



LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES SHALL BE AVAILABLE
The Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan
in the Time of COVID-19

Department of Education

May 2020

Foreword

As Secretary of the Department of Education, I am proud to introduce our Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan in the Time of COVID 19 (BE-LCP). This is the Department's response to the challenges posed by COVID 19 in the field of basic education. I have always maintained that education must continue, whatever the changes and even dangers we confront now and in the future.

Our Learning Continuity Plan is not the work of one person alone. It is truly an integrated output of the Department. BE-LCP is the result of consultations with partners and advisers, legislators, executives and directors, teachers, parents, learners and the general public. All these contributions were integrated and harmonized by the Executive Committee and Management Committee under my direction and drafted by my Undersecretary and Chief of Staff.

In particular, BE-LCP is the result of inputs from different units and field offices of the department; advice from the Philippine Forum for Inclusive Quality Basic Education or Educ Forum; counsel from the Chairs of the House and Senate. Committees on Basic Education; an online survey of more than 700,000 respondents; and a survey of teachers' readiness for distance learning delivery.

BE-LCP covers the essential requirements of education in the time of COVID 19, e.g. most essential learning competencies, multiple learning modalities for teachers, school leaders and learners, required health standards in schools and workplaces, and special activities like *Brigada Eskwela*, *Oplan Balik Eskwela*, and partnerships.

The academic school calendar for 2020-2021 is also included in this volume. We believe that many of the questions which are raised by parents, teachers and the public will be answered by the publication of the calendar. Other important guidelines to fully operationalize the BE-LCP will be issued during plan implementation.

The Department is making BE-LCP available to all who have an interest in, and unfailing commitment to education. Even before COVID-19 unleashed its fury on the international community and the country, DepEd already saw the increasing role of technology in education. At the same time, it also saw the future beyond COVID-19. The department realized the need to enrich the humanities in order to ensure that we will be nurturing and teaching humans, and not robots.

In conclusion, the Department thanks all who have contributed to the preparation of this volume. Together, let us face the challenges of the “new normal” with the virtues of the “old normal” – courage, faith, adventure, and discovery!

Professor Emeritus Leonor Magtolis Briones
Secretary of Education

Executive Summary

The global outbreak of the highly contagious new COVID-19 virus, for which there is yet no vaccine, continues to pose unprecedented challenges. At this point, the biggest impact of COVID-19 arises from the need to practice stringent social or physical distancing to prevent or mitigate its spread. For the Department of Education (DepEd), this meant the cancellation of classes and other school activities for the remaining weeks of SY 2019-2020, and that for SY 2020-2021, schools must find ways for learning to continue amidst the threat and uncertainties brought about by COVID-19, while ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of all learners, teachers, and personnel of the Department.

In the development of this Basic Education - Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), inputs from different units and field offices of the Department, from the Philippine Forum for Inclusive Quality Basic Education or Educ Forum, and from the Chairpersons of the House and Senate Committees on Basic Education, Rep. Roman Romulo and Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, respectively, were gathered.

In the integration of inputs into the BE-LCP, the Office of the Secretary was guided by the following principles:

1. Protect the health, safety and well-being of learners, teachers and personnel, and prevent the further transmission of COVID-19;
2. Ensure learning continuity through K-12 curriculum adjustments, alignment of learning materials, deployment of multiple learning delivery modalities, provision of corresponding training for teachers and school leaders, and proper orientation of parents or guardians of learners;
3. Facilitate the safe return of teaching and non-teaching personnel and learners to workplaces and schools, taking into consideration the scenarios projected by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Philippines (IATF), complemented by other credible sources, and balanced with DepEd's own risk assessments;
4. Be sensitive to equity considerations and concerns, and endeavor to address them the best we can; and
5. Link and bridge the BE-LCP to DepEd's pivot to quality and into the future of education, under the framework of *Sulong EduKalidad* and Futures Thinking in Education.

In developing the BE-LCP, the Department analyzed data on basic education as well as the epidemiological picture for the incoming school year, to make informed decisions. It is in this light that DepEd has set the opening of SY 2020-2021 on August 24, 2020, allowing enough time to undertake the necessary preparations for the extraordinarily challenging school year.

The key elements of the learning strategies that shall operationalize the BE-LCP are the streamlining of the K to 12 Curriculum into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), and allowing of multiple learning delivery modalities such as distance learning and blended learning, either on top or in place of face-to-face learning delivery modality. To help learners, parents, and teachers implement these learning delivery modalities, Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) shall be made available in print and offline/online digital format, for use this incoming school year. DepEd shall also tap the materials developed by various partners and entities such as SEAMEO INNOTECH, *BASA Pilipinas*, Knowledge Channel, Frontlearners Inc., and CHED, among many others.

The learning outcomes in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values will be assessed, through portfolio / e-portfolio to include written works, and performances (and products), whether hardcopy, softcopy or a combination of these, and through summative tests as conditions allow. The administration of national examinations shall continue amidst COVID-19.

To prepare our teachers and school leaders for multiple learning delivery modalities, they shall be capacitated to implement the learning delivery system, consistent with DepEd's professional development framework and professional standards, and the transformation of the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP). They will be introduced to learning delivery modalities that they can readily utilize depending on community context, and be provided with tools and mechanisms to inform their decision-making. To ensure the seamless transition of learning activities into formats appropriate to platforms and learning delivery modalities they will adopt, capacity building will be implemented beginning in June until July 2020. Support mechanisms shall also be established to provide teachers and school leaders access to on-demand technical and administrative advice and guidance.

Adjustments will also apply to the Alternative Learning System (ALS).

In operationalizing the BE-LCP, required health standards shall be enforced to reduce vulnerability, transmission, contact, and duration of the infection. DepEd shall ensure readiness of school facilities, learners, teaching and non-teaching personnel, school administrators, and the community in time for the school opening in August.

The BE-LCP has been designed with a legal framework responsive to the new normal, keeping in mind the constitutional mandate to uphold the right of all citizens to

quality education at all times. The Department also reviewed and assessed the programs, projects and activities outlined in the plan and their corresponding budgetary implications. The available program funds are being maximized, reprogrammed, or realigned to the programs, projects, and activities that shall require more funding support. However, there is still a need to provide substantial and additional financial resources from known and potential sources of funds.

Communications shall play a major role in implementing the BE-LCP with the appreciation and support of our key stakeholders. Communications efforts shall be directed by the central office to ensure unified branding while still anchored on grassroots contexts to make them responsive to localized needs. Synergy and coordination with national government media channels (PCOO, DOH and IATF) shall also be ensured. The setting up of new media platforms, formation of Crisis Communications Management Team, and development of Public Health Information Protocols, shall be the focus of these efforts anchored on the core principles of being proactive, cooperative, responsive, and highly engaged with the multiple publics of the Department.

Finally, a Monitoring & Evaluation framework tailored to the needs of learners during this emergency has been adopted to further guide the Department in its implementation of the BE-LCP.

The decision to open classes on August 24, 2020 was made in consideration of socio-economic factors, such as the need to: 1) avoid prolonged school disruption, which is associated with a range of social risks for the youth; 2) encourage education-related economic activity; and 3) resume school-managed support systems such as the School-Based Feeding Program, among others. On the other hand, we also anticipate that differences in socio-economic status, indicated by internet access at home, and by readiness to engage in blended or distance learning, will affect the quality of learning during the roll-out of this learning continuity plan, and DepEd must address and mitigate these.

The Department also faces a number of security factors in these times of uncertainty, including the need to address the climate of fear among students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders, to strengthen coordination and cooperation at national and local levels, and to mobilize partnerships and its broad constituency for support. Mechanisms such as the DepEd Task Force COVID-19 for quick monitoring and response, and the reconfigured *Oplan Balik Eskwela* and *Brigada Eskwela*, have been put in place to address these security concerns.

With a learner-oriented framework, the reforms articulated in the BE-LCP are aligned with the four pillars of *Sulong Edukalidad*: K to 12 curriculum review and update;

Improving the learning environment; Teachers' upskilling and reskilling; and Engagement of stakeholders for support and collaboration. These pillars shall be implemented with emphasis on INNOVATION, AGILITY, and SYNERGY. *Sulong Edukalidad*, BE-LCP, and the future of the Philippine education are united by our goals for and with every learner: agency and self-actualization, work readiness, and responsible citizenship. Thus, it is important that the BE-LCP shall be guided by life-long, life-wide, life-deep, and life-wise learning principles.

The BE-LCP lays down the direction for basic education in the coming school year. Implementation specifics will be embodied in appropriate guidelines, rules or directives, and operationalized through programs, projects and activities.

DepEd has historically demonstrated resilience in responding to adversities and in delivering its commitments and responsibilities. Nonetheless, the implementation of the BE-LCP will not be easy. It is also not a perfect plan, and operational complications can be expected along the way. Thus, we seek the understanding, support and solidarity of our DepEd family and all our stakeholders, in the true spirit of unity, and *bayanihan* or mutual help.

I. Introduction

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) China Country Office was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The cause would later be determined as a new type or strain of coronavirus not previously detected in people. Coronavirus is named as such because of the crown-like spikes on their surface. On February 11, 2020, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) named the new coronavirus as “severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).” On the same day, WHO also announced the name of the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 as Coronavirus Disease – 2019, or COVID-19. In this document, we shall use the term COVID-19 to refer to both the virus and the disease.

WHO describes coronaviruses as a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, sore throat, or diarrhea. Based on the data from China, about 80 percent of patients experienced mild illness, 14 percent had severe disease, and five percent became critically ill. The cases also indicated that illness severity was associated with patients 60 years and older, as well as with patients that had other underlying illnesses or medical conditions.¹

COVID-19 really hit home on January 30, 2020 when WHO declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, while here in the Philippines the Department of Health (DOH) announced the first patient who tested positive for it. Immediately on February 1, 2020, the Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary issued DepEd Memo No. 11, s. 2020, creating a Task Force for the management of the department’s response to COVID-19².

COVID-19 is transmitted through the respiratory droplets expelled by an infected person when they cough, sneeze, or speak. These droplets can infect an exposed person through contact with the eyes, mouth, or nose, or when the exposed person touches a surface contaminated by the respiratory droplets of the infected person, and in turn touches their eyes, mouth, or nose. Transmission is mainly from symptomatic patients, but there is also evidence that the virus may be transmitted by an infected person at pre-symptomatic stage, that is, before symptoms develop. WHO reports that there has been

¹ World Health Organization COVID-19 Situation Report – 41, March 1, 2020.

² At that time, it was still referred to as Novel Coronavirus 2019.

no documented asymptomatic transmission, but this does not exclude the possibility that such may occur.³

Because of the manner of transmission of COVID-19, practicing proper hand and respiratory hygiene at all times remains as the most important protective measures. Our learners are already familiar with these practices even before COVID-19, as they are included in regular classroom instruction as a general health precaution.

But the biggest impact of COVID-19 results from the need for stringent social or physical distancing, a key intervention that prevents or mitigates its spread. Among the characteristics of COVID-19 that necessitate more than the basic hand and respiratory hygiene are:

- As a “novel” or new coronavirus, humanity has yet to develop a natural immunity to it, and a vaccine will still take time to develop and make available;
- While it is not as deadly as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS⁴, it is more contagious as shown by the rapid growth of infection at the national and global level, and can still be fatal especially for the elderly and those with other underlying illnesses; and,
- Because it is highly contagious, it presents serious challenges to the public health system in terms of detection, isolation, and treatment.

The initial government response to suspend classes, and later to impose community quarantine, disrupted classes first at the National Capital Region (NCR) beginning March 14, 2020, and later in the rest of Luzon and other localities outside Luzon.

While we were fortunate that the March class suspensions happened at the tail-end of the school year, the situation for the incoming school year will be much different. We now face uncertainties on whether schools will be allowed to open, and under what conditions.

In this time of threat, challenges, and uncertainties brought about by COVID-19, the directive of DepEd Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all learners, teachers and personnel of the department, while also finding ways for learning to continue.

³ World Health Organization COVID-19 Situation Report – 73, April 2, 2020.

⁴ Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS is the disease caused by the SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV), to which the COVID-19 virus is genetically related. SARS first infected humans in Guangdong, China in 2002, and led to an outbreak affecting 26 countries with more than 8,000 recorded cases by 2003.

This Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) responds to the directive of the Secretary and provides guidance to the department on how to deliver education in this time of crisis.

The BE-LCP lays down the direction for basic education in the coming school year. Implementation specifics will be embodied in appropriate guidelines, rules or directives, and operationalized through programs, projects and activities.

Implementing the BE-LCP will not be easy. It is also not a perfect plan and operational complications can be expected along the way. Thus, we seek the understanding, support, and solidarity of our DepEd family and all our stakeholders in the true spirit of unity and *bayanihan* or mutual help.

II. Methodologies and Principles

DepEd embarked on the development of the BE-LCP to enable learners of basic education to continue learning and for teachers to be able to deliver instruction in a safe work and learning environment amid the threat of COVID-19. The inputs of the different strands through their lead Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries, and of the different regions through their Regional Directors, were submitted to the Office of the Secretary (OSEC). In addition, the Philippine Forum for Inclusive Quality Basic Education or Educ Forum⁵ conducted consultations to generate their collective inputs. There was also a consultative meeting between members of the DepEd Execom and the chairpersons of the House and Senate Committees on Basic Education, Rep. Roman Romulo and Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, respectively. The process leveraged the internal talents and expertise of DepEd officials and personnel, as well as the expertise, rich experience, and resources of partners.

Within DepEd, the Curriculum and Instruction strand led by Undersecretary Diosdado San Antonio, the Administration strand (which is in charge of the DepEd Task Force on COVID-19) led by Undersecretary Alain Del Pascua, and the Planning strand led by Undersecretary Jesus Lorenzo Mateo, submitted major inputs. The Regional Directors, through their inputs, emphasized the ground realities to be considered. Further consultations with Regional Directors will be undertaken by Undersecretary Revsee Escobedo. The Finance strand led by Undersecretary Annalyn Sevilla, Legal led by

⁵ The *Philippine Forum for Inclusive Quality Basic Education, or Educ Forum*, is a formation convened by DepEd consisting of DepEd and other government agencies relevant to basic education reform, and education partners including civil society organizations, education sector organizations, organizations and foundations coming from the private sector, and bilateral agencies and multilateral organizations. Educ Forum a platform for consultation, collaborative research and analysis, and high-level advice to strategic basic education policy, planning and programming.

Undersecretary Josephine Maribojoc, *Brigada Eskwela* led by Undersecretary Tonisito Umali, and the Alternative Learning System (ALS) led by Assistant Secretary G.H. Ambat also submitted inputs. A number of Central Office Directors gave direct inputs.

For its part, the Educ Forum members, after a meeting on April 13, 2020, organized themselves into five Sub-Groups for focused discussions. (See **Table 1**. Sub-Group Themes) The Educ Forum expanded the participation in the sub-groups, to include interested non-Educ Forum members. (See **Annex “A”** for participating organizations and individuals in the Sub-Groups.) Educ Forum submitted its consolidated inputs to OSEC on April 27, 2020.

Table 1. Educ Forum Sub-Group Themes.

Sub-Groups Themes	Objectives
Sub-Group 1 Data Analytics	Responsible for identifying and analyzing data and information that will be relevant in assessing the capacity of the basic education system, and the appropriate targeting of learners, teachers and school leaders, for the continuing delivery of learning in the context of the constraints and opportunities presented by COVID-19.
Sub-Group 2: Learning Strategies and Modalities	Responsible for identifying feasible and practical learning strategies and learning delivery modalities in the context of COVID 19.
Sub-Group 3: Capacity of Teachers and School Leaders	Responsible for assessing and identifying critical and timely interventions for capacitating teachers and school leaders in managing and facilitating learning through various learning delivery modalities and learning resources.
Sub-Group 4: Operational Plan	Responsible for identifying the operational plan and needs at various governance levels to implement the Learning Continuity Plan.
Sub-Group 5: Bridging to <i>Sulong EduKalidad</i>	Provide the bridging and integration of the short term response with the medium and longer term education agenda for accessible quality education, within the framework of <i>Sulong EduKalidad</i> .

The task of consolidating all inputs into the BE-LECP was undertaken by OSEC, under the direction of the Secretary. The operational execution and integrative writing of the consolidation was led by Undersecretary Nepomuceno Malaluan as the Secretary’s chief of staff, assisted by his team and in collaboration with the Planning Service led by Director Roger Masapol.

While the BE-LCP was being consolidated, updates were presented in several meetings of the Executive Committee⁶ and the Management Committee⁷, where specific elements of the outline of the BE-ELCP were discussed. There is also an ongoing process for consolidating the needed budgetary adjustments arising from the BE-LCP. This process is led jointly by Undersecretary Annalyn Sevilla and Undersecretary Mateo, with the support of the Budget Hearing – Technical Working Group.

While all submitted inputs are supported by their respective data, relevant past studies, discussions, and experience of the contributors, OSEC also supplied further information based on documents from various inter-agency processes relating to COVID-19, discussions in the Execom and Mancom meetings, and research.

In consolidating the inputs, we were guided by principles flowing from the directive of the Secretary, integration with the objectives identified by the Response Plan of the Administration Strand, alignment with overall government policies, and the reform agenda embodied under *Sulong EduKalidad*. These principles are:

1. Protect the health, safety and well-being of learners, teachers and personnel, and prevent the further transmission of COVID-19;
2. Ensure learning continuity through K-12 curriculum adjustments, alignment of learning materials, deployment of multiple learning delivery modalities, provision of corresponding training for teachers and school leaders, and proper orientation of parents or guardians of learners;
3. Facilitate the safe return of teaching and non-teaching personnel and learners to workplaces and schools, taking into consideration the scenarios projected by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Philippines (IATF), complemented by other credible sources, and balanced with DepEd’s own risk assessments;
4. Be sensitive to equity considerations and concerns, and endeavor to address them the best we can; and

⁶ The Executive Committee or Execom of DepEd consists of the Secretary and all Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries.

⁷ The Management Committee or Mancom includes the Execom, all Central Office Bureau and Service Directors, and all Regional Directors of DepEd.

- Link and bridge the BE-LCP to DepEd's pivot to quality and into the future of education, under the framework of *Sulong EduKalidad* and Futures Thinking in Education.

III. What the Data Tell Us

The Pre-COVID Baseline. In the time of COVID-19, the concern over basic education lies in the magnitude of moving and congregating learners, teachers and education personnel nationwide.

Based on the enrollment in the recently concluded School Year 2019-2020, basic education has a total enrollment of 27,770,263 learners from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Excluding the 21,786 enrollees in Philippine Schools Overseas (PSOs), it comes to a total of 27,748,477 learners in the country, of which 22,572,923 are accounted for by DepEd schools. (See **Table 2: Total Enrollment in K to 12, SY 2019-2020.**) The breakdown of the enrollment in formal basic education by regions is shown in **Table 3.**

Table 2: Total Enrollment in K to 12, SY 2019-2020

Sector	Kinder	Elem	JHS	SHS	Total	% Share
Public	1,791,076	12,010,674	7,004,355	1,766,818	22,572,923	81.28%
Private	250,811	1,256,476	1,439,507	1,357,882	4,304,676	15.50%
SUC/LUC	1,088	9,109	53,107	67,702	131,006	0.47%
PSO	1,770	11,702	6,681	1,633	21,786	0.08%
Total Formal	2,044,745	13,287,961	8,503,650	3,194,035	27,030,391	
ALS					739,872	2.66%
GRAND TOTAL					27,770,263	

Source: Department of Education, Philippines

Table 3. Regional Distribution of Enrollment in Formal K to 12, Public and Private, SY 2019-2020

Regions	Enrollment		
	Male	Female	Total
Region I	665,095	625,976	1,291,071
Region II	457,377	439,125	896,502
Region III	1,490,979	1,424,475	2,915,454
Region IV-A	1,958,258	1,875,022	3,833,280
Region IV-B	453,606	434,553	888,159
Region V	913,745	872,011	1,785,756
Region VI	1,049,509	996,572	2,046,081
Region VII	1,061,361	1,022,160	2,083,521
Region VIII	643,668	617,642	1,261,310
Region IX	524,819	515,105	1,039,924

Region X	665,911	645,346	1,311,257
Region XI	687,019	671,807	1,358,826
Region XII	642,492	630,942	1,273,434
CARAGA	397,768	379,087	776,855
BARMM	430,564	460,421	890,985
CAR	223,896	215,999	439,895
NCR	1,478,928	1,437,367	2,916,295
Grand Total	13,744,995	13,263,610	27,008,605

Source: Department of Education, Philippines

In addition to the learners, the DepEd employs over 900,000 regular personnel, of which more than 800,000 are teachers. There are also about 10,000 contract of service personnel in the various offices of DepEd nationwide. To this, we add some 300,000 private school teachers and personnel. (See **Tables 4, 5 and 6**)

Thus, in all, basic education directly accounts for nearly 30 million learners, teachers and personnel, not counting the ancillary services supporting the education system including transport, food, and other services. This 30-million figure represents about 27.8 percent of the estimated 108 million current Philippine population and is 20 percent higher than the total number of people employed in the services sector, the biggest employer of the country's labor force.

Table 4. Total Regular Employees of DepEd, as of April 2020.

Office	Teaching Position			Teaching- Related			Non-Teaching Position			Authorized Personnel Total		
	Filled	Unfilled	Total	Filled	Unfilled	Total	Filled	Unfilled	Total	Filled	Unfilled	Total
Central Office							880	398	1,278	880	398	1,278
Region I	45,233	1,241	46,474	3,312	474	3,786	4,057	467	4,524	52,602	2,182	54,784
Region II	32,123	974	33,097	2,255	229	2,484	2,660	646	3,306	37,038	1,849	38,887
Region III	83,320	2,775	86,095	4,828	773	5,601	5,147	973	6,120	93,295	4,521	97,816
Region IV-A	94,931	6,940	101,871	3,753	1,261	5,014	4,999	1,133	6,132	103,683	9,334	113,017
Region IV-B	31,280	1,656	32,936	2,090	386	2,476	2,101	488	2,589	35,471	2,530	38,001
Region V	62,409	3,206	65,615	3,290	648	3,938	4,171	963	5,134	69,870	4,817	74,687
Region VI	69,248	2,541	71,789	3,782	765	4,547	4,604	1,290	5,894	77,634	4,596	82,230
Region VII	65,852	4,022	69,874	2,917	787	3,704	3,904	1,043	4,947	72,673	5,852	78,525
Region VIII	50,324	1,957	52,281	3,101	563	3,664	3,469	832	4,301	56,894	3,352	60,246
Region IX	36,308	1,177	37,485	2,560	280	2,840	2,000	292	2,292	40,868	1,749	42,617
Region X	39,962	2,378	42,340	2,162	337	2,499	2,867	962	3,829	44,991	3,677	48,668
Region XI	41,084	2,472	43,556	1,868	493	2,361	2,362	462	2,824	45,314	3,427	48,741
Region XII	40,717	1,072	41,789	1,907	431	2,338	2,484	316	2,800	45,108	1,819	46,927
Region XIII	28,444	826	29,270	1,826	296	2,122	2,400	528	2,928	32,670	1,650	34,320
CAR	16,428	509	16,937	1,300	114	1,414	1,995	373	2,368	19,723	996	20,719
NCR	68,294	7,764	76,058	2,178	900	3,078	3,439	1,622	5,061	73,911	10,286	84,197
Total	805,957	41,510	847,467	43,129	8,737	51,866	53,539	12,788	66,327	902,625	63,035	965,660

Source: Department of Education

Table 5. DepEd Contract of Service Personnel, as of April 2020.

Region	No. of COS/JO
Region I	826
Region II	593
Region III	703
Region IV-A	2,166
Region IV- B	320
Region V	1,846
Region VI	166
Region VII	315
Region VIII	239
Region IX	81
Region X	286
Region XI	276
Region XII	996
Region XIII	370
CAR	105
NCR	88
Central Office	1,050
TOTAL	10,426

Source: DepEd

Table 6. Private School Teachers and Personnel, 2019.

Level	Teaching	Teaching-Related	Non-Teaching
Elementary	72,035	4,409	5,638
Secondary	158,476	9,699	12,403
SHS	32,920	2,015	2,576
Total	263, 430	16,123	20,617
Grand Total	300,170		

Source: Private Sector Assistance Committee (PEAC)

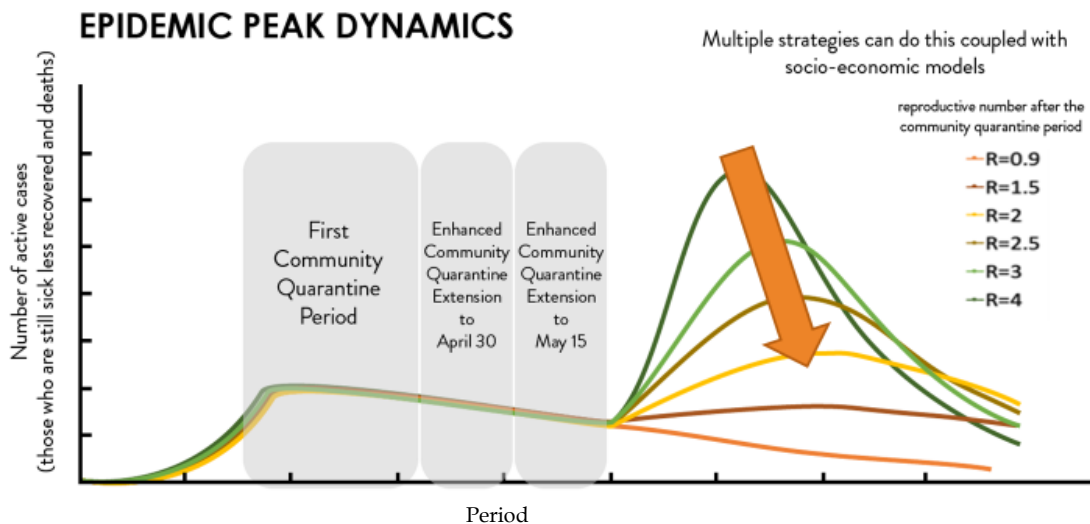
The Epidemiological Picture for the Incoming School Year. Since WHO declared COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern, the government has acted decisively to contain its spread through various measures such as restrictions on international travel, managed repatriation of Filipinos from COVID-19 affected countries, declaration of state of public health emergency throughout the country, imposition of health standards and community quarantine, improvement in the health system capacity, effective enforcement, and provision of social amelioration to economically vulnerable households.

The most important measure by far was the imposition of an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) over Luzon involving strict home quarantine for all households,

suspension of public transportation, and suspension of business operations except those providing basic necessities and other expressly exempted activities. The ECQ was initially imposed for 28 days from March 17 to April 13, extended up to April 30, and imposed in identified high risk areas in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, with the areas not on ECQ placed under General Community Quarantine (GCQ) until May 15.

The ECQ intended to slow down or contain the outbreak while buying time for the health system to improve its capacity for containment and management of COVID-19 post-ECQ. This is illustrated in **Figure 1**, which is borrowed and modified from an undated PowerPoint presentation titled “COVID-19 Estimates for Philippine Provinces and Highly-Urbanized Cities” by the Bioinformatics and Modeling Group of the University of the Philippines COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team. As shown, the imposition of the ECQ brings the infection trajectory to a downward slope. However, the ECQ cannot go on indefinitely until full containment given the huge economic and social costs of its imposition. In the meantime during this period of the ECQ, the government is able to undertake measures to improve the health system’s capacity and to allow all sectors to put in place the required health standards that can bring down the epidemic peak level, or what is now commonly referred to as “flattening the curve,” when ECQ would already have been relaxed or lifted.

Figure 1

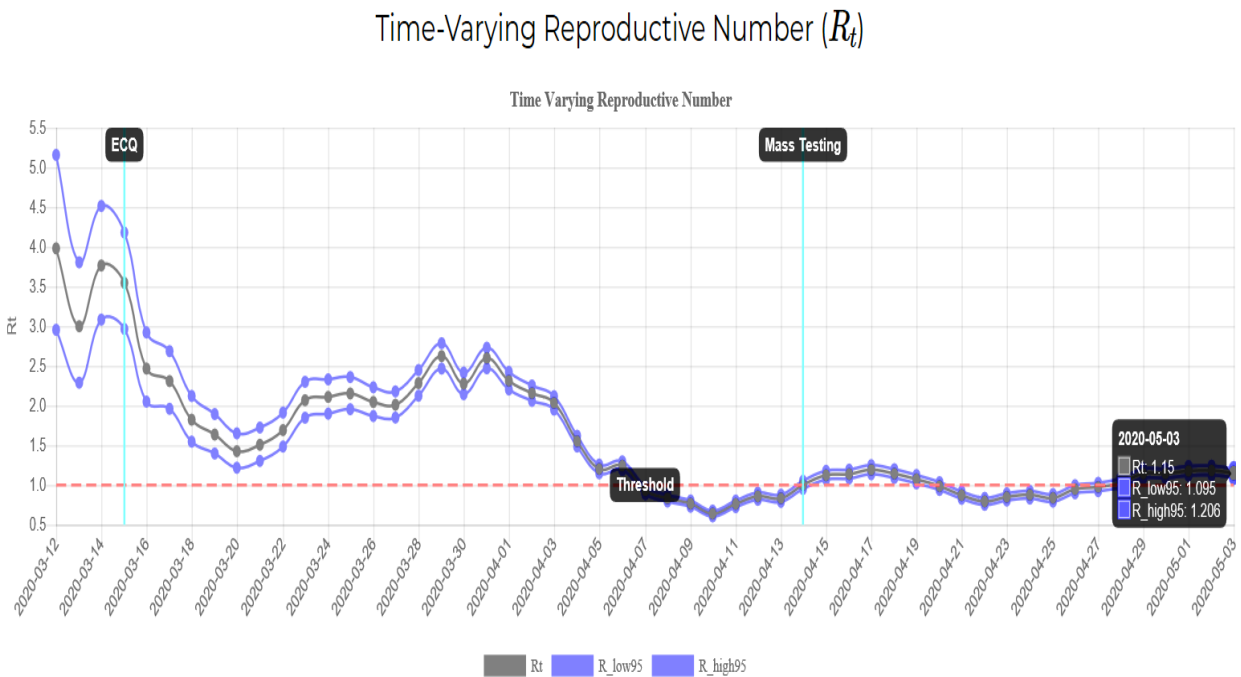


Note: Lifted with modification to reflect the ECQ extensions, from an undated PowerPoint presentation by the Bioinformatics and Modeling Group of the University of the Philippines COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team titled “COVID-19 Estimates for Philippine Provinces and Highly-Urbanized Cities”.

There is evidence of the positive impact of the ECQ on containing the outbreak. The *Leading Evidence-based Actions through Data Science (LEADS) for Health Security and Resilience*, a consortium of professionals from the academe, civil society and the private

sector⁸ doing data science and analytics on COVID-19 in the Philippines, has provided a chart (**Figure 2**) showing declining estimates of the time-varying reproduction number (R_t) of the COVID-19 infection. The time-varying reproduction number measures, at a particular point in time, the average number of secondary cases that each infected individual can infect at the prevailing conditions at such particular point in time. Pre-ECQ, the estimated R_t ranged between 3 to 4, but this has gone down to an estimated 1.15 as of May 3, 2020.

Figure 2.



Source: Lifted from LEADS for Health Security and Resilience, at <http://covid19.psphp.org/?page=tsr#timeVarying>

Still, the question for basic education is what happens beyond the current ECQ period ending on May 15, 2020. What is the epidemiological picture that we are looking at, to allow us to make informed plans and decisions for the incoming school year, which usually starts on the first Monday of June?

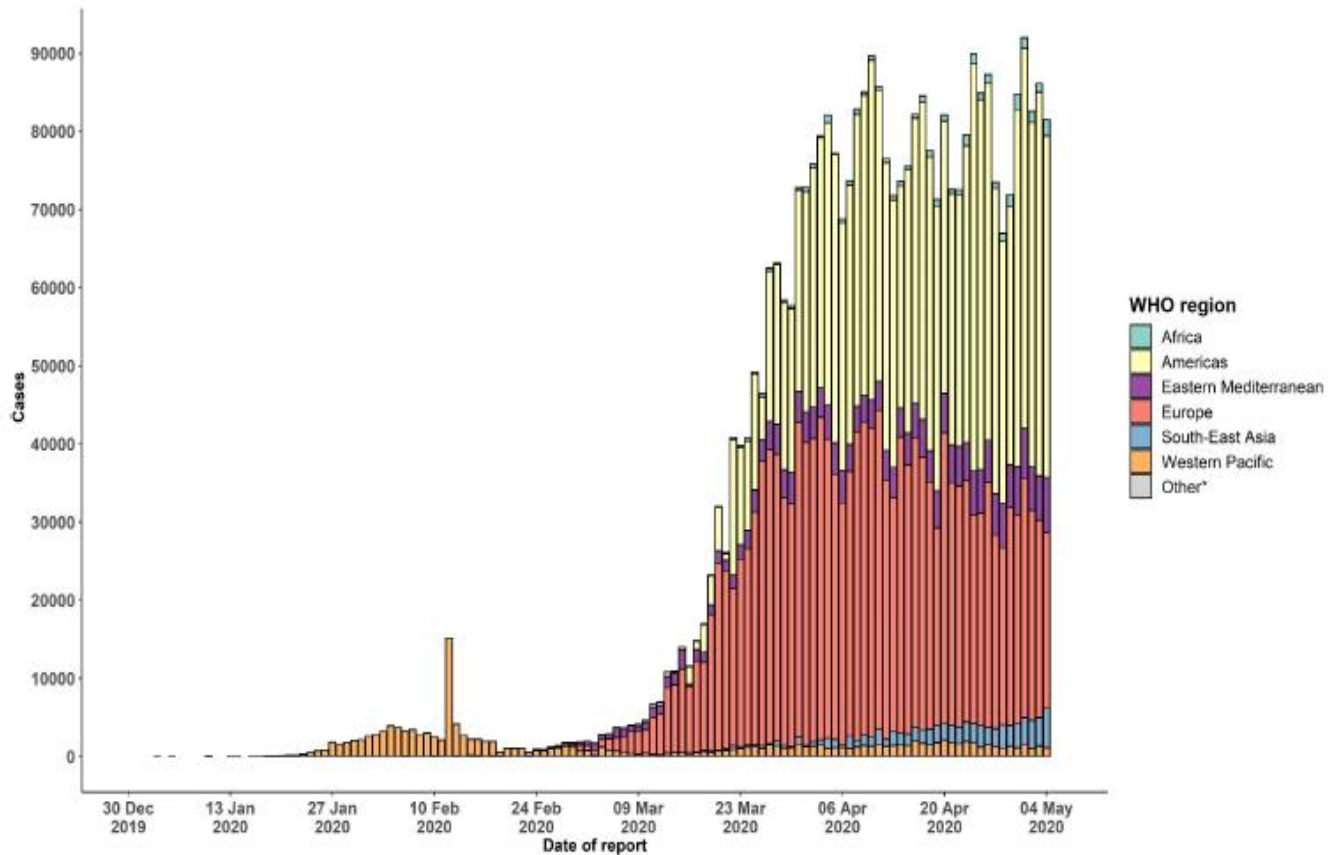
There are two aspects of the COVID-19 epidemiological picture that are of interest to DepEd in relation to school operations and school opening. The first is the general epidemiological projections, that will enable DepEd to ascertain scenarios to prepare for. The second is the specific risk factors for infection among school-aged children, especially

⁸ See <http://covid19.psphp.org/#whoWeare>.

in school setting, that will enable DepEd to come up with sector-specific, evidence-based risk assessment and risk-mitigation and response measures.

Available general epidemiological projections⁹ point to the reality that COVID-19 is not yet fully contained. In **Figure 2**, the lifting or relaxation of ECQ will represent a big change in conditions that will expectedly raise R_t again. Its containment will then depend on the ability to detect and isolate infected individuals, and on other measures that will mitigate exposure to an infected person. Even if we are able to contain COVID-19 in the country, the pandemic is still on globally, and can be reintroduced from outside. (See **Figure 3 on pandemic**) Thus, outbreak resurgence remains possible.

Figure 3. Number of confirmed COVID-19 cases by date of report and WHO region, 30 December 2019 through 5 May 2020

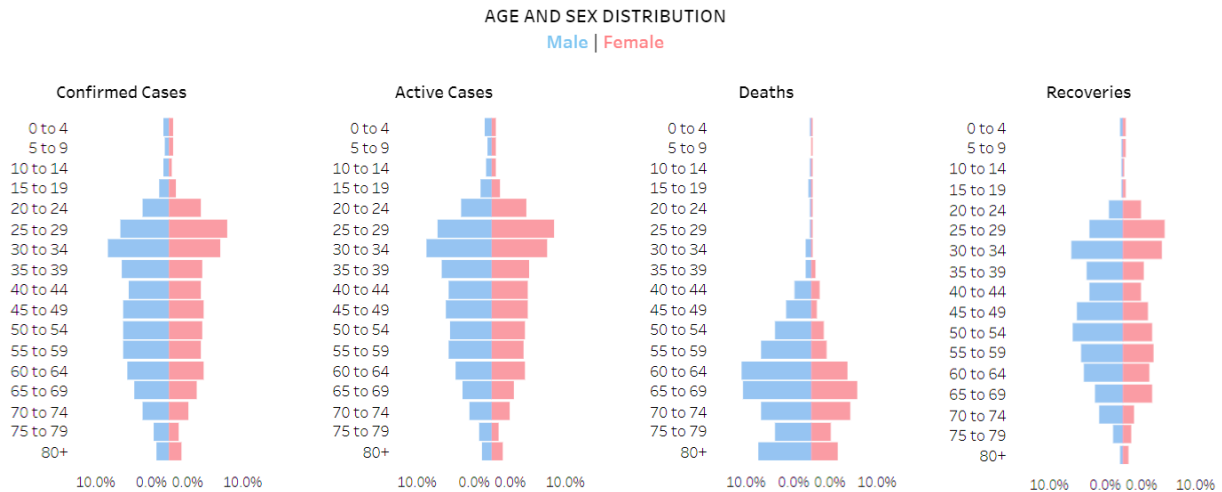


Source: Lifted from WHO COVID-19 Situation Report - 106

⁹ By their nature, models will have their respective assumptions, input parameters, and unknowns, so that projections will generally vary in terms of forecast magnitude and periods of the epidemic peak. While there remain uncertainties and divergences with respect to what will actually unfold, they nonetheless provide us with evidence-based idea of what the possibilities are.

With respect to specific risk factors for infection among school-aged children in the school setting, we have no current basis in the Philippines since classes were suspended at the early stages of the local transmission. However, the incidence of confirmed cases among the basic education school ages (5 to 17 years) is low relative to the older age groups, as shown in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4. Age and Sex Distribution of Confirmed COVID-19 Case in the Philippines, data as of May 5, 2020



Data sources: Confirmed case data from the Epidemiology Bureau (EB)

Tableau Public visualization designed in collaboration with Nel Jason Haw and Thinking Machines Data Science.

Source: Lifted from DOH COVID-19 Tracker, <https://www.doh.gov.ph/covid19tracker> downloaded on May 5, 2020.

This is confirmed by the summary of evidence on infectiousness of COVID-19 in children, as contained in a Briefing Note by the Health Operations and Technical Expertise of the WHO Western Pacific Region. We quote the summary verbatim:

“● A systematic review of 45 papers published by March 18 2020 found that children have only accounted for one to five percent of all cases.

- 90 percent of cases had symptomatic, mild or moderate disease. Median recovery time is also shorter than in adults.
- One 10-month-old child and one 14-year-old child have been reported to have died in China. No additional deaths in this age group have been reported in more recent reports.
- No deaths in children had been reported in Italy or the US at the time of publication.

● Of 366 children hospitalized in January in Central Wuhan, only six (1.6

percent) tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Median age was three years, and all recovered.

- Another study from China found that only five percent of all cases reported were in children aged one to 16 years (median age of eight years). Twenty-eight (28) percent of the patients were asymptomatic and 47 percent only displayed mild symptoms. There were no deaths in this age group. The mode of transmission in 89 percent of the cases were from close family contact.”

Among the studies often put forward by comparison in relation to infectious transmission among children in school setting are studies relating to influenza. However, in a publication by the Center for Health Security of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, titled “Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors”, it is observed that:

“However, it is still not known what role children play in the transmission of SARS-CoV-2. For other viral illnesses, like influenza, children are drivers of transmission. Early and prolonged school closures have been shown to reduce overall community transmission of influenza. There has been some evidence that COVID-19 produces more mild illness in children and therefore it may be less likely to be detected than in adults. However, without more conclusive evidence, it is difficult to quantify the role of children in propagating COVID-19 to other students, their family members, teachers, and school staff. x x x”

The role children play in transmission in the school setting needs further study, but DepEd acknowledges the high volume of contact and high degree of contact intensity in the school setting. Add to this the magnitude of the population directly covered by the sector, then the opening of schools become a potential hotspot for transmission and a public health concern in general.

Thus, DepEd adheres to the position of “Closure of schools or use of alternative learning modalities (e.g., online/distance learning)” in the Risk Severity Grading and Risk-based Public Health Standards provided by DOH in its Administrative Order No. 2020-0015, dated April 27, 2020, with the subject “Guidelines on the Risk-Based Public Health Standards for COVID-19 Mitigation”. The risk severity grading has been applied by Executive Order No. 112¹⁰, issued by the President on April 30, 2020, in the classification of cities, provinces, and regions in the country.

¹⁰ EO 112 dated April 30, 2020 is titled “Imposing an Enhanced Community Quarantine in High-Risk Geographic Areas of the Philippines and a General Community Quarantine in the Rest of the Country from 01 May to 15 May 2020, Adopting the Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation Thereof, and for Other Purposes”

The DOH Risk Severity Grading is divided into Low, Moderate and High based on a classification tool that takes into account the case doubling rate and critical care utilization rate. For Moderate and High severity gradings, schools are required to remain closed. For Low Risk severity grading, closure of schools is “Can Do,” or optional. We take it that the option will be exercised by DepEd, based on its risk assessment and feasibility of risk mitigation and response measures. (See **Table 7**.)

Another Public Health Standard in the DOH administrative order is physical distancing. It is indicated as mandatory for all risk severity levels. DepEd would need to reduce our class size to 15 to 20 learners per classroom from the present 30 to 40 learners per classroom to meet this requirement.

In summary, we see the epidemiological picture combined with the direction of national response to be as follows for basic education beyond May 15:

1. Full containment is not yet attained, given the Philippine projections and the fact that the pandemic is still raging.
2. School closures or use of alternative learning modalities will remain mandatory in areas categorized as Moderate and High Risk, based on DOH risk severity grading. However, the IATF and the Office of the President may make a more aggressive mobility restriction, such as in EO 112 which imposed a General Community Quarantine in all low and moderate risk areas, with physical classes suspended.
3. In Low Risk areas where schools may be allowed to open, physical distancing will still be required, resulting in an adjustment in class size.
4. Low Risk areas may experience an outbreak resurgence anytime, requiring closure of schools or use of alternative learning delivery modalities.

Table 7. DOH Risk Severity Grading and Risk-based Public Health Standards

Intervention	Risk Severity ¹ Based on Classification Tool		
	Low	Moderate	High
OBJECTIVE NO. 1 Increase Physical and Mental Resilience			
Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette	Must Do	Must Do	Must Do
Promote Mental Health	Must Do	Must Do	Must Do
Reduce exposure of vulnerable individuals (e.g., senior citizens, individuals with underlying health conditions) to prevent infection	Can Do	Must Do	Must Do
Provision of support for essential workforce (ex: financial, lodging, shuttle, food, etc.)	Can Do	Must Do	Must Do
Provision of support for vulnerable groups (ex. Social Amelioration Programs, Food Assistance)	Can Do	Must Do	Must Do
OBJECTIVE NO. 2 Reduce Transmission			
Personal Hygiene (e.g. handwashing with soap and water, sanitizing with hand disinfectants, etc.)	Must Do	Must Do	Must Do
Environmental Hygiene (e.g. disinfecting surfaces and objects)	Must Do	Must Do	Must Do
Use of PPE and other medical-grade protective apparel	Can Do	Must Do	Must Do
OBJECTIVE NO.3 Reduce Contact			
Physical Distancing	Must Do	Must Do	Must Do
Modified Work Structures and Schedules, and alternative work arrangements	Can Do	Must Do	Must Do
Limitation on non-essential Travel	Can Do	Must Do	Must Do
Limitation of non-essential Services	Can Do	Can Do	Must Do
Restriction on Mass Gatherings	Can Do (50 individuals max)	Can Do (10 individuals max)	Must Do
Closure of Schools OR use of alternative learning modalities (e.g., online/distance learning)	Can Do	Must Do	Must Do
OBJECTIVE NO.4 Reduce Duration of Infection			
Detection and isolation of Symptomatic Individuals (e.g. temperature scanning at entry points, symptom monitoring, etc.)	Must Do	Must Do	Must Do

Source: DOH AO 2020-0015

DepEd’s Readiness for Distance Learning. Given the epidemiological picture, the direction of overall government response, and the directive of the Secretary to find ways for learning to continue in a safe and healthy environment amid COVID-19, it is clear that distance learning will be a key modality of learning delivery in the incoming school year.

Technology solutions are very important in distance learning. Online platform is regarded to be the most advanced because of its ability to facilitate various interactive and remote activities and carry a broad range of content to a connected community.

On this aspect, one obvious limitation lies in the current stage of development of the ICT infrastructure. In the Global Connectivity Index published by Huawei, which annually ranks 79 nations based on factors including ICT investment, ICT maturity, and digital economic performance, the Philippines ranked 59th and is categorized as a “Starter.” Meanwhile, on the side of the end-user there is the question of access to the platform and the availability of the appropriate gadgets.

Within the public school system, there are 1,042,575 devices (Desktops, laptops, tablets) that are distributed across 44,155 or 93 percent of schools. Among these devices, 459,578 are laptops/tablets that may be brought home, which represents only 2 percent of total learners in the public schools. Some 22,645 or 48 percent of public schools have internet connections. Another 8,478 or 18 percent of public schools are located in areas with Internet Service Providers, but they have not yet connected.

DepEd’s Information and Communications Technology Service (ICTS) has summarized some of the critical challenges that we face, as well as the updates on ongoing initiatives, in relation to distance learning technologies:

- Access to internet is a major limiting factor to online learning. This can be mitigated by loading digital materials into the devices of learners.
- Teachers would have to be trained in the use of technology for learning delivery. DepEd has already conducted two online training programs this year with 17,000 participants each on the use of technology in teaching. This will be expanded, but there are teachers with limited knowledge in ICT, as well as with no internet access.
- Early grade levels need to be closely supervised by parents in the use of technology. Orienting the parents will be a major challenge, and there are questions as to whether parents are ready to take on this role.

- Senior high school vocational tracks have classes that require hands-on sessions in laboratories that may not be applicable in home-based approaches even with technology.
- DepEd has migrated its systems into Cloud Servers that can be scaled up to meet the increasing demand for technology-based education.

Based on an online survey that DepEd conducted to get a sense of what its immediate stakeholders think about distance learning, these are the results: from 789,690 respondents (53 percent school personnel, 31 percent parents/guardians, and 16 percent learners), overall 46 percent of the respondents said they are open to having lessons and class activities either online or on television or radio. Interestingly, the parents and guardians are the most open with 59 percent responding that they are open to this kind of distance learning. Among the school personnel respondents, 41 percent are open while from the learners, 35 percent of the respondents are open to it. This presents a major communication challenge for DepEd, to improve the degree of openness to technology-based distance learning platforms. (See Figure 5.)

There is still a preference for face-to-face learning delivery across all respondents. On the question of readiness to send learners to school with strict observance of social distancing, 66 percent of school personnel, 58 percent of parents/guardians, and 61 percent of learners express readiness. (See Figure 6.)

Figure 5. Preferred Learning Delivery Modalities

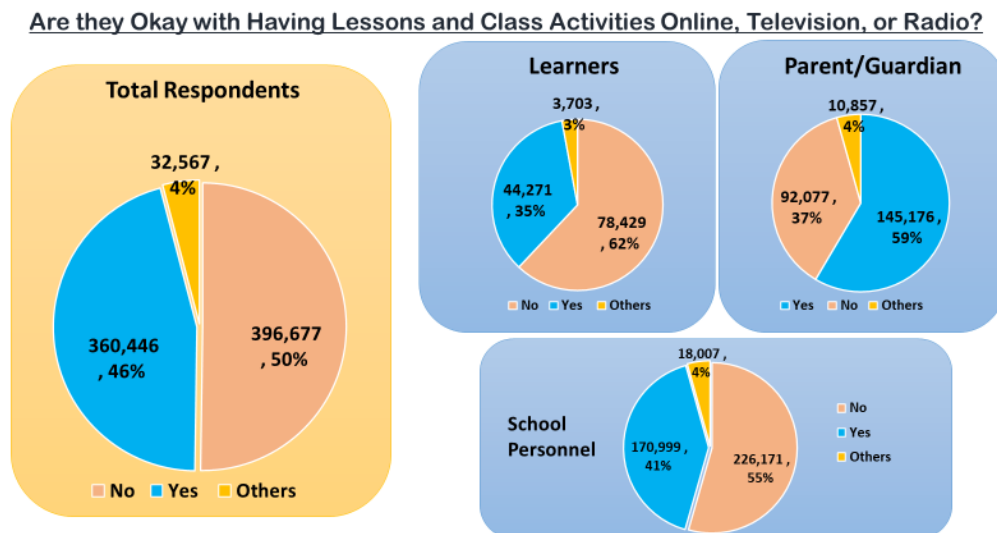
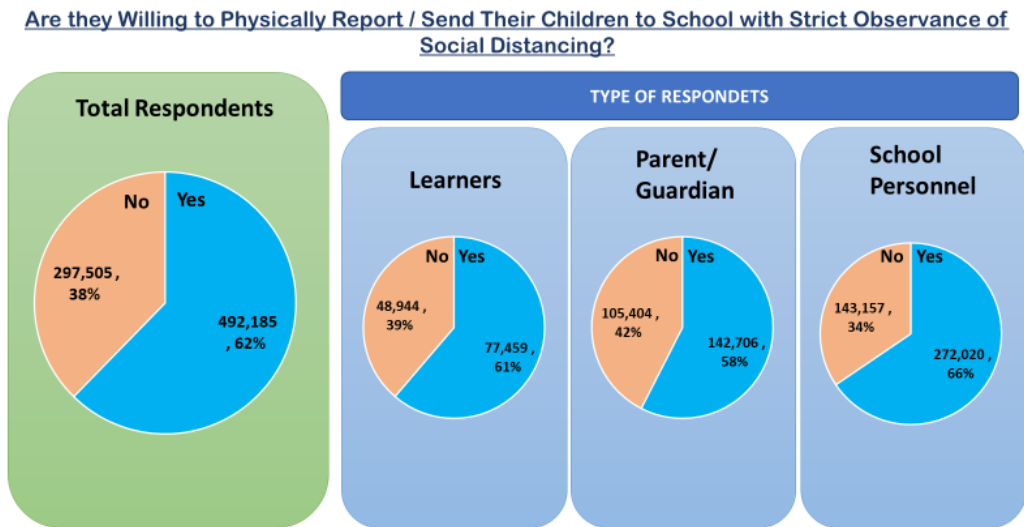
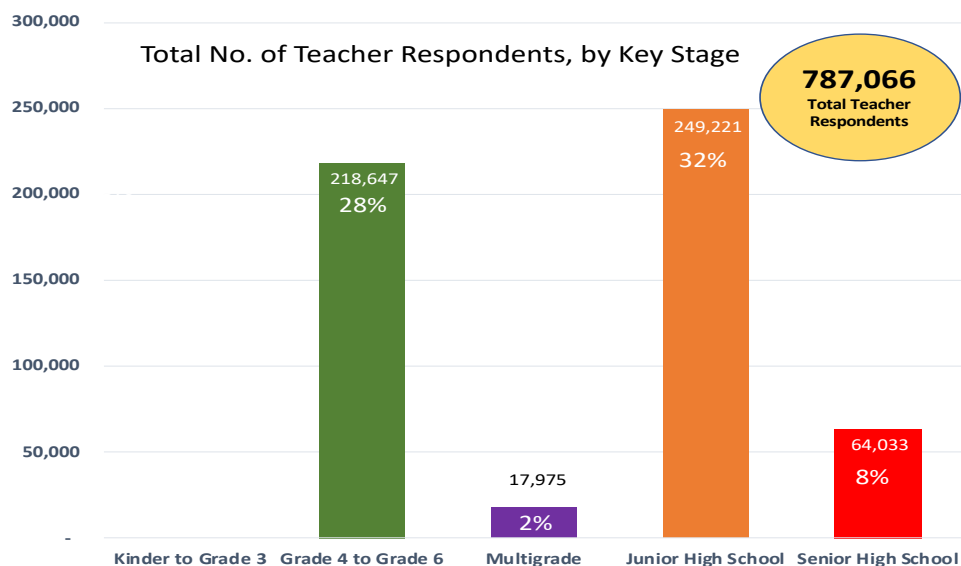


Figure 6. Willingness to Come to School with Social Distancing



DepEd also conducted a survey among its teachers on their readiness for distance education. A Memorandum was disseminated to the field with a survey template, and the responses were consolidated by the Planning and Research Unit of the Division offices and analyzed by the Planning Service. DepEd was able to obtain responses from 787,066 teachers nationwide, across the various key stages of basic education. (See Figure 7)

Figure 7. Teacher Respondents by Key Stage



In terms of ownership of laptops and desktops at home, of the 787,066 teacher respondents, 687,911 or 87 percent of the teachers indicated that they have available computer (laptop or desktop) at home, while 99,155 or 13 percent of the teachers have no computer at home. (See Figure 8.)

In terms of access to internet, of the 687,911 teacher respondents with computer at home, 49 percent or 336,252 indicated that they have internet connection at home, 41 percent or 280,531 indicated that while they have computer, they don't have internet access, and 10 percent or 71,128 responded that internet signal is not available in their area. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 8. Teachers' Ownership of Computer at Home

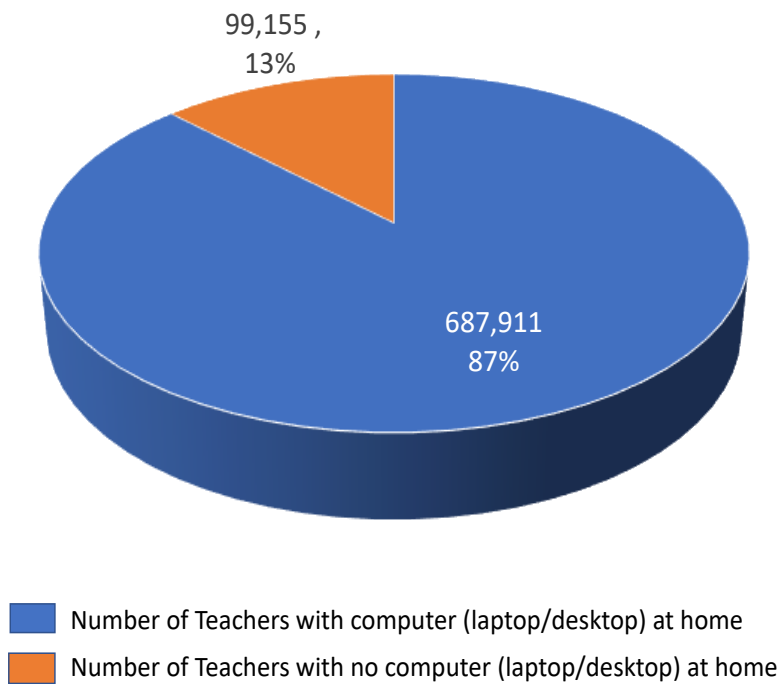
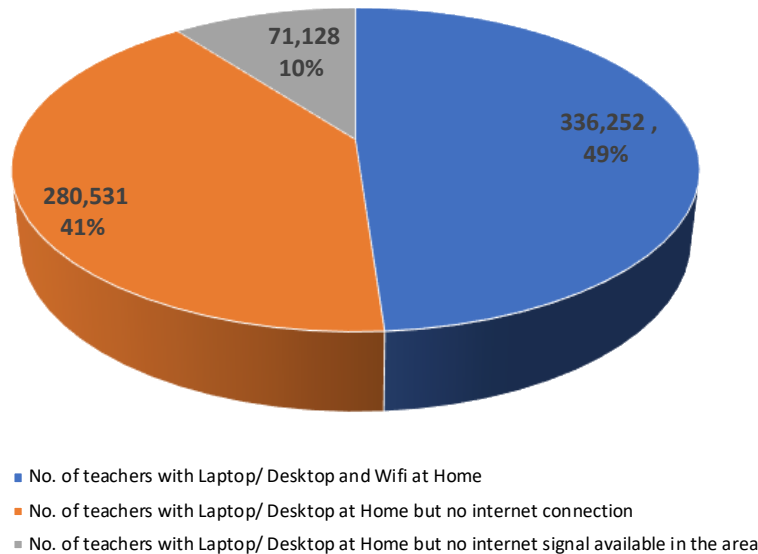


Figure 9. Teachers' Ownership of Computer and Access to Connectivity at Home



Distance learning is not new to DepEd. We have existing Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs) in the formal schools, which are not confined to online or digital platforms. However, the scale of deployment of these ADMs is small, and now is the first time that these will be employed on a large scale, thus presenting key operational challenges in implementation.

IV. School Calendar and Activities

After consultations and internal discussions, DepEd has reached a decision to set the opening of SY 2020-2021 on August 24, 2020. However, the days in August prior to the formal school opening will be used to provide learners with orientation on the utilization of alternative learning delivery modalities and corresponding learners' materials, and mental health and psychosocial support activities. These pre-opening activities devoted to the attainment of the learning objectives for the school year shall be counted as part of the class days. The school year will end on April 30, 2021.

We emphasize that the school opening will not necessarily mean traditional face-to-face learning in classroom. As indicated in the previous section, the physical opening of schools will depend on the risk severity grading of a locality. Even in areas where schools are allowed to open, physical distancing will still be required, which will necessitate schools to combine face-to-face learning with distance learning, or blended learning.

Schools shall conduct enrollment from June 1 – 30, 2020 for all learners intending to attend SY 2020-2021. Those who have enrolled during the early registration period will have to enroll again, given that circumstances have changed substantially. It is important to validate the enrollment, so that teachers and schools are able to adequately plan the organization of their learners into classes, taking into consideration their particular circumstances. The enrollment may be done electronically or in printed format. The enrollees and their parents or guardians have to accomplish an enrollment and survey form that will collect important data and information for the contextualization of the learning delivery strategies and modalities.

The push back in the formal school opening by nearly three months from the traditional first Monday of June is intended to afford DepEd enough time to undertake the necessary preparations in what will be an extraordinarily challenging school year. For this purpose, teachers shall start rendering service on June 1, 2020. They will attend orientation and training activities on the use of the multiple learning delivery modalities, prepare instructional materials, and plan the organization of classes in consideration of the learning delivery modalities to be employed. If skeleton workforce will still be the operative government guidelines by June, DepEd shall issue the appropriate alternative work arrangements guidelines to the field to comply with prevailing policy and to ensure safe work environment.

Because of the shortened school year, the Secretary is exercising her prerogative to authorize the conduct of distance learning activities on Saturdays. In all, the total class days in this year's school calendar and activities will be 203 days.

The conduct of curricular and co-curricular activities that involve gathering of larger number of learners, such as science fairs, showcase of portfolios, trade fairs, school sports, campus journalism, festival of talents, job fairs, career orientation, and other similar activities are cancelled for the school year, except for those that can be conducted through online platform.

The conduct of activities related to *Palarong Pambansa* shall be decided separately by the *Palarong Pambansa* Board.

Given the differing circumstances and capacities of learners and households to cope with the new modes of learning, we anticipate that there will be more learners that may be left behind. Thus, efforts to provide remediation and enhancement activities shall also be given more attention.

Private schools will be allowed to open classes within the period authorized by law, which is on the first Monday of June but not later than the last day of August. However, no face-to-face classes will be allowed earlier than August 24, 2020, and from then on only in areas where schools are allowed to open physically. The private schools

will also submit their respective Learning Continuity Plan and compliance to required health standards that will be issued by DepEd, consistent with guidelines from the DOH, the IATF, or the Office of the President.

A copy of the School Calendar and Activities for SY 2020-2021 is attached for further details (**Annex “B”**). The enrollment and survey form are enclosed in the school calendar.

V. Learning Strategies and Modalities

Major adjustments are being made at the central and field levels to enable DepEd to deliver distance learning at a magnitude never done before. While the task is daunting, it also compels the Department to implement on a larger scale innovations already being done by DepEd and also by its education partners, though on a much smaller scale. Thus, we are not really starting from scratch.

This section describes the key elements of the learning strategies and learning delivery modalities that will operationalize the BE-LCP. Some of these constitute parameters, while others are intended to be a menu of options and resources that our field units, from the regions, divisions, and schools can deploy, taking into consideration their respective conditions and realities on the ground.

These are work in progress, for refinement and fleshing out in the run-up to the formal school opening, and during the school year itself.

A. Streamlining the K to 12 Curriculum into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs)

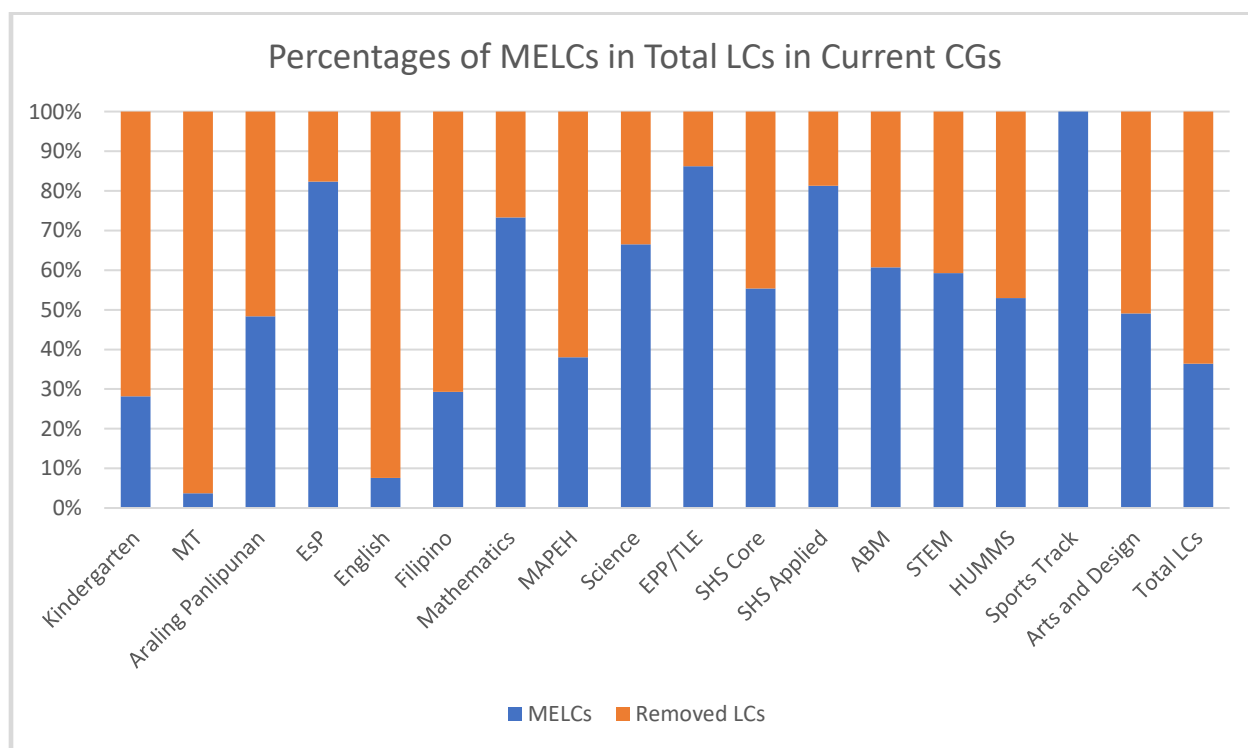
The DepEd Curriculum and Instruction strand, through the Bureau of Curriculum Development, has identified within the full K to 12 curriculum the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), hereto attached as **Annex “C”**. This has streamlined the total number of competencies in all learning areas from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (excluding the TVL specializations in Senior High School) to 5,689 from the original 14,171 or a reduction by 60 percent. (See **Table 8** and **Figure 10**.)

Table 8. Streamlining of K to 12 Curriculum into the Most Essential Learning Competencies

Subjects	Number of LCs in Current CG	Number of MELCs	Percentage of MELCs	Percentage of Removed LCs
Kindergarten	241	66	27%	73%
MT	1,738	135	8%	92%
Araling Panlipunan	527	255	48%	52%
EsP	380	313	82%	18%
English	3,120	231	7%	93%
Filipino	2,378	708	30%	70%
Mathematics	741	543	73%	27%
MAPEH	1,436	997	69%	31%
Science	284	187	66%	34%
EPP/TLE	883	749	85%	15%
SHS Core	739	409	55%	45%
SHS Applied	219	178	81%	19%
ABM	257	167	65%	35%
STEM	586	347	59%	41%
HUMMS	326	168	52%	48%
Sports Track	149	149	100%	0%
Arts and Design	167	87	52%	48%
Total	14,171	5,689	40%	60%

Source: Department of Education

Figure 10. Streamlining of K to 12 Curriculum into the Most Essential Learning Competencies



Source: Department of Education

By streamlining the learning competencies to the most essential, we will be able to give more focus to the learning activities and resources, while having sufficient time for coverage and mastery.

The identification of the MELCs is not only in response to the challenge of learning delivering learning in the time of COVID-19, but is actually the accelerated result of the curriculum review that the Secretary has directed as early as two years ago. It responds to the findings that there are overlaps and congestion in the curriculum. The review involved bureau specialists, academic experts and field implementers working collaboratively and employing consensus judgment. A key partner in the review, which remains ongoing and will still be refined and finalized beyond the COVID-19 period, is the Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC).

The MELCs are defined as the competencies that a learner needs in order to continue to subsequent grades, and ultimately to have a successful life. The characteristics of the MELCs are:

- a. It is aligned with national standards or frameworks, such as, for example, “holistic Filipino learners with 21st Century skills”.
- b. They connect the content to higher concepts across content areas.
- c. They are applicable to real-life situations.
- d. They are important for students to acquire, even if a student drops out from school.
- e. They cannot be expected to be ordinarily learned by students if not taught in school.

A word that may describe an essential learning competency is “endurance”, that is, it remains with learners long after a test or unit of study is completed, or it remains useful beyond a single test or unit of study. Examples of such learning competencies include research skills, reading comprehension, writing, map reading, and hypothesis testing, which are essential in many professions and in everyday life.

Releasing the MELCs does not necessarily replace the use of the curriculum guides. Rather, these serve as a supplementary guide for teachers as they address the instructional needs of learners. The content and performance standards are indicated in **Annex “C”** for field implementers to recognize that the MELCs are anchored on the prescribed K to 12 standards.

Finally, field implementers are encouraged to contextualize the MELCs in order to accommodate the varying contexts of learners, teachers, learning environment, and support structures considering both the content and performance standards. With these, Filipino learners are guaranteed relevant and quality basic education amidst COVID-19.

There shall be a follow-up issuance to further explain how the MELCs should be used, and to clarify its status in relation to the ongoing broader K to 12 curriculum review.

B. Learning Delivery Modalities

The learning delivery modalities that schools can adopt may be one or a combination of the following, depending on the COVID-19 restrictions and the particular context of the learners in the school or locality.

1. **Face-to-face**. This refers to a learning delivery modality where the students and the teacher are both physically present in the classroom, and there are opportunities for active engagement, immediate feedback, and socio-emotional development of learners.

In areas under the Moderate and High-risk severity grading, this is not possible. However, there are learners with disabilities whose condition require face-to-face instruction. This will be the subject of further discussion within DepEd, with partners, and with parents.

Face-to-face option may also be feasible in very low risk areas such as the geographically isolated, disadvantaged and conflict affected areas (GIDCA) with no history of infection and very low and easily monitored external contacts, but with teachers and learners living in the vicinity of the school.

Any face-to-face learning delivery must have proper risk assessment and must adhere to the health protocols in place. Potential learning spaces in the community near the school may be explored to add spaces for the conduct of classes with the appropriate social distancing.

2. **Distance learning**. This refers to a learning delivery modality where learning takes place between the teacher and the learners who are geographically remote from each other during instruction. This modality has three types: Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV/Radio-Based Instruction.

Modular Distance Learning involves individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules (SLMs) in print or digital

format/electronic copy, whichever is applicable in the context of the learner, and other learning resources like Learner's Materials, textbooks, activity sheets, study guides and other study materials. Learners access electronic copies of learning materials on a computer, tablet PC, or smartphone. CDs, DVDs, USB storage and computer-based applications can all be used to deliver e-learning materials, including offline E-books. The teacher takes the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners. The learners may ask assistance from the teacher via e-mail, telephone, text message/instant messaging, etc. Where possible, the teacher shall do home visits to learners needing remediation or assistance. Any member of the family or other stakeholder in the community needs to serve as para-teachers.

Online Distance Learning features the teacher as facilitator, engaging learners' active participation through the use of various technologies accessed through the internet while they are geographically remote from each other during instruction. The internet is used to facilitate learner-teacher and peer-to-peer communication. Online learning allows live synchronous instruction. It requires participants to have good and stable internet connection. It is more interactive than the other types of distance learning. The responses are real-time. The learners may download materials from the internet, complete and submit assignments online, attend webinars and virtual classes. This is practiced effectively by using a Learning Management System or related technologies. The DepEd Commons and LR Portal fall in this category.

TV/Radio-Based Instruction utilizes SLMs converted to video lessons for Television-Based Instruction and SLMs converted to radio script for Radio-Based Instruction.

Distance learning modality is most viable for independent learners, and learners supported by periodic supervision of parents or guardians.

The challenge will be in dealing with learners not capable of independent learning. This is the subject of further discussion within DepEd, and with partners and parents.

3. **Blended Learning.** This refers to a learning delivery that combines face-to-face with any or a mix of online distance learning, modular distance learning, and TV/Radio-based Instruction. Blended learning will enable the schools to limit

face-to-face learning, ensure social distancing, and decrease the volume of people outside the home at any given time.

Critical for implementation will be the production of the needed teacher's and learner's learning materials (LR Portal and DepEd Commons will be maximized), as well as the support of media institutions like TV and radio stations.

4. **Homeschooling.** This is an is an ADM that aims to provide learners with access to quality basic education through a home-based environment to be facilitated by qualified parents, guardians, or tutors who have undergone relevant training. It allows families to educate according to their personal faith, philosophy, and values, and to adjust learning schedules around family schedules and circumstances. However, there remain several issues in its implementation, including the supervision of licensed teachers and alignments with the curriculum. Thus, this this modality will be the subject of a later DepEd issuance before its expansion.

A matrix of the modalities, considerations and strategies is attached as **Annex "D"**. In addition, the Curriculum and Instruction strand has identified some of the factors that needs to be assessed in order to determine the learning delivery options:

- **Risk Severity Grading/IATF Policy**
 - Whether teachers and learners are allowed to be in school
 - Physical distancing
- **School Context**
 - Health status of teachers
 - Readiness of Principals and Supervisors to lead and manage multiple learning delivery modalities
 - Availability of learning resources/materials: Textbooks/printed modules; Offline learning resources; Online learning resources; Educational TV and Radio broadcast resources
 - Teachers' readiness and capacity to facilitate multiple learning delivery modalities
- **Learners' Context**
 - Capacity to complete self-directed learning resources
 - Access to learning resources and technology

- Parents, home, and community support
- Capacity to guide learners in understanding lessons

C. Learning Resources

In addition to the textbooks distributed to the schools, Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) shall be made available in print and digital format (PDF Flat and Interactive) for use this incoming school year. They will be converted to inclusive interactive e-books where videos, audio and even sign language interpretation can be embedded to respond to the needs of the children with disabilities

SLMs in PDF Flat shall be uploaded to the Learning Resource Portal while the SLMs in digital interactive, inclusive e-books and video lessons shall be uploaded to DepEd Commons. SLMs will also be converted to video-taped lessons for radio scripts for radio-based instruction.

Based on the ongoing inventory by the Bureau of Learning Resources of printed, digital offline and online materials, and educational videos, DepEd presently has the following:

Grade Level	List of Materials
Kindergarten	K to G3 - Story books through Competition Writing, Kindergarten Activity Sheets, ADM K Learning Kit
Grade 1 to 3	Primer Lessons for Grade 1, Story books thru Competition Writing, G1 English - Activity Sheets, LMs and TGs
Grade 4 to 6	LMs & TGs for Grade 4, TM and TX for 5 & 6
Grade 7 to 10	TXs & TMs, TGs and LMs
Grade 11-12	TXs & TMs, LMs & TGs, Readers, Manuals, PRIMALS PLUS Self-Learning Modules for Core Subjects

- Self-Learning Modules for ADM crafted by all Regions from Kindergarten to Grade 12 Core Subjects plus Applied Subjects covering all Essential Learning Competencies

- Self-Learning Modules for SHS Core Learning Areas developed under PRIMALS Plus. BLD is also working on the development of modules for Applied Subjects and Specialized Subjects.
- 2016 Grade 5 Buffer Materials for all Learning Areas. There are Activity Sheets based on the CG.
- 2017 Grade 6 Activity Sheets for All Learning Areas
- *Balik Kasaysayan* Lesson Exemplars and Travelogues developed by regions
- Multi-Grade self-instructional tools for learners available in Multi-Grade schools

For K to 3

- ADM Learning Modules for K (Kindergarten Learning Experiences -KCEP Module) to Grade 3. It includes modules in digital format, video lessons/modules in audio format (interactive), interactive songs, poems, rhymes in different languages, manipulative materials on literacy and numeracy content like puzzles, forming words, lacing, tracing, etc.
- Primer lessons in the 19 languages.
- Primer lessons for Grade 1 (TG, LM, FAT-Formative Assessment Tool) for teaching beginning reading in the mother tongue to be made available in print, digital (available in LR portal) and audio format. This should be accompanied by big books and small books in digital and audio format with consideration to the mother tongue (MT) of the learners to develop and enhance the learner's skills in beginning reading in MT.
- Primer lessons for Grades 2 and 3 (TG and LM) to be made available in print, (Primer Gr. 2-for finalization, Primer Gr. 3-for development for 2020) digital and audio format as bridging materials for smooth transition in reading from L1 (MT), to L2 (Filipino) then L3 (English). This should be accompanied by big books and small books in digital and audio format with consideration to the mother tongue (MT) of the learners.

During our scan of existing learning resources, we have also found a body of learning resources across various distance learning approaches and platforms, developed by non-DepEd entities. DepEd will explore ways to deploy a number of these resources, subject to content evaluation and through arrangements consistent with existing laws, rules and regulations.

D. Strategies for K to 3

The early-grade learners (K to 3 stage) are the most vulnerable to not being able to access education. They rely heavily on the guidance of adults as caregivers and as facilitators of learning. The delivery of instruction for them should be anchored on the

principles of developmentally appropriate practices: age appropriate, individually appropriate and socio-culturally appropriate.

Since early grades learners need adult guidance, a combination of face-to-face learning delivery with the teacher and modular learning at home may be employed. For modular learning at home, the guidance of trained para-teachers is required. They must be trained on the content and delivery of instruction before implementation to properly and appropriately deliver the instruction. Facilitator's Guide shall be made available to para-teachers.

E. Assessment

The learning outcomes in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values will be assessed. Learners shall prepare their portfolio / e-portfolio to include written works, and performances (and products), whether hardcopy, softcopy or a combination of these. The portfolio/e-portfolio content will be assessed using rubrics that capture the evidence of learning. Testimonies of parents and other adults including community leaders aside from teachers may also be considered in the assessment.

Where face-to-face learning and blended learning is possible, summative test will be administered in school. For learners who are on distance learning, summative test may be administered when physical classes shall be allowed in their respective areas.

National Examinations are a necessary part of quality assurance and provide important feedback on the system's performance as regards curricular reforms, professional development of teachers and educational leaders, provision of financial resources and learning materials, and student's learning outcome. Thus the administration of national examinations shall continue amidst COVID-19.

DepEd shall issue specific guidelines on assessments taking into consideration the physical limitations imposed by COVID-19.

F. Alternative Learning System (ALS)

The overall goal of the learning continuity plan for ALS is to sustain the gains of the Duterte administration in the delivery of quality and relevant second chance basic education programs for out-of-school youth and adults while ensuring the health and safety of both learners and teachers during the COVID-19 emergency and in the transition to the new normal.

Curriculum. The ALS K to 12 curriculum will be further enriched and made relevant to address cross-cutting and emerging issues. The learning goals (outlined in the individual learning agreement) and the recognized prior learning of an ALS student will

determine the competencies in the ALS curriculum that will be given focus in learning activities and the amount of time needed for coverage and mastery.

Training programs that will be relevant as we move forward post-COVID, such as entrepreneurship in industry 4.0, digital citizenship, health promotion and agribusiness will be made available.

Learning Delivery Options. Inclusiveness in existing learning delivery modalities will be strengthened so that more women, PWDs, and members of IP and marginalized communities are reached. To address the issue of social distancing and limited learner access to internet (which limits possibilities for online instruction), ALS teachers shall be encouraged to utilize the following options for the continuance of ALS learning interventions:

- 1) Blended approach for advanced Elementary and Secondary level learners
 - The existing modules for the advanced Elementary and Secondary level are instructionally designed to support self-learning e.g., they are grouped into manageable lessons with pre-and post-tests, self-directed learning activities, and written in conversational/interactive style. These modules can serve as the primary source of content delivery. Other available materials can also be used for supplemental learning. Learners can report to the CLC on an agreed staggered schedule to pick up copies of modules which they can study independently throughout the week. During their weekly CLC visit they shall return completed modules for use by other learners. ALS teachers will need to devise a modified library system to manage the borrowing of modules by learners.
 - The ALS teachers' task is to design weekly learning plans/agreements with their individual learners. The existing Individual Learning Agreement (ILA) template can be used for this purpose. The agreement shall cover specific learning objectives for the week and identify the modules and resources to be accessed e.g., work sheets, radio, TV, internet, and other learning activities that can support attainment of these learning goals.
 - The ALS teachers shall assign weekly assessment tasks for evaluating their learning progress. The module post-tests can be used for this purpose and supplemented by other teacher-made assessments. The module post-tests can be supervised by the ALS teacher during their weekly CLC visit, or by parents, peer learners, or learners' siblings. It is important for learners to practice their writing and higher order thinking skills. To achieve this, ALS teachers can send questions via SMS or other messaging platforms that learners can answer.

Learners will be given writing tasks on the modules and should be encouraged to submit a weekly written learning reflection. The writing tasks are expected to train learners to practice higher thinking skills, as they document the new knowledge and skills they have gained, the learning challenges they faced, and what parts of the module they did not fully understand and need additional help for from their teacher. These reflection paper and other learning outputs should be discussed with the ALS teacher during the weekly CLC visit.

- During the week, the ALS teachers may provide remote learning support by answering queries, giving feedback, and providing socio-emotional support to learners through social media platforms.
- Peer learning can also be introduced. Learners can organize online or social media groups. If learners live near each other, and their LGU allows small gatherings, they could meet in pairs/triads to discuss their learning activities.
- The working folder/portfolio will continue to play a very important role in ALS. The teacher will review the portfolio outputs, learning journal/notebook entries and reflection papers with individual students and agree on the following week's learning contract deliverables and learning strategies.

2) Face-To-Face Learning Sessions for lower elementary and basic literacy level learners.

- Basic literacy and lower elementary level learners need more face-to-face facilitator-aided support than advanced elementary and secondary ALS learners. It is difficult to provide this learning support remotely given the weak literacy skills of BL and LE level learners. ALS teachers who wish to continue offering basic literacy and lower elementary A&E classes will have to conduct these face-to-face learning sessions on an agreed schedule with learners in an appropriate learning environment.
- ALS teachers will need to prepare a class program and set a maximum number of learners per session that complies with the physical distancing requirements.
- If the learning center/location is too small to accommodate all learners, the class may be divided into sub-groups with different schedules.

3) Radio-Based Instruction (RBI) or Broadcast of ALS "Ibang Klase" TV episodes of Knowledge Channel

- For RBI, DepEd has developed some audio materials and scripts that ALS teachers can access, download, and store. ALS teachers are also encouraged to develop their own radio scripts based on the ALS K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) to be quality-assured by the Division ALS Focal Person and Learning Resource Supervisor. They would then need to coordinate with their local community radio to secure airtime for broadcast of radio-based materials.
- TV, such as the Knowledge Channel, may be a source of supplemental learning given lack of internet access in some areas. Knowledge Channel videos can also be downloaded for free from the website www.knowledgechannel.org. Some of these videos have accompanying lesson guides.

4) Online learning for learners with gadgets and access to the internet

- Learners with ICT equipment such as computers, mobile phones/pads, and other digital devices and have access to internet can continue learning through the DepEd Commons, DepEd Learning Resource Portal, ICT4ALS application developed by UNICEF with DepEd ALS teachers and the *AralMuna* application. DepEd Commons can be accessed free through Smart and Globe.
- ALS teachers can also save the soft copies of ALS modules in the cell phones or mobile devices/pads of their learners, if available or when circumstances allow.
- With support from partners, innovations will be introduced to update and improve the DepEd learning resource portals, while securing the integrity of online assessments.

Assessment. For the conduct of A&E test, the Bureau of Education Assessment shall release further guidance on its administration. To better prepare the ALS learners in the A&E test, the ALS Task Force has developed an A&E Readiness Test to be administered in the Community Learning Centers or agreed venue by the ALS Teachers and learners. A memo shall be issued on the details of said test.

Teacher training and support. A series of capacity building workshops shall be rolled out for DepEd field officials and ALS teachers on how to implement ALS 2.0 during emergencies and in the new normal. In preparation for the school opening, ALS implementers will be trained on the following topics: ILA/contract-based learning; portfolio assessment; setting up and supporting peer learning and peer assessment;

parental/familial engagement strategies to support learning; use of technology for learning support; ALS – Learning Action Cells; and instructional mentoring/coaching.

Learners’ support. For the learners, guidance and career support services shall be introduced to help address academic and psychological issues affecting learning. Such services will help prepare learners for their options after undergoing ALS, specifically in their transition to employment, self-employment, entrepreneurship, or continuing education.

Learning Environment. It is proposed that existing formal school facilities be also used by ALS learners not only to ensure that social distancing protocols are observed, but also to provide access to WASH facilities for ALS learners. For CLCs that will still be used, disinfecting and sanitizing products should be provided.

G. Establishing a Committee for the Development, Acquisition, and Deployment of Learning Resources

Because sources of learning materials and platforms are vastly diverse, a committee led by the Curriculum and Instruction Strand, with representations from the Office of the Secretary, Legal Affairs, Administration, Procurement, Field Operations, and Finance shall be constituted to develop a transparent and responsive process for the development, evaluation, selection, acquisition and deployment of various learning resources and platforms.

VI. Preparing Our Teachers and School Leaders for Multiple Learning Delivery Modalities

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its concomitant challenges, the Department of Education, through the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), affirms its commitment to providing and supporting the professional development of teachers and school leaders.

Our teachers and school leaders shall be capacitated to implement and manage the adoption of multi-modal learning delivery models based on their technology resources map, readiness assessment results, and implementation plans. They will be introduced to a range of delivery modalities they can utilize depending on the context in their community, the situation of learners and the teachers, and with the tools and mechanism that will be provided to them to make informed decisions on appropriate learning modality for their context. Context includes geographical conditions, access to delivery platforms (i.e. online, broadcast technology, and modules), readiness of learners, teachers and household and community partners, and other relevant factors.

The capacity building programs, to be implemented starting June 2020, will address the curriculum requirements in terms of essential learning competencies and content as well as pedagogy and assessment, and will complement the learning resources already available through the DepEd LR Portal, DepEd Commons, and other LR portals and resources that may be made available by education partners. Given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic not only to the physical but also to the mental health of both learners and teachers, capacity building will also include support for teachers so they can debrief their classes about their experience of the public health crisis, and also set fair expectations on how learning will take place with the “new normal.”

There will also be efforts to train teachers in identifying and assisting children under vulnerable conditions, and in protecting them from violence and harm in the various contexts of the school, home as school, and the cyber world. These children include those who are victims or at risk of child abuse and bullying, children under conflict-afflicted areas, children in disaster-prone areas, gifted children, and other learners who are at risk of learning discontinuity because of socio-economic factors, among others. Proper attention must be given to these learners, as under normal conditions they already face enough limiting their ability to catch up with the other students. Otherwise, students with learning disabilities may lag further behind the rest of the learner population. These strategies shall ensure that teachers can seamlessly transition their learning activities into formats that are appropriate to the platforms and modalities that they will adopt and implement.

The capacity-building intervention shall also be differentiated in consideration of the level of risk in the area and the COVID response adopted based on the epidemiological picture. Thus, the intervention delivery shall adopt a multi-modal approach that leverages accessible technology, resources, and capacities of the education system as well as client-readiness to undertake the process of capacity building. Rapid survey on the physical readiness of Teachers, School Leaders, and Households for Remote Learning through the Division and Regional Offices shall be conducted ahead of finalizing the arrangements for capacity building programs.

Moreover, a support mechanism shall be established for teachers and school leaders, including supervisors, to have access to relevant on-demand technical and administrative advice and guidance. This will come in the form of functional helpdesk, coaching, professional learning community through the learning action cell (LAC), resource materials, and other forms of support that can be made available in real or virtual platforms/set-up. Monitoring of course implementation and identification of areas of improvement and best practices will also be conducted.

In line with the fourth pillar of *Sulong Edukalidad* which is to increase the engagement of stakeholders for support and collaboration, DepEd, through the issuance of DM No. 048, s. 2020, called for proposals for professional development programs and

courses from both DepEd units and non-DepEd Learning Service Providers. This opens to non-DepEd learning service providers the opportunity to contribute to the education of our children. DepEd also issued DM No. 050, s. 2020 which provided the professional development priorities for teachers and school leaders for the school year 2020-2023, which includes training programs in light of COVID-19 for the incoming school year.

VII. Operationalizing the Learning Continuity Plan

A. Required Health Standards

In accordance with the DOH *Guidelines on the Risk-Based Public Health Standards for COVID-19 Mitigation* (DOH AO No. 2020-0015), the DepEd will issue Guidelines on its *Required Health Standards* for the adoption and guidance of all public and private schools and DepEd offices. This will cover the four COVID-19 Mitigation Objectives identified by the DOH, namely:

1. Increase Physical and Mental Resilience
2. Reduce Transmission
3. Reduce Contact
4. Reduce Duration of Infection

Additional references also guide the development of the DepEd Required Health Standards, such as:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (2020)¹¹, which provides recommendations for a holistic approach to required health standards. A holistic approach should include a communication strategy, community engagement, and health protocols that should be adopted by schools. It also details actions to be taken in situations where there is community transmission, among others.
- International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) UNESCO: Plan for School Reopening (2020) highlights the need for communities to trust in the health and safety measures which shall guarantee the well-being of the learners, teachers, and staff in schools. Infrastructure, finance, and human resources all play a role in ensuring the implementation of necessary safety protocols.

¹¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools-h.pdf>

- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Health Security, *Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors* (2020) ¹² provides a breakdown of risks involved in various settings, including schools.
- UNESCO/UNICEF/World Bank/World Food Programme: *Framework for Reopening Schools* (2020) highlights six strategies in operationalizing the opening of schools. The framework reiterates that policy and financing serve as support to safe operations, learning especially among the most marginalized, and well-being and protection. In this case, the Required Health Standards are created to promote the well-being and protection of DepEd learners, teachers, and staff.

Increase Physical and Mental Resilience. According to UNESCO, COVID-19 has not only disrupted essential school-based services, but has also been a source of stress and anxiety to learners due to loss of peer interaction and disrupted routines. It is essential to re-establish the regular and safe delivery of services such as school feeding, mental health, and psychosocial support in the coming school year.

As an intervention for increasing the physical resilience of learners, the Department intends to strengthen its implementation of the *School Based Feeding Program* to severely wasted and wasted learners, as well as of DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2017 (*Policy and Guidelines on Healthy Food and Beverage Choices in Schools and in DepEd Offices*). In order to ensure adequate nutrition and diets in the time of COVID-19, schools and offices are to provide advocacy and instruction on health education and nutrition.

The DepEd Required Health Standards shall put strong emphasis on the need to protect and promote the mental health and general welfare of all learners and DepEd personnel across all risk severity gradings. Mental health interventions that increase resilience include mental health and psychosocial support, such as psychological first aid (PFA), in-house counseling sessions, online counseling, and support groups. Learners in particular shall be given PFA within the first month of the resumption of classes.

Reduce Transmission. Given that the virus has not yet been fully contained, DepEd shall ensure that its facilities are ready to receive students and personnel and that they follow the stringent social distancing measures as well as strengthen programs promoting hygiene. Compliance to the standards set in DO No. 10, s. 2016 titled *Policy and Guidelines for the Comprehensive Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools (WINS) Program* shall be strictly observed. Though the program has been targeted for schools, the same standards shall be applied in the offices, such as provision of adequate clean water

¹² https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf

and soap for handwashing as well as alcohol or sanitizers. In addition to the current programs in place, the following measures shall also be implemented:

- There shall be designated isolation areas, aligned with the standards set by DOH, for school and offices
- All students, teachers, and personnel who will be entering the school/office premises shall use cloth masks
- Regular disinfection of schools and offices shall be conducted
- Teachers shall regularly and closely monitor the health of their students
- Students, teachers, and personnel who will be detected as having respiratory symptoms shall not be allowed in schools/offices.

These health and safety standards shall not only be observed in schools and offices, but during travel and in their private activities as well, to reduce risk of exposure and transmission.

Reduce contact. As already set through DTF No. 025 s.2020 and other related issuances, DepEd shall continue to implement strict physical distancing at the Central and Field Offices. Non-essential travel and activities will be limited. In addition, temporary barriers will be installed between cubicles.

There shall be restrictions on mass gatherings that will require close contact, such as flag ceremonies and face-to-face office meetings. Any or a combination of work-from-home, skeleton workforce, or other alternative work arrangements shall be put in place pursuant to CSC Memorandum Circular No. 10 series of 2020, entitled *Revised Interim Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements & Support Mechanisms for Workers in the Government During the Period of State of National Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic*. Whenever work-from-home arrangements are not possible, other efforts to maintain social distancing, such as limiting the number of individuals who can eat in the pantry at a given time, will also be in place.

For schools, if localities with low-risk severity will be permitted to hold classes through the face-to-face modality, class size shall be reduced to 15 to 20 learners in a classroom. Classrooms shall maximize available ventilation. Moreover, as discussed more comprehensively in another portion of this LCP, a combination of different modalities shall be implemented on top of or to replace face-to-face learning delivery in order to reduce possible exposure of learners and teachers. All activities involving large congregation of learners are cancelled in the coming school year.

Reduce duration of infection. In order to reduce the duration of infection of COVID-19, detection and isolation of symptomatic individuals must be ensured in all schools and offices. Pursuant to DM No. 15, s. 2020, (*First Set of Policy Directives of the DepEd Task Force on NCOV*) the Preventive Alert System in Schools shall remain in operation to be able to identify possible cases. Further stated in the Memorandum,

students, teachers, and personnel who are exhibiting symptoms shall immediately be referred to the school health personnel or nearest barangay/municipal/city health center for evaluation or referral to a hospital for possible testing.

Should there be an infected student, teacher, or personnel, contact tracing within the school or office shall be done and quarantine of students, teachers, or personnel who had direct contact with the infected person shall be observed. Disinfection of the places within school or office where the infected had been should immediately follow. The proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for emergency situations and management of quarantine facilities will be detailed in the Required Health Standards.

Other components. To support the implementation of the identified strategies under each COVID-19 mitigation objective, DepEd shall also implement the following:

1. Continuation of DepEd Task Force COVID-19

The DepEd Task Force COVID-19, created through DM No. 11, s. 2020, shall continue to lead the overall efforts of the Department in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 through policy recommendations and strategy development. It shall monitor compliance with the DepEd Required Health Standards, DOH guidelines, and other relevant policy directives in relation to COVID-19. It shall also perform other functions and activities as may be necessary to carry out their mandate, or as the Secretary may direct.

2. Communications Plan

The Department places great emphasis on the importance of maintaining clear communication, consultation, and coordination with learners, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. In its *Plan for School Reopening*, intended to support countries in ensuring access to quality education in the time of COVID-19, the IIEP UNESCO encourages transparency with all education stakeholders and the correction of misinformation to appease public doubts or worries.

As discussed earlier in this BE-LCP, DepEd is strengthening its new media channels across various online platforms for quick and wide syndication of its policies and announcements. We are also doing environment scanning for the collection of inputs from stakeholders that will help inform our decisions.

In disseminating relevant mental health, and preventive and safety information, support, and response in the midst of COVID-19, the Public Affairs Service (PAS) shall work closely with the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRRMS), Quick Response and Recovery Team (QRRT), Bureau of Learner Support Services-School Health Division (BLSS-SHD), and other DepEd units.

3. Internal Situation Reports

The Department, through the DepEd COVID Task Force, has been issuing an internal situation report regularly to all DepEd units. The said report contains updated statistics of infected persons nationally, zeroing in on infected persons within the Department, the latest actions taken by the Department in support of COVID-19 mitigation, and the latest issuances related to COVID-19, among others. The report also aims to keep all DepEd units informed about the latest development in the Department in relation to COVID-19 situation and to ensure that all actions being undertaken are unified.

The DepEd Required Health Standards will be issued through a DepEd Memorandum detailing the health and safety standards for schools and offices discussed above.

B. Contextualizing Learning Strategies and Modalities in Regions

Upon recommendation by the Schools Division Offices, after consultation with the schools under their respective jurisdictions, the Regional Directors shall decide on the learning delivery modalities deemed appropriate in the context of the local conditions and consistent with the COVID-19 guidelines and regulations.

We have great trust in our field officials, school leaders and teachers, particularly in their resilience, adaptability, and resourcefulness in delivering instruction. Our schools and field offices are very much mindful of the Secretary's direction to pivot to quality under the framework of *Sulong EduKalidad*, and we are confident that our own front liners will ensure that the quality of education will be enhanced rather than sacrificed.

The contextualization at the field shall be informed by the wealth of knowledge and experience in ground conditions by our regions, divisions and schools. However, there is also a wealth of resources that can serve as guides in deploying various technologies for distance learning. By way of example, we include in this document as **Annex "E"** an excellent paper by Ani Rosa Almario and Reagan Austria, titled "Helping K-12 Schools transition to Post-COVID 19 Times," which provides practical steps that K-12 schools may take in order to arrive at the best decisions regarding the use of educational technology to address their particular situation.

C. Brigada Eskwela and Oplan Balik Eskwela

Brigada Eskwela and *Oplan Balik Eskwela*, the annual activities of DepEd to prepare for the school opening, will be reconfigured to fully assist the preparation of stakeholders in the roll-out of the BE-LCP. *Brigada Eskwela* and *Oplan Balik Eskwela* will be undertaken from June 1, 2020 to August 29, 2020.

Brigada Eskwela. The original schedule of the 2020 *Brigada Eskwela* on May 18-23, 2020 as provided in DM 32, s.2020, is postponed. DepEd through the EPS shall now be implementing a longer national schools' preparation through *Brigada Eskwela* from June 1 to August 29, 2020. However, under the *Brigada Eskwela Plus*, the partnership initiatives shall be implemented throughout the school year. This will contribute to the readiness not only of the school facilities but also of the learners, teaching and non-teaching personnel, school administrators, and community.

The National *Brigada Eskwela* Media/Online Kick-off Program shall be held on June 1, 2020 via MS Teams and other media platforms. DepEd Region VI shall host and lead the national kick-off which shall be participated virtually by all regions and select stakeholders.

Regional Offices (RO) and Schools Division Offices (SDO) may hold their own virtual kick-off ceremonies during the Kick-Off Week from June 1-6, 2020 to launch the *Brigada Eskwela* in their respective areas after the national kick-off program. If ROs and SDOs opt to hold their kick-off, it shall be conducted as *Brigada Eskwela* Forum which may involve the following activities:

1. Orientation on the "New Normal";
2. Investment in Education: Giving New Direction in Engaging Partners;
3. Discussion of the BE-LCP;
4. One major *Brigada Eskwela* activity to be adopted by RO/SDO;
5. Conduct of Psychological First Aid (PFA) and PFA training;
6. Discussion on the basic roles and responsibilities of different sectors, including parents; and
7. Debriefing of learners, among others.

The national schools' maintenance week, which includes cleaning, minor repairs, repainting, beautification, landscaping, electrical works and installations, and other activities **may** still be done two weeks before the opening of classes in public schools, depending on the prevailing ECQ/GCQ situation.

All Regional Directors (RDs) and Schools Division Superintendents (SDSs) shall mobilize their Partnerships Focal Persons to effectively implement *Brigada Eskwela* in all public elementary and secondary schools. Involved community and local stakeholders shall strictly comply with protocols on social distancing and regulated gathering of people/volunteers in schools consistent with the IATF health protocols, DOH protection protocols, local quarantine rules and all other relevant protocols outlined in DepEd issuances and subsequent DepEd Task Force COVID-19 issuances. It is also important to note that no volunteer with COVID-19-like symptoms like fever, dry cough and colds shall be allowed to participate in *Brigada Eskwela*.

Below is the modified schedule of activities for the 2020 Brigada Eskwela:

Activity	Schedule
Pre-implementation Stage (activities adjusted on account of the COVID-19 situation)	Up to May 31, 2020
National <i>Brigada Eskwela</i> Media/Online Kick-off Program	June 1, 2020
Regional/Division Kick-off Program (Optional)	During <i>Brigada Eskwela</i> Kick-off Week from June 1-6, 2020
<i>Brigada Eskwela</i> Implementation and Monitoring of Schools	June 1 to August 29, 2020
Submission of <i>Brigada Eskwela</i> Accomplishment Reports	By Divisions: September 24, 2020 By Regions: October 30, 2020

The 2020 *Brigada Eskwela* activities shall highlight partnership initiatives that complement the Department's efforts for ensuring that quality education will continue despite the challenges in adapting to the new normal. Aside from the usual activities conducted in the past *Brigada Eskwela*, School Heads shall endeavor to conduct the following related initiatives:

1. Coordinate with the Local Government Units or other non-government organizations and volunteers to clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and other school facilities.
2. The EPS, Regional/Division Partnership Focal Persons and School Heads shall engage partners in raising the availability of the following items in school during *Brigada Eskwela*:
 - Thermal scanners;
 - Hand sanitizing equipment or materials, such as rubbing alcohol, anti-bacterial or germicidal soap;
 - Cleaning tools, materials or disinfectants that may be used to disinfect the learning areas, such as spray tank, disinfectant spray or disinfecting bleach, foot bath;
 - Appropriate face mask/shield and gloves;
 - Multivitamins capsules, tablets, or syrups for our DepEd personnel and school children;
 - Printing of COVID-19 and health measures information materials; and

- Printing of materials and provision of supplies for remote learning for the learners, teachers and parents (i.e. bond papers, worksheets, notebooks, pad paper, ball pens, pencils, crayons, coloring materials and others)
3. The School Heads shall ensure that psychological first aid or other psychological interventions together with debriefing are conducted in partnership with stakeholders during the implementation of *Brigada Eskwela*.
4. Orientation activities with teachers, partners, PTA, and learners in DepEd's Learning Continuity Plan, shall focus on the implementation of DepEd's multiple learning delivery modalities.
- Encourage parents through the Parents-Teachers Associations (PTA) towards possible collaborations with the schools that can support the delivery of learning adapting to the new normal.
 - Engage parents in the promotion of the new school system. The new role and increased involvement of the parents in the learning of their children are essential in augmenting available resources and technology in the community.
 - Engage partners in the promotion and provision of learning delivery options such as local radio/TV stations and other available media, which can help in distance or blended learning, and can be a form of partnership initiative to deliver the curriculum. The School Heads may identify resources necessary for High Tech, Low Tech, or No Tech aide for learning to engage other partners.
5. Lead the implementation of *Gulayan sa Tahanan* and Urban Vegetable Gardening at Home as part of *Brigada Eskwela* and School-Family-Community partnerships to promote sustainable food supply at homes.
6. Update their school emergency and contingency plans and communicate to all stakeholders on how they can support schools to ensure resiliency. This is in relation to school safety and preparedness as provided for under DepEd Memo No. 32, s.2020.
7. Engage partners extensively and substantially in *Brigada Eskwela* and Adopt-a-School Program (ASP) to promote quality education and commit their support for the new normal in schools, especially in the delivery of learning.

8. Collaborate with various stakeholders to guarantee the proper implementation of the Learning Continuity Plan.

9. Strengthen *Brigada Pagbasa* in their Learning Continuity Plan.

10. Enrich partnership appreciation.

Despite the current situation, the *Brigada Eskwela* Program shall continue to serve as one of the Department's ways to ensure that under the "new normal" our schools, our learners, our administrators, our teaching and non-teaching personnel, our parents are ready for the school year.

Oplan Balik Eskwela. The *Oplan Balik Eskwela* (OBE) is an annual program to ensure that learners are enrolled and able to attend the school on the first day of classes. It is a mechanism to address problems, queries and other concerns commonly encountered by the public at the start of the school year.

Given the challenges of COVID-19 and the many anticipated questions and uncertainties, DepEd has extended the period of OBE implementation to run from June 1 to August 29, 2020. The OBE will coordinate and strengthen the synergy with the Department's *Brigada Eskwela*, and engage agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders towards contributing to the needs of the education sector at this critical time.

There shall be a localized OBE committee at the regional and division levels. The OBE committee will be led by the Regional Directors and Assistant Regional Directors in the region with representatives from its Public Affairs Unit, Legal Office, Administrative Office, and other offices that could provide assistance to the activity. The Schools Division Superintendent and Assistant Schools Division Superintendent will lead in the Division levels. The Regional Office shall send the list of OBE Committee members in the regions and divisions with contact numbers such as mobile, email, FB or Viber for faster communications with the Central Office. The local OBE in the regions and divisions with the CO shall ensure that concerns in the regions and divisions are properly addressed in their respective areas.

The OBE Public Assistance Command Center (OBE-PACC) shall serve as an information and complaints processing and routing mechanism of the DepEd. It has the following functions:

- Receive, process and respond to simple queries, information requests, and grievance from the general public. Complex issues and complaints shall be referred to Legal Officers.
- Assist in the dissemination and clarification of DepEd policies, programs, projects, and processes, particularly those relevant to the opening of classes;

- Monitor, document, and submit reports on all issues and concerns received daily, including actions taken, to the OBE-PACC Central Office.

The Public Affairs Service (PAS), in coordination with the Information and Communication Technology Service (ICTS), shall use an open source OBE ticketing system for recording of issues and concerns received in the central, regional and division offices. A daily report will be generated to summarize concerns received during the day. This will be forwarded to members of the DepEd Executive Committee while a press briefer containing highlights of the report will be shared to the media.

There shall be a scheduled mass training of RIOs, DIOs and ICT coordinators via teleconferencing on how to use the system. This will be facilitated by ICTS and PAS.

D. Legal Context

The 1987 Constitution provides in Article XIV, Section 1 that the “State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” This right must be upheld at all times, and DepEd is duty-bound to provide learning opportunities even in the time of the COVID-19 national emergency. Under Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9155 or the “Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001,” DepEd is “vested with authority, accountability and responsibility for ensuring access to, promoting equity in, and improving the quality of basic education.”

Article XIV, Section 2 of the 1987 Constitution mandates the State to (e)stablish and maintain, a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels.” The novelty of the COVID-19 emergency equally calls for a novel approach to the delivery of basic education in the public school system, in which social or physical distancing is indispensable to health and safety. At the same time, the DepEd acknowledges the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the education system, as inscribed in Article XIV, Section 4(1) of the 1987 Constitution, in the particular context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the restrictions imposed by the new normal, the BE-LCP requires responsive legal frameworks and support. The Plan features an adjusted curriculum with the Most Essential Learning Competencies, which will be delivered in multiple learning delivery modalities. These multiple learning delivery modalities necessitate the creation, reproduction, distribution, and use of learning resources consisting of intellectual properties. The learning resources shall comprise not only the usual textbooks and teaching guides used by DepEd in normal times, but also learning modules in print, digital, and broadcasting formats, as well as accessible format copies for persons with disabilities. Thus, different ways of applying intellectual property law will be crucial in

ensuring that their creation, reproduction, distribution, and use will be in accordance with law, including but not limited to Republic Act (R.A.) No. 8293, otherwise known as the “Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines,” as amended by R.A. No. 10372.

In our provision of learning opportunities, activities, and resources, the constitutional right to access quality education and as stated in Republic Act No. 10533, otherwise known as the “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013,” calls for inclusive, quality, learner-oriented education that addresses the various needs and diversity of learners. Thus, the prevailing digital divide in the country, the various socio-economic situations of families which affect the provision of learning support in the home, and the peculiar needs of learners with disabilities, learners who are part of indigenous communities, and learners in remote locations, among others, shall be taken into account, along with the needs of the majority and mainstream learners. The rights to access and to quality education shall be made available to every Filipino learner in basic education.

The learning environment under the new normal will be very different. The landscape of child protection and child rights will now encompass not only the physical school but more extensively, the cyber world and the home as “school.” The way children will enjoy their right to play, leisure, and recreational activities under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, will change. Synergy with other government agencies such as the Council for the Welfare of Children, international organizations, NGOs, the academe, and other child rights stakeholders will be crucial to the respect, protection, and promotion of the various rights of the child in the particular context of the COVID-19 emergency.

It cannot be overemphasized that the delivery of education under the new normal will require a whole-of-government and even whole-of-society approach to mobilize the needed resources, skills, talents, and energies for the unprecedented task of delivering basic education to millions of learners all over the country. For this purpose, it is essential to synergize with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the local governments in whose territorial jurisdiction the various schools, learners, teachers and non-teaching personnel, and offices of DepEd are situated. Laws pertaining to the mandates of local governments in relation to basic education and to DepEd, as well as to the promotion of the development of children and their protection, and the general welfare of the local government units, in normal times and in emergencies, are relevant.¹³

¹³ These relevant laws include, but are not limited to, R.A. No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991; R.A. No. 10121, otherwise known as the “Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2012”; R.A. No. 10821, otherwise known as the “Children’s Emergency Relief and Protection Act”; R.A. No. 11469, otherwise known as the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act”; Presidential Proclamation No. 922, s. 2020, “Declaring a State of Public Health Emergency Throughout the Philippines”; Proclamation No. 929, s. 202, “Declaring A State of Calamity Throughout the Philippines Due to Corona Virus Disease 2019”; and Executive Order No. 112, “Imposing An Enhanced Community Quarantine in High-Risk Geographic Areas of the Philippines and A General Community

The new normal in DepEd will bring with it a different working environment. Work arrangements and processes shall be modified to conform to safety and health requirements during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the operation and reexamination, or even augmentation, of laws and rules pertaining to human resources.

Existing laws and rules may be used to address the COVID-19 situation particularly in relation to DepEd, with the end view of upholding the constitutional and international rights to education¹⁴ and health,¹⁵ and promoting the best interest of the child.¹⁶ However, as the Learning Continuity Plan and its implementation unfold, it may be necessary to propose new laws and rules to suit the realities of a continuing COVID-19 public health emergency.

E. Finance

The Department shall make adjustments in its operations needed to meet the objectives of the LCP. Guided by the directions set forth by the plan, the Bureaus, Services and Offices (B/S/Os) are reviewing and assessing programs, activities and projects and their corresponding budgets to make them more responsive to the current and post-COVID-19 scenarios. The available programmed funds shall be maximized, reprogrammed, or realigned to those programs and activities that would require more funding support.

While there are existing funds made available to the Department this FY 2020, there is still a need to provide substantial and additional financial resources from other known and potential sources of funds. Even as DepEd is trying to make internal adjustments to cover the funding requirements of the BE-LCP, DepEd is also exploring the following strategies to address funding gaps:

1. Secure the support of both Houses of Congress to pass supplementary budget to finance the new and expanded programs, activities and projects. This may

Quarantine in the Rest of the Country from 01 to 15 May 2020, Adopting the Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation Thereof, and for Other Purposes”.

¹⁴ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28 (1) provides: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education...”

¹⁵ The 1987 Constitution provides in Article II, Section 15: “The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people...”. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides in Article 12 (1): “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.”

¹⁶ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3(1) provides: “In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

- include the funding requirements to rehabilitate the existing network infrastructure and procurement of hardware to ensure alignment of the supplemental budget with the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) and support the automation of financial management systems;
2. Revisit Joint Circular No. 1, s.2017 DepEd-DBM-DILG governing the utilization of the School Education Fund (SEF), which should be aligned to the new normal in basic education service delivery;
 3. Propose legislation or institute policy measures that will allow ways and means to facilitate the processing and approval of financial transactions, such as, but not limited to, the adoption of digital documentation and electronic signatures;
 4. Reduce spending on non-priority items in the expenditures of programs, activities, and projects under maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) and capital outlay (CO). This involves the adoption of austerity measures to generate “forced savings” in current operating expenditures to cover the requirements of new and emerging activities; and
 5. Continue to engage with the Local Government Units (LGUs), civil society organizations, Parent Teachers Associations, (PTAs), community leaders and other stakeholders for transparency and accountability.

All resources generated from both the available annual programmed appropriations and those that may be sourced from other means shall not be used for ends which are inconsistent with the Learning Continuity Plan.

F. Communications

Communications shall play a major role in getting the support of stakeholders in implementing the BE-LCP. In its communications work on the BE-LCP, DepEd is guided by its National Communications Framework (NCF) which outlines the overarching communications approaches, including a communications strategy in the time of crisis.

All communications efforts shall be directed from the central office to ensure a common understanding of DepEd’s programs, while allowing field communicators to make communications responsive to localized needs. Communication planning shall be regularly made and adjusted by the Public Affairs Service in consultation with policy

makers and key publics to unify branding and response efforts. Synergy and coordination with national government media channels (PCOO, DOH and IATF) will also be given priority to ensure that truthful and accurate information are disseminated to the ground.

The Department is strengthening its new media channels across various online platforms for quick syndication of important policies and announcements. We are also focusing on environment scanning for the collection of inputs from stakeholders that will help inform executive decisions, whether strategic, tactical, or operational. The convergence of official, allied, and recognized social media channels from the central office, regions, divisions, and schools will help reach and engage not only those in urban centers but most importantly our field communicators.

On the operation level, a crisis communication management team (CCMT) was formed since the declaration of quarantine protocols. The crisis communications approach shall be integrated with the objectives of *Sulong Edukalidad*. Since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the team has been performing crisis management-related tasks that require timely and speedy completion (24/7 media monitoring, Public Assistance and Action Center help desk). The CCMT ensures maximization of traditional media, relevant NGO and external partners for engagement, and close monitoring of feedback from teachers, learners and other stakeholders.

In terms of disseminating relevant health and safety information, the PAS will continue to partner and work closely with the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRRMS), DepEd Task Force COVID-19, Bureau of Learner Support Services - School Health Division (BLSS-SHD), and other DepEd offices for relevant mental health, preventive and safety information, support, and response in the midst of the global pandemic.

These communication efforts of the PAS for the LCP are anchored on the core principles of proactive, cooperative, responsive and highly engaged relationship with the multiple publics of the Department of Education.

G. Monitoring and Evaluation

To further guide the Department in refining and continuously fleshing out the BE-LCP, a Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) Framework anchored on the Basic Education Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (BEMEF) is being adopted, tailored to the needs of the learners during this emergency. This framework shall animate the planned interventions and activities since this shows the desired outcomes as we navigate through the situation.

The framework includes intermediate outcomes (IOs), which represent what DepEd endeavors the learners to achieve in terms of access and quality during the pandemic. The enabling environment (EE) defines the necessary governance structure in terms of leadership investments, management systems, partnerships, and external relations that will ensure the effective, efficient, and responsive delivery of basic education needs of the learners.

OUTCOME / OUTPUTS	DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	ACCOUNTABLE OFFICE
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES			
1. Learners are in the basic education system.	We need to ensure that all learners, regardless of sex, religion, geography, financial disposition, are encouraged to be in the basic education system during this pandemic . This requires that multiple learning facilities, resources and learning delivery modalities are made accessible to the different types of learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross Enrolment Rate • Net Enrolment Rate 	Planning Service
<i>1.a Appropriate and relevant learning delivery modalities established</i>	Learning delivery modalities refer to various modes of accessing learning resources, such as face-to-face learning, distance learning, and blended learning, which cater to the different contexts and learning needs of the learners.	<i>Appropriate and relevant learning delivery modalities established</i>	Curriculum and Instruction (CI) Bureaus; Regional Offices
<i>1.b. Learners received the necessary learning resources for the applicable learning delivery modalities</i>	Learning resources refer to learning materials used by the learners to achieve the set learning competencies and standards. These are, but are not limited to,	Percentage of learners receiving learning resources per learning delivery modality	Curriculum and Instruction (CI), Bureaus led by the Bureau of Learning Resources (BLR), Regions and Divisions

	printed modules, printed books, DepEd commons, online modules, and broadcast modules. These must be in conjunction with the adopted learning delivery modalities.		
2. Learners access programs responsive to their needs, consistent with their interest and aptitude	Ensures that learners' needs, interests, and aptitudes are taken into consideration in developing and rolling out learning delivery modalities	Percentage of learners enrolled in appropriate programs	Planning Service
<i>2.a Learning delivery modalities for inclusive education programs established</i>	Inclusive education programs refer to IPed, Madrasah Education Program, Special Education Program (SPED)/Learner with Special Education Needs (LSEN), and special interest programs that will adopt various learning delivery modalities	<i>Appropriate and relevant learning delivery modalities for inclusive education programs established</i>	Curriculum and Instruction (CI) Bureaus
<i>2.b. Learners receive learning resources responsive to their learning needs</i>	Learning resources refer to learning materials used by the learners to achieve the set learning competencies and standards. These are, but not limited to, printed modules, books, DepEd commons, online modules and broadcast materials that are aligned with inclusive education program principles	No. of learners receiving learning resources responsive to their needs	Curriculum and Instruction (CI) Bureaus led by the Bureau of Learning Resources (BLR); Regions and Divisions
3. Learners actively participate in different learning delivery modalities	Ensures that learning delivery modalities are learner-friendly and encourage active participation. These	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort Survival Rate • Transition Rate • School Leaver Rate 	Planning Service

	modalities shall endeavor to establish systems that are child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, and motivational, ensuring the well-being of learners.		
3.a Learner support systems are established	Support systems refer, but is not limited, to feeding programs, psychosocial support, health and safety measures, and remedial classes.	Appropriate and relevant learner support systems established	Bureau of Learner Support Services (BLSS), DRRMS, and Curriculum and Instruction Bureaus
3.b Learners receive support from learner support systems	Refers to the learners that received various support systems	Percentage of learners receiving support from learner support systems	Bureau of Learner Support Services (BLSS) and Curriculum and Instruction Bureaus
4. Learners complete education and attain learning standards	Ensures that programs and initiatives benefiting learners as they complete the basic education cycle and other educational interventions are implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion rate • Promotion Rate • ALS Completion Rate 	Planning Service
ENABLING ENVIRONMENT			
1. Education leaders, teaching, and non-teaching staff practice participative and inclusive management processes during emergencies	Improves the capacity, as well as functional and leadership competencies in participative and inclusive management processes during emergencies, of education leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff. It ensures that the design and implementation of professional development programs are relevant and appropriate to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of trainings established • Percent of staff trained for various learning delivery modalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education leaders - Teaching staff - Non-teaching staff • Types of support systems established • Percentage of staff trained for various learner support systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education leaders - Teaching staff - Non-teaching staff 	National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) Bureau of Human Resources and Organizational Development

	the current public health situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of education leaders trained/ capacitated on emergency planning 	
2. Investments in the LCP provides learners options for their required learning delivery modalities	Ensures sufficient provision and equitable distribution of education resources during the pandemic. Funding decisions also recognize the gaps and immediate measures that need to be considered in prioritizing resources in the midst of competing education priorities to achieve equity and impact	No. of learning resources procured No. of learning resources developed No. of learning resources produced	Finance Service, Administrative Service, Procurement Management Services, Planning Service, CI Bureaus
3. Internal systems and processes serve learners efficiently through continuous monitoring and feedback	Enhances internal system and processes to efficiently and effectively deliver basic education services	Disbursement rate Timely delivery of procured projects	Finance and Administration
4. Key stakeholders actively collaborate to serve learners	Ensures collaborative engagement with key stakeholders to achieve the LCP. This collaboration will be delivered through functional mechanisms to make partnership building and linkages more strategic and aligned to LCP priorities.	Percentage of financial contribution of development partners over the total national education budget for the fiscal year	External Partnership Service Program Management Service

VIII. Social, Economic, and Security Factors

The decision to open classes on August 24, 2020 shall allow the resumption of learning by our students. This will have long-term positive impact, and is clearly superior to losing an entire school year if we wait for the full containment of COVID-19.

UNESCO¹⁷ points out that prolonged school disruptions are associated with various negative impacts on children. The longer marginalized children are out of school the less likely they are to return. UNESCO also notes the risk of teenage pregnancy and sexual exploitation, and that prolonged closures disrupt essential school-based services such as immunization, school feeding, and mental health and psychosocial support, and can cause stress and anxiety due to the loss of peer interaction and disrupted routines.

With the opening of classes, education-related economic activities, such as in learning resources, technology-based platforms, and other ancillary/support industries will also be able to resume. Private schools will be able to open classes, and thus avoid continued financial dislocation and displacement of their teachers and staff.

By resuming classes, we shall be able to continue with school-managed support systems, such as the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP). Pursuant to Republic Act No. 11037 entitled “*Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino Act*” and DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2017, or the “Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program for School Years 2017-2022,” the SBFP primarily aims to address undernutrition by serving nutritious meals to undernourished learners for at least 120 days in a year. Republic Act 11469, known as the *Bayanihan Heal as One Act*, has identified the SBFP as a measure addressing COVID-19 and beneficial to children.

The commitment to continue providing education to our learners during this time of pandemic shall catalyze technological upgrade and innovations in learning resources and platforms. As discussed in more detail in a section in this document, a number of previously independent blended learning initiatives shall now be consolidated and strategically deployed by DepEd in a large scale.

In a study on the factors that influence the use of technology in the context of the Australian AID tablet computer programme in nine schools in the Philippines, Lumagbas et al.¹⁸ found that leaders’ openness to using ICT Tools, a shared vision on the purpose of using ICT in education, and an open and responsive school culture are key drivers of successful integration of technology in learning. This learning continuity plan, with the capacity building programs and other related initiatives it brings, can potentially create these factors for the country’s entire school system.

However, there are major issues that will need to be addressed in the implementation of BE-LCP. One key issue is equity in terms of learners’ access to technology, gadgets, and household support to learning. Learners who do not have internet access at home will still have printed modules and textbooks for independent

¹⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020) *Framework for reopening schools*. Retrieved from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373348.locale=en>

¹⁸ Jedaiah Joel Lumagbas, Wally Smith, Esther Care & Claire Scoular (2019) Tablet computers in Philippine public schools: School-level factors that influence technology management and use, *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 28:1, 73-89, DOI: 10.1080/1475939X.2019.1572535

learning, but these learners will have limited opportunities for interaction with their teacher and classmates.

Another consideration is the impact of distance and blended learning on the achievement of learning outcomes. Because both learners and teachers are mostly exposed to the face-to-face learning delivery modality, the impact of the shift to blended learning is still unknown. During this transition period, it is unavoidable that there will be a negative impact on the learning of those who cannot easily cope with the change. Support interventions will have to be implemented to mitigate this.

The “new normal” in education means additional administrative and operational burdens to teachers and schools. School management tools and practices such as the learning action cells (LAC), faculty meetings, and the use of school forms, will have to be reconfigured to suit the current situation.

On the security aspect, in times of uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, IIEP UNESCO¹⁹ has emphasized the need to put to rest any public doubt or fear as school reopens. As such, it is crucial that the Department effectively addresses the climate of fear among students, parents, and communities. There may likewise be resistance among certain sections of teachers. In response to these, DepEd intends to be transparent in its communication, and shall correct the spread of misinformation, consult with its internal and external stakeholders, respond to queries and concerns raised, and strengthen its assistance and support to teachers.

Great importance is also given to strengthened coordination and cooperation at national and local levels, especially with the DOH, LGUs, and PNP, to continuously ensure the well-being of all returning learners and DepEd personnel. And finally, the Department shall mobilize its partnerships and broad constituency for help and support.

The BE-LCP has put in place several mechanisms to attend to these areas of concern. The first is the conduct of the annual *Oplan Balik Eskwela* and *Brigada Eskwela*, which are scheduled for activation from June 1 to August 29. In light of COVID-19, both have been reconfigured to establish readiness of the school facilities, learners, teaching and non-teaching personnel, school administrators, and the community in time for school opening on August 24 and the implementation of the BE-LCP.

Another existing mechanism is the DepEd Task Force COVID-19, which is tasked to lead the Department’s overall efforts in addressing COVID-19. The Task Force shall make policy recommendations and oversee operations, while also providing Daily Situation Reports for monitoring and quick response.

¹⁹ International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) UNESCO (2020) *Plan for School Reopening*. Retrieved from: <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/plan-school-reopening>

IX. Anchoring on *Sulong EduKalidad* and Bridging into the Future

DepEd has already made significant strides in education access and was already pivoting to shift its focus on quality. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced other strains of inequities to the education system, including in connectivity, cost of mobile use, bandwidth, digital capacity, availability of and capacity for providing learning support at home, as well as physical availability of parents/learning facilitators who may be daily wage earners and need to be at work.

Although reforms remain anchored on the four pillars of *Sulong EduKalidad*, the discourse on quality education and approach towards achieving this have been altered. For instance, streamlining the curriculum to prioritize durable and relevant competencies has been accelerated in light of the challenges of remote learning. Moreover, community quarantine has drastically redefined the learning environment, that is, from physical to virtual and distance learning spaces.

On the aspect of capacity-building of teachers and school leaders, skills that need to be strengthened such as resilience, adaptability, resource management, technological literacy, and crisis response have become more pronounced in the face of the evolving roles as well as competing priorities of teachers and school leaders. In other words, the *Sulong EduKalidad* reforms are happening a lot faster than expected, with new dimensions, but also with different roadblocks that have to be hurdled.

With the LCP, DepEd has demonstrated three interconnected capacities that are significantly linked to the future: INNOVATION, AGILITY, AND SYNERGY. Innovation means formulating superior solutions and have greater social or economic impact. Agility refers to the ability to move quickly and gracefully, while synergy is a collaboration that creates an output greater or bigger than the sum of the individual contributions. The LCP shows that adversities can be overcome because there is always a solution. It may be a matter of looking through different perspectives and sometimes diverging from conventional approaches, but problems can be solved through innovation.

The speed by which an innovation can be launched matters a lot. Those who are agile, who are nimble and fast enough to adapt, would have a head start compared to others and, therefore, have more time for fine-tuning their ideas. In contrast, there are voices preferring to cling to the past and calling on DepEd to freeze in time and wait for things to normalize before moving.

The LCP is testament that there is a huge difference between formulating a solution the soonest time possible when it is needed and coming up with a near-perfect solution much later when everyone has already looked elsewhere. There will be issues and problems in the implementation of the LCP, but these would provide the opportunity

for redesigning, which indicates further growth areas and sustains the cycle of innovation.

Synergy, the third future-facing capacity, is the secret to innovating quickly. Converging individuals/institutions that have great alignment creates something that is greater than what each of them can achieve separately. The LCP is a product of the synergy of forward-looking sections of government-industry-academe to ensure that learners, teachers, and school leaders will thrive in the “new normal”.

Sulong EduKalidad, the current LCP, and the future of Philippine education are unified by three goals for and with every learner: agency and self-actualization, work readiness, and responsible citizenship. In the immediate future, the threat of virus transmission persists, and job insecurity becomes high. More than ever, the pandemic has shown that multiliteracies such as information, scientific, health, financial, and civic literacies are important for people to thrive in crisis. When citizens have these literacies fully functioning, they have better understanding of how the spread can be contained. They are more critical of information credibility. They have a sharper sense of social responsibility and are more capable of dealing with financial shocks. As businesses try to recover from losses due to the pandemic, layoffs due to redundancy are expected and there is greater risk for low-skilled workers. In addition, employers are more likely to outsource or sub-contract some tasks to cut costs, which gives rise to the gig economy or short-term jobs, most of which can be done online. Changes in the employment landscape emphasize the importance of higher-order skills, technological skills, and the ability to work with greater autonomy.

To fully connect the LCP to the future, enduring literacies and skills need to be highlighted in learning delivery modalities, technologies, strategies, resources, assessment, and in teacher/school leader capacity-building. Furthermore, its components can be expanded to include knowledge mobilization, science of learning, and analytics. Knowledge mobilization will facilitate the translation of actionable knowledge. The science of learning will provide insights on how learners develop competencies, expertise, dispositions in either physical or virtual learning spaces. On the other hand, analytics will introduce techniques and tools for collecting, interpreting, and communicating data to ensure evidence-driven decision-making. More importantly, the LCP has to be guided by life-long, life-wide, life-deep, and life-wise learning principles.²⁰ These principles connect learning to a purpose (life-long), to the real-world (life-wide), to mastery and greater autonomy (life-deep), and to practical wisdom, ethics, values, morals, and dispositions (life-wise).

DepEd Resilience. As concluding remarks, DepEd has historically demonstrated an ability to respond to adversities and to deliver on its commitments and responsibilities.

²⁰ Four-Learning Framework. <https://www.nie.edu.sg/about-us/nie-strategic-vision-2022>

Just last March 2020, two major DepEd ongoing events involving a large number of students from around the country, the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) and National Festival of Talents (NFOT), overlapped with the start of the Luzon Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), and participants faced difficulties travelling back to their respective regions due to travel restrictions. Through strong and expeditious coordination with various national and local authorities and offices, the Department was able to bring the delegates safely back to their homes, and was able to undertake the close monitoring of the health condition of all delegates during the precautionary period.

DepEd and its teachers have also been in the frontlines of every national and local election, ensuring its honest, orderly, peaceful, and credible conduct. Our schools have been used as polling stations, and teachers have been deputized to serve crucial roles despite the demands and challenges that election season entails.

DepEd has provided response actions during major calamities. In just the past nine months, we have dealt with four major occurrences: Cotabato Earthquakes (October 16-31), Typhoon Tisoy (Nov. 24 - Dec. 6), Typhoon Ursula (Dec. 19-29) and Taal Eruption (January 12). Through response systems instituted by the Department, learners, personnel and schools were provided with support for repairs, psychological first aid, and temporary learning spaces. Partnerships have also been leveraged to provide support to DepEd's efforts to ensure learning continuity.

DepEd has a working governance system from the Central Office to field. This will enable it to translate a complex plan into operational actions at all governance levels. While COVID-19 is a problem, it is also an opportunity. DepEd will not sit idly by to miss the opportunities that COVID-19 brings.

Learning opportunities shall be available, and learning shall continue in the time of COVID-19. *Sulong EduKalidad!*