



SPECIAL EDITION

CNMI Public School System

STUDENTS FIRST

- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Transparency



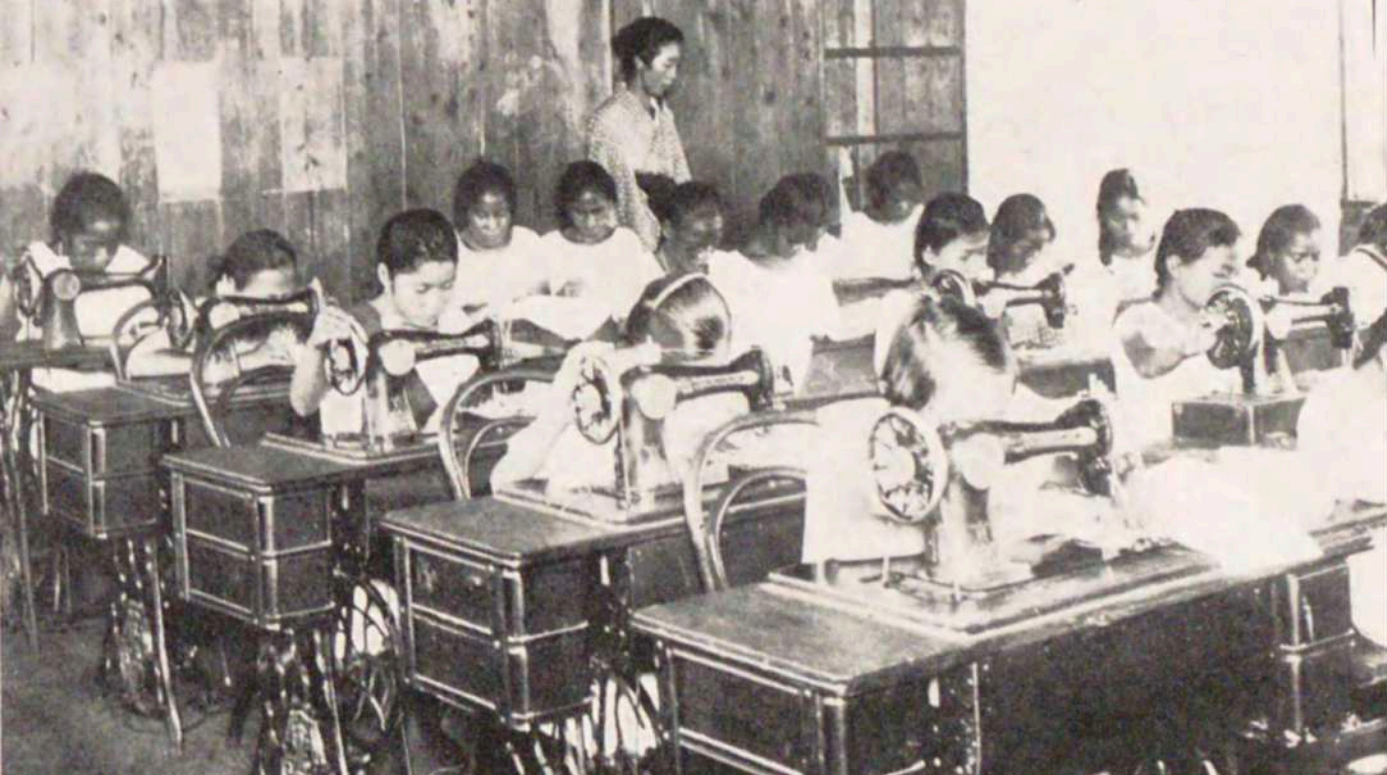
JOURNEY:

34 YEARS of PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE CNMI



'The Heart of Education Beats with
Resiliency, Flexibility, and Unity'





Sewing class in
Saipan circa 1932.

The Autonomy of the Public School System

THE change, improvement and eventual growth of the learning landscape in the commonwealth is credited to one historic act that took place thirty-four years ago. This was the result when educators and advocates of public education and elected government leaders acknowledged that to be able to provide quality free education is to have an independent school system.

With attention turned to the introduction of legislation establishing an elected education policymaking body and an autonomous school system - which eventually paved the way for the creation of the CNMI Board of Education - it was a fight that had been substantially won.

This significant change took place in 1988 when Senate Bill 6-1 was introduced and eventually enacted into Public Law 6-10. It created the CNMI BOE and an autonomous CNMI Public School System.

It transformed the then-Department of Education as an autonomous Public School System resulting from the Second Constitutional Convention's Amendment 38.

Then Public Law 6-10 was enacted. It was in conformity with the 1985 Constitutional amendment to expand the rights afforded to the people of the CNMI by establishing a Board of Education that would be elected at large on a non-partisan basis.

And with enactment of P.L. 6-10 or the "Education Act of 1988", pointed toward education growth in the last thirty-four years.

One of the pioneers of public education in the commonwealth is the late Governor Pedro P. Tenorio who signed the Senate bill into PL 6-10.

On October 25, 1988 the historic legislation came into being three years after the Second Constitutional Convention voted to pass an amendment authorizing an elected BOE and PSS.

The Senate bill was authored by then-Senator Juan N. Babauta, also a former BOE member, Washington Representative, and former governor.

OVER ninety Public School System personnel and students were honored on November 23 during the CNMI-wide Education Day celebration that also highlighted the 34 years founding anniversary celebration of the school district as an autonomous government entity.

Of the ninety-two teaching and non-teaching PSS personnel, five of them were the state level winners: PSS 2023 Teacher of the Year Donovan Tudela; 2023 State Counselor of the Year Frank Rebauliman Jr., 2023 Instructor of the Year Jennie Magofna; 2023 Teacher Aide of the Year Carleen Lizama, and 2023 Administrative Support Staff of the Year Estanislao Limes.

The 2023 Education Day PSS-wide competition student winners were also honored. They were: Education Month Theme Winner was Logan Zane T. Atalig (4th grade, Sinapalo Elementary School), Education Month Logo Winner Ashley Kyle E. Cayabyab (10th grade, Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School), and Education Month Essay winner Ysharei Lizama Sanje (8th grade, Dandan Middle School).

A centralized Education Day celebration was held at the sprawling field of Saipan Southern High School, which saw the participation of the school district's 1,500 employees from Saipan, Tinian and Rota coming together.

PSS is also the largest government instrumentality.

Board of Education Chairman Gregorio Pat Borja honored the men and women of PSS for their sacrifices and commitment.

He also recalled his time as a former PSS employee, Chairman Borja said he always looked forward to Education Day as a time to meet with peers and enjoy sharing ideas.



The Public School System honored several individuals, both teaching and non-teaching, including students during the 34th years founding celebration of the school district. In these photo are the Education Month Theme Winner Logan Zane T. Atalig (4th grade, Sinapalo Elementary School), Education Month Logo Winner Ashley Kyle E. Cayabyab (10th grade, Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School), and Education Month Essay winner Ysharei Lizama Sanje (8th grade, Dandan Middle School) proudly received their awards. In these photo, they are joined by education and government officials comprised by Governor Ralph DLG. Torres, Lt. Gov. Arnold Palacios, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, Associate Commissioner Eric Magofna, Board of Education Chairman Gregory Pat Pat Borja, Vice Chairman Antonio L. Borja, Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio, Board Member Herman Atalig, and Senior Directors Jackie Quitugua, Dr. Rizalina Liwag and Dr. Yvone Pangelinan, parents and school administrators.

Public School System Honors Employees, Students





"Education Day is where I developed friendships with those outside of my school. My fellow coaches and I would set aside our rivalries and engage in activities that brought us closer together. I also loved each school's presentation of their (Teachers of the Year) and other Of the Years," Chairman Borja said. "The creativity always brought a smile to my face."

All members of the BOE, the policymaking and governing body of PSS, were also present yesterday. They included Vice Chairman Antonio L. Borja, Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio, Board Member Herman Atalig, Board Member Andrew L. Orsini, Teacher Representative Phyllis Ain, Non-Public School Rep. Dr. Ron Snyder, and Student Rep. Ryan Michael Nuera.

This year's celebration was centered on the theme, "The Heart of Education Beats with Resiliency, Flexibility, and Unity".

'Like a human heart'

In his remark, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said PSS functions like a human heart.

"(L)ike how the human heart plays a big role in keeping the body healthy and alive, each and every one of you plays an important role in keeping our education system up and running," Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada said.

"You are the heart of education. And as our theme proclaims, you all beat with resiliency, flexibility, and unity. No typhoons, no pandemic or economic crisis has ever stopped you from putting Students First," adds Dr. Ada.

The education chief also said that this year is particularly special because it marked the first year towards recovery: "We are able to celebrate education day together as one School System for the first time in years. Although we are still in recovery mode, the spirit towards the light is still bright. Today's celebration unifies us in every way".

"May we continue to remain resilient, flexible, and united. Together, we can conquer anything," Commissioner Ada said.

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios graced the event.



Highlight

Along with the five state-level winners and three student winners, the Education Day Committee, joined by Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada and all members of the BOE recognized all school-level winners in various teaching and non-teaching positions.

This year's Education Day Committee members are Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, Human Resources Director Lucretia Deleon Guerrero, Communications and Media Coordinator Randee-Jo Barcinas-Manglona, PSS Teacher of the Year Coordinator Frankie Camacho, and Paulette Tomokane, James Sablan, and Vince Dela Cruz, the principal representatives for elementary, middle and high schools, respectively.

The respective school winners in various categories that were honored were:

Garapan Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Jessica Mendez
Instructor of the Year: Rosalita Hosono
Teacher Aide of the Year: Carleen Lizama

Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Maribel Igitol
Instructor of the Year: Jennifer Magofna
Teacher Aide of the Year: Jeding Take
Library Aide of the Year: Lisascheeyong Iginoif
Administrative Staff of the Year: Leonie Dela Cruz
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Dominator Concepcion

Kagman Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Imelda Nazarene Talon
Instructor of the Year: Janerline Saimon
Teacher Aide of the Year: Penelope Norita
Counselor of the Year: Tracy Lyn Santos
Administrative Support Staff of the Year: Luisito Bautista
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Eladia G. Muna

Koblerville Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Francis Mendiola
Instructor of the Year: Alma K. Villagomez
Administrative Support Staff of the Year: Kevin Adachi
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Sandy B. Quemado

Oleai Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Sherlyn Cruz
Teacher Aide of the Year: Randy Pagapular
Administrative Support Staff of the Year: Charlene P. Valle

San Vicente Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Dr. Patrick Castillon

Sinapalo Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Jennifer Yalung
Teacher Aide of the Year: Casia Barcinas
Administrative Staff of the Year: Demy Catubay
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Nestor Jingco

Tinian Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: April Manglona
Teacher Aide of the Year: Teresita Sanchez Lazaro
Instructor of the Year: Angelina Cing Fitial
Administrative Staff of the Year: Marcial Patio

William S. Reyes Elementary School

Teacher of the Year: Chelsea Yangirefil
Instructor of the Year: Virginian Richards
Teacher Aide of the Year: Marlon Cabrera
Counselor of the Year: Tambra Reyes
Administrative Support Staff of the Year: Stanislaio "Stanley" Limes
Librarian of the Year: Arthur Sondheim

Hopwood Middle School

Teacher of the Year: Chang Whan Jang
Instructor of the Year: Donovan Pangelinan
Counselor of the Year: Livia Pangelinan
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Mildred D. Ebbled

Chacha Oceanview Middle School

Teacher of the Year: Kristine Ladra
Teacher Life of the Year: Rosa Mafnas Sablan
Instructor of the Year: Rose Sharon Taimanao Jones
Counselor of the Year: Frank A. Rabauliman, Jr.

Dandan Middle School

Teacher of the Year: Jerry Bacilli
Teacher Aide of the Year: Jasmin Ngirmekur
Librarian of the Year: Catherine Borja-Flores
Administrative Support Staff of the Year: Cristalyn Acera
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Roman Santos

Francisco M. Sablan Middle School

Teacher of the Year: Joseph Deleon Guerrero
Teacher Aide of the Year: Dorina Castro
Instructor of the Year: Gloria-Ann Rasiang
Administrative Staff of the Year: Stephanie Sablan
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Manuel Quitaneg

Tanapag Middle School

Teacher of the Year: Marseli Frank Sablan
Instructor of the Year: Yoana Achen
Counselor of the Year: Leilani Deleon Guerrero
Administrative Support Staff of the Year: Julie Camacho

Dr. Rita H. Inos Junior Senior High School

Teacher of the Year: Doralyn Barcinas
Teacher Aide of the Year: Izabelle Ayuyu
Instructor of the Year: Therese Managing
Counselor of the Year: Elvira Mesngon
Administrative Staff of the Year: Bernice San Nicolas Maratita
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Artemis Tebia

Tinian Junior Senior High School

Teacher of the Year: Dr. Regina Palacios
Teacher Aide of the Year: Bridgette Also
Instructor of the Year: Captain Joseph Santos
Counselor of the Year: Patricia Aguon
Library Aide of the Year: Tracy Sanchez
Administrative Staff of the Year: Laila Manibusan
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Emerita Lumba

Da'ok Academy

Teacher of the Year: Joan Reyes

Kagman High School

Teacher of the Year: Jolene Aguon
Instructor of the Year: John Pineda
Librarian of the Year: Maria Ornes
Trades and Maintenance Staff of the Year: Mauricia Rios

Marianas High School

Teacher of the Year: Daniel Wollak
Instructor of the Year: SFC Albert Lujan
Teacher Aide of the Year: Irene Cristobal
Administrative Support Staff of the Year: Cecilia San Nicolas

Saipan Southern High School

Teacher of the Year: Donovan Tudela
Instructor of the Year: CSM Richard Basa
Counselor of the Year: Ana Mendiola
Teacher Aide of the Year: Misael Manglona
Administrative Staff of the Year: Romana Maratita

Early Head Start/Head Start Program

Teacher of the Year: Kathryn Ramos
Instructor of the Year: Elicit Arriola
Teacher Aide of the Year: Kayla Borja
Office of Pupil Transportation
Saipan Pupil Transportation Staff of the Year: Dominic Fitial
Tinian Pupil Transportation Staff of the Year: Renato Benghit
Rota Pupil Transportation Staff of the Year: Rhysanne Hizon





THE Heart of Education Beats with Resiliency, Flexibility, and Unity.

It is common knowledge that the heart is the most important organ in our body. As it beats, it fuels all other organs to function, allowing for life. Students are the heart of education. As we learn, our hearts beat with flexibility, resiliency, and unity.

When students' hearts beat with flexibility, they acknowledge that life is full of continuous change. Instead of dismissing these changes students learn to overcome them. We learn to adapt to new environments despite the challenges.

When students' hearts beat with resiliency, we accept that there is hardly anything that we can control in life. It allows us to realize that we can only control our mind, thoughts, and actions. To become resilient, relearn that negative emotions lie within ourselves. By accepting this, it makes us stronger and more flexible.

As students, our hearts should beat with unit so we can learn to live with it by uniting together, embracing differences, and learning from each other. Students are the heart of education. Our heart gives us the energy to advance, just as a healthy heartbeat gives us the energy to live. We may improve as individuals and as inventive learners and thinkers by being flexible, resilient, and united.

Student Winning Essay

Ysharei Lizama Sanje

8th Grade

Dandan Middle School



'The Heart of Education Beats with Resiliency, Flexibility, and Unity'

Education Month Theme Winner
Logan Zane T. Atalig
4th Grade, Sinapalo Elementary School

He's a student like many others who experienced the impact of super typhoons Soudelor, Youtube and COVID-19 pandemic.

He also experienced how a community came together to help each other out and how the Public School System adapted to meet his education needs.

Logan Zane T. Atalig was a former student of William S. Reyes Elementary School and transferred to Sinapalo Elementary School beginning School-Year 2021-2022.



'We Are A Proud Community of Culture'

Education Month Logo Winner
Ashley Kyle E. Cayabyab
10th Grade, Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School

"I created the logo primarily because we are a school district that is proud to be home to different ethnicities, hence, the different colors on the face represents us.

The other pictures next to the face represent the different subjects that we learn in school. And the symbol of the hand heart not only represents love but peers to the future -- our future.

"I feel proud to be part of my school by representing RHI".

How Has Education Changed Over the Last 30 Years? These Educators Share Their Thoughts

AFTER over three decades, the CNMI Public School System has evolved tremendously to keep up with an ever-changing landscape, ensuring that the Commonwealth's children are afforded the best possible educational opportunities.

Students First conducted interviews with various PSS educators and asked them, "How has education changed over the last 30 years?" .

Here are their responses.

Maribel Igitol **Gregorio T. Camacho** **Elementary School** **Teacher of the Year**

Igitol, a Kindergarten teacher at GTC who has been teaching for over 12 years said that over the years, a lot of technological improvements have been made to the CNMI's education system. Moving forward, she has faith that education will continue down this technological route ensuring that students are using this powerful tool for good.



Maribel Igitol

"I started teaching 12 years ago and I have seen a lot of improvements since then. I've definitely seen a dedication to our students, to provide them quality education, and to our teachers as well. I have faith in our education system I know that in the next couple of years, we will see more improvements. In the years to come, I see us focusing on 21st century skills like advancement in technology, taking that further and having the kids more comfortable with it since they're already started doing it. I see us taking these skills, and educating the students on using them and using them for good," she said.

Sherlyn Cruz **Oleai Elementary School Teacher of the Year**

Cruz, a 1st grade Teacher for OES, stated that education has evolved throughout the years in terms of strategies used to engaged students to learn. In the following years, she sees this continuing and hopes that more teachers—passionate teachers, as she puts it, join the education system.

"PSS has evolved tremendously with its strategies of teaching. Today, teachers are really getting out there and trying new things and I've seen that with PSS too. I believe it's only going to get better for our students. As an education system, I see PSS evolving further by hiring more teachers who are willing and ready to motivate students to learn," Cruz said.



Sherlyn Cruz

Dr. Patrick Castillon **San Vicente Elementary** **School Teacher of the Year**

Castillon, a 5th grade teacher for SVES, said through the years, the CNMI educational system has proven its resiliency time and time again. He believes that the CNMI's education system will only continue to be resilient 34 years from now.



Dr. Patrick Castillon

"34 years from now, I see PSS as a resilient public education institution that will always provide public education to our students here in the islands. We have gone through a lot. We've been through two natural disasters, two super typhoons to be exact, and recently a pandemic, all in the span of five years. It's nice to see the resiliency of the islands, students, and most especially our teachers. Like I mentioned before, teachers are the frontliners for our students and it's good that after all we went through, we're celebrating another Education Day," he said.

Chelsea Yangirefil

**William S. Reyes
Elementary School
Teacher of the Year**

Yangirefil, a Kindergarten teacher at WSR, said that through the years, PSS has progressed in terms of its curriculum. Before, she says, the education system focused solely on education; today, PSS encourages teaching students life skills that will help them as adults in society. She believes that in the years to come, the CNMI's education system will only continue to update its curriculum to keep up with the changing times.



Chelsea Yangirefil

"When I think of PSS and how it has changed from when I attended school as a young child, and now as an educator, I believe it has really progressed further into how it teaches our students to be more self-confident in themselves, and also making sure that they're able to survive in society as well. The education system today teaches students to use life skills and apply those skills to succeed in all aspects of life, not just college. It can be in the workforce, or whatever path they choose, they're able to really succeed and move forward as an individual. Now, looking forward in education, I feel like society is always changing. It's never going to be stagnant and stay the same. So I feel PSS will always meet the standards of what the future holds," she said.

Vince Dela Cruz

**Saipan Southern High School
Principal, 24 years**

The word I would use to best describe how far education has come in the CNMI would be progression.

First is infrastructure, what I mean about infrastructure is new buildings. Today, we have new middle schools, new high schools, we have our very own gyms now, we have additional classrooms being built, and existing classrooms are being upgraded. That is progress compared to over 20 years ago.



Vince Dela Cruz

So in terms of infrastructure, we've come a long way. When you think back, we started with one middle school and one high school, but today, we have many.

Second, there's the recent provision of internet services and technological services for schools and students. Thirty years ago, this was not even in our thoughts, but now every school is wired, and every student is provided a device. These new services, in turn, improve teaching and counseling.

Also, in the last 34 year, even for school administrators, the credentials are now different. Now you must have a master's or higher to be a principal, for teachers you have to have a BS or

higher, and you have to take annual certification classes. Now, we're trying to mirror the state side requirements to become educators, which is great because now even the pay is different for teachers and staff compared to 20 years ago.

Lastly, the education system has progressed demographically because the demographics 30 years ago was mostly Chamorro and Carolinian students. Today, we are more diverse with Filipino students, Chinese students, Korean students, and so much more. I think it's a good thing that we're more diverse because we are able to learn from each other.

Yoana Aachen

PSS educator since 1989

Based on my experience, education has changed a lot in the past 33 years. From solely utilizing papers and textbooks, to more advanced technology. Today, learning has been made a lot easier for our kids and educators because everything is at the tip of your fingers thanks to the internet. But way back, it was very hard. Nowadays, there's a lot of resources for the students. So they're so fortunate. As for PSS and the education system, being here for almost 34 years, based on my experience, it's the best for me. I just love PSS like a second home and I don't want to go anywhere else. For me, PSS is a wonderful place for learning. PSS strives to help our kids, and help them reach their full potential and that's something that hasn't changed in the last 34 years.



Yoana Aachen

Leilani Rabauliman

**SSHS 9th grade
English teacher for two years**

In my case, because I am a product of PSS and now I'm an educator for PSS, I've seen a lot of things, experienced a lot of things with the people that were in the system from a long time ago. I think the number one thing that changed are the students, whereas they've gone through a pandemic, they've gone through numerous typhoons, they've gone through a number of earthquakes and all that. So the majority of these students, compared to when I was in school, have a very different mindset. They can take in those natural crises, and look at them in either a negative way, or in a positive way. But now it seems like the students are much stronger, and very, very resilient, whereas they're even learning with online and in person learning so they are adaptable. So overall, from my experience, what I could say has changed massively is the students' mindsets because they're definitely not the same as before. Back in the day, it was so different. But now these guys are so resilient and just mentally stronger than previous generations.



Leilani Rabauliman

Andrew Golden

**SSHS educator
for over 20 years**

What I have noticed over the years is an increase in services provided to our students with special needs. So we've really made strides there trying to better address not only individuals identified, but also each and every student because teachers now understand each student learns differently. So we need to better address each individual student's needs, instead of trying to address the entire class all at once. You see a lot of teachers and even PSS has done a lot of work in terms of PD, and trying to educate the child as opposed to educating the class as a whole. So we now focus more on each individual student trying to learn about each individual student's strengths, weaknesses, what we can do to better help them succeed by either giving them options, different assignments, whatever they need to better show how they're learning. So we've really tried to address each individual, not only those with special needs, but also the entire student population.



Andrew Golden

Adeline Borja

PSS educator for 14 years

I think, in the last 34 years, education and the education system has come so far in terms of the type of testing we require our students to go through. Today, it's more online. Everything has also changed since WIDA. When I first started, it was in its pilot stage where we had to test it out, but now it's provided different kinds of testing that are all online based. Online standardized testing is just more prominent now and it's more easy access. Internet used to be an issue over a decade ago, but now connectivity is a lot better



Adeline Borja

Lalanie Santomin

**TMS special education
teacher for one year**

As a special education teacher I also work closely with teachers who teach general education since general education and special education is pretty different. These days, compared to when I was a student, technology has made it easier for me to collaborate with the rest of my colleagues because for one student who is in the special education, we do need to create an individualized education plan and that requires collaboration from Gen Ed teachers and special education teachers. So online tools today like Google Docs has made it easier for me to collaborate with other teachers and prepare plans to better educate our students with special needs.



Lalanie Santomin

Felisa Brel

**TMS vice principal
and PSS educator since 1990**

Education has come a long way, 20, 30 some years ago, schools were operating independently. But under the leadership of Dr. Rita Sablan, she brought our district together and we had a goal for PSS. Now, we're setting up our goals based on that overall system, the public school system. And so it kind of started from there and now the whole system is moving forward as one education system and that's why today, we see a lot of achievement in terms of students academically and physically and socially. In fact, I would say our kids are now being recognized globally in terms of their achievements. That wasn't the case back in the day. In fact, Tanapag Middle School alone has four students who have been recognized globally for their achievements on Achieve 3000.



Felisa Brel

Hilda Rios

PSS educator since 1999

I feel like education now really is beyond the four walls. Unfortunately the walls are still there, but we found very creative ways to go past them from pencils and papers to technology in such a short period of time. Like usually those things take decades to happen here. I remember one time in a workshop that we were discussing, how education is evolving. And we were talking about virtual learning and we were thinking back then that we're probably not going to see that in maybe 50 years. That was less than about 10 years ago. Virtual Learning unfortunately happened a lot quicker than we thought. And it's still happening and the fact that that is a future reality for so many people now is both exciting, and a bit scary for me because I feel like education really still needs that face to face engagement. That component can never be replaced with any technology. So I feel like we've made great leaps, we've made great advances. But I think from time to time, we really do need to take it down a notch. Slow down a little bit, and make sure we're properly reflecting so that we're not moving too fast and too far ahead of ourselves so that we learn to adapt along the way.



Hilda Rios

Donald Mendiola

**Hopwood Middle High School
PSS educator since 1988
Taught Math, Business,
Cultural Literacy, and now,
Chamorro, Carolinian
and Heritage Studies**

PSS has come a long way in the last 34 years. Both the Administration, teachers, and staff have been very resilient during these recent years,



Donald Mendiola

especially dealing with the 2 catastrophes of the two super typhoons, and the pandemic. The biggest improvements (I feel) are the openings of the 2 high schools (SSHS and KHS) as well as the 4 additional Middle Schools: FMS, DMS, COVMS, and TMS; and also PSS's commitment in improving the skills and knowledge of the teachers by providing Professional Development not only for the teachers' knowledge in their expertise in the field they teach, but also for their personal enrichment. A lot of opportunities were provided for improvements. These are but a few to mention but can never be forgotten to include. I plan to continue working for PSS until I can no longer do so! Commendations to all involved in the process of improving our School System, Thank you, Si Yu'us Ma'āsi, and ghilissow everyone.

Velma Mae Shai Reyes
Chamorro Language & Heritage Studies Teacher
Tinian Jr/Sr High School

"Wow 34 years"! If I can recall back from when my mother Magdalena Shai Reyes retired after 27 years of being an educator/school counselor for Tinian Elementary School, we've come a long way from a very traditional teaching style to a 21st century teaching style. Growing up and remembering the days of how my mom planned out her lessons, activities and grading I could say I am glad that the CNMI Public School System has worked its way into obtaining so many opportunities to improve our students' learning and making sure that we all strive and aim to all different learning styles a child may need.



Velma Mae Shai Reyes

Some days I try to picture myself in my mother's shoes while she is teaching and I can never seem to find myself working on a carbon copy planning, ringed paper lesson plan book and manually inputting grades and calculating them individually. Today we all find ourselves stressed out mentally and emotionally from all the high expectations required from us teachers but when I reflect we are very lucky and fortunate for the education we have today. Because 34 years ago education was very limited, I am glad we made it into the world of technology. I am proud to be a Chamorro teacher because educating my students can change them but a good teacher can change everything.

Therese Manalang
Educator,
Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr. Sr.
High School

One of the highlights are educators— we're asking their thoughts on the question, "How far public education in the CNMI has come in the last 34 years?"

Presently, education is so technology driven that the ways



Therese Manalang

and teachings of the past are lost and gone because today everything is just a click away. Students' today do not work hard or put much effort into their work because they rely on Google or other websites to find answers and solutions to many problems. These are my points of views as a Chamorro teacher. I see that traditional ways are still good and healthy learning styles in terms of helping our students think greater and better which also includes having simple life skills such as "common sense." Education has come a long way these past 34 years, however compromising the past and present ways might serve as an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

Pete Mesngon
Educator,
Chacha Oceanview
Middle School

Honestly, there have been a lot of changes worldwide within the last three decades - especially, in this sense, in education. Education these days must have a curriculum which enhances the skills for our students to become successful in their years after graduation. The many human or technological changes in our world (or society) has made the need to "change with the times". We are no longer in an educational system where a teacher is the provider of all necessary information and students use memorization to succeed. We are at the age where schools focus on success through teaching the necessary human or technical skills to succeed in "the real world", which is demanding and competitive. In all, teaching and learning is subjected to a transformation to "change with times" and we must do so in order to become relevant in society



Pete Mesngon

Rose Sharon Taimanao
Educator,
Chacha Oceanview
Middle School

Education has evolved over the past 34 years. It is evident and visible to see all the changes in education through the implementation of many educational factors. This can range from teaching strategies, applications, teaching and learning styles and the most advanced change is through technology. Another major change in education that has tremendously evolved is the inclusion of the well-being of teachers and students whether focused on physical or mental health. Prioritizing the importance of health has created a buzz in the PSS system, the CNMI community and globally. Although education has changed in many ways these past 34 years, the goal of placing Students' First has and will forever remain the same.



Rose Sharon Taimanao

Capturing the 34 Years of Public Education Celebration



CNMI PSS Instructional Technology Highlights

Learning with Nearpod

65 educators from elementary, middle, and high schools across the CNMI participated in the Nearpod Training of Trainers Program to become certified trainers and provide school-level support. Nearpod is an instructional software that engages students with interactive learning experiences. With Nearpod, students have the ability to participate in lessons that contain virtual field trips, PhET simulations, and gamified assessments. These educators learned to empower student voices through interactive software features like open-ended questions, polls, quizzes, and collaborative boards. Teachers can create Nearpod learning experiences or select from a catalog of over 6,500 lessons found in the lesson library. Key highlights of the training sessions include exploring best practices for creating Nearpod lessons, learning to design and facilitate formative assessment strategies to measure adult learner understanding, and personalizing learning for special education students. Lastly, participants collaborated with their colleagues to create plans to implement a Nearpod PD session in their schools.



21st Century Teacher Awardees

10 teachers across the Marianas were recently awarded the 21st Century Teacher recognition for their excellence in technology integration. This program supports the CNMI Public School System's Strategic Priorities of Student Success and Highly Effective Personnel. The award recognizes teacher leaders who demonstrate excellence in educational technology integration to support the unique needs of all learners in their classrooms. Awardees will receive a classroom set of educational technology resources to support learning and teaching in the 21st century. Elementary school awardees are Jennifer Villagomez (GTC Elementary), Francis Mendiola (Koblerville Elementary), Jessica Mendez (Garapan Elementary), April Manglona (Tinian Elementary), and Lorna Calvo (Sinapalo Elementary). Middle and high school awardees are Tianna San Nicolas (Tinian Jr. Sr. High School), Desiree Pendergrass (Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr High School), Kyle Mateo (Kagman High School), Sonya-Jane Olopai (Da'ok Academy), and Dr. Roque Indalecio (Marianas High School).

CONGRATULATIONS!

CNMI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM SY 22-23 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM TEACHER AWARDEES

The 21st Century Classroom Teacher Award is one of several PSS initiatives to promote effective technology use in the classroom. Awardees were selected based on school principal nominations. The award recognizes teacher leaders who demonstrate excellence in educational technology integration to support the unique needs of all learners in their classrooms. Awardees will receive a classroom set of educational technology resources to support learning and teaching in the 21st century.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL



Jennifer Villagomez

Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School



Francis Mendiola

Koblerville Elementary School



Jessica Mendez

Garapan Elementary School



April Manglona

Tinian Elementary School



Lorna Calvo

Sinapalo Elementary School

MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL



Tianna San Nicolas

Tinian Jr. Sr. High School



Desiree Pendergrass

Dr. Rita H. Jr. Sr. High School



Kyle Mateo

Kagman High School



Sonya-Jane Olopai

Da'ok Academy



Dr. Roque Indalecio

Marianas High School



"Technology will never replace great educators, but in the hands of great educators, it's transformational."

—George Couros



Students Take Action at the Close-Up Youth Summit

By: Ismail Hossain



Students pose for a group photo at the 2022 Close-Up Youth Summit



Members of the CNMI Legislature sit together as they listen to proposals made by the students.

FROM October 23-27, students from all over the CNMI came together to participate in the 2022 Close-Up Youth Summit at the Saipan World Resort. The Close Up Youth Summit is an opportunity for students to research local problems and brainstorm solutions affecting our community. They also got a close-up opportunity to meet and discuss their thoughts with professionals and lawmakers who work daily to battle the same issues.

During the first day of the Summit, students voiced out the different issues that they felt were important and shared them with each other. They also played icebreaker activities to which many had found fun.

"The program instructors made us do icebreaker activities and I loved it! Games such as rock-paper-scissors and a wink version of Mafia alleviated the tension in the room. People were hyping each other up, screaming, yelling, and cheering. It was fun watching students having fun with each other despite being from different schools and islands," says Amira De Guzman from Marianas High School.

Brylle Angelo from Dr. Rita H. Inos Highschool stated "All of the icebreaker activities were entertaining and fun. One that I really enjoyed was the "Pick a Side" activity. Not only was it a way to make us learn more about the people's preferences in the room, but it also showed that everyone might have a different perspective and opinion from you."

Later, the students broke into different groups known as subcommittees where they will work with others on identifying the problems affecting the CNMI. Over the next few days, the students collaborated with one another in researching the issue



Students present their proposal to members of the CNMI Legislature.

they chose, and began writing their own proposals to address the problem. Instructors gave them guidance on how to write their drafts, and the students engaged in discussions over their chosen issue. They were also able to get insights from experts from different Departments and Organizations in drafting their proposals, as well as U.S. Congressman Kilili Sablan.

Once completed, all subcommittees presented their bill to everyone at the summit. Their proposal was then challenged by a brief debating period where other committees were able to ask tough questions about the group's solution. By the time the debate was over, all students then voted on whether the bill that was presented should be passed or not. Some groups were not able to rack up enough votes to continue, while others who did get enough votes got the chance to present their proposals to dignitaries the next day.

All committees wrote captivating proposals that would help address their specific issue. When we asked which bills presented stood out to them, Andrew Sunderland from Saipan Southern High School stated, "The MRI proposal of creating and implementing them here in the CNMI stood out to me. It is an issue that it has been postponed for so long despite it having already met the governor's request for specific details. Instead, it has been ignored for a year and still is."

Another student, Jane Mozunder stated, "One proposal from the Committee on Education's Subcommittee on Mismanagement of School Funds stood out to me. This committee emphasized the significance of managing school funds because it can have a significant impact. Because of the mismanagement of funds, schools in the CNMI have broken infrastructure, fewer materials, and more! This is a critical issue because it affects students and their future."

On the final day of the summit, subcommittees that were able to get their bills passed the previous day were presented to members of the CNMI Legislature. Members of the House, Senate, and Gubernatorial Candidates took the time to listen to the students' proposals and express their opinions on the issues.

When asked about what their thoughts were on the Close-Up Summit, Representative Tina Sablan stated, "I enjoyed the Close-Up Youth Summit very much and appreciated the opportunity to hear from island youth about the issues they feel are most important, and the solutions they propose to the problems they

see. Being informed and getting involved in the issues affecting our islands are part of being a good citizen. The CNMI needs its young people to do both if we are to make progress as a community. The Close-Up program provides a powerful opportunity for young people to learn about issues together, and brainstorm ideas, and I absolutely believe students should continue to gather for events like this in the future."

The four-day-long summit was a great learning experience for all the students that attended. They were able to meet with members of our government that continue to help the changes needed in our community and learn more about the issues affecting our Commonwealth.

This summit has also shown that it is important for the youth to become engaged with Civics and Government. When we asked about their thoughts about this, Jakey De Leon Guerrero of MHS stated, "Just as students need to be financially literate to succeed in life, students must also be literate in how the government operates in order to prosper. They need to be educated so that they have the ability to have an impact on their community. Soon, the manhoben will be the ones being asked for questions on what to do, and it is up to us, the manhoben, to learn as much as we can about the government because everyone is affected by the government, one way or another."

Another student, Jerome Manzon stressed that it is important to "voice out to elected officials what we want to get done and address community issues to them. It is important to understand the process of how a law is made so that they can thoroughly think about what issues they want officials to address and work on."

We also asked many of the students what they learned from this summit and the impact this has had on them. Jimmina Flamar from Kagman Highschool noted, "the program gave me a lot of perspectives. Listening to others share what they're truly passionate about and hearing all the amazing proposals, some of which I never knew about and some I never took seriously and this program opened my heart to understand the relevance of withstanding the importance of our people, environment, culture, and economy. Also, close-up encouraged me to ameliorate my public speaking and leadership skills."



Students listen to Shirley Norita as she gives her insights during the Expert Panel Section of the Summit.



High Dosage Tutoring: Gains in Reading, Math Abilities of Tutored Students

ACADEMIC performance of public schools students who received tutoring under the High Dosage Tutoring Program in two critical subject areas, Reading and Mathematics, show impressive gains. These gains indicate the abilities of these students to respond positively to these learning initiative that was implemented by the Public School System to mitigate both short term and long term effects of the pandemic.

This was the result of the HDT survey conducted throughout the school district on all students, K-12, for School-Year 2021-2022, the pilot year that the program was implemented by the school district.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, with Senior Director for Accountability, Research and Evaluation Dr. Rizalina Liwag and her team pioneered the program in 2021. It was launched in 2021 by Dr. Ada as a “bridge program for academic intervention” or designed to assist students with urgent intervention needed on reading and math subjects and whose learning abilities were impacted during the pandemic.

At the same time, overall surveyed students indicate



positive interactions with their tutors— that they “strongly agree” or “agree” with positive experience or attitude in response to the learning experience, and expressed gratitude to their tutors.

Surveyed were students who received or have availed of the tutorial program under the HDT and the classroom teachers who served as their high dosage. Tutors. They survey is provided to determine the affectivity of the program and to identify the needs of both tutees and tutors

“The data shows that the academic performance of the students who receive tutoring has an academic improvement in Reading between 1% to 22.5% and an academic improvement between 1.7% to 14.2% in Math,” Senior Director for Accountability, Research and Evaluation Dr. Rizalina Liwag told Students First in an interview.



PSS Participates in Largest Career, Technical Expo

A CADRE of secondary and postsecondary career and technical educators, business leaders and industry professionals from the CNMI attended the 2022 Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Vision Conference and Expo which was held in Las Vegas on November 30-December 3, 2022.

The CNMI participants included representatives from the CNMI Public School System, Northern Marianas College, Northern Marianas Technical Institute, Guam Marianas Training Center, and Department of Labor.

NMC, NMTech, GMTC and the CNMI Dept. of Labor are critical partners in the school district's collaborative effort to ensure high school students in the Commonwealth graduate college, career, and ready for life as a result of completing high quality and comprehensive career pathway credentials and industry certifications in programs.

The Public School System has pioneered several high quality and comprehensive career pathway credentials in partnership with these agencies. These include Construction, Nurse Assistant, Teacher Academy and Entrepreneurship.

The ACTE is the premier annual conference for Career and Technical Education (CTE) formerly known as vocational education.

Attendees enjoyed featured keynote speakers and leaders, hundreds of concurrent educational sessions and networking events in a variety of formats, and a massive CareerTech Expo as well as high-quality secondary and postsecondary CTE and specific content areas, including agricultural education, business and marketing, career academies, counseling and career development, family and consumer sciences, engineering and technology, health science, trade and industrial education, work-based learning and more!

"This was a wonderful opportunity to see how rigorous academic content could be integrated with hands-on learning through CTE. This exactly the type of education I have been advocating for: utilizing the methods of our indigenous ancestors with cutting edge technology," says Dr. Beylul Solomon of the Northern Marianas College.

ACTE's CareerTech VISION 2022 is the organization's premier annual conference attracting more than 4,000 secondary and postsecondary career and technical educators to an expo featuring hundreds of educational and networking events.

For those interested in CTE programs, you may reach out to the school district's CTE Program through jessica.taylor@cnmipss.org to learn more or visit the ACTE site www.acteonline.org, says Dr. Beylul Solomon of the Northern Marianas College.

Supporting Students with Challenging Behaviors in the CNMI

IN collaboration with the Guam Department of Education, Division of Special Education (GDOE-SPED), Guam CEDDERS co-facilitated the August 16 full-day professional learning: Supporting Students with Challenging Behaviors on Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) with the CNMI Special Education Director and Team. The full-day session included close to 200 Public School System (PSS) administrators, special education teachers, teacher aides, related service providers, health monitors, nurses, bus drivers, and bus conductors. The focus of the session was prioritized through feedback received from previous professional learning activities.

The GDOE-SPED Assistant Superintendent Tom Babauta with his training team, Trisha Taitague, Warren Lampa, and Josielynn San Nicolas, introduced the Safe Crisis Management (SCM) framework and strategies for supporting students with challenging behaviors in various school environments from on the bus to the classroom. Session objectives included:

- Identifying the rationale for SCM
- Understanding the factors which influence an individual's development, growth capacity, and behavior
- Identifying, understanding, and applying the SCM principles, practices, and prevention strategies
- Identifying and understanding common sources, characteristics, and types of behaviors of concern
- Identifying, understanding, and utilizing strategies to de-escalate and/or physically intervene

The GDOE-SPED team reviewed the SCM principles and provided examples of their importance. Preventative and de-escalation strategies were emphasized through demonstration of the techniques for implementing the strategies. As a result, each school team reflected on how the SCM strategies can support their team's action steps for improvement this school year. The overall feedback indicated that the full-day session was useful and relevant. The importance of TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) was echoed throughout the day, which was an excellent way to start the school year!





Dolphins Make History as First CNMI School to Compete in National US Army Raider Championships

THE Marianas High School's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets who competed in the 2022 U.S. Army National Raider Championships last November made history as the CNMI's first representing school in such a prestigious competition.

Last Nov. 6, 22 MHS JROTC cadets competed in the 2022 U.S. Army National Raider Championships held in Molena, Georgia.

According to MHS principal Jonathan Aguon, MHS' participation in the event is historical not just for the Dolphins, but for the CNMI as a whole.

"Our participation in this event is history-making for MHS and for the CNMI Public School System. This is the first time that any CNMI PSS school has competed in this national competition, so we are very proud of our cadets for taking on the challenge to go up against schools who have been competing at this level for years," he said.

Aside from being the first CNMI school to partake in the national event, MHS was the only school from the Pacific to compete in this year's national competition, making their feat even more astonishing.

During the competition, the MHS Dolphins went up against 2,300 students from schools across the nation during the three-day competition from Nov. 3 to 6 at Gerald Lawhorn Boy Scout Camp.

While MHS did not nab any trophies, their mixed team did place top seven in the rope bridge challenge.

"This was a showcase of our Dolphin spirit of 'Teamwork Towards Excellence' as our MHS motto goes, and we hope to compete again in the future," said Aguon.

Aguon said overall, the experience tested the students and pushed them to become to further better themselves and hone their skills.

"In addition to competing and testing themselves against other high caliber teams, I am very grateful to provide the opportunity for our students to see firsthand beyond our shores and to promote the message that they are worthy to be among the best of the best," Aguon added.

The CNMI's students competed in various events, including a 4K Mountain Run, Rope Bridge, Gauntlet Challenge, and the Physical Team Test, which consisted of strength tests like wall climb, tire-drag, obstacle course, etc., distance team running, and rope bridge construction and crossing.