



CNMI Public School System

STUDENTS FIRST

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January 2022



FOCUS

EMBRACING DIVERSITY WITHIN OUR PSS COMMUNITY

STORIES OF

Student Achievers Increased Attendance

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Saipan's Gregorio Pat Borja elected 17th BOE chairman

Tinian's Antonio Borja is vice chairman;
Maisie Tenorio reelected secretary

'I'd like to see us address the needs of and provide assistance to students and families... as we return to face-to-face learning'



Gregorio Pat Borja

LONG-TIME educator and an advocate for disabilities and their families Gregory Pat Borja was elected chairman of the 18th CNMI Board of Education, the policymaking and governing body of the Public School System.

Elected vice chairman is Tinian's Antonio Borja.

Saipan's Maisie B. Tenorio was re-elected Secretary/Treasurer. Saipan's Borja and Tenorio were elected to the BOE in 2020. Borja was appointed last year to represent Tinian.

The election of officers for the 18th BOE was held on January 11, 2022.

"I'm going to do my very best to serve our students, parents, our Public School System family, and our stakeholders of public education," newly elected BOE Chairman Borja said.

"I'd like to see us address what's happening in terms of being able to return to face-to-face especially provide assistance to the needs of students and families at this time (who aren't able to return to the classroom)," said Chairman Borja. The newly elected chairman said he would work with his colleagues to ensure that through BOE policies these students and parents are provided the needed support, and "work a healthy relationship with my colleagues".

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17th CNMI Board of Education Officers and Standing Committees

The policymaking and governing body of the Public School System was organized and elected its officers during its regular meeting on January 11, 2022.

Officers



**Chairman
Gregory Pat Borja**



**Vice Chairman
Antonio L. Borja**



**Secretary/Treasurer
Maisie B. Tenorio**

Members



**Herman M. Atalig,
SGM (Ret.)**



Andrew L. Orsini



**Teacher Representative
Phyllis M. Ain, J.D.**



**Non-Public School Representative
Ronald E. Snyder, Ed.D.**



**Student Representative
Jed R. Sta. Theresa**

Standing Committees Chairperson and Assignments

Fiscal, Personnel & Administration (FPA) Committee

Chairman: Herman M. Atalig
Vice Chairman: Andrew L. Orsini
Members: Maisie B. Tenorio
Phyllis M. Ain.

Capital Improvement & PSS Projects (CIP) Committee

Chairman: Andrew L. Orsini
Vice Chairman: Herman M. Atalig
Members: Gregory P. Borja
Ronald E. Snyder

Instructional Services & Assessment (ISA) Committee

Chairman: Antonio L. Borja
Vice Chairman: Maisie B. Tenorio
Members: Andrew L. Orsini
Ronald E. Snyder
Phyllis M. Ain.

Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs (LIA) Committee

Chairman: Andrew L. Orsini
Vice Chairman: Herman M. Atalig
Member: Gregory P. Borja

Student issues & Community & Parent Programs (SICPP) Committee

Chairman: Maisie B. Tenorio
Vice Chairman: Antonio L. Borja
Members: Gregory P. Borja
Jed R. Sta. Theresa

Head Start Policy Council (HPC)

Representative: Gregory P. Borja
Alternate: Maisie B. Tenorio

School Attendance Review Committee (SARC)

Coordinator: Robert L. Coldeen III
Chairperson: Patricia A. Mendoza
Vice Chairman: Sylvio Ada
Members: Julian R. Camacho
Kevin Maratita
John Blanco
Anthony Tomokane
Frances C. Ulloa
Nora F. Pangelinan

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"I am looking forward working with our different committees to address the needs of our public education stakeholders," said Chairman Borja.

Borja succeeded Andrew Orsini who led the 16th BOE.

Support in-person learning

Vice Chairman Borja of Tinian share with the plans of the new BOE chairman.

"Like I mentioned in our November meeting we have to go back to face-to-face because our students so needs it."

"Guided by professionals and health experts, they (our PSS leaders) deemed that we have to go back to classroom learning. So, I believe in this leadership," said Vice Chairman Borja.

Vice Chairman Antonio Borja became the youngest member to both served to the BOE and elected as vice chairman. He is 32 years old.

He is also the current Commonwealth Ports Authority manager for Tinian and Aguiguan.

Vice Chairman Borja said "this is about supporting the direction of PSS through the leadership of Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada" especially during the pandemic.

"We have to continue to serve our students...it's about **Students First**. Listen to our health professionals— they know what to do, then what is good for us and our community," Vice Chairman Borja said separately.

He added, "I am here to work hard and work with everybody to serve our students and our community."

Community Advocates

The new BOE chairman served as an educator for 8 years at San Vicente Elementary School. He is also a sports coach for Saipan Southern High School.

Last December he was promoted as executive director for the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc. a local non-profit organization that provides advocacy services on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families in the CNMI. NMPASI also administers grant programs



Maisie Tenorio



Antonio Borja

from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)/Center for Mental Health.

"It is a bit surprise. I am excited for this opportunity. I am thankful for my fellow board members for their confidence in me, to help lead us through the next year. And I am looking forward to the opportunity to provide ample leadership with the support of everyone," Borja said.

He extended his congratulations to his colleagues "for their new role and looks forward to working with them and sharing in the leadership and the decision-making process" in order "to move forward and create policies that will help everyone be successful".

Borja is also a retired US marine.

The BOE chairman is the son of long-time public educators: former education commissioner Dr. David Borja and former Marianas High School Principal Karen Borja.

"I think they'd be proud. I am looking forward of letting them know," said Chairman Borja. "They are happy for me when I decided to ran for the board. They were excited for that; they are excited that I am part of the board now and I am sure they are excited for this new opportunity to lead," he added.

Another community advocate, Tenorio, felt honored to be reelected and continue to serve as officer of the BOE for the second year in a row.

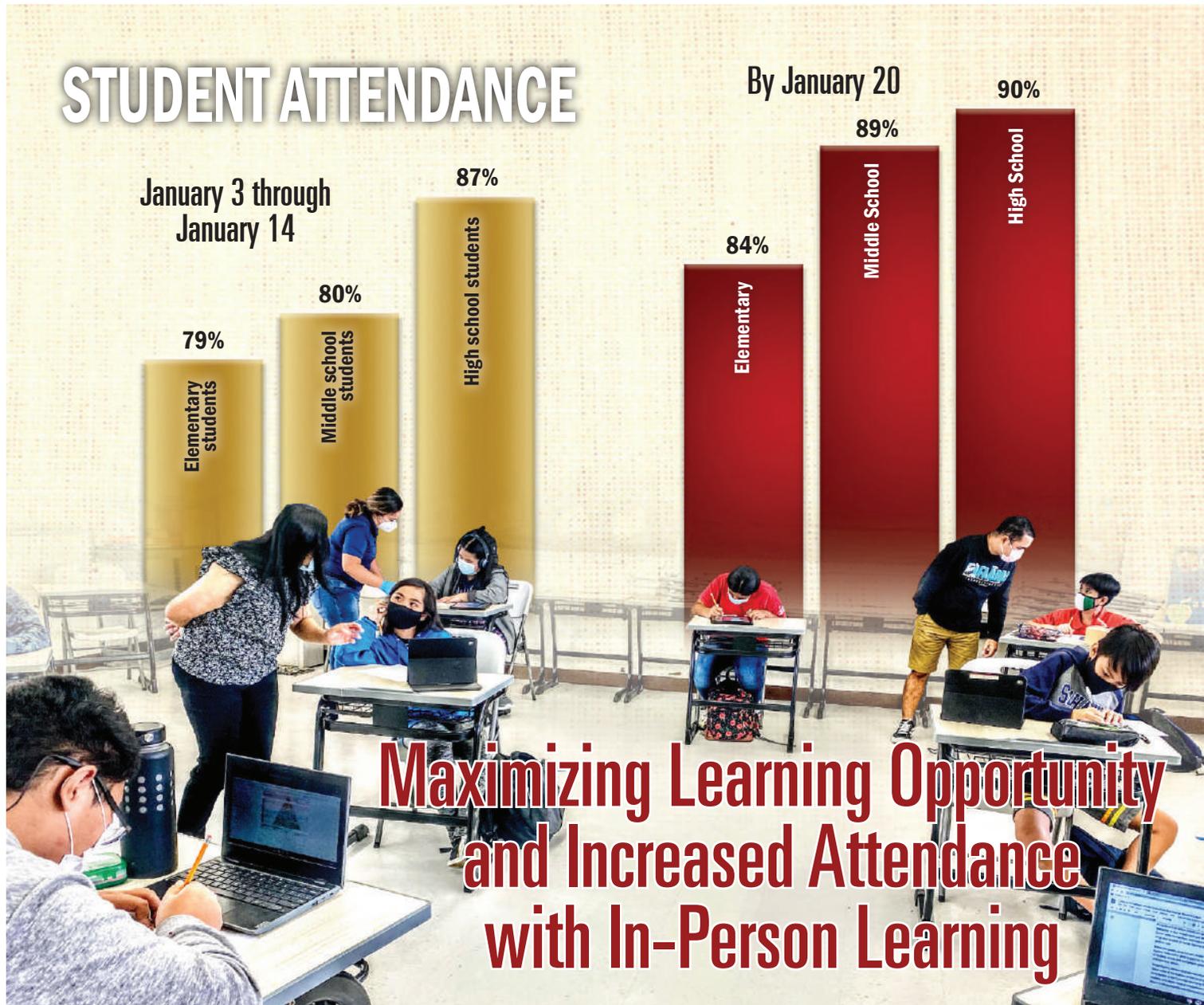
"I would do my best to serve our constituents," said Tenorio, who was reelected secretary/treasurer.

Tenorio is the chairperson of the Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations.

She is also the current executive director of the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence.

"I think it is great we have representations to this board who are committed to ensure our students are provided every opportunities for them to succeed," said Tenorio.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE



Maximizing Learning Opportunity and Increased Attendance with In-Person Learning

THE school district successfully resumed its in-person learning on January 3 and data have shown public school students attendance increased during the three two weeks of the transition. This means that the return to face-to-face learning for public school students will allow them better academic outcomes, greater level of engagement and affording them better support for social and emotional well-being.

“We have received our initial student attendance report from our schools and I am proud to inform our public education stakeholders that more and more of our public school students are coming back to school,” Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada told *Students First* in an interview.

Attendance data culled during the first three weeks of January (January 2 through January 14 –show that student attendance for elementary levels was at 79 percent.

Middle school students’ attendance was at 80 percent and high school students at 87 percent.

These data covers all of Saipan, Tinian and Rota public school campuses.

By the third week of the transition back to face-to-face classroom learning – the week of January 20-21 – student attendance rate further rose to the near pre-COVID levels

Elementary attendance rate has increase further to 84 percent, middle school students’ attendance was 89 percent, and high school students were at 90 percent.

“Application for waiver forms have decreased,” Commissioner

of Education Dr. Ada disclosed.

The education chief added that there are also other parents and guardians who filed the waiver form but still opted to send their child back to school.

The Public School System has the “In-Person Attendance Waiver Request Form”. Although these are unprecedented times, school attendance is still compulsory under the CNMI

3 CMC Section 1131 mandated that “every person between the age of 5 and 17 shall attend a public school or non-public school or until the completion of the 12th grade and or upon meeting the high school graduation requirements.

Only students with a medical condition that may impair their ability to attend school in person may apply to the Commissioner of Education for a waiver. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

“We continue to inform our parents and the community that we are doing our best in maintaining effective health and safety practices to protect our students when they are in our schools,” education chief Ada explained.

The education chief credited the school and the district leadership for its sustained efforts in reaching out to parents and all stakeholders, and the use of various media and information platforms for the high student attendance rate success.

“This are results of our successful collective work and our aggressive campaign using our media partners, our social media (Facebook, instagram and tweeter) and parental involvement,” Dr. Ada explained.



Long sisters of Tinian Junior Senior High School accepted to Harvard University

‘Classmates, school are our support system’

TINIAN – Isa Ha’ani Long said the collective spirit of her classmates and the support of her teachers and school community have inspired her and her sister with their pursuit of higher education.

The twin sisters – Isa Ha’ani and Cielo Long – made history both for the island of Tinian and for the Commonwealth after being accepted into Harvard University, one of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the world.

Isa Ha’ani Long credited her classmates and her school community as their “support system” now that they’re a step close in the realization of their dreams.

“This means a lot. Coming from Tinian, where we don’t have a lot (Advance Placement) courses or honors offered. But because it’s the resiliency that my classmates have showed me and my teachers have taught me to do,” Isa Ha’ani Long told *Students First* in an interview early January 2022.

During his visit here to Tinian Junior Senior High School on January 3, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada praised the success of the Long sisters.

“I am here to also congratulate (two of your classmates) and your school because you made history... for the entire CNMI,” the education chief said during a special ceremony held at the TJSHS cafeteria. The education conducted an on-site visit on all schools here the first day that the school district transitioned back into face-to-face instruction.

“The PSS family is very proud of you both,” education chief Dr. Ada added.

Tinian Board of Education Member Antonio L. Borja, said the success of the Long sisters will “serve as an inspiration and motivation of many students” in the years to come.

“I am very optimistic that their success will open doors to many educational opportunities for students of Tinian and the entire CNMI,” Board Member Borja said.

The Long sisters are active students leaders – Isa Ha’ani as president

of the TJSHS student council organization and Cielo as battalion commander of JROTC. Both of them are also authors, and engaged in community volunteer and outreach activities.

Harvard University is one of the 14 universities and colleges the twin sisters have applied into.

In her application essay, Isa Ha’ani shared that she highlighted “... more of my resourcefulness as an individual and the initiative that I took to pursue higher education regardless of the lack of resource that I have (especially coming from the island) and the difference of (what we have compared to other states/schools in the mainland).”

She added, “I let them know how my home shaped my character, and that there are resilient people around me.”

The big part of her acceptance letter is “how my people impacted my life.”

“PSS...my school honestly has really been a big support system to my journey,” she added.

TJSHS afforded her and her sister all the support for them to avail of all extra curricular activities and other student opportunities, she said.

December 17, 2021 was the day that would forever change the lives of twin sisters Isa Ha’ani and Cielo Long; they receive separate emails from Harvard University.

“I was very nervous at first but for the most part...I guess we were just excited,” Isa Ha’ani shares.

The twins will graduate this year from TJSHS.

Isa Ha’ani is will pursue business and economic and her sister will pursue law.

They are still waiting for decisions of 13 other universities and colleges, which they expect would be around March.

“Right now we are both considering Harvard University as our top (choice) but we haven’t committed yet,” she said.

She said her parents are happy and proud of their success.



THE makeup of the Public School System's student population highlights the beauty of a growing diverse community, its inclusivity and its strong relationship to the community it serves. The school district is now keen at investing in hiring classroom teachers coming from various ethnic backgrounds.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada is clear-eyed with his goal at building further the CNMI-PSS' strong relationship with the growing ethnic community, by hiring more highly skilled classroom teachers with various ethnic backgrounds.

"We have very extensive data based on our enrollment, survey and student population that shows the need to diversity our teaching staff. Why? Because we have to pay attention to varying ratio of our student ethnic population and the makeup of our classroom teachers," Commissioner of Education Ada told *Students First* in an interview.

A significant body of research that highlights the importance of a culturally inclusive classroom community reinforces Dr. Ada's direction and goal.

"The cultural upbringing of the teachers and the cultural upbringing of the students form an intersection that is critical to the academic success of the students and the professional success of the adults," one study said.

A separate article, published in 2018, said, among others that "...studies show that teacher diversity can make a difference in students' performance and their interest in school".

The shift – growth of student demographics – also captures the role of the school district in human migration, according to Commissioner Ada.

"In our work to diversify our teaching staff, we need to factor in the teaching strategy to be able to further support the growth and development of various student ethnicity," Dr. Ada said, noting how imperative that educators must also possess an understanding of diverse cultures.

Data

When the Public School System released its most recent student population data, at the close of SY 2020-2021, it showed that the school district is now home to 31 ethnic groups (by citizenship).

A year earlier (based on SY 2019-2020 student data), there were around 20-25 ethnic groups.

And if you look further back, twenty years earlier, in 2000-2001, public school student population were comprised of 17 ethnic groups.

The education chief added: "We have the choice, either to face it upfront and address the need to reinforce our diverse learning population with diverse teaching profession or just look away.

"The education landscape continues to evolve and our mindset must adopt to this ever-changing landscape," adds the education chief.



FOCUS

A Culturally Inclusive School District

With Growth and Diversity in Student Population, Need to Hire Teachers from Various Ethnic Background is Highlighted

20-Year Student Enrollment

A detailed data of student enrollment by ethnicity for the last 20 school years on all grade levels: Pre-Kindergarten

Ethnic Group											
	Bangladesh	Carolinian	Caucasian	Chamorro	Chinese	Chuukese	Filipino	Japanese	Korean	Kosraean	Ma...
SY 2000-2001		763	27	3760	20	371	1200	7	118		
SY 2001-2002		650	38	3982	37	359	1501	9	129		
SY 2002-2003		763	49	4140	41	414	1630	12	127		
SY 2003-2004		765	44	4019	57	430	1887	22	160		
SY 2004-2005		1122	71	5224	83	493	2296	36	205		
SY 2005-2006		1301	49	4880	96	529	2588	45	181		
SY 2006-2007		1157	53	4925	114	499	2813	47	231		
SY 2007-2008		1133	53	4432	144	511	3030	62	250		
SY 2008-2009		1050	54	4078	154	507	3168	64	240		
SY 2009-2010		1013	64	4050	186	497	3265	68	261		
SY 2010-2011		1015	63	4000	203	521	3373	85	299		
SY 2011-2012		952	72	3943	242	511	3369	84	276		
SY 2012-2013		870	61	3704	272	508	3368	86	250		
SY 2013-2014		901	71	3756	323	509	3584	94	223	28	
SY 2014-2015		899	58	3633	323	493	3509	106	192	24	
SY 2015-2016		907	75	3691	357	523	3455	106	184	21	
SY 2016-2017		833	54	3667	399	531	3435	109	142	17	
SY 2017-2018		836	67	3628	461	538	3362	104	119	18	
SY 2018-2019	117	836	54	3461	462	562	3200	100	116	15	
SY 2019-2020	145	858	50	3534	491	579	3114	104	128	15	

At the closing of SY 2019-2020, the Public School System is home to a twenty

Sources: Students First Archive, CNMI Public School System (Includes Early Childhood, Pre-K)

ment by Ethnicity Data

ten to 12th Grade. Data culled reveal that PSS student population has been on the 10K-mark during this period.



	Marshallese	Nepalese	Palauan	Pohnpeian	Russian	Samoan	Thai	Yapese	Two or More Races	Others	Total
	49		408	161				52		148	9378
	35		447	169				48		240	9902
	50		449	136				56		303	10554
	47		482	209				68		219	10581
	47		503	212				75		220	10946
	63		548	263				86		143	11062
	36		506	206				74		148	11029
	28		482	216				76		173	10742
	20		461	209				71		188	10369
	28		452	200				78		141	10445
	26		434	216				89		131	10590
	33		414	224				85		145	10505
	31		358	208				82		151	10129
	24		361	199				86		231	10569
	26		343	179				90		279	10345
	32		319	167				96		255 1 (African American)	10349
	25		311	168				95		269 1 (African American)	10220
	24		296	177				102		289 2 (African American)	10179
	23		288	170	11		55	108		128 1 (African American)	10052
	24	11	258	164	11	13	47	109		61 2 (African American)	10002

y-five (25) ethnic groups. There were only 17 ethnic groups in SY 2000-2001.

K (Early Head Start-Head Start Programs), and K-12 information from Administrators Plus.

Meet PSS' Workhorse: Registrars, Record-keepers & Administrative Officers

THERE is no single profession that can have a full picture of a student's needs than the group of professionals that serves the largest stakeholders of the Public School System. They are the registrars, record-keepers and administrative officers—the unsung heroes that are custodian of every child's school information.

The information is integral to the overall school practice of keeping them safe and protected while they learn and grow while in school, their

paramount responsibility. They are vested the primary custodian of the schools' information system, which includes all of student and staff health clearances and information, student demographics, parent information, and teacher-student grade books (ledgers), that no other school personnel are entrusted with.

"You are the unsung heroes: our schools will be in despair without your expertise," Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada said in praising these professionals of the school district.

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Dorsia Palacios and Maggie Sarmiento (Tinian Elementary School); Laura Matsunaga (Garapan Elementary School); Angelica C. Atalig (GTC Elementary School); Kevin Adachi and Alex Menor (Koblerville Elementary School); MaryJane Taitano (Chacha Oceanview Middle School); Bernice Maratita (Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School); Demy Catubay (Sinapalo Elementary School); Stephanie Sablan (Francisco M. Sablan Middle School); Cristelyn Acera (Dandan Middle School); Olive Bateman (Tanapag Middle School); Josefa Mikel (WSR Elementary School); Charlene Valle (Oleai Elementary School); Louie Bautista (Kagman Elementary School); Valerie Dela Cruz and Laila DLR. Manibusan (Tinian Jr. Sr. High School) are joined by Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, Senior Director Dr. Rizalina Liwag and school principals and counselors during the completion of their three-day work-session initiated by the PSS Office of Accountability, Research and Evaluation.

► **Continued from page 10**

For the first time in many years, the school district through the leadership of Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and the Office of Accountability, Research and Evaluation, has brought all of them together for a three-day professional development. This was held on January 19 to 21, 2022 at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

The education chief announced during the three-day event that he has put forward a proposal for the continuing growth of all of Saipan, Tinian and Rota public schools registrars, record-keepers and administrative officers.

Dr. Ada is proposing an annual cross training, training on code of ethics, and the acquisition of a stamp seal kit that is only custom-made to all of PSS registrars.

Thank You for the Opportunity

Femie Rey said she is proud to be working for the PSS as a school registrar for Hopwood Middle School.

"We would like to thank you (Commissioner of Education Dr. Ada) for bringing us here," Rey said.

They are used to multitask, adds Rey, noting that the three-day training provided by the school district gives them the opportunity to "focus on what is important: student data".

The training highlights student data and the role of these professionals on student growth and learning.

Josefa Mikel, administrative assistant/office secretary for WSR Elementary School, hailed the support of the school district for their professional growth.

"Thank you for giving us this opportunity to be trained," she said.

Valerie T. Dela Cruz, who has been the registrar Tinian Jr. Sr. high School for 28 years, said the work that registrars do is "beyond the profession; it's our love for what we do...how we all put our hearts into every task that we do".

The longest-serving PSS school administrative officer, Bernice Maratita, who has been with the system for 31 year, said "it is an honor for us to serve our public school students and our stakeholders of public education".

Charlene Valle, administrative officer of Oleai Elementary School and Josefa D. Mikela, WSR Elementary School secretary.



Laura Matsunaga, school aide, of Garapan Elementary School.



Laila Manibusan, school aide of Tinian Jr. Sr. High School.



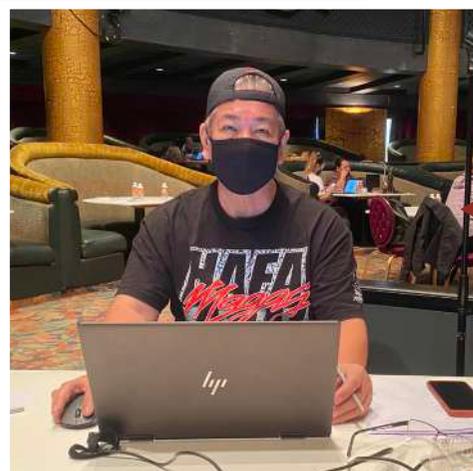
Dorsia A. Palacios, registrar for Tinian Elementary School.



Francisco M. Sablan administrative assistant Stephanie Sablan, left, Dandan Middle school administrative officer Cristalyn Acera, and DMS Principal James Sablan.



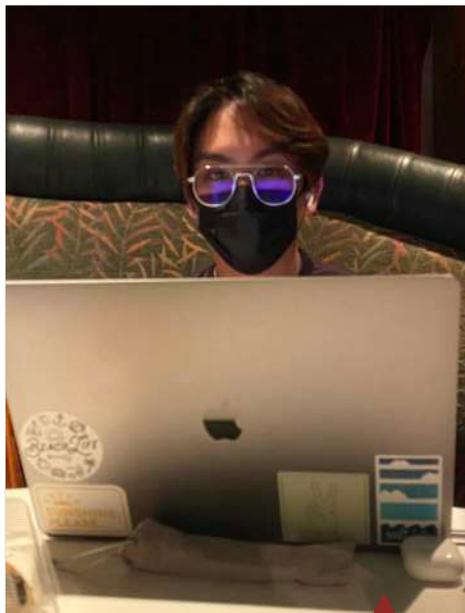
Louie Bautista, registrar of Kagman Elementary School.



Hopwood Middle School counselor Femie Rey, right, and Principal Victor Borja.



The second oldest registrar in PSS, Valeria T. Dela Cruz, left, of Tinian Jr. Sr. high School, and Maggie Sarmiento, administrative officer of Tinian Elementary School.



The 2022 State Administrative Assistant of the Year Alex Menor of Koblerville Elementary School.



MaryJane L. Taitano, school registrar for Chacha Oceanview Middle School.



Angelica Atalig, secretary of GTC Elementary School.



Kevin Adachi, left, administrative officer and registrar of Koblerville Elementary School



The longest serving PSS administrative officer, Bernice Maratita (31 years) of Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr High School.



Olive Bateman, right, administrative officer of Tanapag Middle School, with school vice principal Felisa Brel.



Sinapalo Elementary School administrative officer Demy Catubay, right, and Principal Daisy Quitugua.

After Summer Program's Successful Implementation Four Marianas High School Students Pioneer Teacher Academy Dual Enrollment Program with Northern Marianas College

FOUR public school students that participated during in the pioneering 2021 Teacher Academy Summer Program have acknowledged that their initial exposure in the short program made it easier for them with their after-high school choices.

On January 29, the PSS-CTE Program pioneered the dual enrollment Teacher Academy Program with the Northern Marianas College. And successful shortlisted enrollees in this advanced college-credited program are the four high school students that previously participated in the summer program.

The PSS-CTE-NMC Teacher Academy Program expands the short-term courses that were launched six month ago with the Northern Marianas College's School of Education. Through the partnership between the two institutions, high school students can also enroll for teaching college courses.

The PSS-CTE Teacher Academy Program was implemented with the long-term goal of reversing the challenge of teacher shortage in the CNMI.

"What makes this program unique is this is designed to be a wraparound program," PSS CTE Program Director Dr. Jessica Taylor explained to **Students First**.

"It is not just about the students taking upper secondary or college credit but it is also exposes them to mentorship, participate in pre-apprenticeship and workshops and professional developments as part of this program," Dr. Taylor explained.

These are hand-on, one-to-one professional development and workshops between PSS students and NMC mentors (instructors), and these includes, among others, focus on financial literacy, time management, team building and resume writing. The program is divided into three course, with the first (B111) is from January to May, Education Technology (ED 211) in the summer, and Child Development in the fall.

"This will be between a year to a year-and-a-half program," notes Dr. Taylor.

Dr. Taylor added, "And they can continue their college courses after they graduate high school."



'THE ACADEMY HELPED ME DECIDE'

MHS senior James Aldan, 17, said there are students that need support and guidance in making decision of what to do after high school.

He is glad that the school district has offered the Teacher Academy Program because "it made my mind clear with what I wanted to pursue when I graduate high school".

"I didn't have a goal yet) until the Teacher Academy (Summer) Program which I signed up for (during the summer of 2021) helped me decide," Aldan said in an interview with **Students First**.

"I know what I wanted now: to be a teacher specializing Early Childhood," shares Aldan.

The high school senior said his motivation in signing up with the program was to make use of his time productively.

"I have a lot of time and rather than spend it on social media, the Teacher Academy Program makes me more productive," he admits.

"I am just glad that this program was offered—and I love this opportunity."



'A STEP CLOSER TO MY GOALS IN LIFE'

Jericho Conge embraces the value in education. He believes that there are more lifeline benefits and opportunities one can reap of a college education.

"Since I was a kid, it has been my determination to get a bachelor's degree," Conge said, acknowledging how his parents have continually motivated him to study hard to fulfill his dream.

When the dual enrollment Teacher Academy Program was offered on January 2022, the sixteen-year-old MHS junior student grabbed the opportunity.

He was very excited to be shortlisted.

"(PSS) has been generous in helping us students. This is a good opportunity that they offer to us students," said Conge in an interview with **Students First**.

"I'm determine...to secure myself with a career once I earned by bachelor's degree," he intimated. "That will be a fulfillment of my goal."

This is a start in fulfilling his life-long dream, he admits. "I'm still chasing my dreams and (with the program) I am happy because I am now determined to graduate high school and pursue college," Conge said.

"This is the start".

LOOKING AT THE FUTURE WHILE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL

Cindy Ma is a sophomore student at Marianas High School and she is already earning college credit through the dual enrollment Teacher Academy Program.

This she said will prepare her early for college-level work.

"When I saw the email that (PSS CTE) has the dual enrollment, I found it interesting. Why not do it especially so that that it is a limited opportunity," Ma, 16, told **Students First** in an interview.

"And I am happy with my decision. (Before the program was implemented), I was kind of lost with the choices that I have," she said. "Now, having signed up for this program, it will help me look at things...help me with my career choices."

Ma said the Teacher Academy Summer Program last year was an eye-opener. Now that it was expanded into a full dual enrollment, students like her will have less difficulty in navigating the high school-to-college transition.

"This opens door for me to look at what my choices are. This gives me a better idea of what (college courses are) while I am still a (high school) sophomore," Ma admits.



TO BE AN INSPIRATION TO OTHERS

It's the impact and life-changing role that a teacher can have on a child's life that motivated Marianas High School student Fei Fei Lei to join the dual enrollment Teacher Academy Program between the Public School System and the Northern Marianas College.

And, plus, earning a college degree secures her future.

"Teachers are good examples, inspires and motivates students," Lei, 17, said.

Lei is one of the four MHS students who are the pioneer cohort of the dual enrollment program of the school district's Career Technical Education Programs which is done in partnership with the School of Education of the Northern Marianas College.

"There is also the financial advantage because there is always a need for teachers," the MHS junior student said.

Lei said she wants to be an inspiration to children when she becomes a teacher. "It's a path that I have chose from. And I want to help inspire our children...that teachers (plays an important role) in our lives."

Lei also expressed her appreciation to the PSS-CTE Program for "giving public school students more choices and guide us through our path after high school."

Northern Marianas College, Northern Marianas Trades Institute and Public School System Partners

ALL three of the Commonwealth's institutions of learning have pledged to work alongside each other, through a sustainable partnership that would support student success, beginning at high school and their after-high school choices.

This first-of-its-kind partnership was this month after many years of being stalled.

"The vision is to have a professional development with NMC, PSS and NMTI under the cover of career technical and trades education," Dr. Jessica Taylor, PSS Career Technical Education Program Director told **Students First**.

"This has been a long time coming. In fact, this is the a first that all of the three institutions have partnered," Dr. Taylor reveals.

With indicators pointing towards the direction of college and career-ready graduates, PSS, NMC and NMTI have held its first professional development and training, and highlighted, among others, student data at they relate to public school student college and career readiness.

"The goal is to learn together, to leverage resources, so that we can best serve all our students in career technology and trades education, and the seamless transition of career pathways from our high school students who are pursuing post secondary education," explains Dr. Taylor.

She added, "We want the relationship to be built also between post secondary and industry partners."

Through the Career Technical and Trades Education Program, PSS had sent its Career Technical Education Program (CTE) teacher to participate in the professional development.

PSS sent 40 CTE teachers and NMTI had 11 teachers attending the first professional development.

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Meet your PSS Early Childhood Special Education Team

THE CNMI Public School System's Special education and Related Services are required by federal and state law.

The laws are intended to ensure that young children with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate public education in accordance with their individual needs.

Early childhood special education (ECSE) as defined by the federal law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is for 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children with disabilities who require special education and related services.

ECSE enables young children with disabilities to be full participants in everyday routines and activities across a variety of settings (in their homes with their families, in child care, preschool or school programs, and in the community) throughout the early childhood years.

Bottom from left to right: Mary Margaret Peyton, teacher; Krissy Hayes, related service specialist-speech, and Ignacio Dela Cruz, related service specialist-speech. Top left to right: Donna Flores, program director; Patty Staal, teacher; Marie Castro, teacher; Rose Diaz, related service specialist-occupational therapy, and Mark Staal, teacher.



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With the initial success of the first professional development, all three institutions are looking at reinforcing by having a second series of professional development. Eventually, becoming an annual summit for all three institutions.

"With our goal of having all of us in one room...what better way to work together, leverage resources, and learn together," explains Dr. Taylor. "Hopefully, by the month May we will be able to come together and have a second series of this learning together."

"This is just perfect timing for PSS, NMC, and NMTI to come together."

