



August 2023

CNMI Public School System

STUDENTS FIRST

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WHAT'S INSIDE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS REPORT A SUCCESSFUL START OF SCHOOL YEAR 2023-2024

The Commonwealth's public school students wrapped up the successful summer months participating in various federally funded programs that prepared them for the reopening of classes. School Year 2023-2024 opened on August 22 to over 9,000 elementary, middle, high school, Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Intervention and Special Education Program students from Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

Investing in Employees Growth and Development

The school district continues to embrace every opportunity that will spur growth and learning of its staff that play a critical role in student learning. Following a successful summer of learning and professional development, the new school year opened to a prepared school district.

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Hopwood Middle School's CTE 8th grade class of Arlene Buniag and Victor Cabrera began their full day classes as the rest of the public elementary, middle and high schools which began classroom instruction on August 22- start of School-Year 2023-2024.

Back to School Story

- Write about going back to school after summer vacation
- Five years from now I will be

Public Schools
Open School-Year
2023-2024

All 20 public schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota opened their doors smoothly on August 22 to returning and new students attending Headstart/ Early Headstart, early intervention, special education elementary, middle, and high school classes.

There were 8,896 enrolled students at all levels. This number is projected to increase as schools expect late enrollees and transferees during the first two weeks, according to the Office of Accountability, Research and Evaluation, which tracks and records enrollment numbers for all campuses.

School administrators credited the smooth opening of the classes to three factors: preparation that was done throughout the summer, collaboration with parents, and technology-based registration/enrollment.

The school district has also implemented a new bell schedule for middle schools, from 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., and for high schools, from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

The elementary bell schedule remains at 7:30 am.

"I received reports from our schools that we have a smooth transition – reopening of our public schools to our public school students. Thank you to our strongest partners, our parents, who were there to help their children get to attend the first day of classes and for supporting our schools to reopen safely and orderly," Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada.

Schools across Saipan, Tinian and Rota reported attendance rates between 95 percent to 100 percent on the first day of classes.

Transportation

Transporting students from various pick-up and drop off points in different school zones (locations) went on smoothly, except for "minor hiccups", especially first-time students getting onto the wrong buses.

An estimated 2,000 elementary, middle, and high school students were transported during the August 21 resumption of public schools, according to the Office of Pupil Transportation.

Most parents escort and drop their children off to school during the first day of classes.

Bus drivers and conductors were on-time in picking up students at various bus stops.

According to Office of Pupil Transportation Director Shawn San Nicolas, students were transported on time.

A total of 29 regular buses and special education vans rolled out at exactly 6:30 am to pick up students for the first day of classes.

"It was smooth considering all the traffic that our buses have to encounter, especially on Saipan's Beach Road's ongoing construction," San Nicolas said.

Infinite campus

The infinite campus, a district-wide technology-based information system, is credited for the smooth opening of the new school year. There were fewer parents visiting schools for late enrollment, school leaders said.

The infinite campus was implemented in 2022 by Commissioner of Education Ada and Senior Director for Accountability, Research and Evaluation Dr. Rizalina Liwag.



Students of Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School opened the school year with a program which was held in the open-air school field.



The school district also provides free transportation service for public school students at all grade levels on Saipan, Tinian and Rota. Students are picked up and dropped off daily at approved designated pick-up points. PSS buses and vans ply along designated routes and school zones.

Infinite campus is designed to manage students' information, as a portal that stores and records attendance, grades, schedule, test scores and all other student-related information.

"We are still processing because there are late enrollees, but everything is seamless because it is a computerized system," Dr. Liwag separately said.

Tinian, Rota

Tinian's newly separated Tinian High School and Tinian Middle School held a joint flag ceremony for its 253 combined enrolled students.

Principal Liz Perzinski said the first day of school was spent on the election of class and club. The students also signed up for their respective clubs and sports organizations.

"It was a really good activity to open the school," Principal Perzinski said.

Rota's Dr. Rita H. Inos Junior Senior High School opened the school year with 220 student enrollees.

A senior entrance was held and performances to welcome incoming seventh and eleventh grade students.

"The students were really very excited. It is the collaboration and preparation between the school

administration and staff, working together in making sure we open the school smoothly and ready to receive our learners," Interim Principal Calvo said, crediting her school's nearly 40 teaching and non-teaching personnel for making it happen.

Saipan

Marianas High School, the biggest school in the CNMI, registered its largest student enrollment at 1,680.

"This is the biggest enrollment in the history of the school," Vice Principal Melanie S. Rdiall said. Last year's enrollment was at 1,540.

According to her, the increase in enrollment is "from private schools and off-island students."

She said there were student transferees from Grace Christian Academy, Mount Carmel School, Seventh Day Adventist School, and Agape Christian Academy.

"We were smooth. But in the afternoon, it was a little bit chaotic because parents were waiting for their children. Basically, it was organized chaos. We are expecting that in the coming days, traffic will not be a problem anymore," Vice Principal Rdiall said.

MHS has emailed parents and students of MHS about a temporary traffic flow and parking given the ongoing road construction affecting incoming and outgoing traffic to the school.

Hopwood Middle School, the largest middle school in the CNMI, opened smoothly. It had 618 student enrollment and the number is expected to increase.

"Opening so far went pretty smoothly. Having everyone here at the same time...everyone is looking forward to having a full day of instruction," Principal Vic Borja said.

Vice Principal Karen Manuel said the school implemented its full day session, the first time since typhoon Yutu when it implemented a double session (morning and afternoon sessions).

"We began our classroom instruction without any delay. It was seamless and organized based on our scheduled time," Vice Principal Manuel said.

She added: "Compared to previous years, it's a lot smoother. There may be overcrowding in our classroom and that's maybe because we have a full set of students on full schedule, but we don't see any problem."

The largest elementary school, William S. Reyes Elementary School, welcomed 540 students. The number

is expected to change in the coming days.

"We opened very smoothly and quietly. Although we have some parents who came to do the last-minute registration, it was not as busy as last year or previous year," Principal Dr. Lyn Mendiola said.

She praised their school registrar, Roque Pulido, for his aggressive work "in reaching out to parents." As a result, "parents did a lot better at registering earlier or on time".

Saipan Southern High School opened its campus 690 students.

"I thought we were going to have a scheduling difficulty, but our counselors and staff did really a good job," SSHS Principal Vince Dela Cruz said.

He said the staff reported a week before Aug. 22 to help prepare the school schedule.

"And a lot of parents also helped fellow parents with the registration (through infinite campus)," he added.

Garapan Elementary School's first bell rang at 7:30 a.m. to welcome 450 elementary students, according to Principal Derwin Johnson.

GES had its orientation and open house a day before the school opening. "And it helped that we were able to address any potential situation at the opening. Otherwise, it was smooth," Principal Johnson said.

At the northernmost school, Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School, the students were "excited and smiling," Principal Raena Bermudes said.

"The first day of school went well for our Binadu! We had the opportunity to welcome many of our students and families to campus before the first day of our Open House event held last Friday, August 18. Parents and students who attended were able to meet the whole school team, learn about our school-wide goals and expectations, as well as visit the classroom to meet the teacher and learn more about the class. This helped with a smooth start for many of our students today, on the first day of school. We had a flood of smiling faces and excitement as students entered their classrooms. GTC is off to a great start and our team looks forward to a wonderful school year," said Principal Raena Bermudes.

San Vicente Elementary School opened its doors to 482 students.

"It was a beautiful site on the first day of school seeing parents walking their child to school," Principal Paulette Tomokane said. "Despite the normal heavy traffic, it was a good first day."



From left, WSR Elementary School special education teacher Dora Jo Ada, Vice Principal Dr. Jocelyn Manibusan Tudela and Principal Dr. Lynn Mendiola monitors the flow of classes through state-of-the-art technology that includes high-end security surveillance and cameras strategically setup in various points of the large campus.

Leading-edge Multi-tiered System of Support Framework Training held to Identify Students' Academic, Behavior Needs



THROUGHOUT the summer months, the Public School System – elementary, middle, and high schools on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota – and various programs have worked collaboratively to identify and address students' academic and behavioral needs using the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Framework.

This will be a continuous initiative of the school district's Accountability, Research and Evaluation, in partnership with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Office of Student Support Services. In preparation for its adoption (MTSS framework) in the classroom, coaching and training will be provided throughout the new school year, 2023–2024.

The Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework is a comprehensive framework and protocol established to identify, implement, assess, monitor, and evaluate evidence-based interventions for learners across three islands, from early childhood education to 12th grade, based on their unique needs.

This leading-edge system is used to predict a student's level of risk for missing an essential academic milestone or milestones (without interventions) using key indicators. The State Longitudinal Data System developed a platform for the Early Warning System to assist schools in identifying at-risk students based on key indicators. The key indicators identified are the student's reading and math assessments, attendance, current grades, behavior, and school mobility.

In June 2023, PSS key management, school leaders, the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, the Office of Student Support Services, and the Office of Accountability, Research, and Evaluation met to discuss and develop the MTSS framework appropriate for the CNMI Public School System. During the discussions, key management and school leaders had the opportunity to provide input on the types of interventions and support that must be provided for students identified in different tiers. The leadership team also learned how students are flagged on the Early Warning System platform. In July 2023, the school administrators, teachers, counselors, and instructional providers took a one-week training course on MTSS and EWS.



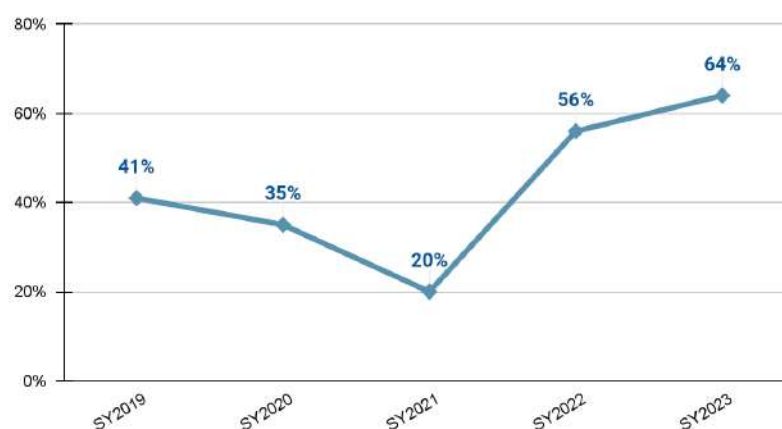


Schoolwide Planning Prepares Schools For New School Year

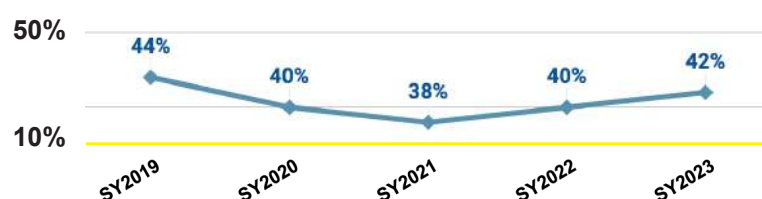
THE schools are ready to implement the programs and activities for the SY2023-2024. In June 2023, stakeholders composed of teachers, school personnel, parents, students, and school leaders from 20 schools met to determine the impact of the critical initiatives they implemented in SY2022-2023. The results of the student's academic achievement and other data are used to develop a new schoolwide plan for the SY2023-2024.

Based on last year's data, out of 255 objectives from all the schools, 199 objectives were met in their schoolwide plan. The school initiatives written in their SWP helped the school improve the students' academic performance in Reading and Math. Below is the result of the SY2022-2023 reading and math assessments:

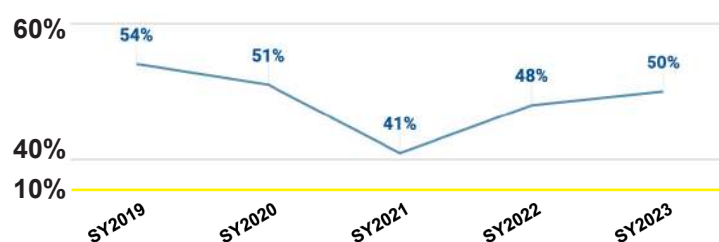
STAR EARLY LITERACY ASSESSMENT 5-YEAR TREND DATA



STAR READING ASSESSMENT 5-YEAR TREND DATA



STAR MATH ASSESSMENT 5-YEAR TREND DATA



PSS Names Teacher of the Year 5 finalists

THE Public School System has announced the top five finalists for the 2024 Teacher of the Year.

The five finalists are Roque Castro Indalecio of Marianas High School, Francis Mendiola of Koblerville Elementary School, Maria Pobeda of Sinapalo Elementary School, Maria Victoria Nishida of Hopwood Middle School, and Sonya-Jane Olopai of Da'ok Academy.

Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores said this year's finalists represent a highly competitive and experienced group of educators who excel in their respective classrooms.

"As we all know, every year our school district conducts the Teacher of the Year selection in a very competitive process. We are as excited as our PSS community because this goes to show that we have hardworking, committed, and excellent

classroom teachers who continue to give their best to our students, our parents and family," Interim Commissioner of Education Flores said.

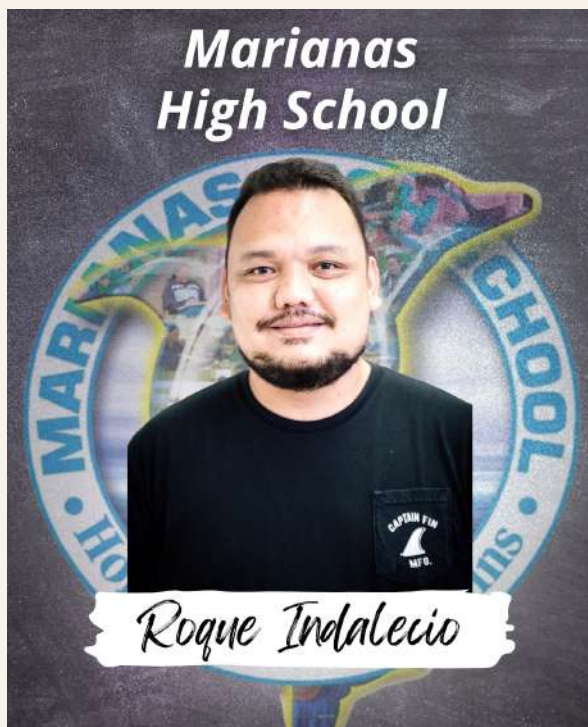
The twenty public elementary, middle, and high schools on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota each sent their respective nominees to the state-level competition.

The CNMI-wide winner (state-level) will qualify for the national competition. This is held every December in the nation's capital.

This is the second year that the winner is announced early – no later than the first week of October. This will allow for the CNMI winner to submit the requirements of timely requirements for the 2024 National Teacher of the Year competition.

The five finalists were chosen by a panel coming from various sectors in the community.

ROQUE CASTRO INDALECIO



MHS classroom teacher Dr. Roque Castro Indalecio is an educator "who imparts his expertise across all high school grade levels (9th-12th), specializing in the subjects of chemistry and environmental science."

Roque's passion for teaching is highlighted by a rich educational background.

He earned his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education degree from the Northern Marianas College.

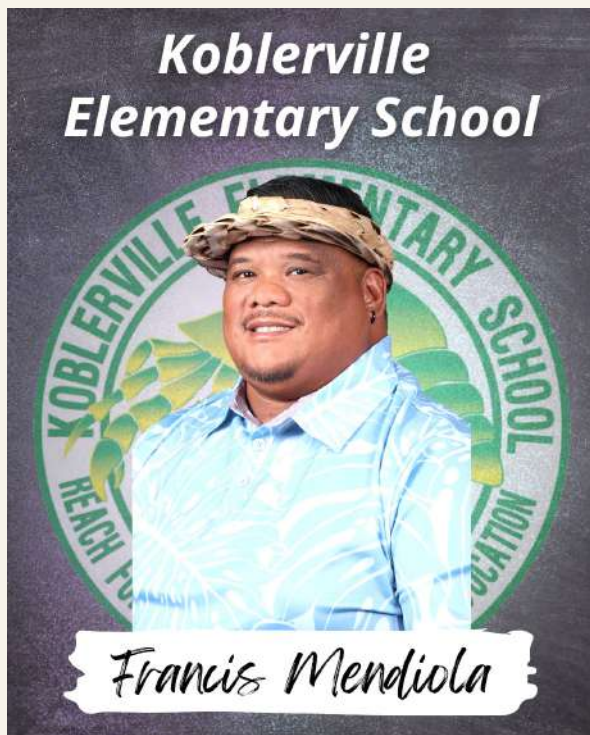
Building upon this foundation, he pursued a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Concordia University, which expanded his repertoire of effective teaching methodologies. Demonstrating his dedication to educational advancement, Dr. Indalecio earned his Doctor of Education in Educational Technology from Walden University, which is "a testament to his commitment to integrating innovative technology into the learning experience of his students," PSS said.

Throughout his career, Dr. Indalecio has earned recognition for his outstanding contributions to education. He was honored as a 21st Century Teacher at the high school level, acknowledging his forward-thinking approach to education, and, for his remarkable work, he was named as Teacher of the Year during his time at the middle school level in 2015.

Dr. Indalecio's "pedagogical philosophy is firmly rooted in the principles of student-centered education."

"He passionately believes in fostering an inclusive environment where learners of diverse backgrounds and abilities collaborate, think critically, and unleash their creative potential. This approach allows students to take ownership of their educational journey, nurturing a lifelong love for learning. Roque is also a supporter for integrating technology purposefully, leveraging its capabilities to enhance engagement and cater to varied learning modalities. By blending interactive tools with traditional teaching methods, he cultivates a dynamic partnership between students and educators, equipping students with essential digital skills for the modern world," the school district said.

FRANCIS MENDIOLA



KOBLERVILLE Elementary School's Francis Mendiola is a fifth grade classroom teacher that handles all core subjects including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education and Health.

An educator for over 18 years, his leadership skills and capabilities have made him an active contributor to the school, district, and community as a KES Student Council advisor, KES Gardening Club advisor, Eland Environmental Youth Alliance advisor, Youth Advisory Panel advisor, KES Interscholastic Sports coach, CNMI STEM Logistics Committee coordinator, and the Board President for the 670 Sonics Basketball Organization, and Water Safety Instructor.

He was also a finalist in last year's edition of the state-level PSS Teacher of the Year.

"Aside from teaching 5th graders, he also devotes his time teaching fellow PSS colleagues a variety of strategies and techniques that involve the integration of technology into the classroom curriculum under the Instructional Technology program," PSS said.

Born in the Philippines but raised most of his life in Saipan, Mendiola learned to adapt and embrace the island's culture and people. After graduating from Marianas High School in 1999, he went on to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Hawaii at Hilo and graduated in May 2004. Upon his return to Saipan in 2004, he taught KES as a computer teacher. Over time, he decided to further his

education by graduating with a master's degree in international education from Framingham State University in 2011.

"He is a very sociable and innovative man who is known to many. Francis continues to demonstrate passion and commitment to helping our students reach their fullest potential in the classroom and beyond," adds PSS.

MARIA POBEDA



MARIA Lourdes Pobeda is a second grade classroom teacher from Sinapalo Elementary School in Rota.

She considers teachers her "work of heart".

"With eight years of expertise in this field, she has dedicated herself to fostering young brains and educating them to be optimistic world changers. She also serves an active role for individuals of all ages and backgrounds in her community and throughout her state as an AmeriCorps Site Supervisor," PSS said.

Pobeda is an educational content creator who creates engaging learning activities and other educational materials for educators and students. She aims to work with other educators to exchange knowledge and support one another in bringing about the significant changes the education system needs.

Pobeda graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics at Southern New Hampshire in 2018. She continues to serve leadership roles in a professional learning community and an accreditation team. She was acknowledged as a Nearpod Certified Educator, Class Dojo Mentor, Infinite Campus (Kindergarten to 3rd Grade Cluster) Mentor, and Digital Literacy trainer. Her technical abilities earned her recognition as the 21st Century Educator Award in 2022.

"With her interest in continuing improving her technological skills and helping more individuals keep up with technological advancement, she is currently pursuing a master's degree in

education in Curriculum & Instruction with a concentration on Technology Integration," PSS said.

MARIA VICTORIA NISHIDA



MARIA Victoria Nishida is an accomplished educator teaching 8th grade social studies at Hopwood Middle School.

Nishida started teaching at Hopwood Middle School in 2011 and soon developed a passion for teaching. Nishida taught 7th and 8th grade science and mathematics as well as general mathematics and algebra briefly at the Northern Marianas College.

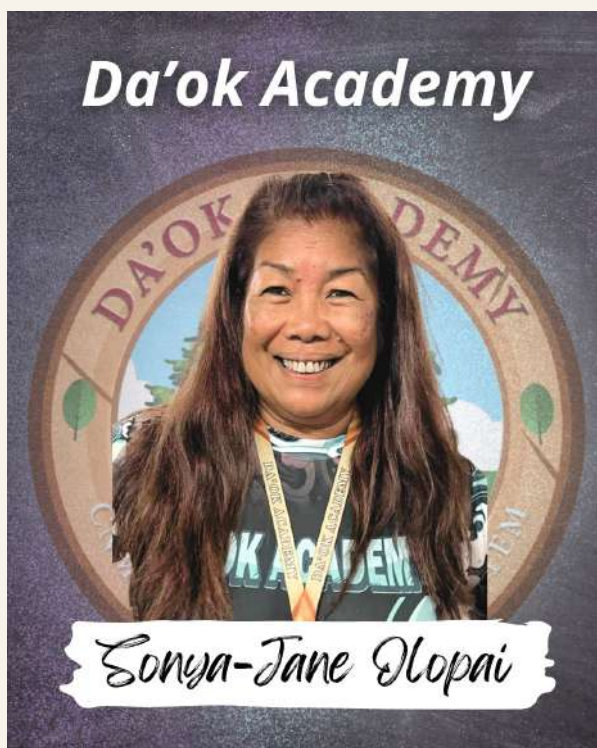
Nishida graduated from Framingham State University with a Master of Education specializing in International Teaching. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Economics degree from the College of the Holy Spirit. Recently, Nishida was selected to participate in the National Endowment for the Humanities' Landmarks of American History and Culture Program, Saipan's Land and Sea: Battle Scars and Sites of Resilience.

"Nishida's commitment to educational equality and empowering students led her to join the Western Pacific Region National Speech and Debate Association and International Thespian Society, where she was elected board member and became national coach. With her hard work and dedication, she was able to inspire and motivate students from public schools to participate, compete, and win in the national tournaments that brought honor and glory to the CNMI," PSS said.

An advocate for students, Nishida volunteers to be an advisor for National Junior Honor Society, Student Council, Model United Nations to name a few. Nishida is a powerful force in the

classroom and uses a positive attitude and dedication to encourage her students to work hard and succeed. She enjoys using her skills through mentorship and leadership to contribute to the exciting educational advances that happen every day at HMS.

SONYA-JANE OLOPAI



SONYA Jane Olopai has over 30 years of classroom teaching experience with the Public School System.

She is currently a classroom teacher for Da'ok Academy.

She started her public education career as a 22-year old at a local elementary school in Saipan in 1989. She was hired as a teacher aide with no experience of teaching, backed by only an AA degree in Liberal Arts.

Olopai, however, with determination and perseverance, took advantage of the professional development opportunities provided by PSS and continued to take classes to pursue her degree in Elementary Education. She received her Associate of Arts Degree in Liberal Arts from the Northern Marianas College in 1988. With the collaboration and extension program between NMC and the University of Guam, she was able to receive her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education in 1997 from UOG.

In 2000, Olopai enrolled in the first cohort for the Master of Education degree with a Concentration in International Teaching offered at NMC through Framingham State University.

During the last school year, Olopai was hailed as a Da'ok Academy Teacher of the Year awardee based on consistency of Achieve 3000 program usage and outstanding average student Lexile growth.

During the same year, she was awarded the 21st Century Educator Award for her school and received 30 laptops for her students.

"She has taken the journey alongside PSS in the countless changes in educational policies and reforms to ensure that public education in our islands perpetually keeps abreast with the societal changes and continues to educate not only students but all major stakeholders," the media release said.



Special Education and Head Start Programs Back to School Professional Development



The CNMI Public School System- Special Education Program's Back-to-School Professional Development joined by Head Start Program staff was held on August 18, 2023 at the Saipan World Resort. Over 200 staff from Saipan, Tinian, & Rota participated in the district-wide professional development. Today, public school instruction on all levels will formally open School-Year 2023-2024.



L-R: Interim Commissioner of Education and Special Education Program Director Donna M. Flores, with staff leaders Lucille Deleon Guerrero, Lorie Baulechong, Instructional Technology and Distance Education Program Director Lorraine Catienza, SPED's Denicia Dela Cruz, and Natalie Suda.

Supporting Students With Special Needs: High-Quality Headsets to Support Online Speech Therapy Services

THE Public School System is committed to fostering a learning environment of inclusivity and accessibility for all students. Through its partnership with the Office of Instructional Technology & Distance Education, the Special Education Program received high-quality headsets equipped with noise canceling microphones to support students availing online speech therapy services.

The 21st century classroom initiative, supported by federal Consolidated Grant funding, reflects the school district's commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, have equal opportunities to excel in the classroom.

In addition to speech therapy services, the headphones will benefit students within the Special Education Program by enabling them to engage more effectively with digital learning resources and the newly implemented high quality instructional material. This initiative aligns with the CNMI Public School System's ongoing efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students and promote an environment of equity and inclusivity.

From Classroom Teachers to District Staff, Professional Development to Support School District's Readiness

FOR one full day, the school district held its annual Statewide Professional Development Day on September 5 on a wide range of topics that impact students' learning, district personnel's role in student learning, and success.

For years now, the Public School System has been investing in the professional growth of its personnel—both teaching and nonteaching—embracing research-based findings of the effects that professional development has on students.

The full-day event included personnel and staff of various programs and all of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota elementary, middle, and high schools. The district-wide professional development provides opportunities for staff and school leaders' knowledge, skills, and professional capability to deliver key curriculum priorities and program initiatives aligned to the Strategic Priorities of the Public School System.

It was a specialized, and tailored, district-wide professional development that included the topics of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Chamorro and Carolinian Language and Heritage Studies (CCLHS) Work Session, Basketball Coaching Workshop, Early Intervention Engagement and Action Planning, Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA), Child Abuse & Neglect Mandated Reporting and Harassment Training, Title I Data Dialogue & Action Planning, Cognia Accreditation, Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), and the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

The result of the statewide PD was that over 1,000 of the school district's teaching and non-teaching personnel took part in the intensive day-long professional development that achieved the district's overall goal of ensuring that public school students graduate career-and college-ready.

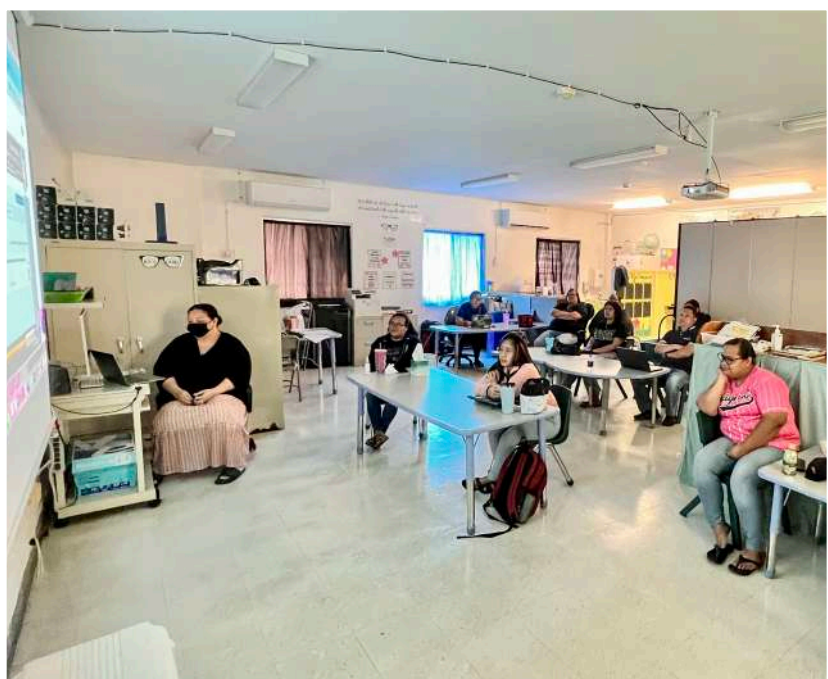


GTC Elementary School classroom teachers Mei Reedstrom, Patricia Muna and Liza Noisom, all second grade teachers, during the September 5 professional development.

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

THE professional development session focused on HQIM Implementation Non- negotiable, the curriculum map calendar, the status of growth measures, and the use of data to create learning goals. It was facilitated by respective school administrators and HQIM school level teams.

Participants were all classroom teachers, instructors, school counselors, librarians, teacher aides, school aides, and school administrative staff.



GTC Elementary School classroom teachers Mei Reedstrom, Patricia Muna and Liza Noisom, all second grade teachers, during the September 5 professional development.

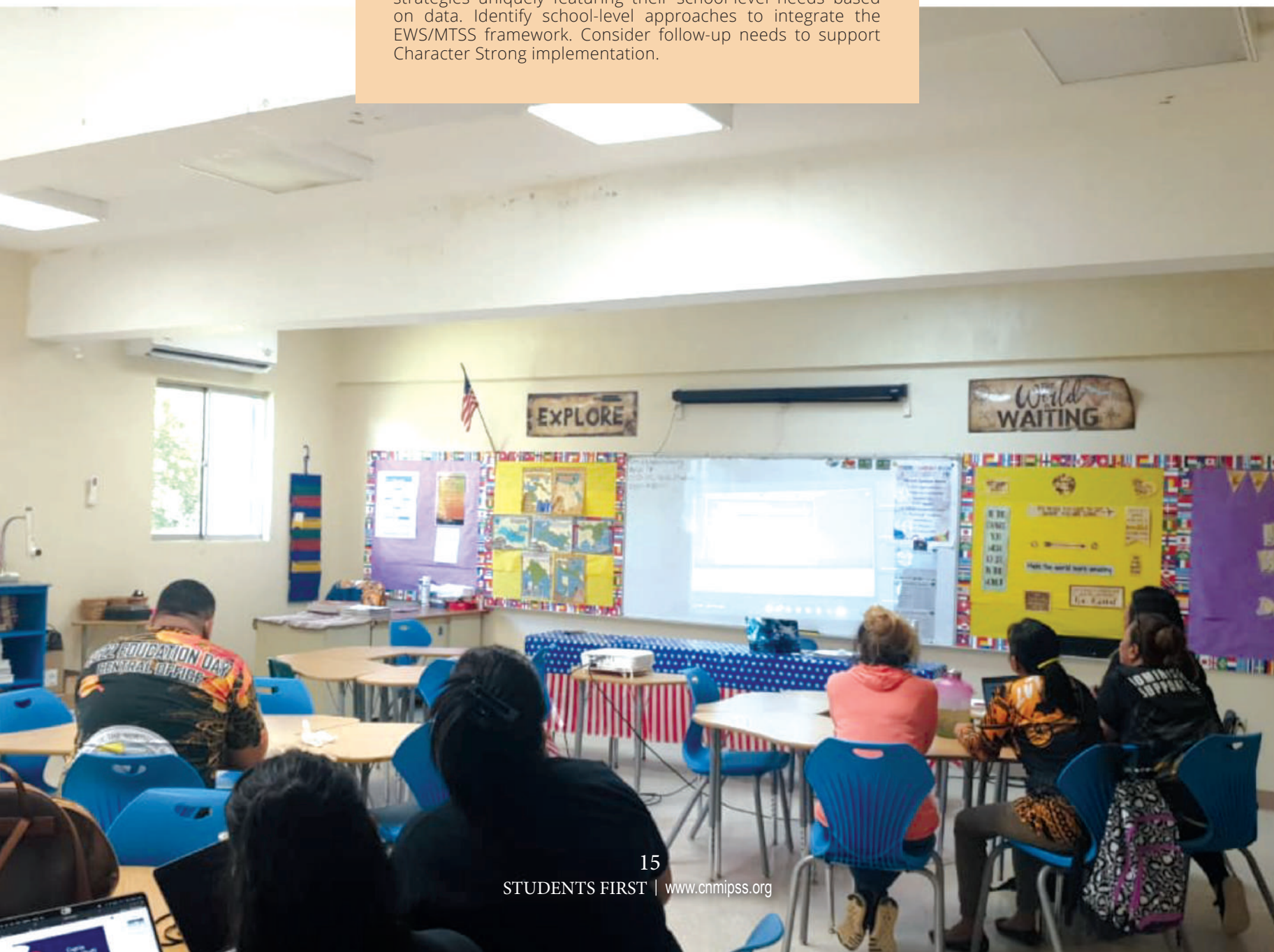
Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

SCHOOL counselors, school monitoring and outreach specialists, physical education teachers, and related service providers were the target audience of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) PD that was held on September 5 at respective schools.

This was focused on the Elementary SEL School-Level Team with Positive Action Description: The team will revisit the implementation of SEL, data collection - measures or targets, booster professional learning needs, and resources allocated to support Positive Action's ongoing implementation. Additionally, share recommended approaches to integrate with the EWS/MTSS framework.

Secondary SEL School-Level with Character Strong Description: The team will develop and share the implementation plan and strategies uniquely featuring their school-level needs based on data. Identify school-level approaches to integrate the EWS/MTSS framework. Consider follow-up needs to support Character Strong implementation.

Rota's Dr. Rita Hocog Inos
Junior Senior High School
classroom teachers and
school personnel participate
during the district-wide PD.



Chamorro Carolinian Language and Heritage Studies

CCLHS classroom teachers Jennjie Magofna of GTC Elementary School and Rose Hosono of Garapan Elementary School during their specialized PD on the CCLHS program which was held at the Dandan Middle School.

THE CCLHS Work Session was designed to provide a follow-up conversation on the priority standards and lesson objectives that connect the standards and developing lesson plans to address the objectives and by keeping in mind the Understanding By Design (UBD) framework.

This was a tailored program for all CCLHS (bilingual) classroom teachers, CCLHS instructors and CCLHS teacher aides in PSS and was facilitated by Dr. Clare Camacho from the University of Guam.



CCLHS classroom teachers Rose T. Jones of Chacha Oceanview Middle School, Alma Villagomez of Koblerville Elementary, and Gloria Rasiang of Francisco M. Sablan Middle School discuss how the CCLHS PR will further improve student learning and outcomes.





Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores joins school personnel at the Marianas High School cafeteria during the professional development relating to work-place safety.

Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)

THE success of student learning is also to ensure they are in a safe and conducive learning environment. Work-place safety is one critical factor in meeting this goal.

The professional development of Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) was held simultaneously in all schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

The OSHA training provides school personnel particularly belonging to the Facilities Development and Management, school building maintenance and custodial workers, and procurement and supply warehouse staff with the latest tools and resources on work-place safety and the proper use of PPEs, equipment, storage, recording, and reporting.

At the Marianas High School cafeteria, Saipan FDM personnel and building and maintenance personnel from all of the Saipan schools received their OSHA training from Tim Asaivao, program manager of CNMI-OSHA, and Jerome Ignacio, safety consultant of CNMI-OSHA.

Tinian Middle School and Tinian High School personnel takes a group photo following their day-long professional development.





Central Office personnel participate in the district-wide accreditation PD.

All Set for Cognia Accreditation

THE Public School System is gearing up for its district wide Cognia accreditation, which is set for October.

From the summer months to last September 5, the school district has been preparing for the next cycle of its accreditation from the global accrediting arm, Cognia – a nonprofit and non-governmental organization that accredits primary and secondary schools both on the mainland and globally.

Led by the team of Dr. Rizalina Liwag of the Office of Accountability, Research and Evaluation, the Cognia accreditation professional development was four-pronged: Culture of Learning, Leadership for Learning, Engagement of Learning, and Growth in Learning.

This was facilitated by Senior Director for ARE Dr. Liwag and Marian Tudela, accreditation program manager of PSS.

Dr. Rizalina Liwag, Senior Director for Accountability, Research & Evaluation | Marian Tudela, Accreditation Program Manager,



Daok Academy staff held their Cognia accreditation training.



Senior Director Dr. Rizalina Liwag of Accountability, Research and Evaluation facilitated the accreditation preparation PD.

Acting Internal Control and Evaluation Program Director

This was for all PSS main office (central) personnel, which includes the Child Nutrition Program, Office of Pupil Transportation, Special Education Relative Service Providers and Related Service Specialists, and School Nurses.

At the school level, personnel from all of Saipan, Tinian and Rota elementary, middle and high schools held their Cognia accreditation preparation.

PSS first received its district-wide accreditation in 2014 from AdvancEd (which later on became Cognia).

In 2018, a review of the district's continuous improvement plan was conducted by Cognia's external review team, visiting all 20 schools, early learning programs (Early Head Start and Head Start). The external review team also interviewed students, parents/ community and business stakeholders, instructional staff, school administrators, the Commissioner of Education, and members of the Board of Education.

On February 2019, PSS was granted another five-year accreditation status valid through June 2024 by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA-CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commissioner (NWAC), and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SCAS CASI).



Francisco M. Sablan Middle School staff participate in an activity.



Saipan Southern High School Principal Vince Dela Cruz, right, facilitates his school's Cognia accreditation preparation.



Parents, friends and visitors of Tinian Elementary School gathered at the school cafeteria as they brought festivity at the annual Lunch with Loved Ones event.



Parents and their children enjoying their time together.

Tinian Elementary School Brought Excitement to Reopening of Classes with *Lunch with Love Ones*



Board of Education Chairman Antonio L. Borja also showed up for his daughter's school activity.



Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores joins in the special lunch celebration with Tinian students.

ADDING extra excitement to the reopening of public schools, parents and community members gathered once again at the Tinian Elementary School cafeteria for 'Lunch with Loved Ones' an event that was pioneered by the school's parent organization.

Four years ago, PTSA came up with this creative idea to increase parental engagement in their child's learning.

"This started four years ago as one of the monthly events of our parents' association (PTSA) who were thinking of ways to increase their visibility and engagement in school activities. Four years later, this has become a major student-school activity for our parents," Principal Lou Connie Manglona said.

She describes the activity as a heartwarming and cherished experience.

"During this time, our families share not only a meal but also laughter, conversations, and a sense of togetherness. It's a precious opportunity to catch up and enjoy each other's company amidst the hustle and bustle of the school day. These moments create lasting memories and strengthen the bonds between those who care for one another," the school administrator said.

Tinian Elementary School has 178 students.

The whole intent of our parents here is to make sure that nobody feels left out during this special lunch.

As a parent himself, Board of Education Chairman Antonio L. Borja, has never missed the activity.

Interim Commissioner of Education Donna M. Flores and Acting Associate Commissioner for Administrative Service Shawn San Nicolas were on site to personally witness the event. As "visitors" they also took part in the special lunch and engaged with students and parents.