tournaments in late February and early March.

Co-ed badminton, an Athletic Programs expansion sport, is targeting a starting date of Saturday, January 22 with their season-ending tournament tentatively scheduled for Saturday, February 19, 2022.

"Although the Girls Soccer season was scheduled for 3rd quarter, due to the condensed seasons (2nd & 3rd quarter), we will be working closely with the Northern Marianas Islands Football Association (NMIFA) to offer this program during the 4th quarter," Gross explained.

**High (9-12):** Girls basketball will be conducted on Wednesdays, beginning Jan 19 while the Boys basketball will play on Friday's with a start date of Jan 21, 2022. We anticipate concluding season play the week of February 21-25 with Tournaments planned in late February and early March.

Co-ed badminton is set to begin on Saturday, January 29 with the season-ending tournament currently scheduled for Saturday, February 26.

This Co-ed Outrigger (Va'a) season is slated to kick-off Saturday, January 29 and run through late February.

In an effort to preserve the boys soccer season that was scheduled for 2nd quarter, the PSS Athletics Program will work closely with the NMIFA to provide this opportunity for our students interested in participating with an anticipated start date of late January, 2022. Also, due to the combining of Middle school volleyball for both boys and girls, the program will be working with the NMIFA to offer girls middle school soccer during the 4th quarter.



**"With the PSS plans of opening system wide, face-to-face in January, 2022 for instruction, Athletics Programs is excited to resume sports as well," Program Director Gross said.**

ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HIGH
Co-ed Volleyball (Grass) Jan 22 - Feb 12, 2022	Girls Volleyball Jan 18 - Late February	Girls Basketball Jan 19 - Late February
Co-ed Basketball Feb 26 - Mid March	Boys Volleyball Jan 20- Late February	Boys Basketball Jan 21 - Late February
	Co-ed Badminton Jan 29- Late February	Co-ed Badminton Jan 29- February 26
		Co-ed Outrigger Jan 29- Late February
	** Girls Soccer moved to 4th quarter**	Boys Soccer Lae Jan 2022

This table refer to the resumption of Athletic Programs in 2022.



# Celebrating 33rd Years of Public Education

## Five PSS Employees are Recipients of 2022 State-level Honors



Dr. Ria Nathrani, 5th right, was honored on Wednesday by BOE-PSS officials as the 2022 CNMI PSS State Teacher of the Year. She selected last October. Principal Vic Borja and Vice Principal Karen Manuel joined school district officials in honoring Dr. Nathrani.

**T**HE Public School System celebrated on November 24 its 33 years of establishment. Five employees from various schools were named top recipients of various state-level honors.

Every year, the school district chooses winners from various categories through rigorous selection process. This year all 20 schools nominated their respected school winners for the state-level competition.

Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, PSS Human Resources Director Lucretia B. Deleon Guerrero, joined Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna and PSS search committee coordinator Frankie Camacho in the awarding.

The awards were presented during surprise on-site school campus visits, as the 20 public elementary, middle and high school campuses, including various Head



Marianas High School Counselor Kimberly Manglona, 4th left, is the recipient of the 2022 CNMI PSS State Counselor of the Year Award. She was presented with the honor by Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna, Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, Human Resources Officer Lucretia Borja, 2022 PSS Of The Years Search Committee coordinator Frankie Camacho. Manglona is also joined by MHS Principal Jonathan Aguon, and Vice Principals Melanie Rdiall, Romolor Orsini and Preston Basa





Chacha Oceanview Middle School took the 2022 CNMI PSS State Instructor of the Year Award, which was presented to classroom instructor Ronnie L. Aguon. He is joined by Principal Martha Kintol, Acting Commissioner Magofna and BOE Chairman Orsini.

Another Chacha Oceanview Middle School staff, Henry C. Lizama, second right, was named 2022 CNMI PSS State Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year.

Start/Early Head Start Centers on Saipan, Tinian and Rota were conducting their respected in-school celebrations.

The celebration marked the establishment of PSS as constitutionally independent autonomous entity of the CNMI government. PSS was established in 1988.

The 2022 PSS State Counselor of the Year was Kimberly Reyes Manglona of Marianas High School. She was surprised to receive the award, which was held at MHS cafeteria during her school's education day celebration.

Acting Commissioner Magofna, Chairman Orsini, HRO Director Borja and search committee coordinator Camacho presented her with the award – a huge plaque, a bouquet of flowers and gift bag.

William S. Reyes Elementary School's Rodrigo G. Ada won the 2022 CNMI PSS State Teacher Aide of the Year. The WSR school community, led by Principal Dr. Lynn Mendiola and Vice Principal Jocelyn Manibusan, celebrated with Ada.

Koblerville Elementary School's staff Alex D. Menor was unanimously chosen at the 2022 CNMI PSS State Administrative Staff of the Year, Alex D. Menor.

Chacha Oceanview Middle School took two state-level honors this year: 2022CNMI PSS State Instructor of the Year, Ronnie L. Aguon, and 2022 CNMI PSS State Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year, Henry C. Lizama.

Last October, Dr. Ria Nathrani of Hopwood Middle School, was named as the 2022 Teacher of the Year. Last Wednesday she was presented with the honor by Acting Commissioner of Education Magofna and Chairman Orsini.



William S. Reyes Elementary School's Rodrigo G. Ada won the 2022 CNMI PSS State Teacher Aide of the Year. With PSS-BOE officials, Ada is joined here by Principal Dr. Lynn Mendiola and Vice Principal Jocelyn Manibusan.



Koblerville Elementary School's Alex D. Menor, 4th left, was unanimously chosen at the 2022 CNMI PSS State Administrative Staff of the Year.





# Career and Technical Education New Pathways Expanded

**T**HE school district has been clear with its direction in creating pathways for high school students—giving them early and direct exposures to employment experiences designed to prepare them while still in high school.

With the overwhelming success of the Career and Technical Education Summer Program of the CNMI Public School System it is now working towards expanding the program beyond the summer months.

The Public School System has implemented Summer School Program during the summer months specifically tailored-fit to the growing needs of high school students of career-centered pathways or programs. They are the Nursing Assistant Program, Construction Boot Camp, Teacher Academy Program, Entrepreneurship Program and classes offered by the Northern Marianas Technical Institute Programs.

Dr. Jessica B. Taylor, program director of the school district's CTE Program, disclosed of an ongoing work that will expand the CTE Career Pathways, for it to be implemented beyond the summer months.

"I am hoping that our students (who signed up) during our summer CTE Programs will take dual courses at the respective sites," Dr. Taylor said. "We are now working on the process to make this a fruition."

Dr. Taylor said her office is now discussion with respective

partners of the CTE Program – the Department of Labor, Northern Marianas College, Northern Marianas Trades Institute and the CNMI Department of Public Works.

With dual courses at respected sites, Dr. Taylor said they she is working with the respective partners of a policy that would be the basis in implementing the expanded program.

Initially, for the Teacher Academy Program, it is being proposed that high school students will take dual courses – in their respective high school and at NMC for the particular CTE program.

Dr. Taylor said she is looking at implementing the Teacher Academy Program with NMC by January 2022.

For the construction program, PSS-CTE is working with NMTI on ways that will allow high school students to enroll dual courses.

The same for Nursing Assistantship Program, students will continue attending high school classes at their respective campuses, but when it comes for the nursing assistantship they will have to attend it at the Guam Marianas Training Center.

Also part of the work she is doing is to review the high school graduation requirement policy ensuring that students enrolled in this CTE Pathway courses received the needed credits to graduate.





# Developing Apprenticeship Program

**T**HE school district is also working on a unique pathway for its employees, which is designed to increase the skills and education of the CNMI Public School System's workforce.

This is a new initiative that the Career and Technical Education Program of the school district is now working on.

Dr. Jessica Taylor, CTE Program Director, said her office is now working with the Department of Labor and the Northern Marianas College in creating ways that will effectuate this PSS Apprenticeship Program.

"This is basically for current PSS employees who have expressed eagerness to learn and earn," Dr. Taylor said.

The program has two components: the wage progress and related training, and instruction and on-the-job training.

"We are hoping that we will be able to continue to help our PSS employees move up the career ladder," Dr. Taylor expresses.

Currently there are 15 PSS employees that have already signified participation in the programs.





# \$12 Million Federal Grant Award for New CTE Center



**I**N the coming months, Building T of Marianas High School will be demolished to pave the way for the construction of the new Career and Technical Education Center.

The center will be a two-story facility that will be built from ground up. This was as a result of a direct federal supplemental funding of \$12 million that was awarded to the CNMI Public School System this year.

The new CTE Center is a flagship initiative of Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and the CNMI Board of Education. This will be designed as a centralized center combining training, learning and other spaces for academic programming under CTE.

PSS Federal Programs Officer Tim Thornburgh said the decision to construct a new CTE



center is part of the school district's long-term goal of expanding student resources.

"We are very excited about the impact of having a new (CTE) resource center to our students and our community," Federal Programs Officer Thornburgh said.

Based on the plan, the proposed new CTE Center will be a reinforced concrete two-story structure that will house an expanded CTE Program with the on-the-job training coupled with classroom instruction that includes: hospitality and tourism, business management and administration program, information technology program,

health science/nursing program, automotive technology program, cosmetology program, performing arts, HVA Program, Teacher Academy Program, Family and Consumer Sciences Program and Graphics and Digital Arts Program.

PSS is projecting over 600 students will secure employment, with the school district's expanded CTE Pathways designed to respond to the growing tourism-based economy.

"We will model this CTE Program upon our very successful connecting youth-to-career in the CNMI that through Cooperative Education has enabled over 200 students per year for the last four years to secure employment in the private sector," Thornburgh explains.

