Oasis Project makeover turns DPMES into climate resilient environment **Page 2**

VOL 9
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struggling together
for truth

OFFICIAL STUDENT PUBLICATION OF DIOSDADO P. MACAPAGAL
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, QUEZON CITY, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

synergy



Pest control crew are seen conducting fogging operations at DPMES, following the uptick of dengue cases in Quezon City.
BARANGAY TATALON FB PAGE

DPMES goes all-out in combatting dengue, other diseases **NEWS / 3**

Readying for the *Big One*

SDRRMC hopes for best but braces for worst

Cassandra Chanel M. Lim

To keep learners and school personnel safe, Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES) continues to strengthen its disaster preparedness amid recent earthquakes in the country and fire incidents in Barangay Tatalon, Quezon City.

In July 2025, a fire broke out in parts of Barangay Tatalon prompting firefighters to respond and evacuate affected residents.

Earlier incidents, including a large fire in February 2024 that destroyed about 100 houses in the same barangay, highlighted the risks faced by the surrounding community, including families of DPMES learners.

Aside from fire incidents, several earthquakes were recorded in different parts of the country in 2025, raising awareness about the need for earthquake preparedness in schools, including DPMES, which caters to around 4,000 learners.

To address these risks, the School Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (SDRRMC) regularly leads DPMES's participation in Department of Education (DepEd)-mandated earthquake and fire drills.

"Isinasagawa natin ang mga drills na ito upang sa oras na may dumating na sakuna gaya ng lindol o sunog ay handa tayo at maiwasan ang disgrasya," said Mr. Dante Libanan, SDRRMC Coordinator.

In line with DepEd Order No. 053, s. 2022, the SDRRMC also conducts unannounced drills and regularly monitors fire and earthquake preparedness activities to ensure that safety protocols are consistently practiced.



Learners participate in the earthquake drills.
PRINCESS SYTHO CASING

synergy news

THEY SAID IT

"Let us champion the use of
empowerment, no

DepEd Usec. Atty. Fati

'Project Synergy' promotes media literacy, campus journ

Xyz D. Gongora

Eighty young campus journalists from various schools across Quezon City gathered for Synergy 2025: School-Based Young Writers Conference and Contests, held from June 2 to 7 at the conference room of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES).

More than just a competition, the event stood as a strong call to uphold responsible journalism, media literacy, and truth-telling among young writers in an age of fast-spreading misinformation.

Throughout the week-long conference, participants attended lectures and hands-on workshops focused on enhancing their journalistic writing skills, critical thinking, and fact-checking practices.

Journalism advocates from around the region were invited as trainer-speakers, sharing their expertise on ethical reporting, verifying sources, and producing accurate stories.

In the project's context, Synergy means working together with a shared goal, as learners from different schools came together to learn, share ideas, and grow as young writers beyond their own schools.

A model program for other facilities

OASIS Project turns DPMES into safer, climate-resilient environment

Elezahr Jesse B. Janapin

The OASIS Schoolyard Project was officially launched at Diosdado Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES) on January 13.

The project aims to make the school environment more eco-friendly, cooler, and better adapted to the effects of climate change.

The schoolyard, launched by the Resilient Cities Network and Temasek Foundation, is the first OASIS pilot site in Quezon City and the first of its kind in Asia.

Under OASIS (Openness, Adaptation, Sensitization, Innovation, and Social Ties), the project helps protect students from extreme heat, flooding, and other climate-related risks. It also promotes inclusive and accessible spaces, experiential learning, and stronger community participation.



DPMESians can now enjoy a safer and more climate-resilient environment with the OASIS initiative in the school. ZIYARRA CALARAMO, MANILA BULLETIN

The schoolyard features a spacious central seating area, benches, a playground with slides, monkey bars, tunnels, and a shaded side park with play and learning elements.

It can be recalled that teachers, students, and community members of DPMES took part in designing the schoolyard.

The project is also seen as an important and practical way to reduce excessive screen time among students by encouraging outdoor play and physical activities.

The project launch was led by City Administrator Michael Victor Alimurung and Assistant City Administrator for Operations Alberto Kimpo, along with Ms. Lina Liakou, Global Director of Engagement and Practices of Resilient Cities.

Schools Division Superintendent and OIC Assistant Regional Director of DepEd NCR Carleen S. Sedilla, DPMES Principal Wilma C. Obras, the students, and the whole DPMES community expressed their gratitude to the Quezon City Government and the Resilient Cities Network for their support.

"Napakalaking bagay po nito para sa ating paaralan, lalo na sa aming mga nag-aaral dito. Hindi lahat ay nakapupunta sa mga ganitong lugar kaya nakatutuwang isiping may ganito sa loob mismo ng paaralan," said Cerynise Vien Quindong, a DPMES student.

DPMESians commit to stay away from drugs

Aizaack Noah D. Estabillo

To guide the learners on how to choose healthy and safe lifestyles, Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School held a Drug Awareness Campaign at the school covered court on December 9, organized by the school's Guidance Office with the support from the Philippine National Police Galas Station.

Grades 5 and 6 students participated in discussions on how drugs harm the physical and mental health of young people as officers from the PNP shared real-life lessons on why children should always choose to stay drug-free.



A police officer shares lectures to DPMES students. JAEROSE CORDOVA

The campaign also focused on the recent concern about a substance called "Tuklaw," which has been reported as a harmful drug that can seriously affect young people's health and school life.

Local news and authorities have reported that schools and communities are strengthening their efforts to prevent learners from getting involved in drug use, a move that the school fully supports.

The activity supports the Department of Education's Preventive Drug Education Program, which helps learners learn about the harmful effects of drugs through lessons and school activities.

f AI as a tool for
ot replacement."
ma Panontongan

"We need to provide all the necessary support to our teachers so they can effectively fulfill their duties."
AKBAYAN Rep. Chel Diokno



OASIS Project makes DPMES climate resilient **Page 2**
QC lauded as country's most child-friendly **Page 3**
DPMES strengthens Madrasah program **Page 5**

School-based vaccination keeps pupils healthy, ready to learn

Angel M. Coquilla

Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School implemented the Bakuna Eskwela School-Based Immunization Program, for Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners on August.

The program aimed to increase vaccination among school-aged children in public schools by delivering vaccines conveniently where children already spend their day.

The vaccines protect children from diseases such as measles, rubella, tetanus, and diphtheria, and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine for eligible learners which are all proven to be safe, free, and effective.

Safety First:

DPMES goes all-out in combatting dengue



Pest control crew conduct fogging at DPMES. **BARANGAY TATALON FB PAGE**

Andrea T. Anastacio

As part of the continuing campaign against dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases, regular fogging operations are conducted at Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School through the initiative of the Barangay Tatalon Council.

The operations aim to eliminate mosquitoes that may carry dengue, particularly in areas frequently used by learners and teachers, as part of preventive measures to avoid the possible spread of the disease.

The activity is done by barangay personnel in coordination with the school administration to ensure that the fogging was conducted safely and properly within the DPMES.

In an interview with DZMM Teleradyo, Dr. Rolly Cruz, chief epidemiologist of the Quezon City Epidemiology and Surveillance Division said that Quezon City recorded 7,084 dengue cases from January to August 22, 2025, marking a 151% increase compared to the same period last year.

Dengue-related deaths also rose during the period, with 23 fatalities reported.

Learners and teachers are also reminded to support the anti-dengue campaign by maintaining a clean and healthy environment.

School, PTA take action amid rising flu-like cases in QC

Ceryniise A. Quindong

In response to reports of rising influenza-like illness (ILI) cases in Quezon City, the administration of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School and the School Parent Teachers Association regularly conduct clean-up and search and destroy initiatives inside the school.

According to the Quezon City Epidemiology and Surveillance Division (QCESD) as reported by GMA Integrated News, cases of ILI in the city have increased significantly this year, with thousands recorded across various barangays compared to the same period last year.

Most cases involve children and young residents, heightening concerns among health and education officials.

ILI refers to respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, and body aches which are symptoms commonly seen during flu season.

While the Department of Health (DOH) has not declared a flu outbreak nationwide, it has encouraged preventive measures as these illnesses tend to rise annually during the rainy months.

To help prevent the spread of infection within the school community, officers and members of the DPMES-SPTA clean the hallways and outdoor spaces while potential mosquito breeding sites are being removed to reduce health risks.

QC lauded country's most child-friendly city

Audrey G. Cabaluna

For the first time, Quezon City was awarded the 2025 Presidential Award for Most Child-Friendly City under the Highly Urbanized Cities category.

The award is part of the Presidential Award for Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities (PACFMC), which evaluates how local governments protect children's rights and promote their safety, development, and participation.

Before receiving the award, Quezon City underwent a strict validation process conducted by representatives from the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), which assessed the city's child-focused programs and policies.



QC Mayor Joy Belmonte adds another achievement to her belt. **QC LGU**

Mayor Joy Belmonte and the City team presented various services aimed at improving the lives of children across Quezon City, including those living in Barangay Tatalon, where many learners of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES) reside.

Among the programs highlighted were the QC Children's Code, Zero Child Labor initiatives, the BAD 'yan campaign against bullying, and city-led efforts promoting a safe online environment for children,.

Elezahr Janapin, a DPMES student leader and journalist, affirmed that the award given to the QC-LGU was well-deserved, noting that he had personally attended some of the city's programs.

"Ramdam ko ang concern ng QC-LGU sa mga batang kagaya ko," he said.

SPEd advocate urges teachers to help end stigma, uphold inclusivity



DENNIS MAÑO FACEBOOK

Bea Hailey P. Bulosan

Mr. Dennis Maño, Education Program Specialist II of the Schools Division Office–Quezon City and a known Special Education advocate, called on teachers to become instruments in ending stigma against learners with special needs and to strengthen inclusive education during the Training of Head Teachers and Master Teachers as Assessors for the Expanded Career Progression held last October at the Axiaa Hotel.

During his discussion, Mr. Maño reminded teachers that inclusive education means accepting all learners and giving them equal opportunities to learn regardless of ability or background.

He emphasized the important role of teachers in shaping learners' attitudes through understanding, respect, and empathy inside the classroom.

He also stressed that inclusive education is a shared responsibility of teachers, school leaders, and the community as he encouraged the educators to continue creating safe and supportive learning environments for all learners.

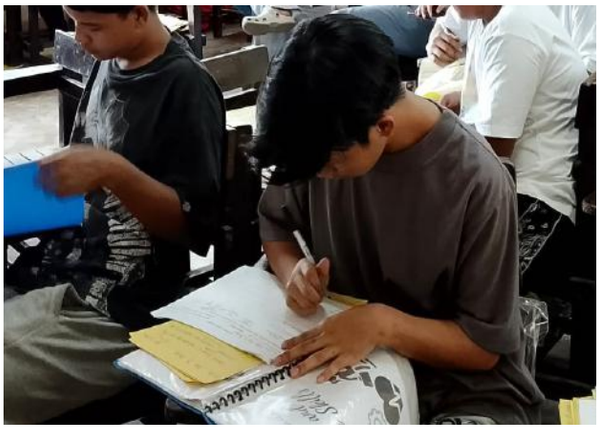
Second chances turning into real opportunities

ALS gives hope as DPMES expands enrollment, graduates

Jim Mariette C. Milana

Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES) continues to promote lifelong learning through its Alternative Learning System (ALS), helping out-of-school youth and adults in the community complete their basic education.

In July 2025, seven ALS learners from DPMES successfully graduated and earned their diplomas which reflects the important role of the school's ALS program among OSYs.



ALS learners actively engaging in classroom tasks. GEMALYN S. CLEMENCIO

"Masaya tayo na nagiging instrumento ang ating programa upang makamit ng ibang kabataan at matatanda ang kanilang mga pangarap na naudlot," said Ms. Gemalyn S. Clemencio, DPMES-ALS teacher.

For School Year 2025–2026, a total of 30 learners is currently enrolled in the DPMES ALS program. Out of this number, 10 learners are preparing to take the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test on March 2, 2026, which will allow them to earn certificates equivalent to formal elementary or junior high school education.

"Akala ko tapos na ang pangarap kong makapagtapos ng pag-aaral. Dahil sa ALS, nagkaroon ulit ako ng pag-asa," said Joey Rongcales, an ALS learner.

The ALS is a parallel learning program that provides flexible education for out-of-school children, youth, and adults, as mandated by Republic Act No. 9155 and further institutionalized nationwide through Republic Act No. 11510.

Forum on bullying reminds learners to take stand, speak up, be kind

Aizaack Noah D. Estabillo

To strengthen awareness on creating a safe and respectful school environment, Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School conducted a forum on bullying on December 9 at the school covered court, organized by the school Guidance Office with the support of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Galas Station.

The forum was attended by Grades 5 and 6 learners, with Mrs. Enelda V. Martinez, the school guidance counselor, serving as the main speaker. The activity aimed to educate pupils about the different forms of bullying and how it affects the well-being of learners.

In her talk, Mrs. Martinez emphasized that bullying is never good and should not be tolerated in any form, whether physical, verbal, or online. She explained how hurtful words, teasing, and harmful actions can negatively affect a learner's emotions and performance in school.

She encouraged learners to immediately report incidents of bullying to teachers, parents, or school authorities so that concerns can be addressed properly. According to her, reporting is not a sign of weakness but a responsible action to protect oneself and others.

Representatives from the PNP Galas Station also shared reminders on child safety and the importance of speaking up when experiencing or witnessing bullying. They assured the learners that authorities are always ready to help and protect children's rights, especially within the school and community.

The forum also highlighted the role of learners in building a caring school community by showing kindness, respect, and understanding toward one another.

This activity supports the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy, which ensures that schools remain safe spaces for all learners.

It is also aligned with the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10627), which requires schools to prevent and address bullying cases promptly.

School intensifies campaign vs. domestic violence to keep students in class

Jaerose Cordova

A child's risk of dropping out of school often starts at home, not in the classroom.

A study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), conducted with the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), found that children who experienced parental violence are less likely to stay in school.

According to the study, children exposed to abuse at age 10 are about half as likely to still be enrolled by age 14.

Nearly four in ten Filipino children were also found to have experienced physical or emotional violence at home, an alarming rate according to experts.

Researchers said domestic abuse affects a child's behavior, emotional well-being, and decision to continue schooling.

School principal Wilma C. Obras urged teachers to help end domestic violence by always reminding the parents during meetings of their role in providing a safe and supportive learning for their children, especially about the negative impact of violence in the children's lives and studies.

School champions inclusive education by strengthening Madrasah program

Mohammad-Zain A. Ampatua

In line with the Department of Education's advocacy on inclusive education, Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School continues to strengthen its Madrasah Education Program, which currently serves 77 Muslim learners.

The Madrasah program at DPMES provides full support to Muslim learners by offering enhanced lessons in Arabic literacy, Islamic customs, and Islamic values, helping them grow academically while staying connected to their cultural and religious identity.



Diversity and equality are just some of DPMES' strength. CHANDI SULIBIO

The program follows the Department of Education's Madrasah Education Program, guided by DepEd Order No. 51, which encourages public and private schools with Muslim communities to implement a curriculum that supports inclusive and culturally responsive education.

Now on its 18th year of implementation at DPMES, the Madrasah program continues to positively impact learners' lives by promoting respect, understanding, and equal learning opportunities within the school community.

According to Fayzah M. Sultan, an asatidz or Madrasah teacher at DPMES, the program plays an important role in shaping the learners' identity and values.

The success of the program was further highlighted as Muhammad-Zain Ampatua, a DPMES learner, secured 1st place in Arabic Spelling during the Division Festival of Talents Musabaqah, held on October 17, at Esteban Abada Elementary School.

Ampatua outperformed competitors from five other Quezon City districts, earning the title of division champion and the chance to represent SDO-Quezon City in the Regional Festival of Talents.

Learners urged to embrace plastic-free lifestyle

Ziyarra Kaela C. Calaramo

Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School welcomed representatives from the Quezon City Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department (CCESD) and Greenpeace Philippines for a Plastic-Free Exhibit Roadshow last November 19.

The activity aimed to teach the learners the importance of caring for the environment by living a plastic-free lifestyle. Learners were also encouraged to help reduce plastic waste by using reusable items, properly throwing and recycling trash, and being mindful of their daily habits that affect the environment.

Building a culture of responsibility

School tightens code of conduct to promote discipline, safety

Ma. Ysabel E. Del Rosario

To promote discipline and proper behavior among learners, Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES) further strengthens the implementation of its Code of Conduct and Discipline for School Year 2025–2026.

The initiative aims to ensure that learners remain safe, orderly, and well-guided while under the care of the school, with the support and cooperation of their parents and guardians.

A series of discussions with teachers was led by Mr. Ricarte D. Dacles, School Discipline Coordinator, to ensure consistent implementation of school rules across all grade levels.

The Code was also discussed during Homeroom Parent-Teacher Association (HRPTA) Meetings to fully explain the policies to parents and guardians and to encourage their active participation in enforcing them.



Teachers are also briefed with the Code of Conduct and Discipline. CHANDI SULIBIO

Under the Policy on Discipline, learners are reminded to attend flag ceremonies on time, avoid tardiness and frequent absences, secure a hall pass when leaving the classroom, wear the proper school uniform and identification card, and refrain from bringing gadgets without permission.

The guidelines on proper decorum also include maintaining neat haircuts for boys, appropriate use of earrings for girls, and the prohibition of tattoos and body painting.

Road safety seminar equips DPMESians with life-saving knowledge

Mhiel C. Bargaso

The Automobile Association Philippines (AAP) conducted a Road Safety Awareness Seminar for Grade 6 learners at Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School on November 12.

The seminar, which was participated in by classroom officers from the Grade 6 level, aimed to educate the learner on proper road behavior, safety precautions, and the importance of being alert and disciplined pedestrians, especially when walking to and from school along the busy streets of Barangay Tatalon and nearby areas in Quezon City.

The seminar was held amid growing concerns about road safety in Quezon City, where heavy traffic, narrow streets, and frequent pedestrian crossings are common, particularly near schools.

In Barangay Tatalon, learners often pass through crowded roads and intersections, making them more exposed to road accidents if safety rules are not followed.

Mr. Dante L. Libanan, Head Teacher III, emphasized during his opening message that equipping learners with road safety knowledge at a young age can help prevent accidents and save lives.

During the seminar, representatives from AAP discussed basic road signs, proper ways of crossing the street, and the importance of staying focused while walking on sidewalks and pedestrian lanes.

The participants are expected to cascade the knowledge they gained to their classmates and encourage them to apply in real-life situations to ensure their safety and well-being.

synergy opinion

QUOTA
QUO

BY THE NUMBERS

Collated by Synergy staffers

Because of governance failures, some students' lives may be put at risk due to substandard buildings and inadequate infrastructure. Here are key numbers showing how these problems directly affect us.

166K
backlogs in classrooms nationwide

P545B
controversial infrastructure funds used in flood control

30%
estimated construction losses in schools due to inflated costs

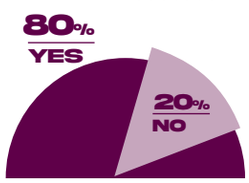
28M
total student population in PH

AS OF JANUARY 2026

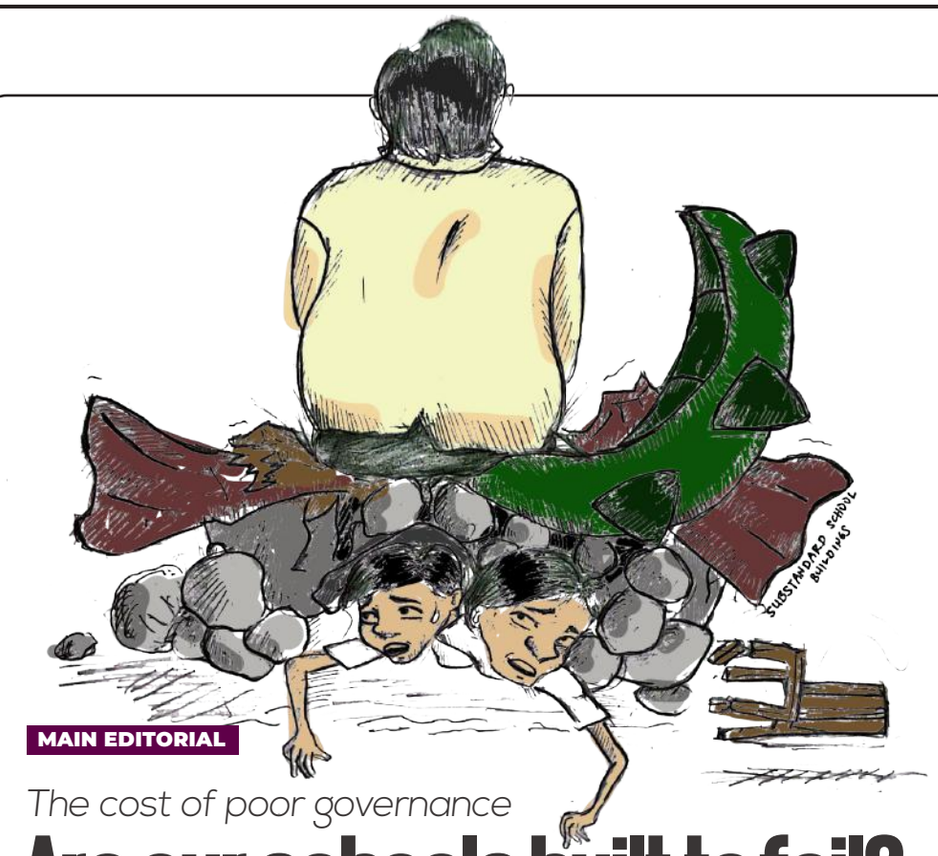
SOURCE: MANILA BULLETIN, REUTERS, WORLD BANK, TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL, DEPED

POLL

Even at a young age, do you think us students are affected by corruption in education?



*100 RESPONDENTS



MAIN EDITORIAL

The cost of poor governance

Are our schools built to fail?

Recent national news reports and Senate hearings revealed admissions from a former official of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) that some public infrastructure projects, including school buildings, failed to meet required standards because of problems in fund use. These reports raised concerns across the country about the safety and quality of public school facilities.

Because of these reports, students cannot help but look at the situation in our own school, Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, and ask: Are we experiencing the same problem? Some classrooms already show signs of damage even though they are newly built. Several comfort rooms are not fully functional, creating unsafe and unhygienic conditions for learners and school personnel. Are these just minor maintenance issues or signs of a bigger problem?

The lack of classrooms makes the situation worse. With only a few school buildings available, classrooms become overcrowded. In our school, the average class size is around 40 learners per classroom, higher than the ideal 30–35 learners for safe and effective learning. Crowded classrooms make it harder to focus and raise safety concerns during emergencies such as earthquakes. Should learners be placed in conditions like these when standards exist to protect them?

There are also concerns about the lack of textbooks and learning materials. Many learners do not have enough books, forcing teachers to prepare their own instructional materials. Teachers also do not have one-to-one laptops, and even basic tools like television sets for instruction are lacking. Are these shortages simple supply problems or signs of deeper systemic challenges in how education resources are planned and distributed?

These concerns have serious effects. Unsafe buildings and crowded classrooms put learners and school personnel at risk. Learning becomes more difficult and the quality of education suffers. When learners struggle because of poor facilities and limited resources, their future is affected.

As a publication that speaks for the learner sector, we believe these questions deserve clear and honest answers. If systemic weaknesses have played a role in weakening the education system, then accountability and corrective action must follow. If investigations reveal violations of standards, appropriate action should be taken in accordance with existing laws and regulations as a necessary step toward reform.

We raise these questions not to accuse, but to seek truth and improvement. Systems of governance exist to protect the most vulnerable, especially children. Until schools are safe, students will continue to ask: Are these signs of deeper systemic problems? And if so, how can they be properly addressed?

Synergy

The Official Publication of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, Brgy. Tatalon, Quezon City, National Capital Region (NCR)

Struggling Together for Truth

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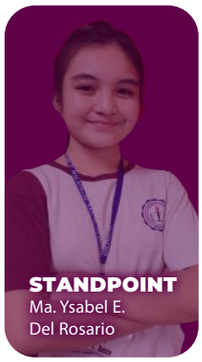
"Education is one of those things ... that even without me here, it becomes a right."

President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.



Corruption in Education **Page 6**
Learning begins with a proper meal **Page 8**
Forum: What keeps the Philippines poor? **Page 9**

No place for abuse, violence, and fear in schools



STANDPOINT
Ma. Ysabel E. Del Rosario

When schools fail to protect learners, fear replaces learning and silence replaces trust.

School is supposed to be a safe place. It should be a space where children feel protected, cared for, and free to learn. Many parents send their children to school believing that teachers and staff will act as guardians while their children are away from home. School is often called a child's second home. It's a place where values are shaped, confidence is built, and dreams begin. When this sense of safety is broken, the impact on children is serious and long-lasting.

Fear inside schools does not always come from fellow students. There have been reports in different parts of the country where teachers themselves were accused of hurting learners. Last December, a teacher in Tondo, Manila was investigated for alleged child abuse. The Department of Education clearly stated that it has zero tolerance for any form of abuse committed by educators. Such cases are deeply troubling because teachers are expected to guide and protect children, not cause them pain or fear.

In another case reported in 2024, a video showed a teacher shouting at and physically hurting Grade 9 students. The video spread quickly online and sparked public outrage. These incidents are alarming because teachers hold authority and influence over learners. When that authority is abused, children may suffer emotional trauma, loss of self-confidence, and fear of authority figures. The effects may not be visible immediately, but they can harm a learner's mental health and academic performance over time.

Aside from teacher-related cases, bullying among students remains a serious and ongoing problem in many schools. Bullying does not only involve teasing or name-calling. It can include physical violence, threats, exclusion, and cyberbullying through social media. Some cases have become so severe that they were brought to court. There are even situations where schools faced legal scrutiny because proper supervision was questioned during violent incidents. In the worst cases, bullying has been linked to severe emotional distress and tragic outcomes that should never happen inside an institution meant to protect children.

These events go against the true purpose of schools. Fear has a powerful effect on learning. A child who feels unsafe cannot concentrate on lessons, ask questions freely, or participate actively in class. Some learners begin to avoid going to school altogether while others attend classes but carry fear and anxiety with them every day. Instead of being a place of growth and discovery, school becomes a source of stress and suffering.

Because of this reality, it is encouraging to see schools taking action. Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School recently held a symposium against bullying, showing its commitment to protecting learners and promoting respect and kindness. Activities like this help students understand their rights, recognize harmful behavior, and learn how to seek help. More importantly, such efforts send a clear message that bullying and abuse have no place in school.

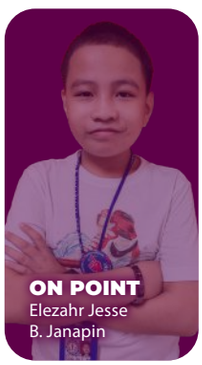
Teachers were also reminded of their responsibility to watch over students closely and treat learners with care, like second parents. This role is important and should never be taken lightly. Teachers shape not only the minds of learners, but also their sense of safety and self-worth. A single action or decision by a teacher can either build a child's confidence or break it.

However, one program or symposium is not enough. Child protection policies must be followed every day, not only during special events. Reporting systems should be clear and child-friendly. Students must feel truly supported when they speak up, without fear of being ignored, blamed, or punished. Schools must respond quickly and fairly to all reports of abuse and bullying.

Parents, teachers, and school leaders must work together to ensure that schools remain safe spaces. Parents should listen to their children and take their concerns seriously. School administrators must ensure that policies are enforced and that all school personnel are properly trained in child protection. Silence and inaction only allow abuse and bullying to continue.

The safety of learners must always come first. Schools exist to educate and protect children. There is no room for abuse, violence, or fear in a child's second home. Every learner deserves to study in an environment where they feel secure and valued. Only when schools are truly safe can education fulfill its true purpose.

Justice for Kian meant hope for many others



ON POINT
Elezahr Jesse B. Janapin

The death of Kian delos Santos remains one of the darkest moments in our country's history. He was only 17 years old. He was a student like me with dreams and a future ahead of him. Like many young people, he was simply trying to live his life. Yet his story ended during the campaign against illegal drugs, in a way that shocked the nation. His killing became a powerful symbol of the fear felt by many young people especially those living in poor communities.

In 2018, the Regional Trial Court of Caloocan found three police officers guilty of killing Kian. The court found that he was unarmed and did not fight back. Evidence and witness accounts showed that the claims of a legitimate police operation were not true. This decision was seen as a rare victory for justice which reminds us that even those in authority can be held accountable for their actions.

In December 2025, the Supreme Court affirmed the ruling. The decision clearly stated that Kian's killing was a crime and not a valid police operation. The court emphasized that no one, especially a child, can be killed based only on suspicion. Due process and the rule of law must always be followed, even in the fight against crime.

As a student, this issue feels deeply personal. Kian was a student too. Like many of us, he went to school, looked forward to seeing his friends, and had plans for his future. His death reminds us that children should never be treated as criminals without proof. Students deserve protection, not violence. They should be heard and supported and not silenced by fear.

The ruling in Kian's case shows that justice is possible, even if it takes time. Truth, evidence, and the courage of his family made the difference. Despite many circumstances, they continued to seek justice. Their fight proved that standing firm can lead to accountability, even against powerful institutions.

However, it is also painful to admit that many other cases remain unresolved. Many families are still waiting for justice for loved ones who were wrongly killed. Their silence and suffering remind us that one victory, while important, is not enough to fix a broken system.

Still, Kian's case gives hope. It tells us that justice is not completely lost. It shows that human rights matter and that abuses of power can be punished.

The lesson here is clear. Children are not criminals. We deserve education, not bullets. We need protection, not fear. For victims like Kian, this ruling may be the beginning of justice not only for him, but for many others whose lives were taken too soon.

When floods wash away our learnings



Flooding has become a common problem in many parts of the country and its effect on education is hard to ignore. Every time heavy rain falls, class suspensions soon follow. While student safety must always come first, frequent class disruptions slowly harm learning. The cycle of canceled classes, lost instructional time, and delayed lessons creates gaps that are hard to fill, affecting both teachers and learners alike.

In communities like Barangay Tatalon, schools are not always flooded, but the areas around them are. One of the first places to go underwater is Araneta Avenue, a main road used by students and teachers in our community. When roads become impassable, reaching school becomes impossible. This shows that the problem is not only rain, but poor flood control. Students often miss days of learning simply because they cannot reach their classrooms safely, a problem that could be avoided with better planning and infrastructure.

During severe flooding, schools often turn into evacuation centers. While this helps families in need, it also causes damage. Classrooms and school equipment are sometimes destroyed or left neglected. Once classes resume, students and teachers must deal with broken facilities, missing materials, and disrupted schedules. This not only slows learning but also adds stress to teachers, who must adjust lesson plans to make up for lost time.

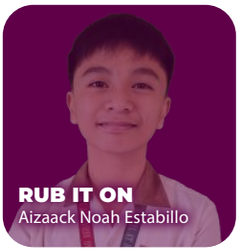
To make up for lost school days, schools often use the Alternative Delivery Mode or ADM during class suspensions. However, this system does not work well for everyone. Many students do not have gadgets, stable internet, or quiet spaces at home. Asynchronous lessons often leave them confused and behind. In this way, natural disasters like flooding interact with existing inequalities, widening the gap between students who have resources and those who do not.

What makes the situation worse is that huge amounts of money are spent on flood control projects every year, yet flooding in cities continues. Concerns about project implementation, and possible irregularities are often raised in public discussions. This suggests that flooding may not be only a natural problem, but also a governance challenge that needs closer review.

Long-term solutions are needed. Suspending classes and shifting to online learning are only temporary fixes. If drainage systems and flood control projects are not properly managed, the same problem will return again and again.

If flooding continues, learning loss will continue. When education is delayed by infrastructure gaps and governance challenges, it is not just streets that are flooded but the future of students too.

True friends don't push you towards harm



Wanting to belong is a normal part of student life. Everyone wants to be accepted and included in a group of friends. But there comes a point when trying to be "cool" can turn into a serious problem. When does fitting in start to put young people in danger?

A recent school survey conducted by Synergy revealed that some students have already tried smoking and vaping. A few also admitted using "Tuklaw," a cigarette product that authorities have warned against due to concerns about high nicotine content and harmful chemicals.

These substances can cause dangerous reactions in the body and long-term health problems.

Many students shared that they tried these substances because of peer pressure. Friends offered them a cigarette or a vape and saying no felt hard. This situation is not new among young people. But should the desire to belong decide choices that can harm health and future?

Smoking, vaping, and experimenting with products like Tuklaw are not just trends or styles.

They are real threats, especially to growing bodies and developing minds. Like other illegal drugs, they can affect memory, focus, and overall well-being. These risks can also harm school performance and future opportunities.

Students must remember that real friendship is not about showing off or copying bad habits. True friends help each other become better. They do not push one another into risky behavior. A real group lifts its members up instead of placing them in danger.

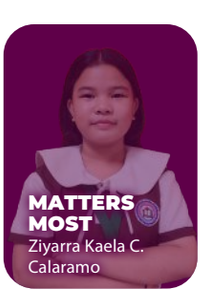
To address this issue, the school's Guidance Office partnered with PNP Galas Station to hold a Drug Awareness Campaign. The activity was more than a lecture. Students were given space to share their thoughts and struggles with peer pressure. Honest discussions helped many realize they were not alone.

At the same time, the school continues to strictly enforce the Code of Conduct and Discipline. This reminds students that every action has consequences not only for themselves, but also for the whole school community.

Peer pressure will always exist. However, it can be turned into something positive.

Instead of pushing friends to try harmful habits, students can encourage each other to study harder, stay disciplined, and make good choices. Let us make doing the right thing the new pressure. True friendship is not about falling together but about rising together.

Learning begins with a proper meal



Learning becomes a struggle when the body itself is weak.

When Senator Kiko Pangilinan once again pushed for the Libreng Almusal Program for public school students, many people reacted with doubt. Some questioned the cost. Others wondered if the government could really afford it. But inside the classroom, the answer to this debate is already clear.

Every day, many children arrive at school without eating their first meal. They sit quietly at their desks, trying to listen while their stomachs are empty. Hunger makes it hard to focus, understand lessons, or even stay awake. Learning becomes a struggle when the body itself is weak.

This is where the government's School-Based Feeding Program plays an important role. The program is not just about giving food. It is about helping children become healthy enough to learn. Proper nutrition supports both the mind and the body, making education more effective.

Studies support this need. According to EDCOM II, a large number of Filipino students are undernourished or stunted. These conditions affect memory, attention, and school performance. When nutrition is poor, learning suffers as well.

In communities like Barangay Tatalon, this problem is easy to see. Many students go to school without having eaten anything. For them, a free breakfast is not a luxury. It gives them energy to stay in class and understand their lessons.

Some critics argue that feeding programs make families depend too much on the government. However, research tells a different story. Studies from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies show that feeding programs improve attendance, health, and learning ability. These programs do not replace parents' roles. They help children who are struggling with poverty.

There is also a wider benefit. Food that will be used in the Libreng Almusal Program will come from local farmers. This means the program supports both students and the agriculture sector, helping local communities grow stronger together.

In the end, the purpose of a Free Breakfast Program is simple. To help students learn better. Government funds are not wasted when they are used to make sure children are healthy, alert, and ready to learn. For many students, one good meal can be the first step toward a brighter future. Let us not deny them that chance.

OPEN FORUM

They said it:

What keeps the Philippines poor?

In my opinion, corruption remains one of the biggest reasons. Despite our rich resources, governance problems continue to slow national progress. When public funds are not managed properly, essential services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure suffer.

Raedhen Chole Prado,
VI-Baltazar

We must also examine our own responsibility. Every election gives us the chance to choose wisely, yet popularity often influence decisions more than qualifications. If we want better governance, we must make better choices at the ballot box.

James Matthew Macapia,
VI-Luna

Many feel that politicians often protect their own interests. Meanwhile, ordinary people carry much of the burden of economic hardship. This perception raises important questions about accountability and how public funds are managed.

Mark David Mabini,
IV-Topaz

I think geography is a big factor. It is not easy to travel around in an archipelago. It is more expensive for our goods to reach the markets. While we have beautiful islands, I think being an archipelago is both a blessing and a curse.

Alexander Liam Acay,
IV-Amber

Corruption is my answer. I believe we have the resources and talent to stand alongside countries like Japan, Korea, or Singapore. What holds us back are governance problems that limit our growth and development.

Raigun Dela Cruz,
V-Betelgeuse

I believe some of our problems come from our own attitudes and habits. Lack of discipline and the "talangka mentality" can hold us back. If we want progress, we must support one another and take responsibility for change.

Daniel Abendanio,
V-Sirius

Letter to the Editor

Let's keep our restrooms clean

Dear editor,

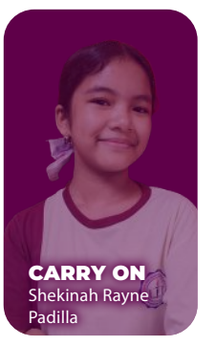
I would like to kindly share a concern about the condition of our school restrooms. At times, they can be smelly and not as clean as we hope them to be. Since many pupils use them every day, it is important that they are kept neat and fresh.

I hope we can all work together to keep them clean. Maybe we can be more mindful about flushing properly, throwing trash in the bins, and reminding one another to keep the area tidy.

Thank you!

Respectfully,
Anonymous

Change begins at the ballot



CARRY ON
Shekinah Rayne Padilla

The government we criticize is often the result of our own choices.

Whenever something goes wrong in government, we are quick to complain. We question poor services and bad decisions. We criticize programs and public officials. But there is one important question we often forget to ask: how did these leaders get there in the first place? Understanding this is key, because government does not operate in a vacuum. It reflects the choices and responsibility of its citizens. The leaders we have are, in many ways, the leaders we have chosen.

In every election, power begins with the ballot. Voting is meant to be a serious responsibility, a moment where each citizen contributes to shaping the country's future. Yet studies show that many people do not always choose leaders based on skills, values, or past work. Instead, emotions often guide decisions more than reason. Excitement, admiration, and personal feelings can outweigh careful consideration of platforms, past accomplishments, and long-term competence. Election campaigns filled with slogans, promises, and flashy displays can easily distract voters from the hard questions that should be asked.

A study titled Political Fanaticism through the Lens of the Local Community conducted in Tagbilaran City illustrates this clearly. According to the research, some voters develop strong emotional attachment to a candidate or group. This loyalty becomes more important than checking their plans, track record, or their leadership ability. When this happens, leaders are treated as idols rather than public servants accountable to the people. Decisions that should be based on rational evaluation are replaced by devotion to personalities. Policies and governance are reduced to personal popularity contests.

Social conditions also affect voting behavior. Research conducted by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) shows that poverty and limited access to clear, accurate information influence how people vote. When information is lacking, voters often rely on people's familiarity, on how popular they are, or on emotional appeal rather than careful study of platforms and long-term solutions. Some citizens may also be swayed by promises that feel immediate and tangible, even if they are not sustainable or realistic. These conditions make elections less about competence and more about sentiment, which has long-term consequences for public services and national development.

These findings send a clear message. Complaining after elections is not enough. Real change begins before leaders are elected. Voters must take time to ask important questions. What is the candidate's record? Do their plans make sense? Are their promises realistic? Are they capable of serving the public, or are they appealing only to feelings and appearances? Responsible voters understand that leadership is about service not popularity.

The phrase "vote wisely" may sound overused, but it remains at the heart of democracy. As long as blind loyalty and emotion control our choices, meaningful change will stay out of reach. A country's future should never be decided by excitement or admiration alone.

If we want better leaders, we must first raise our standards as voters. Leadership quality depends on the decisions made at the ballot box. The government we criticize is often the result of choices we, or those around us, made. True reform does not start with protests or complaints after elections. It begins with thoughtful and responsible voting. The ballot is powerful. Let us respect it. Let us protect its dignity. Let us use it wisely because our future depends on it.

synergy features

FROM THE BIG SCREEN

"Oh yes, the past
either run fr

Stand up, speak out

Beyond the Label



HTTPS://ENABLINGDEVICES.COM/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2016/09/STOPBULLYING.JPG

Ma. Ysabel E. Del Rosario

In every school, there are stories that never reach the guidance office and voices that never rise during class discussions. These stories live in quiet hallways, in classroom corners, and in the long pauses before a child finally says, "Ayoko nang pumasok ng paaralan." Bullying often starts this way. Unseen, unheard, and slowly treated as normal. It is easy to point at one child and call them a bully. What is harder is accepting that bullying is not simple and not only caused by a few "problem students." It is a problem that affects many and needs everyone's attention.

Bullying is not a one-time mistake or a small misunderstanding. According to studies used by schools and child protection programs, bullying happens when a child is hurt on purpose and many times by someone who is stronger or has more power. Sometimes it is physical, like pushing or hitting. More often, it is quiet. Hurtful words, teasing, exclusion, rumors, threats, or ignoring someone on purpose can all be forms of bullying. These actions may not leave bruises, but they can hurt a child's feelings and confidence for a long time.

This problem is not only seen in national reports. It is also happening in schools. A school-based survey at Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, indicated that some students have experienced bullying. Some said they were teased again and again. Others shared that they were excluded or made to feel afraid by their classmates. These answers show that bullying is not just something talked about in books or laws. It is real and happens inside classrooms every day.

In the Philippines, the government created Republic Act No. 10627, also known as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013, to protect students. This law tells schools to make rules against bullying, create ways to report it, and help students involved. However, reports from the Department of Education still show bullying and child abuse cases every year. This means that while the law helps, it cannot stop bullying by itself, especially when children are hurting inside.

To help schools more, local leaders also took action. The Quezon City Government, together with Department of Education Quezon City, started the program called B.A.D. Yan, which means Bullying at Diskriminasyon 'Yan! This program teaches students that bullying and discrimination are wrong. It helps schools act fast when bullying happens.

Studies shared by UNESCO show that bullying happens in many countries. In fact, UNESCO reports that almost one out of three students around the world has experienced bullying. Experts say that a child's environment plays a big role. Children who grow up around anger, violence, or neglect may think hurting others is normal.

Behind the bully is often a child who is also hurting. Some children hide their fear and sadness by acting tough or angry. This does not make bullying right, but it helps us understand why punishment alone does not always work. When children are punished without being understood, the behavior may stop for a while, but the pain remains.

Bullying affects many people. Victims may become scared to go to school or lose interest in learning. Children who only see bullying also get affected. Sometimes, children who were bullied grow up and bully others, continuing the cycle.

To stop this cycle, schools must do more than punish. They must listen, guide, and care. Teaching kindness, giving students safe spaces to speak, and helping both victims and bullies are important steps.

Bullying is not just an action. It is a warning sign. It tells us that someone needs help. Laws and programs may help by setting boundaries. But real change begins when adults choose to listen, understand, and see every child as more than a label.



A cooler, sa

How DPMES' O Responds to Clima

Shekinah Ra

MARIELA BULLECER

As climate change brings stronger heat waves and heavier rains, schools are increasingly on the front line of risk, especially in dense urban areas like Quezon City, where concrete surrounds many campuses and shade is scarce.

At Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES), a redesigned schoolyard is offering a different response, one that treats the campus not just as a place to learn, but as a space that protects children's health and well-being.

Turning the Schoolyard into Protection

The OASIS Schoolyard Project, short for Openness, Adaptation, Sensitization, Innovation, and Social Ties, was launched through a partnership between the Quezon City government, the Resilient Cities Network, and the Temasek Foundation. Its goal is simple but urgent. Make school environments cooler, safer, and more supportive in the face of climate change.

This comes at a critical time. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Philippines is among the countries most vulnerable to extreme heat and flooding. In urban schools surrounded by cement, heat can build quickly, affecting students' comfort, concentration, and health.

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Rafiki from Lion King

"Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're gonna get."



Forrest Gump

"The flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all."



The Emperor from Mulan



afer school

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growing concern, often linked to limited space for safe outdoor play. The redesigned schoolyard includes open areas and play-friendly spaces that encourage students to move, walk, and play. Health studies consistently show that regular physical activity helps reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, while also improving learning and classroom behavior.

For students, this means exercise is no longer limited to PE classes. It becomes part of their everyday school life.

Supporting Mental Well-Being

Green spaces do not only benefit the body. Research shows that children who learn and play in greener environments experience lower stress levels, better memory, and longer attention spans. The OASIS Schoolyard gives students a place to pause, breathe, and interact.

A Model for Future Schools

The OASIS Schoolyard at DPMES shows that no matter how small, thoughtful changes to school environments can create big and significant benefits. By combining climate adaptation, health promotion, and child-friendly design, the project transformed the schoolyard into a space that protects DPMESian learners today while preparing them for a brighter tomorrow.

Let us talk about mental health

Beyond the Silence



HTTPS://PSYCHICARE.COM/HELP-YOUR-CHILD-WITH-DEPRESSION/

Audrey G. Cabaluna

One morning, a student sits quietly at their desk, staring at a notebook that remains blank. When a teacher asks if everything is alright, the child smiles and nods, saying nothing. Inside, however, the student feels overwhelmed, tired, and unsure of who to talk to. Stories like this often go unnoticed in schools, but they remind us that mental health struggles can exist even behind calm faces.

Mental health is important for every student. It affects how children learn, think, and feel each day. When students are mentally healthy, they can focus better in class and enjoy time with friends and feel safe in school. But when mental health is ignored, students may feel sad, anxious, or alone without knowing where to ask for help.

Around the world, many young people struggle with their mental health. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that anxiety and depression are common among children and teenagers, and that suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young people aged 15 to 29. This shows that mental health problems are real and serious,even at a young age.

In the Philippines, the situation is also concerning. Reports from the Department of Education and health agencies show a worrying number of student suicide cases and attempts in recent years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, studies also revealed that many students experienced increased stress and fear due to isolation, online classes, and family difficulties. These realities remind us that many students are silently struggling.

Mental health problems do not always look the same. Some students may cry or openly talk about feeling sad. Others may become quiet, lose interest in schoolwork, or avoid their classmates. Many students keep their feelings to themselves because they are afraid of being judged or misunderstood. Hurtful remarks such as "nag-iinarte lang yan" or "papansin lang yan" can discourage a child from seeking help.

At Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, the importance of mental and emotional well-being is being recognized. Based on a school-based survey, some learners reported experiencing stress, sadness, and difficulties with peer relationships. These responses show that mental health concerns are present even within the school community.

Support systems are now more available to students. The school's Guidance Center is functional and open to learners who need someone to listen to them. Guidance services are provided to help students talk about their concerns and and find healthy ways to cope. It's high time to remove the stigma that Guidance Office is a place for punishment and being feared of.

The Department of Education has also strengthened its efforts to promote student mental health by encouraging guidance programs, psychosocial support activities, and other school-based initiatives. These efforts aim to help students cope with stress, express their feelings in healthy ways, and know where to seek help when they feel overwhelmed.

Mental health is not only the responsibility of schools. Families, friends, and the wider community also play important roles. When adults listen and take children's feelings seriously, students feel safer opening up. Simple actions such as asking how a child is feeling or reminding them that it is okay to ask for help can make a meaningful difference.

Mental health problems are not signs of weakness. They are part of being human. What matters most is that students know they are supported. By working together and breaking the silence around mental health, we can help every student feel seen, heard, and cared for both inside and outside the classroom.

Where Hope Finds a Home:

Quezon City's Shelters of Care

Jamella N. Andus

Quezon City is known for its busy streets and fast-paced life. But beyond the noise and movement, there are quiet places built for care and healing. These are shelters created by the local government to help people in need, those children at risk, abandoned senior citizens, survivors of abuse, and young people in conflict with the law.

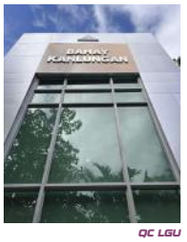












QC LGU

Bahay Kanlungan: A Safe Place to Heal

Bahay Kanlungan is Quezon City's shelter for women, children, and LGBTQ+ individuals who have experienced abuse. It was established in November 2020 and formally opened during the 18-Day Campaign to End Violence Against Women. The shelter was created in response to the rise in domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 lockdowns, when many victims were forced to stay with their abusers.

The shelter includes activity rooms, a play area for children, a reading space, internet access for schoolwork, and livelihood training areas to help residents earn a living in the future.

Bahay Kanlungan follows laws that protect women and children and is guided by a human-rights approach. More importantly, it focuses on survivor-centered care, helping people feel safe, respected, and supported as they heal.

Bahay Kalinga: Protecting Children at Risk

For children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned, Bahay Kalinga offers safety and care. The shelter serves children aged 17 and below and provides temporary housing while social workers study each child's situation and plan the best support.

As part of Quezon City's Safe Homes for the Youth program, Bahay Kalinga provides case management, health and dental services, education support, and skills training. It also helps them recover and prepare for a better future, whether that means returning to their families or moving into permanent care.

Bahay Aruga: Caring for Senior Citizens

Care is also needed in old age. Bahay Aruga is a shelter for senior citizens who have been abandoned, abused, or left without family support.

Managed by the Social Services Development Department, Bahay Aruga serves senior citizens aged 60 and above. It provides shelter, food, healthcare, and respectful care for those who can no longer live on their own.

Molave Youth Home: Giving Young People a Second Chance

Molave Youth Home supports young people in conflict with the law. Established in 1973, it serves youths aged 15 to 18 who have pending cases in Family Court. The facility believes that young offenders need guidance and rehabilitation, not punishment.

It can accommodate up to 340 residents. The young people follow structured daily programs that include education, vocational training, life skills, spiritual development, healthcare, and recreation. After-care services help them adjust when they return to the community.

Reception and Action Center: Improving Access to Care

To improve how services are delivered, Quezon City began building the Reception and Action Center (RAC) in March 2024. The RAC serves as a central intake and temporary shelter for individuals and families in need.

At the center, clients are assessed and then referred to the right shelters or services. The facility includes sleeping areas, medical check-up spaces, family rooms, and common areas that ensure comfort and dignity during short stays.

More Than Shelter: A Network of Hope

The shelters of Quezon City (Bahay Kanlungan, Bahay Kalinga, Bahay Aruga, Molave Youth Home, and the Reception and Action Center) are more than buildings. They are signs of care and compassion.

Through these facilities, the city addresses violence, neglect, aging, and legal challenges with programs that focus on healing and reintegration. In a city of more than three million people, these shelters quietly remind us that in Quezon City, no one is meant to be left behind. (Source: QC LGU Facebook Page)

When children work too soon

STOLEN CHILDHOOD

Princess Angel Ortiz

Child labor happens when children work at a young age instead of spending their time in school and at home. While helping at home in small ways is normal, child labor becomes a problem when the work is unsafe or affects a child's education and health. In the Philippines, child labor remains a serious issue, especially among families living in poverty.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2022), there are about 29 million children aged 5 to 17 in the country. Out of this number, around 5.5 million are working children. Nearly 3 million of them are involved in hazardous child labor, meaning their work can harm their bodies, minds, or future. These figures show that many Filipino children are working when they should be studying and playing.

At Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, there are learners who work after class to help their families. One of them is Mark (not his real name). Mark is still in elementary school, but after classes, he works as a carwash and wiper boy on busy roads. When the traffic light turns red, he quickly wipes the windshields of cars. Some drivers give him a small amount of money in return.

Mark does this to help his family buy food. On some days, he comes to school tired because he worked late. There are times when it is hard for him to focus in class. Still, he tries his best to study because he knows that education is important for his future.

Mark's story shows how poverty can push children to work.

Like Mark, some children help in the public market, work as jeepney conductors or barkers, or sell rugs on busy streets. These children try to balance school and work.

The International Labour Organization (2021) explains that poverty is the main reason why children work. When parents do not have steady jobs or enough income, children feel the need to help earn money. Because of this, many children miss school.

Child labor is dangerous. It takes away a child's right to education and play. It can also cause sickness and emotional stress. Children who work long hours may lose interest in school and may even stop studying completely.

Despite these challenges, Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School continues to support learners affected by child labor and poverty. Some learners who are identified as child laborers, or those who come from very poor families, are included as beneficiaries of the school's feeding program. This simple but important effort helps ensure that children have food during school days so they can focus better in class.

"We understand the situation of our learners. Our goal is to help them stay in school and remind them that education can change their future," a teacher shared.

The school also works with non-government organizations (NGOs) such as the Rotary Club, which provides support through feeding activities, school supplies, and other assistance programs. Some working children are included as beneficiaries of these efforts, helping lessen the burden on their families.

Teachers and school leaders continue to encourage learners like Mark to stay in school and remind them that education is the key to a better future.

Child labor should not be treated as normal. Children belong in school, not at work. While poverty pushes many children to work, support from schools, communities, and government programs can help protect them.

Education is one of the best ways to break the cycle of poverty. Helping working children is not only the responsibility of their families, but of the whole community. By fulfilling this responsibility, the community helps children stay in class and hold on to the hope of a better future.

synergy sci & tech

QC launches vendor business school **Page 13**
When flood becomes a lesson **Page 14**
Commentary: Project NOAH matters **Page 14**

HEALTH

QC launches Vendor Business School to boost food safety, climate resilience



FREEPIK.COM

Alyssa N. Velarde

Informal food vendors across Quezon City are set to receive formal training in food safety, basic business skills, and climate change adaptation following the passage of an ordinance institutionalizing the Vendor Business School.

Under Ordinance No. 3430-S-2025, approved on January 2026, the Quezon City government formally adopted the VBS as a city program aimed at improving the safety, knowledge, and livelihoods of small-scale food vendors who operate outside the formal business sector.

The program was first launched in 2024 as a pilot initiative in partnership with the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), with 108 vendors completing the initial training. City officials said the positive results of the pilot led to its expansion and formal adoption.

The VBS provides practical lessons on food hygiene, proper food handling and storage, basic business management, sustainability, and ways to cope with extreme weather.

Students, teachers weigh promise and risks

DepEd rolls out AI education push with AGAP.AI program



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. himself led the launch of AGAP.AI. PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Alyssa Felicity N. Velarde

The Department of Education (DepEd) has formally launched a national initiative to introduce artificial intelligence into basic education, a move that has sparked both optimism and caution among students and educators.

The program, called Project AGAP.AI (Accelerating Governance and Adaptive Pedagogy through Artificial Intelligence), was unveiled at Quezon City Science High School and is designed to promote the safe, responsible, and meaningful use of AI in Philippine schools.

DepEd officials stressed that AGAP.AI is meant to support teachers and learners, not replace classroom instruction.

Through AI-powered tools, the department aims to improve lesson preparation, access to learning materials, and school operations.

At Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, reactions among students are divided.

Kristel Salva, a Grade 6 student, said responsible AI use should be allowed in schools, noting its potential to help with academic tasks.

Another student, Xyz Nicole Gongora, acknowledged AI's usefulness but raised concerns about readiness. She said schools may not yet be fully prepared.

Mr. Jefferson Dela Cruz, a DPMES teacher currently pursuing his master's in Educational Technology at UP Diliman, said AI can be beneficial if used responsibly.

QC steps up fight vs extreme heat as schools back citywide climate action

Ziyarra Kaela C. Calaramo

As extreme heat increasingly disrupts daily life in urban areas, Quezon City has taken a bigger role on the global climate stage, a move welcomed by local schools that face the impact of rising temperatures firsthand.

Quezon City is among the 33 founding members of the C40 Cities Cool Cities Accelerator, a



QUEZON CITY LGU

global initiative that helps cities design and implement science-based solutions to protect residents from dangerous heat linked to climate change.

Mayor Joy Belmonte said extreme heat now poses one of the most serious climate risks worldwide, affecting health, education, and livelihoods.

In recent years, Quezon City has been forced to suspend or shorten classes due to soaring temperatures, highlighting how

JUMP TO PAGE 14
QC STEPS UP...

Rice is Life:

Raising healthier children, one grain at a time

Cerynise Quindong



ERIK DE CASTRO/REUTERS

Rice is more than a staple in the Philippines. It is part of everyday life. For most Filipino families, every meal begins with "kanin." Now, scientists are asking whether rice can do more than fill the stomach and help address long-standing nutrition problems, especially among children.

At the Philippine Rice Research Institute, researchers are using biotechnology to develop rice varieties that can survive floods, drought, and salty soil while also becoming more nutritious.

Malnutrition remains a serious concern in the country. Health data show that about 14 percent of children under five lack vitamin A, around 22 percent of pregnant women suffer from anemia, and one in four Filipino children is stunted due to poor nutrition. These conditions affect children's health, school attendance, and learning.

One major innovation is Golden Rice, or Malusog Rice, which contains beta-carotene that helps prevent vitamin A deficiency. Scientists have also developed rice varieties rich in iron and zinc to support growth and brain development. With faster research methods, rice may play a growing role in improving public health, one grain at a time.

from page 13

QC steps up fight vs extreme heat as schools back citywide climate action

heat has become a direct threat to students and school operations.

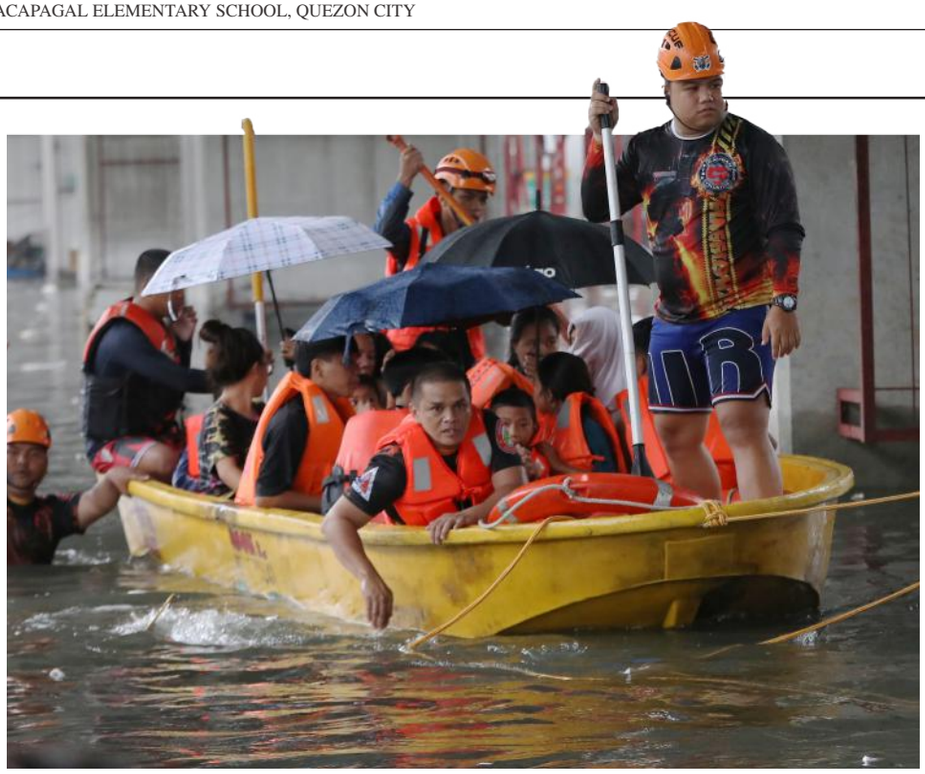
Under the Cool Cities Accelerator, the city is expected to roll out measures such as heat-wave early warning systems, designated cooling areas, expanded tree cover and shaded spaces, and updated building design policies aimed at keeping indoor temperatures safer.

The initiative has gained support at the school level, where the effects of heat are felt daily.
Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School welcomed the city's participation in the global program, citing the importance of climate action in ensuring student safety.

"Sa paglaban sa matinding init, una sa mga makikinabang ang ating paaralan, lalo na ang mga mag-aaral, pati na rin ang mga guro at iba pang personnel," said DPMES principal Wilma C. Obras.

She added that the school has already taken steps aligned with the city's goals through its OASIS Schoolyard project, which focuses on creating a cooler, safer campus environment by adding greenery, shade, and open spaces.

"Isinusulong natin ang paglaban sa matinding init at climate change kaya inilunsad ang OASIS Schoolyard," Obras said.



G. Araneta Avenue, just a stone's throw away from DPMES, everytime it rains hard. MICHAEL VARCAS/THE PHILSTAR

When flood becomes a lesson

Jelly Ann S. Salonga

For students of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, flooding is not an abstract concept discussed only in textbooks. It is something they see, step around, and worry about. Wet shoes, muddy roads, canceled classes, and safety reminders become part of life whenever heavy rain falls.

Why Water Rises So Fast

Flooding happens when rain falls faster than the ground and drainage systems can handle. Soil can absorb water, but only up to a point. Once it is full, excess rain flows over the surface.

In cities, the problem grows quickly. Roads, sidewalks, and buildings are mostly made of concrete, which does not absorb water. Rain rushes into canals and esteros, and when these are clogged with trash or already full, water spills into streets and homes.

This is why areas like Barangay Tatalon experience flooding even after short but heavy downpours.
Stronger Rains, Bigger Problems
Climate change has made rainfall more intense and unpredictable. Scientists explain that warmer air holds more moisture, leading to sudden and powerful rainstorms. These conditions increase the risk of flash floods, floods that rise quickly and give little warning.

For children, this means flooding is no longer rare or seasonal. It can happen more often, sometimes without long hours of rain.

Flood Control is More Than Clean Canals

Experts say that clearing drainage during storms is not enough. Flood prevention requires proper planning, well-designed drainage systems, and regular maintenance. Flood control projects are meant to guide water safely away from communities and protect places like schools and homes.

When these systems are poorly planned or not maintained, flooding returns — and children are among the most affected. Missed classes and unsafe routes to school become common during the rainy months.

Hidden Dangers in Floodwater

Floodwater carries more than rain. It often contains dirt, waste, and bacteria that can cause illness. Health workers warn that children are especially at risk of diseases such as leptospirosis, skin infections, diarrhea, and respiratory problems.

Because children like to move and play, they may forget to wash right away or stay in wet clothes longer, increasing the risk of getting sick.

Staying Safe During Floods

Teachers and parents remind students not to walk through floodwater, especially if they have cuts or wounds. Washing feet and legs with soap, changing wet clothes immediately, and following instructions from adults and barangay officials are important steps to stay safe.

Small Actions, Real Impact

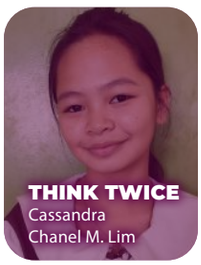
Children also have a role in preventing floods. Proper waste disposal, helping in clean-up drives, planting plants at home or school, and reminding family members to care for the environment all help reduce clogged drainage and water buildup.

Learning Before the Next Rain

Flooding is caused by many factors. Weather, climate, city design, and human actions. Solving it takes time and teamwork. But for young students, understanding why floods happen is already a powerful step.

COLUMN

Why Project NOAH matters more than ever



Launched in 2012 after Tropical Storm Sendong, Project NOAH (Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards) was created to provide early warnings through real-time data and public hazard maps, giving communities time to prepare before disaster strikes.

The public already trusts the system. With over 35 million searches and up to 2.5 million daily searches during heavy rains.

NOAH stands out because its maps are free, open-source, and built from historical records, satellite imagery, field observations, and real-time rainfall data, allowing forecasts down to the barangay level. In February 2025, it flagged severe flooding in Palawan a full day in advance, proving how early warnings can support preparation and evacuation.

Project NOAH should not be used only during storms. Its data can guide planning and policy decisions, yet many local governments fail to use it consistently. The technology and science are already there; what is needed is the commitment to keep using Project NOAH to plan ahead and protect lives.

SURVEY

HIGH FIVE

The 5 Biggest Philippine Sports Stories of 2025

Jham G. Balitaon & Asbenthea Kaith A. Helonggo



2025 was a year of victory for Filipino athletes. PHOTOS FROM ABSCBN, WTA, GREEN ARCHERS ONLINE, PFF, COLLAGED BY SUNERGY STAFF

What defined Philippine sports in 2025? For students of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES), the year was remembered for historic breakthroughs, long-awaited championships, and steady progress on the regional and global stage.

In a survey conducted by Synergy among 300 DPMES students, five sports stories stood out as the most memorable and impactful of the year.

1. Alex Eala delivers a historic year for Philippine tennis (45%)

The biggest sports story of 2025, according to nearly half of respondents, was the breakout season of Alex Eala, who redefined what was possible for Philippine tennis.

Eala entered the WTA Top 100, won a WTA 125 title, and recorded main-draw victories in Grand Slam tournaments, achievements never before reached by a Filipino player. She capped the year by winning the gold medal in women's singles tennis at the 33rd Southeast Asian Games in Thailand in December 2025, ending the country's long wait for a SEA Games tennis gold.

2. La Salle reclaims the UAAP men's basketball crown

Redemption defined De La Salle University's 2025 campaign, as the Green Archers defeated the University of the Philippines, 80–72, in Game 3 of the UAAP Season 88 men's basketball finals.

Played before a crowd of nearly 24,000 fans, the win completed La Salle's return to the top of collegiate basketball after a highly competitive finals series that became one of the most talked-about sporting events of the year.

3. Team Pilipinas hauls 277 medals at the SEA Games (15%)

Another major highlight was Team Pilipinas' performance at the 33rd Southeast Asian Games, where the country collected a total of 277 medals (50 gold, 73 silver, and 154 bronze) to finish sixth overall in the medal standings.

The medals came from a wide range of sports, including athletics, boxing, gymnastics, swimming, and volleyball, reflecting the growing depth of Philippine sports across multiple disciplines.

4. Petro Gazz asserts dominance in the PVL (8%)

The Petro Gazz Angels continued to establish themselves as one of the Premier Volleyball League's top teams after winning the PVL Reinforced Conference title against Zus Coffee in the finals. The Angels also claimed the 2024–25 PVL All-Filipino Conference championship, giving the team its fourth overall PVL title and strengthening its status as a league powerhouse.

5. Philippine women's football shows steady rise in Asia (5%)

While podium finishes remained elusive, the Philippine Women's National Football Team earned recognition from students for its continued participation in official international matches throughout 2025.

Competing during multiple FIFA international windows, the team displayed improved organization and discipline against higher-ranked Asian opponents.

Ex-DPMES standout part of history as PH stuns Egypt for first-ever FIVB win



VOLLEYBALL WORLD

Aizaack D. Estabillo

Philippine volleyball reached a breakthrough moment on the global stage as Alas Pilipinas Men secured its first-ever victory in the FIVB Men's World Championship, shocking reigning African champion Egypt in a four-set battle at the Mall of Asia Arena.

The Filipinos pulled off a landmark 29–27, 23–25, 25–21, 25–21 win in September, marking the country's first triumph in the history of the tournament and proving it could compete against higher-ranked nations despite entering the match as World No. 89.

Bryan Bagunas led the charge with 25 points, anchoring the offense through four tight sets. Marck Espejo sealed the historic win with a clutch block late in the fourth set, igniting the home crowd and the Philippine bench.

A key part of PH's winning effort came from the backcourt, where libero Vince Patrick Lorenzo helped stabilize the team's defense.

A former athlete of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, Lorenzo played a crucial role in serve reception and floor defense, keeping plays alive against Egypt's heavy attacks.



VINCE LORENZO'S FACEBOOK

FROM DPMES TO THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF PH TEAM

The Rise of Alas Pilipinas' Vince Lorenzo

Ma. Ysabel E. Del Rosario

Before the bright lights, big arenas, and loud crowds, Vince Patrick Paler Lorenzo's volleyball story began on a simple school covered court at Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School.

It was there where Lorenzo first learned the basics of the game. Not as a spiker chasing points, but as a defender willing to wait, receive, and protect the team.

"Hindi ko pa alam noon kung hanggang saan ako dadalhin ng volleyball. Ang alam ko lang, gusto kong pumasok sa training at ibigay ang kaya ko," Lorenzo said.

Training days were ordinary and often repetitive. Wins were quiet, and progress came slowly. But at DPMES, Lorenzo learned values that stayed with him. Patience, discipline, and the courage to stand as the last line of defense. Those lessons helped carry his team to the Milo Olympics.

After elementary school, Lorenzo brought those lessons with him to University of Perpetual Help System DALTA–Las Piñas Senior High School. There, competition became tougher and expectations higher. In 2016, his team reached the top of Philippine school sports by winning the Palarong Pambansa.

"Doon ko talaga naramdaman kung gaano kabigat at kasarap ipaglaban ang isang koponan. Hindi lang sarili mo ang iniisip mo. Buong paaralan ang dala mo," he said.

The experience strengthened his belief that defense mattered just as much as offense. That belief followed him into college volleyball with the FEU Tamaraws where he played as libero in the UAAP. He became known not for flashy plays but for consistency and reliability.

Lorenzo continued to develop through club volleyball as he played for teams such as VNS, Philippine Navy, AMC Cotabato Spikers, and D' Navigators Iloilo. Each stop helped shape his game and mindset.

"Bawat team may sariling kultura. May matututuhan ka sa bawat coach, sa bawat kakampi, kahit sa bawat pagkatalo," he shared.
He later found stability with the Cignal HD Spikers where his steady defense showed that strong backcourt play can be the foundation of winning.

Wearing the national colors is a dream few athletes reach. For Lorenzo, joining Alas Pilipinas came after years of training and trusting his role.

"Iba ang pakiramdam kapag Pilipinas na ang suot mo. May kaba, may bigat, pero mas nangingibabaw ang pasasalamat," he said.

Every international match brings pressure and memories. He thinks of the DPMES court where he started, the championship run in senior high school, his UAAP years, and countless club practices.

"Kapag nasa likod ako ng court at may dumating na malakas na atake, iniisip ko lang, gawin mo ang trabaho mo. Para sa team. Para sa bansa," Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo's story is one of steady growth, not instant success. From a quiet elementary school court to collegiate leagues, professional teams, and the national squad, he carried his beginnings with him every step of the way.

For young players now training at DPMES, his journey sends a clear message. Big dreams can start small. Sometimes, all it takes is the courage to stay on defense. And the patience to let the dream grow.

They said it – Champion's Routine:

What habits should students follow to stay healthy?

We should eat fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food. Drinking water keeps us active and alert. What we eat affects how we feel.

Hayley Venice Alao, Badminton



We need 8 to 10 hours of sleep every night. Rest helps us feel energized and focused. When we sleep well, we do better in school and in games.

Raeden Prado, Volleyball



We should take care of our bodies every day. Small healthy choices, like exercising and eating right, really help. Being disciplined makes us stronger.

Marian Mina, Track and field



We should move every day by playing, running, or stretching. Exercise keeps our body strong and healthy. It also makes us feel happier.

Addie Merene, Basketball



from page 20

Salva's silver spin seals Regional spot

Kristel Ann Salva carved out a breakthrough run in the throwing events, earning her a place in the NCR Palaro 2026 and emerging as the school's only qualifier to the regional meet.

Before competing at the division level, Salva delivered a dominant performance at the 2025 Congressional District 4 Athletic Meet, where she won gold in the discus throw, silver in the shot put, and bronze in the javelin.

Alongside her was classmate and close friend Marian Mina, who also posted an impressive medal haul, claiming silver finishes in both the discus throw and shot put, and a bronze in the javelin.

Both athletes advanced to the division meet; however, it was there that Salva separated herself from the field, securing a silver medal in the discus throw that earned her a coveted berth in the regional competition.

The pair also competed together in the Five Throws for All event in Mandaluyong City, where both Salva and Mina collected bronze medals in the discus throw.

Now preparing to compete without her longtime throwing partner at the next level, Salva acknowledged both the honor and the pressure of advancing alone.

"Bilang nag-iisang kinatawan ng DPMES sa Palarong NCR, ramdam ko ang pressure. Pero gagawin ko ang lahat upang maibigay ang aking pinakamahusay at makapagbigay-karangalan sa ating paaralan at sa buong Quezon City," said Salva.



SPORTS EDITORIAL

Be a good example

Sports are meant to be competitive. Players train to win, crowds cheer loudly, and emotions naturally run high. But competition does not excuse bad behavior. And when it does, the people most affected are often the ones not even on the court.

Fights, shouting matches, and disrespectful conduct have become common headlines in sports. Even in major leagues like the National Basketball Association, games are sometimes remembered more for scuffles than skill. Locally, the Philippine Basketball Association has also seen moments when tempers boil over and the game itself fades into the background.

For adults, these may seem like isolated incidents. Part of the game, they say. But for children watching, the message can be very different.

Young fans do not just admire how athletes score, block, or defend. They also notice how players react when things go wrong. When they see stars yelling at referees, hurting opponents, or refusing to accept a loss, they may begin to believe that this behavior is normal or even acceptable.

That belief can quietly carry over into school sports.

Instead of focusing on learning and teamwork, some young athletes start copying what they see. Arguing over calls, playing with anger, and treating opponents as enemies instead of fellow players. Games that should be fun and educational turn tense and hostile.

This problem is made worse when bad behavior goes unpunished or is brushed off as "heat of the moment." When leagues, schools, or fans excuse unsportsmanlike conduct, they send the message that winning matters more than character. Over time, this weakens the values that sports are supposed to teach.

This is where adults in sports carry a heavy responsibility.

Athletes, coaches, officials, and public figures are always being watched, whether they realize it or not. Their actions teach lessons long after the game ends.

Talent and championships mean little if the behavior that comes with them encourages disrespect. Parents and teachers, too, play a role by guiding young athletes on how to respond to victory and defeat.

Sports should help young people learn discipline, fairness, and how to handle both victory and defeat. Losing with dignity is just as important as winning with pride. Respecting opponents and officials should never be optional.

If we want school sports to remain safe and meaningful, the example must be set at the top. Children will follow what they see far more than what they are told.

A game may only last an hour, but the behavior young athletes copy from their heroes can stay with them for life.

DPMES extends table tennis legacy with QF finish in 'Palaro'



RICARTE DACLES' FACEBOOK

Aizaack D. Estabillo

Even without a medal finish, the latest national appearance by Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School's table tennis program underscored a tradition that continues to define the school: producing athletes capable of competing on the biggest stage of Philippine school sports.

Representing the National Capital Region in the Elementary Girls' Doubles event at the 2025 Palarong Pambansa, DPMES standouts Alisha Buquid and Mary Angelique Diolola powered their way into the quarterfinals of the weeklong tournament held on May 24-31 in Laoag City.

The duo's campaign came to a close in the quarterfinal round, where they were stopped by a seasoned Western Visayas pairing, ending their bid for a podium finish.

Still, reaching the final eight placed Buquid and Diolola among the country's top elementary level table tennis teams.

For Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, the quarterfinal finish adds to a growing track record of consistent national representation in table tennis.

"Malaking bagay na ito. Ang pag-abot nila sa quarterfinals sa Palarong Pambansa ay malaking karangalan na para sa ating paaralan at rehiyon," said coach Ricarte D. Dacles.

Former DPMES ace is UAAP rookie of the year



THE DAWN

Danica A. Delos Santos

Rhian Angela Encomienda's rise did not stop at the national level. It only widened her stage.

The former standout of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School continues to build an impressive athletic resume after being named Rookie of the Year in Girls' Athletics at the University Athletic Association of the Philippines Season 88.

Now competing for the University of the East Junior Warriors, Encomienda earned the honor following a strong debut season highlighted by a silver medal finish in the javelin throw.

Her UAAP recognition came on the heels of a successful campaign at the Palarong Pambansa last year, where she continued the winning tradition she helped establish during her elementary years at DPMES.

National standard bearer:

Encomienda's bronze boosts DPMES' winning run at 'Palaro'



Encomienda proudly shows her well-deserved bronze medal. RHIAN ENCOMIENDA

Aizaack Noah D. Estabillo

Excellence at the national level has become tradition for Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School. And in 2025, Rhian Angela Encomienda once again ensured that the school's name remained firmly etched on the Palarong Pambansa medal board.

Competing against the country's top young athletes, Encomienda claimed the bronze medal in the Elementary Girls discus throw at the 2025 Palarong Pambansa held from May 24 to 31 in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, continuing DPMES' long-running streak of podium finishes at the national meet.

Against strong contenders from various regions, Encomienda displayed composure and precision inside the throwing circle, delivering a performance that reinforced DPMES' reputation as one of the most consistent producers of national level athletes.

"Hindi lang ito medalya. Patunay ito na kayang-kaya ng mga atletang DPMES na makipagsabayan kapag binigyan ng tamang gabay at tiwala," said coach Victoriano Depiedra Jr.

Encomienda's podium finish was the result of sustained dominance throughout the season. Prior to the national meet, she captured a silver medal at the NCR Palaro after launching the discus to a distance of 27.84 meters.

"Masaya po ako na nakakapag-uwi ako ng medalya para sa ating paaralan. Lalo po akong ginanahan na magsanay pa," she said, dedicating the medal to her school and coach.

Encomienda's success reflects the culture of excellence in sports DPMES has built over the years.

"Pangarap ko lang makapagbigay ng karangalan para sa DPMES. Hindi ko inasahan na mangyayari ito hanggang sa napakataas na level tulad ng Palarong Pambansa," Encomienda added.

Diolola dominates, clinches gold at 4th Iskolar Cup U13 tilt

Danica A. Delos Santos

Mary Angelique Diolola once again proved her dominance as she paddled her way to the championship in the 4th Iskolar Cup 13-under Table Tennis Tournament organized by the UP Diliman Women Table Tennis Team.

Displaying composure and sharp attacks throughout the competition, Diolola secured the gold meda.

She controlled her matches with steady serves and precise returns, capping off her campaign with a strong championship performance.

In the final match, Diolola quickly established control, winning the opening set, with aggressive forehand drives and well-placed serves.

Her opponent attempted to rally in the second set, but Diolola responded with sharp cross-court returns and consistent backhand blocks to maintain her lead.

The DPMESian paddler sealed the title, 15-9, 15-10, by dominating the closing exchanges and forcing errors.



THE VANGUARD
Ashenthea Kaith A. Helonggo

A victory that lasts

A strong and caring sports program gives students structure and direction.

At Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School, sports are not treated as a side activity or a break from schoolwork. They are part of how students grow not just as athletes, but as people.

From an early age, the school's sports program helps children develop strong bodies, clear minds, and healthy social skills. Regular training and organized games keep students active and teach them how to take care of their health. Active children tend to be more energetic and better prepared to face daily challenges.

But the value of sports goes far beyond physical strength. Being an athlete also means learning discipline and responsibility. Training requires commitment. Competition demands self-control. Because of this, many students learn how to manage their time and stay away from harmful habits. Hours spent practicing become hours spent doing something positive, keeping them away from negative influences.

For many DPMES athletes, sports have also opened doors to bigger opportunities. Some students have earned scholarships and gained access to well-known schools after elementary graduation. What begins as talent on the court or field can turn into a chance for better education and a brighter future.

In a time when many young people struggle due to a lack of guidance and opportunity, programs like this matter more than ever.
A strong and caring sports program gives students structure and direction. It shows them that someone believes in their potential.

This is the true meaning of success in school sports. It is not measured by how many trophies are displayed, but by how many lives are shaped for the better and how many futures are given hope.

For this, the DPMES Sports rogram deserves recognition. From the coaches and teachers to the school leaders, parents, and most of all, the student athletes who continue to represent the school with pride.

More than medals, DPMES Sports builds character and that is a victory that lasts far beyond any competition. Long live DPMES Sports!

Good game, well-played

District 4 bows out in quarters after gritty stand against District 2

Aizaack Noah D. Estabillo

The Congressional District 4 (CD4) girls' volleyball team saw its 2025 Palarong Quezon City campaign end in the quarterfinals, but not without a determined fight against a disciplined CD2 side at Esteban Abada Elementary School.

The quarterfinal action in the Girls Elementary division ended in straight sets, 14–25, 17–25, with CD2's early aggression and late-set composure proving decisive.

CD2 set the tone early, racing to a 10–5 lead in the opening frame behind sustained offensive pressure and a steady defensive wall.



Despite the early exit, CD4 put up a big fight against CD2. ELEANOR GUZMAN

CD4 responded with extended rallies and timely attacks to keep the set competitive midway through, but CD2 closed strong to take the opener.

The second set told a more balanced story as CD4 settled into a better rhythm, leaning on improved net combinations and tighter backcourt coverage to keep the score within reach.

Still, CD2 tightened its defense in the closing stretch, pulling away to seal the match and a semifinal berth.

CD4's lineup featured Raedhen Chole Prado, team captain of the Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School Thunderstorm, and Alendrina Canete, both selected to reinforce the district squad alongside players from Betty Go-Belmonte Elementary School.

Prado finished with six points under knockout-round pressure, while Canete added four.

"Ginawa po namin ang lahat hanggang sa huling puntos. Malaking karanasan ito para sa amin bilang koponan," said Prado after the game.

The two DPMES standouts were guided by coach Eleanor B. Guzman.

Former champs make futsal comeback in Liga Eskwela

Ashenthea A. Helonggo

The futsal team of Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School returned to familiar territory this year not chasing past glory but gaining experience against the best young teams in the country's capital region.

DPMES competed in the 2026 edition of the NCR Liga Eskwela Futsal Festival held on January 18 at La Salle Greenhills, representing Quezon City against squads from across the National Capital Region.

The campaign opened with a draw against Valenzuela, setting a competitive tone early.

DPMES then faced Pasig City, where the Pasigueños claimed a 2–0 victory. The team wrapped up its festival run with a narrow 1–0 loss to Mandaluyong.



The DPMES Booters learned a lot in the NCR Liga. ROSALINDA LICARDO

Despite the scorelines, the focus remained on development rather than standings.

The team was led on the court by Ricardo S. Panelo III, Mark Marcoz Corpuz, and Jacob D. Ocon, under the guidance of head coach Carol E. Bartolome and assistant coach Ma. Teresa F. Ong.

"Magandang experience ito para sa amin. Hindi lang kami sumali para manalo, kundi para magkaroon ng karanasan na magsisilbing gabay namin sa mga susunod pang laban," said Panelo III.

Coach Bartolome echoed the same sentiment, emphasizing growth over results.

"Proud kami sa mga players natin. Ang makarating pa lang sa ganitong antas ng kompetisyon ay malaking achievement na para sa team," she said.

For DPMES, the return to the NCR Liga Eskwela carries added meaning as the school once captured the tournament championship in 2017.

School promotes Pinoy games to support students' physical, mental wellness



ANGELA TORRES

Ashenthea Helonggo

Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School is promoting Laro ng Lahi as part of its psychosocial activities to help improve the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of its students.

Traditional Filipino games such as patintero, tumbang preso, and luksong tinik are being integrated into school activities to encourage movement, social interaction, and emotional expression among learners in a safe and enjoyable environment.

Teachers observed that the activities help reduce stress among students and strengthen peer relationships.

The initiative aligns with programs of the Department of Education that promote the use of traditional games and school-based mental health activities under the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act, which emphasizes the importance of psychosocial support in schools.

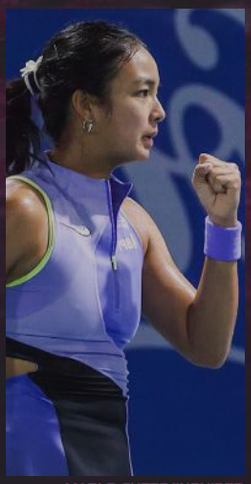
"Kapag naglalaro ang mga bata, mas bukas silang makipag-usap at mas nagiging magaan ang kanilang pakiramdam," said Mrs. Enelda Martinez, guidance counsellor of the school.

She added that combining sports with mental health advocacy allows play to serve as an important tool in supporting the overall development of students.

synergy sports

The five biggest sports stories in PH **Page 16**
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District 4 bows out in Quarterfinals **Page 19**

First-ever WTA tournament in Manila excites DPMESian athletes, students



MARLO CUETO/INQUIRER SPORTS

TABLE TENNIS DYNASTY

Thunderstorm reigns anew at City Meet, marches to NCR Palaro

The DPMES paddlers lived up to their monicker - the Thunderstorm - as they wreaked havoc during the Division Meet. DEPED NCR FACEBOOK PAGE

Jham G. Balitaon

DPMESian athletes and students expressed their excitement as the country prepares to host its first-ever Women's Tennis Association (WTA) tournament.

The WTA 125 tournament, scheduled to be held in Manila this January

DPMESians are looking forward to watching the tournament, particularly with the anticipated participation of Alex Eala, whose breakthrough year has helped fuel renewed interest in the tennis nationwide.

Aizaack Noah D. Estabillo, DPMESian athlete, said hosting a WTA event could help raise awareness and appreciation for the sport among young Filipinos.

In a recent survey conducted among DPMES students, news involving Eala and international tennis ranked among the most significant sports stories of 2025.

Jham G. Balitaon

Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School once again stamped its dominance in Quezon City table tennis after emerging overall champion in the elementary division of the Quezon City Division Athletic Meet 2025.

Representing Congressional District 4, the DPMES Thunderstorm capped a two-day competition with an impressive haul of three gold and three silver medals, reaffirming its status as one of the city's most consistent school-based table tennis programs.

Mary Angelique Diolola led the title run after claiming the gold medal in the girls' singles event.



The DPMES tandem pose with their coach after a game. RICARTE DACLES

The team's dominance continued in the girls' doubles category, where Alisha Buquid and Love Kristine Topular delivered another victory to secure two more gold medals.

DPMES also made its presence felt in the boys' division as Aizaack Noah Estabillo earned a silver medal in the singles event, while the tandem of Jairus Leones and Yohan Topular added two more silver medals in the boys' doubles competition.

With the championship result, DPMES players are set to spearhead Quezon City's table tennis delegation in the upcoming NCR Palaro 2026 scheduled from March 2 to 7.

"Ang panibagong kampeonatong ito ay hindi lamang tagumpay ng mga atleta kundi patunay ng patuloy na paghubog ng DPMES sa mga batang manlalaro na may disiplina, determinasyon, at kakayahang makipagsabayan sa pinakamahuhusay," said Dacles.

TAEKWONDO

Banua racks up podium finishes in back-to-back meets

Ashenthea A. Helonggo

Consistency across multiple competitions signaled Jacob Banua's steady rise in the sport, as the taekwondo jin from Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School secured one gold and two silver medals in separate tournaments held in August.

Banua secured his gold medal in the Poomsae category of the Camanava Age Group Championships and followed this up with two silver medals at the Quezon City Interschool Competition, placing in both the Kyorugi (sparring) and Poomsae categories, adding to DPMES' list of achievements across multiple sports.

ATHLETICS

Salva's silver spin seals Regional spot



JAEROSE CORDOVA

Cassandra M. Lim

Amid a strong showing by young field athletes from Diosdado P. Macapagal Elementary School (DPMES) at the 2025 Quezon City Division Athletic Meet, one name ultimately stood alone on the road to the regional stage.

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SALVA'S SILVER...