



Voice of silence

• Maria Merlinda P. Mariado

Children are priceless gifts from God. You'll never know how blessed you are until you have one. But what if this best gift from God is tarnished by lack of ability to hear you, can't call you Dad, or Mom, can't hear and share your laughter, can't heed to your shout of warning or react to your giving him/her endearment? These are but a few pains every parent of any child with speech or hearing impairment undergo.

Most parents of Children with Special Needs (CSNs) have financial difficulties in enrolling their children to any private institution just to give them needed educational assistance. These parents were grateful and relieved when West Central Elementary School I (WCES I) offered an Special Education (SPED) class for free.

For years, this school continuously assured and guaranteed parents of giving quality learning to enrich the educational experience of SPED learners. One remarkable SPED teacher in WCES I made a difference in teaching CSNs during the pandemic.

In fact, she was one of the 20 nominees to the annual search for the Most Inspiring Teachers of the Philippines by the Saceda Youth Lead, a Youth Serving Institution

under the auspices of the Office of the President, National Youth Commission.

She is Dr. Leah Surot, a Master Teacher II who handles multi-handicapped pupils who have speech and hearing impairment, mental disabilities and autism.

In some of her videos, a number of new angles to access educational content in the new normal were given. She made videos for parents' guide, interpreted songs through sign language which serve as big help for CSNs to appreciate messages of music and to anyone out there who wants to interpret sign language.

Some of these songs are: "You are the Reason" by Calum Scott, "Someone you loved" by Lewis Capaldi, "Ten thousand Reasons" by Matt Redman and "Christmas in our hearts" by Jose Mari Chan

When interviewed on how she teaches the CSNs, she confidently introduced her teaching styles through vlogs in her YouTube channel. She

painstakingly planned a 30-minute one on one schedule via online/virtual meet up with each learner twice a week. She called this plan as "individualized learning plan".

The school also specifically prepared modules for these learners. It is a tough challenge for a solo parent like her but she made it her way. She works in tandem with her school principal, Ma'am Maria Theresa Rinoso, in planning for these learners with special needs.

When asked why she chose to be a SPED teacher, Ma'am Surot replied in a determined tone, "This is really my passion and like any career,

being a special education teacher has its challenges, but at the same time, it is an awesomely rewarding career. I know that I have the chance to make a life-long impact on a family's life".

Ma'am Surot believed that teaching these learners is a matter of willingness of someone and the love of the sign language.

"Teaching is a wonderful chance to change the world one learner at a time, and special education is no different," she added.

She indulged into vlogging her expertise because of her inclination to the CSNs and her adoration to the sign language.

She dedicated her life in teaching the learners with special needs because she wanted to make a difference in the lives of these individuals. She wanted to make these learners know basic and significant information about their lives and needs. And with her long experience teaching these learners, she developed compassion and love for them.

Along came this extraordinary SPED teacher that made every unique child succeed in his/her own style and pace. Then, the voice of silence echoed from the heart of these extraordinary learners.



Teacher Leah converses with her SPED learners through sign language in her online class.

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