

# 'Let's Revive OUR Indigenous Language'

Immersion Program's Leliyal Akkbwung Language (Places of Learning) will be expanded



Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider, Associate Commissioner for Administration Eric Magofna, CCLHS Program Director Jonas Barcinas, Senior Director for Instructional Services Jackie Quitugua, San Vicente Elementary School Principal Paulette Sablan and Kagman Elementary School Principal Dr. Ignacia Demapan joins all of Saipan's public schools Chamorro Carolinian and Heritage Studies classroom teachers: Marlyn Tenorio, Jennie Magofna, Elsie Johnson, Joaquin Camacho, Gloria Rasiang, Josephine Agulto, Stephanie Mensa, Antonette Ayuyu, Rose Hoseno, Lee Pangelinan, Monica Pangelinan, Trisha Mendiola, Tricia Taitano, Alma Villagomez, Erica Evangelista, Ina Bermudes, Lisa Emwalu, Lyn Seman, and Kuino Camacho. Tinian and Rota CCLHS teachers joined their peers virtually in a meeting on April 2.

With the success of Kagman Elementary School in pioneering the Public School System's Immersion Program called Leliyal Akkbwung Language (Places of Learning), the school district is setting its sights towards expanding the program in all public elementary schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

"What Kagman Elementary School did in just three years tells us of the importance of both preserving and reviving our indigenous language," Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said. "It also tells us how our parents have played a big part in the success of their child in learning the indigenous language, making teaching a lot more easier."

"We need to continue working together, helping our Chamorro, Carolinian and Heritage Studies teachers and teacher aides in reviving our indigenous language," Dr. Ada.

PSS is looking at implementing this by School-Year 2021-2022.

Education leaders, along with Senate President Jude Hofschneider and the CNMI's Indigenous Affairs Office Program Manager Cris Ogo met with the school district's CCLHS teachers, to begin the work of implementing the programs throughout the school district.

The PSS-CCLHS Program is headed by Jonas Barcinas. All of the district's leaders supported the program's planned expansion of the Immersion Program.

"I am going to make sure that this will happen—and that you will have the needed support," Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, assuring all of the CCLHS teachers.

The BOE is the policymaking and governing board of the school district.

The planned expansion will be locally funded. There is an existing statute that mandates the teaching and preservation of the indigenous culture within public schools in the CNMI.

Senate President Hofschneider said, "We are going to work with all of our leaders to make sure that we are able to implement this program with all of the needed support."

### Success

It was in SY 2017-2018 that the Immersion Program- Leliyal Akkbwung Language was pioneered at Kagman Elementary School under the Administration for Native American (ANA) Grant.

The \$1 million federal endowment allowed KagES Principal Dr. Ignacia Demapan to successfully roll out a three-year plan for the Immersion Program.

During the first year of the program, Kagman Elementary School organized the program, training teachers and developed the curriculum.

By the second year, it was implemented. It targeted teaching the indigenous language on its Kindergarten classes. These are students within the 5-years-old range.

A total of 20 Kindergarten students were taught of the CCLHS Program.

"It was very successful. The amazing thing is it requires parental involvement. Why? Because when we do instruction at the school level, we require parents to support learning at home for continuity," Dr. Demapan said in an interview.

She said with parents reinforcing classroom teaching, "listening, guiding and teaching" of the indigenous language also takes place at home.

With the planned expansion, PSS is looking at hiring nine (9) more classroom CCLHS teachers to complement the current existing teaching pool for the CCLHS program.

PSS currently has 36 CCLHS teachers and 2 teacher aides.

### Strength of Family Relationship

CCLHS teacher Lee Sablan Pangelinan, a pioneer Immersion Program teacher for KagES, said the strength of the program's success was the support of family.

"The important part of us teaching the program is the positive impact it has not only for the student but with the family. There is the direct student-family connection," Pangelinan said.

"The program has strengthened family relationship because parents themselves are there to help teach their child learn the right use of the indigenous language."

Another pioneer program teacher, Lisa Emwalu, is happy that the success of the program will be used to replicate it with the other schools.

"I am really happy because this is going to be continued in all of our elementary schools. Why? Because you could feel the role of family in the preserving our language and culture," Emwalu told *Students First* in an interview.



CNMI Public School System

# STUDENTS FIRST

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APRIL 2021

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In a pandemic-driven learning landscape  
**SCHOOL LIBRARIES REMAIN A LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER FOR STUDENTS**



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# With schools, parents working together students feel a sense of normalcy in learning

Some students have acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their critical educational time and their need to receive more direct and in-person help for their learning. But no matter what the situation is, for them learning must go on.

With learning taking place from home for most part of 2020, public elementary school students said their families continue to help them navigate the challenges with virtual learning. This says a lot with how public schools have worked with parents and guardians in finding ways to help their child particularly the vulnerable age group – Kindergarten to 6th Grade levels – handle with less difficulty online learning through the Blackboard Ultra learning portal, among others.

The CNMI Public School System's through its Instructional Technology & Distance Education Program, Infrastructure Technology Program and Student Support and Services Program have been working with all school leadership in ensuring that parents get the needed assistance to support their child's learning from home during the year-long schools closure.

"It was kind of difficult for me to start learning from

home because there wasn't much help that I can get when I have questions about my assignment," said Jarian Sablan, 10, a fifth grade student of Kagman Elementary School.

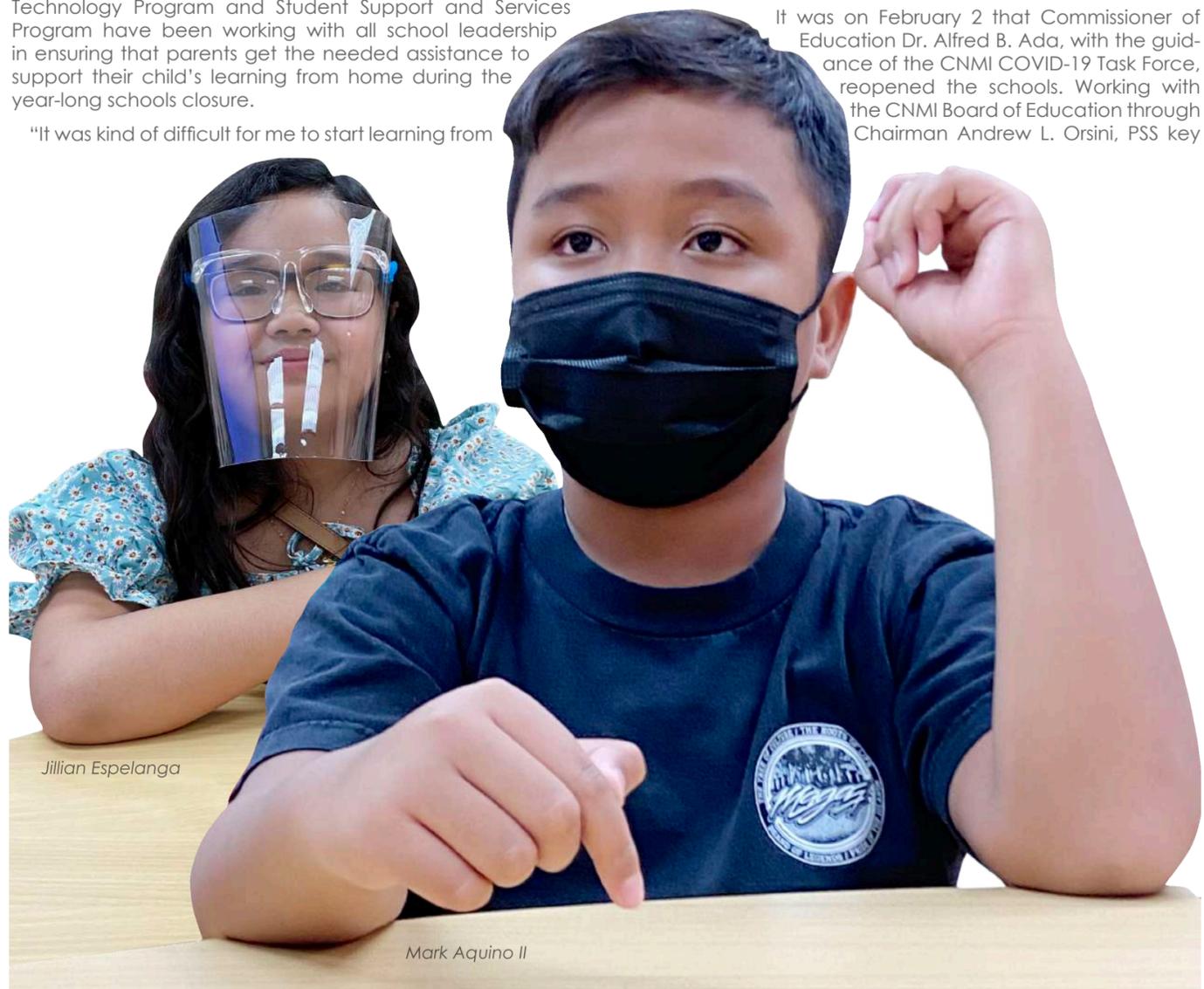
"Then, it kind of became easy. I got help from my family members," the 10-year-old elementary student said in an interview with *Students First*.

Now that they're back in school through the blended learning cohort system, Sablan explains that she uses her "off day" to catch up with her work.

Under the cohort system, Fridays are designed for students to catch up with schoolwork.

"I am happy now because there are days that I don't need to go to school and it is my time to finish my work," she said.

It was on February 2 that Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, with the guidance of the CNMI COVID-19 Task Force, reopened the schools. Working with the CNMI Board of Education through Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, PSS key



**Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and his budget team:** Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, Finance and Budget Director Arlene Lizama and Human Resources Officer Lucretia B. Deleon Guerrero as they show the PSS Fiscal 2022 budget submission.

## School district's proposed FY '22 spending plan: \$24M state funding, \$34.7M federal funding

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini have put forward the Public School System's spending plan for the next fiscal year that leverages the school district's share of the federal Education Stabilization Fund, which supplements the decrease in the central government's local share which was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has impacted every aspect of the Commonwealth, including public education. This is the second straight year that the CNMI government's earmarking to PSS is at bare minimum as a result of the absence of economic activity/revenues to support critical government services and operation due to the pandemic.

"As PSS' share of the CNMI General Fund continue to decrease, we are fortunate to have other financial resources from federal funding through the Education Stabilization Fund to fill the budget gap for FY 2022. The additional revenue will be used to make additional investment that will benefit our students directly during this challenging time," Dr. Ada and Chairman Orsini said in their FY 2022 budget transmittal letter to Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres.

In total, the proposed budget for PSS for the new fiscal year is \$58.817 million. Of this amount, the federal Education Stabilization Fund will provide \$34.7 million for expenditures ordinarily classified as operation costs funded from General Fund (local/state) appropriation.

The \$24 million that PSS is projecting from state/local funding appropriation is 25-percent of the CNMI government's \$96.4 million's budget projection for the new fiscal year.

### Navigating uncertainty

According to Commissioner Ada and Chairman Orsini, the closure of PSS' facilities posed unique challenges for the PSS budget review committee. Budget meetings with school administrators and program manager were conducted to review and assist with the immediate needs of the respective school and programs for FY 2022.

"The investments PSS is making will be complemented by leveraging existing resources to address student needs, with particular emphasis on those whose needs are greatest. These investments will be especially important in the upcoming year as we continue to tackle the hard work related to the impact of COVID-19," both leaders said.

The bulk of the budget plan – 70 percent – or \$41.63 million will be spent for the salaries and benefits of the employees.

PSS will also have to spend \$17 million for all others, which represents 30 percent of the overall budget spending.

"Given the continued uncertainty of the pandemic, the challenge is to maintain a degree of flexibility on the deployment of our resources and to adopt a long-term recovery plan that addresses the academic and social emotional needs of every student."

# Distance Ed Learning Center at Dr. Rita H. Inos Junior Senior High School supports online learners



The spacious fully-equipped Distance Ed Learning Center.



Teacher Angelly Guiang guides her student navigates the use of technology inside the Distance Ed Learning Center here in Rota

**R**ota- The Distance Education Learning Center at the only public high school here has been providing the needed learning support to high school students' online learning on this island.

"We are just glad that we have the Distance Education Learning Center established here at our school. This is a resource center that would assist our students' online learning," says Distance Ed teacher Angelly Guiang.

Guiang was hired recently and oversees the new learning center. The center is located inside the campus of Dr. Rita H. Inos Junior Senior High School.

The center is fully equipped with desktop computers, LED screens, projectors and other modern technologies designed to support online learning.

In a separate interview, Lorraine CatiENZA, Distance Education Program Coordinator, said the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Department of the Public School System will continue to invest 21st century technology on RHI's Distance Education Learning Center.

The future plan will also include investment of similar learning centers in other public school campuses.

"The school district's ITDE department aims to outfit the center (along with the others) in the near future with new computer devices and additional resources to support online learners," CatiENZA said.

The learning center is part of the school district's distance/remote learning program initiative, which is a major branch

of the Instructional Technology Program of the Public School System. It provides online learning opportunities for students and professionals using the Blackboard Learn Management System.

Among which are: Student Portal: The Student eLearning Gateway is an auxiliary online learning program that serves students, offering a range of core curricular and elective high school courses. Students seeking advancement in both public and private secondary schools are eligible to participate. The courses are taught by Highly Qualified Personnel of the Public School System using Blackboard Learn. Courses are aligned with the district standards and have at least an accomplished rating on the Blackboard Exemplary Course Rubric.

## Embracing Normalcy in Student Leadership

Kagman Elementary School's Student Council (STUCO) officers take their oath of office virtually, with Supreme Court Associate Justice Perry Inos. These student leaders are embracing a sense of normalcy in a pandemic-driven student learning.



management and all school leadership, the school district implemented blended learning.

"It is now pretty easy for me to learn," says Jillian Espelanga, 10, a fifth grade student.

For ten years old Arianni Flemming, there was struggle for her learning. She needed physical interaction for her to be able to get motivated into learning. "The pandemic affected my learning. We don't get to see each other and you know it is hard for students not being able to work together."

"We struggle," she admits. "Now with blended learning, I feel that while I'm in class there is more education; I get to learn more."

"When I am home for two days, I can also finish my work because my parents help me," shares the 4th grade elementary student.

Elementary student Mark Aquino, II, notes: "Learning is a challenge now because before we can ask people for advise."

But he knows that he has to adapt to the change in the learning environment for his and his classmates' safety and wellbeing.

"Now that we learn from a far, for me it is still good. We just have to (get used to) to social distancing (and wearing mask). We can still interact and be with our friends."



Arianni Flemming

Jarian Sablan



# Rota public school students' *insights* on blended learning

**R**ota - After nearly a year of learning from home through virtual learning, public school students here reflect on the benefits of blended learning – a combination of in-person (face-to-face) through a cohort system and learning from home.

For some students of Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School that sat with **Students First**, it's about celebrating little things that matter to their learning and the fun with using technology.

And even with some challenges or struggles with blended learning, these students have acknowl-

edged that this is to make sure they won't miss a day of learning even in the midst of the pandemic.

The school district implemented blended learning on February 2 throughout the CNMI's public elementary, middle and high school. This was after nearly a year of virtual learning in order to protect the more than 10,000 elementary, middle and high school students from the threat of COVID-19.

For these students, they also have to strictly heed to COVID-19 protocols that were put in place in their school campus for their continued safety.



**Danica Malaborbor, 13**  
7th grade  
STUCO Class Secretary

"It's quiet alright for me. During face-to-face, my teacher assigns us homework. They give us day off and I do class work."

"I like socializing and making friends, and dress up to go to school."

"There are many (students) that crowd around the school but I still feel safe because we have COVID-19 rules and regulations to follow."



**Nayari Maratita, 13**  
7th grade

"It is sort of thrilling because after Monday (virtual learning), I am able to interact with friends and classmates in person."

"Sometimes, it is exciting, sometimes it is complicated. When you are in a virtual class, links are not working in time or are acting up and I cannot finish my work on time."

"Yes, I feel safe because we are strict with out COVID-19 protocols."



**Eianne Ladal, 10**  
7th grade

"It's good, but after a long quarantine, I have the difficulty to transition because of the coronavirus and the rules that I have to follow."

"Blended learning is better. I have my teacher to assist me in doing my work, while online it is hard to even ask questions."

"I do feel safe moving around within my school."

# Public school vice-principals are recognized for contributions to students, schools' successes



**C**onsidered as the pillars – support system – of public schools leadership, vice principals from all of Rota, Tinian and Saipan gathered on Monday, April 19 for a professional development.

Legal, mental health and other leadership experts conducted the professional development as part of the school district's on-going initiative to support the professional growth and success of all these school leaders.

It was also to honor and recognize their contributions to the overall success of the school district.

The Public School System led by Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and Associate Commissioner for Administrative Eric Magofna and Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini and Board

Member Antonio L. Borja spoke in honor of the vice principals, and of their contributions to the success of all of 20 public elementary, middle and high schools in the CNMI.

The PSS Office of Student, Support Services talked of the school district's "Mental Health Program-Stress Relieve Techniques". The speakers/presenters were Senior Director Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan, Instructional Technology Director Dr. Bobby Cruz, behavioral and mental health expert Dr. Jennifer Maratita, Frank Lee Borja and Walter Mendez.

PSS legal counsel Tiberius Mocanu and Office of Public Auditor counsel Ashley Kost talked about code of ethics and fielded questions about professional conduct, ethical principles and standards, among others.



From left to right: BOE member David Borja, Senate President Jude Hofschneider, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, Tinian & Aguiguan Mayor Edwin Aldan, BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, BOE Vice Chairman Sgt. Maj. Herman Atalig (Ret.), Non-Public School Rep. Dr. Ron Snyder, BOE Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio, Teacher Rep. Phyllis Ain, and Senator Francisco Cruz.

## Public Education, Tinian Municipal Leaders reaffirm partnership for future projects

Public education and Tinian and Aguiguan leaders have pledged to leverage their partnership to support future projects and other endeavors that the school district have planned for municipality's public school students and education stakeholders.

"Let's call it joint leadership and partnership," Tinian and Aguiguan Mayor Edwin Aldan, a staunch supporter of the CNMI Public School System. The chief executive previously served twice as chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Education.

BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini agreed, "As we look ahead for future projects, it is imperative that we continue this partnership that we have to ensure success."

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said that throughout the years the CNMI-PSS' programs and initiatives on the island of Tinian and Aguiguan

continue to receive support—"a testament of the success of collaboration and partnership."

For many years now the municipality of Tinian has assigned municipal employees to assist Tinian Elementary School.

"We have been the receiving end of your municipality's continuous support over the years, especially at a time when we need manpower (human resource) to assist us in providing public education to the students of Tinian," Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada noted.

Mayor Aldan added, "Let us capitalize on our partnership and let's continue to work together in all of our future projects to better serve all our (stakeholders of public education)."

"We are here to support you," Mayor Aldan added.



**Diah Maratita, 13**  
7th grade

"Actually, this is good because (us) students can have both ways; both options for learning – virtual and blended learning."

"This is really great and I enjoy both options."

"I also feel safe because we have (COVID-19) protocols to follow."



**Mary Larin, 17**  
Senior, National Honor Society,  
Youth Advisory Panel, STUCO Vice President

"Blended learning is better. I am able to interact with my teachers and classmates."

"It was really hard learning virtually. At times it is just hard because of internet connectivity."

"With blended learning, my teachers can explain it better to me, especially for mathematics classes."

"Students is also responsible for our own safety (by following) all rules and protocols about COVID-19. And I can tell you that because of (these protocols) my school is safe for me to learn."



**Rotasha Manglona, 17**  
Junior, STUCO President, Youth Advisory Panel



**Bea Bermeo, 16**  
Junior, National Honor Society Treasurer  
Youth Advisory Panel Secretary

"It's better with blended learning because you are able to interact with teachers (which is) not so much when it is virtual learning."

"With virtual, it was difficult for me to interact with my teachers because we have a lot of students around (needing or having questions at the same time)."

"In a way, the school has been taking proper measures to make it safe for all of us."



**Chloe B. Yalung, 15**  
Sophomore, STUCO Secretary  
Youth Advisory Panel President

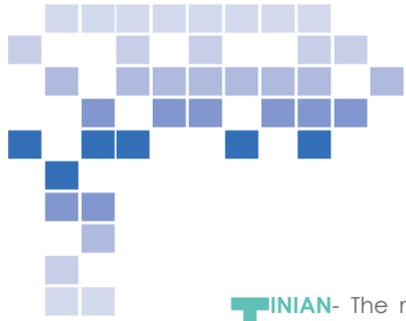
"Blended learning brings a sense of human aspect towards learning. Before, it was difficult with virtual learning."

"Between virtual and blended learning, I realized that blended learning is so much better because learning is easily accessible. Everything is in there for us students."

"I feel safe returning to campuses because COVID-19 protocols are enforced. We are also constantly reminded that we have to follow the 6 ft.-social distancing guideline."

"I am kind of in-between. When I am studying from home (virtual learning), I have my own space, manage my work on time; in-school I have my teacher next to me to guide me with my work. If am at school, there are resources that are available for me to use that I don't have at home like textbooks..."

"I think I feel safe not walking around the school because there is always our teacher and (school) staff reminding us to follow all COVID-19 protocols."



# Blended learning model *helps* Tinian elementary students

**TINIAN-** The return – or transition back to classroom learning through blended learning – which is a combination of face-to-face instruction with online learning in the midst of the pandemic has generated positive response from the elementary students themselves.

For Tinian Elementary School students – those that were approached by **Students First** – it supports their overall learning, both at home and during school days. The school district has implemented a twice-a-week cohort system, to allow students to return to the classroom. This rotational model between online/virtual learning and face-to-face instruction provides the needed reinforcement and support to the most vulnerable of all learners: the elementary students.

The learning ability of elementary students throughout the US – from Kindergarten to 12th

Grade – have been impacted heavily following the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, according to various reports. In many parts of the country, these student demographics are most impacted due to various reasons and among them are the concern for safety of the younger population, access to technology and their inability to fully navigate online learning tools at such young age.

**Students First** sat down with elementary students of Tinian Elementary School, who shared their experiences with blended learning, and now that they are back in the classroom with limited in-person engagement due to the need to protect them from the coronavirus pandemic.

For the young learners, the return from the full virtual learning back to face-to-face learning generated excitement.



**Alicia Teope, 12**

6th grade, Youth Advisory Panel  
National Honor Society

"This is a good thing because everyone is together. We are able to keep up with our learning because we have each other (in the classroom)."

"We can all ask our teacher in person."

"What makes me excited more now that I am back in the classroom is I am able to see everyone again."

"And, I know that our school has made it safe for us to comeback. They are trying hard to protect us (from the coronavirus) as we learn (in-campus)."



**Ysabel Lenteja, 10**

6th Grade, Student Govt. Officer  
Youth Advisory Panel

"Blended learning has helped us more to focus than (with) virtual learning because not many of the students are able to connect."

"I am excited to be back. I am excited to see my friends. And my school has made sure that it is safe for us to learn."



Rota Mayor Efraim Atalig, center, is flanked by, from left, Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, BOE Vice Chairman Sgt. Maj. Herman Atalig, (Ret.), BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, and Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada.

## 'The People of Rota Thank Education Leaders'

**R**ota Mayor Efraim Atalig hailed the men and women of the Public School System for ensuring that the commonwealth's more than 10,000 elementary, middle and high school students continue to receive uninterrupted learning during the pandemic.

"Your classroom teachers, librarians, counselors, and all personnel and staff have gone incredible lengths to make sure that not only the children of our municipality (Rota) but the rest of the commonwealth will continue to learn especially during the period of pandemic.," Rota Mayor Atalig said in a meeting with members of the Board of Education and the leadership of the Public School System.

"Thank you to the (the Board of Education and the Public School System) for all the leadership and in recognizing the need (for the continuity) in student learning for this past one year," Mayor Atalig added.

BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, Vice Chairman Herman Atalig, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and Associate Education Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna met with the local chief executive to personal-

ly thank him for the municipality's continued partnership with PSS, and in particular, supporting the need of Rota's two public schools: Sinapalo Elementary School and Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr. Sr. High School.

"I would like to extend our appreciation to you mayor for your continued support. Rest assured we will continue to work hard for the children of this island and to the rest of the CNMI," BOE Chairman Orsini said.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada added: "Our PSS family wouldn't have done it without the support of our elected leaders—and what you have extended to us shows the strength of our partnership to support the success of our children."

From virtual to blended learning, provisions of free meals and transportation, and one-on-one learning reinforcement, the school district successfully navigated the challenges of COVID-19 exactly one year ago on March this year.

It was only last February 2 when the school district resumed in-person learning, through blended learning.



## Education Stabilization Fund With pioneering 'High-Dosage Tutoring Program', libraries (and librarians) will have a role

The CNMI Public School System is planning to implement "high-dosage tutoring" and all of the public school libraries will have critical roles in the success of this learning program, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada disclosed.

Details of this pioneering program are still being worked on but the chief state school superintendent said Saipan, Tinian and Rota public elementary, middle and school libraries will be among site of the high-dosage tutoring initiative.

This initiative will be funded under the CNMI-PSS share of the Education Stabilization Fund, a component of the Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020. U.S. Congressman Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan has been instrumental in the awarding of PSS' multi-million-dollar share of the ESF.

The high-dosage tutoring will also enlist the help of librarians in ensuring that the school libraries are fitted or maintained to handle the student-tutoring program once the ini-

tiative is implemented.

Along with the librarians, high school seniors will also be tapped in the tutoring program, which is designed to assist lower grade students.

"We are going to implement very soon a high-dosage tutoring program throughout the school district. Thanks to the CNMI-PSS share of the CARES Act of 2020, we are able to get additional funding to support student learning," Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada revealed.

"We will be needing our school libraries and school librarians to ensure the success of this pioneering program."

Rigorous research provides strong evidence that high-dosage tutoring can produce large learning gains for a wide range of students, including those that have fallen academically. This is especially designed to increase learning for students across the different trade levels.



**Jireh Cruz, 12**  
6th Grade, National Honor Society  
Student Gov. Officer, Youth Advisory Panel

"Blended learning is better for me. And I like seeing my friends."

"I just have difficulties using laptops. There are a lot of stuffs that I do in virtual learning that I am having difficulties (with)."

"I really appreciate it now that we have blended learning because it is easier for me to learn and communicate."

I think it is safe for us to go back to the classroom because we have strict COVID-19 protocols all the time."



**Jenard Nuyda, 12**  
6th Grade, Youth Advisory Panel  
National Honor Society

"Blended learning is the best for me. Our teachers are right there to help us."

"And, yes, it is easier for me to learn."

"I think it is safe for us already to learn in-school because we have a strict protocols to follow."



**Juris Cabarles, 11**  
6th Grade, National Honor Society  
Youth Advisory Panel

"I am happy with blended learning because I am not used to online learning yet."

"And my parents are telling me to trust the school's safety (protocols) now that I am back to learning (in-school through blended learning)."



**Quiana Manglona, 11**  
5th Grade, Student Gov. Officer  
National Honor Society

"This has been good so far."

"It was difficult for me virtually. Unlike now with blended learning, I get to see my teacher; my teacher is next to me to help me."

"I wish for us to go back to full classroom learning because I know they really made my school safe for us to go back to learn in the classroom."

In a pandemic-driven learning landscape

# School libraries remain a learning resource center for students

Public school libraries are still the learning resource centers for public school students. It's the experience of physically holding a book and individually flipping through pages that makes the school library matter to students than reading it online or electronically—and this is even in an era of a pandemic-driven learning landscape.

Public school libraries in the CNMI have opened since February 2, the day that blended learning was implemented. School librarians have adopted a strict COVID-19 guidelines and protocols, among others, limiting student capacity at a certain time of the day. Sanitizing stations have also been set up in all of the public school libraries.

"There are important information that I can access faster than online (especially if we have internet connectivity issues) at home or in the classroom. These resources are available at the library," says eight grade Tinian Junior High School student Kyra Adriano.



Kyra Adriano



Annabel Kiyoshi



Ysabella Palacios

"It is important for me also to be able to hold a book than just to read it online. I find it a (different) experience physically reading a book," adds the 13-year-old student.

According to a recent Scientific American article, there is a far more profound impact and effect on physical reading a paper versus electronic materials when it comes to memory and learning.

"For me, a lot of important information is available than what is online. These books that are physically available are important for me."

"It is also a faster way for me to get information than online due to (connectivity issues)."

"I find learning more peaceful in the library."

Another student, Annabel Kiyoshi, said library matters especially now in this pandemic-driven learning environment.

Public school students said that the library is a safe space for them during the threat of the coronavirus in their community. It gives them a sense of comfort.

"For me, I prefer to read (physical) books and study in the library. It gives me a sense of calm (especially what is happening)," shares the 13-year-old eight-grade student.

Libraries provide students a certain sense of connection that they can achieve a stress-free learning.

"(The library) is still the best place for me to learn. It is peaceful," says another student Ysabella Palacios. "Besides, it holds primary and secondary sources that I can use for my learning."

"In the future, we just have to invest more (by adding) new technologies to help our library."



Some of the public school librarians with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and their partner from fish and wildlife department.

## Librarians are trained to support classroom teachers with online learning



Librarian Nelia Llana

The school district's librarians have been undergoing technology-immersion training and other professional development programs to support student learning.

When COVID-19 pandemic hit and shuttered classroom learning, school librarians were able to assist classroom teachers to support students' online learning. They began training with Blackboard Ultra in the summer of 2020, to help the school district prepare with the opening of the current school year, and with students still in virtual learning.

"We had training with BBU. This was a huge help for us, and this was to support classroom teachers

also if ever they needed us with online learning," explains librarian Nelia Llana of Dr. Rita H. Inos Junior Senior High School.

"We are training at the same time to be able to support teachers with their technology use in teaching," explains the 2013 PSS State Librarian of the Year.

As the 20 elementary, middle and high school campuses on Saipan, Tinian and Rota were preparing to open SY 2020-2021, school librarians stepped in to support the smooth continuation of virtual learning. Librarians assisted in the preparation, set-up and distribution of technologies for online learning.

While currently students are not allowed to check out books and other library resources, librarians instead are able to assist students, teachers and parents in providing online sources through links that librarians themselves researches or sources out.

"We are also trained to assist teachers and students in looking for free and useful online resources, that our students and parents can access to support blended learning."

Librarians also assist students with the free use of technology that are in libraries, such as laptops, desktop computers, and iPads.

"We are always here to help students get free access," Llana said.

PSS is currently working in investing more online and technology resources for public school libraries to support student learning.