



CNMI Public School System

STUDENTS FIRST

February 2023

• Accountability • Responsibility • Transparency

THE BENEFITS OF A CONNECTED PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY



**PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS
ARE ACQUAINTED WITH
INDUSTRY-BASED CAREERS**

**COOPERATIVE EDUCATION:
SPRING 2023 JOB FAIR
ATTRACTS OVER 25
BUSINESS PARTNERS**

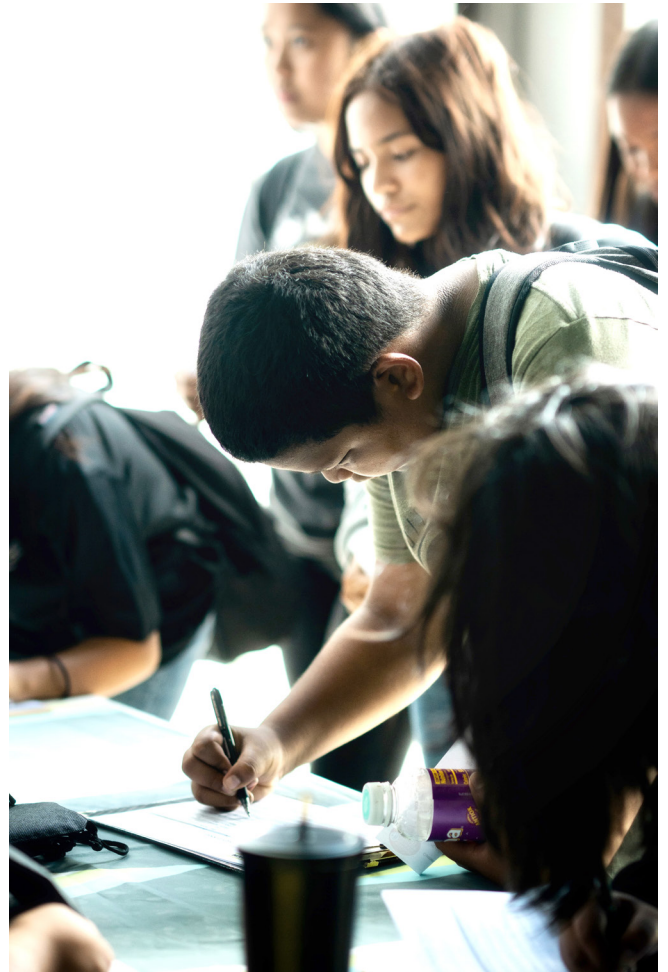
ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIP: THE BENEFITS IT AFFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Public School Students Are Acquainted With Industry-Based Careers

CAREER exploration has become the hallmark of the Public School Systems's Career and Technical Education Program. It was pioneered in 2011 by the school district and, by 2019, it saw a rapid growth and expansion as result of a successful partnership with the two other educational institutions: Northern Marianas College and the Northern Marianas Technical Institute.

PSS, NMC and NMTEch acknowledged the demands for increased knowledge and skills for all students in the Commonwealth. These three educational institutions pledged to work together to create an engaging and innovative learning environment that will ensure the seamless transition of high school students through career pathways offered by NMTEch and NMC.

For the past three years, these institutions have laid out additional programs designed to strengthen PSS CTE Program by building upon its students-centered foundation, and expanding it by connecting in-school learning with the dynamic real world that public school students will meet and face when they graduate high school. PSS, NMC and NMTEch have successfully created career options reflecting the demands of the local workforce industry.





On February 27, public school students were given the privileged to be acquainted with career choices and industry-based careers in the CNMI. NMTEch and PSS held its first even “Career and Technical Education and Me”.

A total of 60 students from Tanapag Middle School, Kagman High School, Saipan Southern High School, Chacha Ocean Vice Middle School, Da’ok Academy and the PSS CTE class in woodworking and culinary attended the “Career and Technical Education & Me” event.

This was the highlight celebration of CTE Month and was held at the main hall of NMTEch in Lower Base.

The theme of the event was “Celebrate Today, Own Tomorrow”.

The students listened to the words of encouragement from Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and NMTEch Chief Executive Officer, US Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan and NMI Labor Secretary Leila Staffler.

Then, the students broke into separate sessions based on CTE classes they are attending, to hear from industry speakers, Chef Zenn Tomokane who provided the students introduction to culinary arts, and Efraim Camacho who talked about the construction industry.





NMI Labor Secretary Staffler said she is excited to see high school students start early and get connected to industries that caters to the local workforce.

She said the event's turn out was excellent.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada in his inspirational speech, he also made the students realize that by end of 2029, foreign workers who currently hold jobs in the islands' key industries will have to leave, and that is federal law.



"So what are we going to do? We need to panic now. We need to start thinking how we are going to survive," The education chief said.

However, he said, he is very hopeful about the students. In the years to come he said, they will be graduating and will be looking for jobs. They will be opportunities all they have to do is grab them.

In her remarks, CEO Attao said that with skilled workers having to leave the CNMI in six years, the future really are the young students.





Cooperative Education: Spring 2023 Job Fair Attracts over 25 Business Partners

THE partnership between the Public School System and private companies in the Northern Marianas continue to grow through the school district's Cooperative Education Program. The Co-Op Program, designed to provide on-the-job training for high school students, have produced one of the single largest source of trained-and workforce-ready high school graduates.

During the February 10-Spring 2023 job fair, the PSS' Cooperative Education Program has attracted over 25 business partners, providing over 100 public and private school students with opportunities that will assist them in their after-high school choices.

Held at the Hyatt Ballroom, the students - including 15 students from Grace Christian Academy - were able to undergo actual on-the-job training interview and job search.



"PSS Co-op is always looking for new partners. Invest in the future workforce of the CNMI by participating in the Cooperative Education Program. Cooperative Education is a work-based learning program that integrates classroom instruction with planned and supervised on-the-job training," the program said.

Each Semester the Co-Op Program hosts a job fair for new students to meet ,interview and get hired by companies for a semester long of training.

Program Director Brandon San Nicolas expressed his appreciation to all partners of the program for "allowing students to experience the world of work under numerous mentors in the private and public sector."

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said, "Our students are our driving force that fuel this partnership.

And our partners plays very critical part in our desire to train and teach our students."

"What this partnership means to us as PSS is that our community believes and values the role of our public schools in teaching and mentoring our students. We look forward to growing further our partnership with our private sector," Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada said.





STUDENT WINNERS

The Public School System through its Instructional Technology and Distance Education Office honored four public school students as winners of the 2023 Digital Learning Competition. The winners are, from left to right: Piper Christian, Xu Jojo Lazaro, Yo Han Jeong, and Andrew Bailey Sunderland. Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and interim ITDE director Lorraine CatiENZA led school district officials in honoring these students at Aqua Resort Club.

Public School System Celebrates Digital Learning Day Awardees

FOUR public school students were named winners of the 2023 Digital Learning Day competition of the Public School System in a special awarding ceremony that also celebrated their success on Thursday, February 23 at the Aqua Resort Club.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and interim director for PSS Instructional Technology and Distance Education Lorraine CatiENZA led school district officials in celebrating the success of these students, who were joined by their family and respective school officials.

For the Early Elementary Level (Kindergarten to Grade 2), Yo Han Jeong, a second-grade student at Oleai Elementary School, won the top prize. Yo Han submitted a short essay and original drawing to showcase "How Technology Helps Me Learn."

Tinian Elementary School 5th grade student Xu Jojo Lazaro won the elementary level (3rd-5th Grade category). She submitted a multimedia presentation on how technology helps him succeed in education.



Student Yo Han Jeong is joined by his mother, as he received the award from Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, ITDE team led by interim director Lorraine CatiENZA, Special Education Director Donna Flores, and Oleai Elementary School Principal Jasylene Parico, among others.



Tinian Elementary School 5th grade student Xu Jojo Lazaro is the winner for the 3rd-5th grade category. She is joined by her parents, and Tinian Elementary School Principal Lou Connie Manglona in receiving the awards from PSS officials.



Piper Christian, a 6th grader from Tinian Elementary School, won the 6th-8th level. She was joined by her parents and school principal, when she received the award from PSS officials that included Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, ITDE interim director Lorraine Catienza, and Special Education Director Donna Flores, and Communications and Media Coordinator Rande-Jo Barcinas-Manglona.

Piper Christian, a 6th grader from Tinian Elementary School, was the winner for the 6th-8th grade level. She submitted an original video poem focused on the importance of technology in learning.

The winner for the high school category was Andrew Bailey Sunderland, a 12th grader from Saipan Southern High School. Andrew submitted an original short video with multimedia integration that answers "What is a 21st Century Learner?"

"This competition was created to celebrate the role of technology in supporting learning and teaching, and promote the effective use of tech tools to improve the learning experience for all CNMI students," interim ITDE Director Catienza said.

Present at the event were members of the CNMI PSS Key Management and school leaders who expressed their appreciation to all student participants of this year's Digital Learning Day Competition. A total of 185 students participated in the competition, showcasing the importance of technology in helping students become lifelong learners. Awardees were selected based on criteria such as student voice, creativity, and integration of multimedia.



Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, during his remarks, hailed the continued success of ITDE and pledged that PSS will continue to support the long-term investment in classroom technology.



ITDE interim director Lorraine Catienza underscores the importance of technology in classroom learning.



Andrew Bailey Sunderland, a 12th grader from Saipan Southern High School was presented with his award for his original short video with multimedia integration that answers "What is a 21st Century Learner?".

School District Leaders Focus on School Accountability System

EDUCATION leaders and staff from three public schools have gathered from February 13 to 17 to discuss on the school district's pilot Accountability System. This is a multi-pronged initiative designed to build workforce capacity of the Public School System.

Experts from the Region 18 Comprehensive Center (R18CC) have been on island for a four-day working meeting, from February 13 to 17. The opening day was held at Saipan World Resort and continued on at the conference room of the federal programs office on Capital Hill.

"The meeting included discussions on performance measures and indicators that will be used in building the district's school accountability system," said Dr. Rizalina Liwag, senior director for Accountability, Research and Evaluation.

Presenters and technical support providers from R18CC that are working with PSS on the initiative are Hendrich erich Cho Cho, R18CC Senior Specialist; Lynette Villagomez, R18CC Network Co-Director; Celine Orsini, PSS Accountability Program Manager, and Dr. Eric Crane-WestEd Research Senior Researcher.

Participants to this four-day meeting for the pilot program are education leaders and staff of Koblerville Elementary School, Hopwood Middle School and Marianas High School.

The school district has been working with the PSS Accountability Task Force for several years now to build the capacity of the district staff to develop and design the Accountability System. These include developing indicator plan, proposed policy, and visualization of the School Accountability Report Card. The school report cards will showcase school performance based on identified indicators that include academic achievement, student attendance, and graduation rate.

School personnel from Koblerville Elementary School, Hopwood Middle School and Marianas High School participated during the opening ceremony last Monday at the Saipan World Resort.



Dr. Eric Crane, senior researcher of WestEd, was one of the resources speakers.





IT'S ALL ABOUT STUDENTS FIRST

Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lieutenant Governor David M. Apatang held a good dialogue and discussion) with the key leaders of the Public School System during an official "Meet and Greet" with Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and his key management. The fruitful dialogue touched off on issues that include capital improvement projects, updates on local and federal fundings, and opportunities for the school district to be involved in matters and decisions affecting the Commonwealth's education system.

Public School Students and Tourism Awareness as a Sustainable Strategy

Northern Marianas Humanities Council
Nurturing the Human Experience

Cultural Icons of the CNMI

My attention was not in the classroom – it was outside. Referring to cultural leader Lino Olopai, I remembered of his childhood on Saipan. He entered elementary when Saipan – just one of over two thousand islands within the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands – was still recovering from the second world war.

“Growing up at that time as a kid, it was exciting not to be in the classroom, to go out with the old people to the farm, go fishing and bring food to our community.”

Ironically, Mr. Olopai, known to many as “Uncle Lino,” was destined to become a prominent educator, as well as an author, and cultural practitioner, well-known for his public service and outspoken opinion on matters related to cultural preservation.

As the Trust Territory times wore on, Mr. Olopai began working for the Peace Corps Volunteer Program, first as a Language Informant and later as the Coordinator of the program’s language and cross-culture component. It was this position that first opened his eyes to the diverse, multi-cultural movement barreling toward the Marianas.

“The changes started coming,” he said. “I began to be aware of those [cultural] differences.”

“There are a lot of things that are very interesting in the world,” he continued. “So many of them, you will be overwhelmed with awesome information: heroes, great writers, beautiful movies, things like that.” He said “But we need to have our foundation as to who we are.”

“...we need to have that firm standing **our heritage** before we become anything else.”

Since his retirement in 2004, Mr. Olopai has continued to facilitate and participate in various cultural symposiums and educational events. In 2005, he received support from the Northern Marianas Humanities Council to author *The Rope of Tradition*, an account of his “longstanding efforts to document and better understand his rich cultural heritage and to seek a balance between traditional ways and the demands of the modern world.”

In 2006, the CNMI House of Representatives recognized and commemorated his contributions to “the development of the social, educational, political, and economic and cultural welfare of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands” through House Commemorative Resolution No. 15-17.

He said his lifelong commitment to cultural education and perpetuation is motivated by the understanding that “without knowledge of their culture, local people are “at the mercy to the weather, like a kite without a string.”

“You have to have a purpose in life, you have to have something to go far to look for. You need to know the star that will take you North,” he said. “The opposite of the North Star is the Southern Cross. You need that so when you go North, you can come back. You need to know where you’re coming from so you can participate in humanity, with all the different colors, different upbringings, different beliefs in the world.”

As he writes in *The Rope of Tradition*, “Striking a balance is not easy, but it’s not impossible either.”

Lino M. Olopai
CNMI CULTURAL ICON

Cultural Icons of the CNMI has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities; Democracy demands wisdom.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this feature do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



“We have a lot (to offer): beautiful beaches, historic sites and peaceful community,” said a Dandan Middle School student-officer of her MY WAVE Club.

“I am really excited being a member of my (MY WAVE) club, said another student from William S. Reyes Elementary School.

The influences of tourism awareness in public schools have been central to the success in protecting, promoting and cultivating advocates in the protection of the primary economic driver of the islands— tourism.

For more than two decades now, the MY WAVE Clubs of public schools in the CNMI have empowered thousands of elementary, middle and high school students. They have helped revitalize the tourism industry by raising awareness at the school and community level.

The Marianas Tourism Education Council has partnered with the Public School System in 2001 in establishing the MY WAVE Clubs. The clubs have become the primary partner of MTEC in heightening the community’s awareness of the importance of tourism to the well-being of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Today, with public school students as tourism advocates, optimism is high towards the sustainability of the visitor industry. Tourism is the main economic engine of the Commonwealth.

During the first Tourism Summit in two years, held last January, more than 300 public school students from 20 Saipan, Tinian and Rota campuses participated. It was a resounding success.

“We want them to understand what it is they can do as a young student. So the kids come in here and they listen to speakers and see pictures so they understand why visitors come here and why they can do to make visitors keep coming. It all start at home, at our schools,” acting MTEC Chairwoman Vicky I. Benavente said in her remarks.

Benavente said MTEC and PSS, with the support of the Marianas Visitor Authority - the tourism arm of the CNMI - will continue to promote the islands as a top destination. With the use of various online platform and social media, the students can be tapped as primary advocates in promoting the islands.

“With the support of our students, nothing will stop us from promoting,” Benavente said.

During the summit, various speakers highlighted the importance of tourism and their roles in promoting the islands.

Exhibits from various government agencies and tourism stakeholders were set up, showcasing how they play major role in beautifying the islands.

MTEC and MVA at the same time have been continuing their annual school presentations about tourism. Recently, they have visited several middle school and high schools.

MTEC said with PSS, through MY WAVES Clubs, they are optimistic that they will be able to revitalize the tourism industry by continually raising awareness.

MTEC’s stated mission is three-fold: to foster community understanding and support of the visitor industry; educate the general public, especially school students, about the value, social benefits, and economic contributions made to the community by the visitor industry; and to instill, improve and promote the “Hafa Adai-Tirow” hospitality spirit throughout the island community.





Dr. Dora Borja Miura is New Teacher Representative to BOE

E DUCATOR Dr. Dora Borja Miura took her oath on February 14 as the new teacher representative to the Board of Education.

Dr. Miura succeeds longtime educator Phyllis Ain, who teaches at William S. Reyes Elementary School.

BOE legal counsel Tiberius Mocanu administered the oath of office which was held at the conference room of the Commissioner of Education of the Public School System.

Dr. Miura will represent the school district's nearly 800 teaching personnel from all 20 elementary, middle and high school campuses, 10 Head Start and Early Head Start center, Early Intervention and Special Education Program.

Dr. Miura's parents, former Supreme Court Justice and Lieutenant Governor Jesus and wife, Mary Anne Borja accompanied her during the ceremony.

The Commissioner of Education, Dr. Alfred B. Ada, led school district officials in witnessing the ceremony.

Board of Education Chairman Gregory Pat Borja, Vice Chairman Antonio L. Borja and Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio were also present to welcome the newest member of the BOE. The teacher representative is a non-voting member of the board but sits on committees.

The BOE is the policymaking and governing body of the Public School System, a constitutionally-independent and



largest government instrumentality of the Commonwealth government.

BOE Chairman Borja said the teacher representative continues to play a critical role in every decision-making process of the board.

"Congratulations to Dr. Dora Borja Miura on her appointment and swearing in as our newest Teacher Representative to the CNMI State Board of Education. It is my belief that the Teacher Representative plays an important role on the board, serving

Child Outcome Summary Key Practices in IEPs for Preschoolers

THE Head Start and Early Childhood Special Education Teachers from the Chalan Kanoa Head Start centers began to infuse the Child Outcome Summary (COS) key practices into the Individualized Education Program (IEPs) of preschoolers enrolled in their Center with technical assistance and support provided by the University of Guam Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (Guam CEDDERS).

Teachers engaged in 5 virtual sessions targeting key practices to address the student's functional outcomes in these 3 areas: 1) Positive social emotional skills including social relationships; 2) Use and acquisition of knowledge and skills including early language/communication and early literacy; and 3) Use appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

The virtual sessions were interactive and allowed teachers to apply these practices using a case study. The Teachers worked in Teams to apply the following key practices: writing functional outcomes, using authentic assessment to capture the student's age-anchored skills, writing present level of academic performance and functional objectives, and identifying the progression of skills used for progress monitoring in these 3 outcome areas.

The teachers were excited to continue to use the Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD assessment that aligns the 3 outcome measures and are able to monitor student's progress throughout the year. Overall, the training sessions were successful and the Programs have agreed to scale up the training beginning March with a pilot at San Antonio Head Start Classes.

The overall goal of the training was to increase the understanding and application for embedding the child outcome practices into the IEP process.



Secondary Transition Opportunity

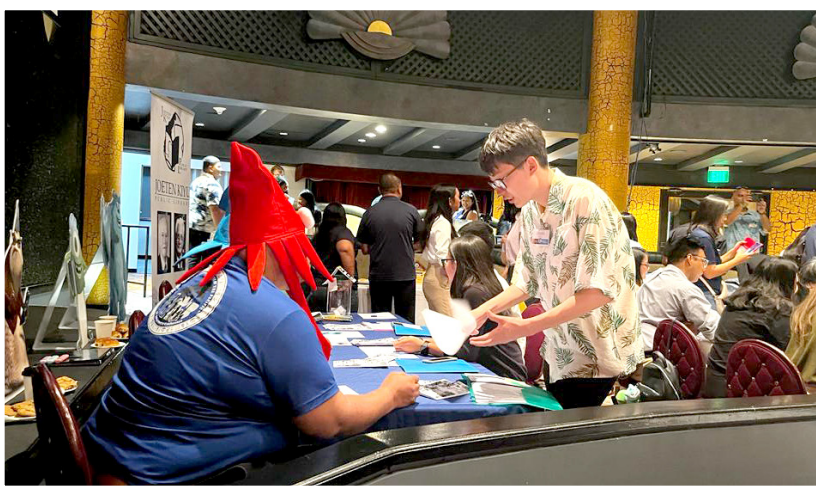
Marianas High Schools students with Individualized Education Program actively participated with their peers in post-secondary (higher education, employment) opportunities.



Northern Marianas College Campus visit



PSS Co-Op Spring 2023 Fair, Hyatt Regency



NMTech Partnership



Special thanks to the MHS Special Education team & School Administrators!

Pupil Transportation Personnel Praised for their Commitment, Positive Influences

THE CNMI Public School System has designated the week of February 13 to 17 as Pupil Transportation Week honoring the drivers, conductors, mechanics and dispatchers and support staff for their tireless dedication to safely transporting students.

Signed by Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, the education chief praised OPT as important figures in children's lives. "They are committed to the hard work of being positive influences while protecting students on the road to and from school."

"(We) honor the drive, conductors, mechanics, dispatchers, and support staff for their tireless education to safely transport students. The Pupil Transportation staff are important figures in children's lives, committed to the hard work of being positive influences while protecting students on the road to and from school," the proclamation reads.

OPT personnel and support staff are a vital part of the school district, directly providing safe transportation services to nearly 5,000 students each day to and from schools.

"Our OPT personnel deserve recognition for their tireless contributions to the education of our children," Commissioner Ada said.



OPT Director Shawn San Nicolas praised his colleagues.

"It is really important that we continue to recognize these professionals – bus drivers, conductors, mechanics, because they really take care of all our students. They take their jobs very seriously. They go through countless hours of training to ensure that students are safe going thru and forth. They play an important role in students' education by bringing them safely to school and home every day," he added.

PSS-OPT fleet of transportation - buses and SPED vans - are spread throughout Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

"These guys know what they are doing. I don't have to tell them what to do. They know what to do. They value their cargo because they know they are precious cargo to every parent," San Nicolas said.





Public School Students Impressive Reading Gains

PUBLIC school students performance continue to show impressive growth, with the latest year-to-date number posting huge gains.

The January-ending Achieve3000 progress show that public school students' Lexile growth is +58 which reflects a +27Lexile expected.

Lexile growth forecast a student's growth. This determines if the students is on track with reading to be college-and career-ready.

Achieve3000 is used to measure the growth. This is a technology-based method used by public schools in the CNMI.

The recent result covered 6,294 students.

Implemented during School-Year 2016-2017, Achieve3000 is a teacher-coaching tailored innovative online solutions that deliver reading gains of up to three times the average level and are proven to accelerate the path to college and career readiness.

Achieve3000 is a cloud-based suite of interactive readings,

formative assessments, and other resources that promote differentiated instruction and interdisciplinary reading for all grade levels. Daily, weekly and monthly top scorers or reading scorers as generated.

CNMI's PSS students' excellent reading performance Achieve3000 prompted the people behind the programs to use the CNMI as a model in the Pacific when the result came out following the piloting of the technology-based method. Since then, PSS students' progress continue to grow.

In essence, it is a unique tool that tracks or tell schools/classroom teachers exactly where students stand on the path to college and career readiness.

As an online reading tool and solutions to student reading challenges/difficulties, Acehive3000 is utilizing a simple five step process: By logging into the portal, each step is based on best practices that have evolved from decades of research: 1) respond to the "Before Reading Poll"; 2) read the article; 3) do the Activity Questions; 4) respond to the After Reading Poll, and 5) answer the Thought Question.



Francisca C. Ulloa is Honored for Exemplary Service to Public Education

Respected Educator Retires after 36 Years

ONE of the pillars of the Public School System has retired after 36 years of dedication and commitment.

Francisca ‘Kai’ C. Ulloa began working with the then-Department of Education in 1987 and throughout the more than three decades in public service, she has worked for the community and serve the children of the Commonwealth.

“Kai”, as she is popularly known to her peers and friends, is one of the living witnesses how public education in the CNMI has undergone several stages of transformation and development.

On January 27, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, along with the Office of Student Support Services (SSS) led by Senior Director Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan, and the PSS central office staff, bestowed upon Kai Ulloa the highest public education honor: The Distinguished Service Recognition Award.

“The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and CNMI Public School System presents this Distinguished Service Recognition Award to Francisca C. Ulloa... in grateful

appreciation for your thirty-six years of exemplary service to the CNMI Public School System,” reads the award, signed by Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada.

“Francisca C. Ulloa is recognized for her genuine pursuit of the growth and development of the CNMI Public School System that promotes and values innovation and change...” the award added.

She started as a classroom teacher in 1986 and went on to serve for 10 years. It was during this period that public education in the CNMI started its transformation. The 1985 and 1995 Constitutional Conventions ushered in changes and development for the public education in the CNMI, with the creation of the autonomous Public School System governed by the CNMI Board of Education in 1988.

Kai Ulloa began her professional growth thereafter. By 1997 she was also a school vice principal and went on to serve until 1999.

She was appointed administrator in 1999 and serve for another 12 years.

Because of the depth of knowledge and breadth of experience in various areas of public education, Kai Ulloa was elevated to the Public School System central office in 2011. It was during this period when the school district began its growth and development.



Honoring Public School Counselors



THE Public School System and Board of Education leadership has paid tribute to all public school counselors whose work, advocacy and commitment are integral part to the development and success of public school students.

In proclaiming the week of February 6-10 as CNMI School Counseling Week, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, who was joined by Board of Education member Herman Atalig, paid tribute to school counselors as “partners...whose work, advocacy and commitment help the children of the CNMI prepare for their after-high school choices...”

“Our classroom teachers help students learn the actual content and subject areas and our school counselors are their partners, they address and handle equally important critical factors that could present obstacles to student learning. Our school counselors are education professionals whose primary focus is to help our public school students achieve academically to prepare them for success in the future,” Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada said in addressing the district’s school counselors.



"I stand alongside our hardworking school counselors. Being a school counselor has become much more difficult these days in the face of the changing – or growing needs of our community for us, custodians of public education, to maintain the quality of education we provide to our largest stakeholders: the children of this commonwealth," the education chief said.

He added, " In our focus for higher level of accountability, we will continue to support the growing role of our school counselors through our School Counseling Program... Our investment in the work and growth of our school counselors will further complement and boost the work that our school counselors and the School Counseling Program have put in place. We will continue to do so in helping our children navigate their future."

During the special ceremony, the district's school counselors were also presented with a special certificate of recognition which highlighted their day-long professional development.

