



the Kaleidoscope

"More than meets the eye"

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ISSUE

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ARAL program launch transforms learning at GVNHS

■ By Micaella De Castro

Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program was officially launched on September 18, 2025, at Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) to support 170 learners from Grades 7 to 10 who were identified as having reading and comprehension difficulties.

ARAL Program is a nationwide learning intervention under Republic Act No. 12028 that provides free academic support, tutorials, and seminars to help learners improve reading proficiency, comprehension skills, and overall academic performance.

At GVNHS, parents of students who did not pass the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) were contacted to seek consent for their children's participation. School data showed an expected enrollment of 28 learners in Mathematics, 55 in English, and 87 in Filipino.

However, program coordinators reported low attendance as an emerging concern. According to ARAL coordinator Jane A. Liccod, parental involvement plays a key role in sustaining the program's success.

"Support coming from parents is highly encouraged for the program to work because it will not succeed if only teachers and students are participating," Liccod said.

Teachers noted that some learners hesitate to attend due to fatigue,

hunger, or fear of embarrassment. To address this, instructors sometimes conduct one-on-one remedial sessions in the faculty room for students who are uncomfortable joining group tutorials.

Remedial instruction at GVNHS is held twice a week after regular class hours to avoid disrupting academic schedules. Each session allocates one hour for English, Filipino, and Mathematics.

The school has also strengthened implementation through student involvement. Members of the Grade 12 Supreme Secondary Learner Government (SSLG) and other volunteers assist learners during sessions, particularly when teachers attend seminars or official duties.

School officials said the ARAL Program is part of ongoing efforts to address learning gaps and reinforce foundational skills among junior high school learners.

The program will continue throughout the school year, with coordinators monitoring attendance and progress to improve participation and effectiveness. ■

PATHWAY TO PROGRESS

From Regional Champs to National Contenders: GVNHS Robotics Team Advances

■ By Ariane Apolpersh Danga

Outperforming top robotics entries from across the Cordillera, Guisad Valley National High School team clinched first place at the Regional Science and Technology Fair (RSTF), securing a spot in the 2026 National Science and Technology Fair.

Victory was achieved during the November 25–26, 2025 competition at the PFVR Gymnasium in Baguio City, where the GVNHS Robotics Team—Daisy G. Tarnate, Rey Mark T. Navarro, and Vanhertzel A. Bernabe—emerged on top with their research project, "TERRASCANN: An IoT-Based System in Detecting NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium), pH, and Soil Moisture."

The team's innovation impressed judges for its potential to modernize soil testing and promote smarter agricultural practices, earning GVNHS

the right to represent the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) at the national level.

Navarro credited the team's success to perseverance and strong support. "The support of our coach, teachers, classmates, and schoolmates, together with our effort, pushed us to overcome every challenge in the competition," he said, adding that they are now preparing intensively for nationals.

Bernabe described the journey as both demanding and meaningful. "The road was bumpy, but with everyone's help, we were able to get through the challenges," he shared.

For Tarnate, the regional triumph marked a major milestone, especially as it will be her first time competing at the national level. She expressed gratitude to their research advisers, Jerry Manogan, who believed in the team despite their limited background in robotics, and Jared Ang, whose technical expertise guided them through long hours of experimentation and development.

She also emphasized that teamwork played a crucial role in their victory, citing the group's strong bond and shared commitment to the project.

GVNHS also made its mark in the individual category as Floyd Amber S. Aguilar placed fourth with his project, "RAIN MAKER: Robotic Ability to Inform Responders and Operate a Mechanism to Effectively Reduce Forest Fires." Aguilar said that while he felt nervous, engaging with fellow contestants and mentors made the competition rewarding.

With its regional championship, GVNHS not only reclaimed a place on the national science fair stage but also reinforced the Cordillera's growing competitiveness in robotics and youth-led innovation. ■





Growth, Unity, and Pride Shine at GVNHS Legislation Day

■ By Janice Aguindang

ONE GVNHS. Highlighting unity and perseverance, Principal Vicente addresses the GVNHS community during the Legislation Day celebration.

Photo by Trixie Hera Dulay

Pride, unity, and creativity filled the covered court of Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) as students, teachers, visitors, and partner institutions gathered on January 30 for the school's Legislation Day celebration. Anchored on the theme "Celebrating Growth, Unity, and Achievement," the event recognized collective progress and outstanding contributions within the school community.

School Principal Edward C. Vicente delivered a motivational message highlighting the importance of unity, perseverance, and shared responsibility in shaping learners into responsible and capable individuals. The program featured various performances, including a song and creative storytelling presentation by Grade 11 – Flexibility that narrated the school's history and journey, reflecting both artistic skill and pride in the Guisad Valley community.

Guest speaker Elmira Dela-Cruz inspired the audience as she shared her life experiences and emphasized the value of education in overcoming challenges. Drawing from her journey as a feature designer in Manila, her work exposure in Pampanga, and her experience as a hairstylist in the Middle East, she reminded students that "dreams do not expire" and that "age is just a number." Dela-Cruz encouraged learners to complete their education before

pursuing work abroad, stressing that education goes beyond earning a diploma and serves as a foundation for discovering one's potential and building lasting dreams. She also urged teachers to continue guiding and inspiring students. Recognition followed as certificates of recognition and appreciation were awarded to deserving individuals, particularly the school's partners, in acknowledgment

of their continued support for the institution. The celebration concluded with energetic performances by the GVNHS Dancesport Team, who showcased various ballroom dances including the Slow Waltz, Rumba, Tango, Cha-cha, Quickstep, and Jive. This was followed by a cultural dance from Kalinga Province, where teachers, visitors, and even the principal joined the performers, symbolizing unity and cultural pride. ■

GVNHS Unites for a VAW-Free Philippines

■ By Tyra Rain Tapang

Violence against women reflects more than individual acts of abuse—it exposes deep-rooted gender inequality that continues to affect society. Through the 18-Day Campaign to End Violence Against Women (VAW), Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) stood firm in advocating women's rights and gender equality. Participating under the theme "UNiTed for a VAW-free Philippines: Advancing Equality, Empowering Women," the school

joined the nationwide campaign led by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) from November 25 to December 12, 2025, aligned with the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Students, teachers, and staff took part in various activities, including banner displays and a simple program. Another highlighted activity under the campaign was the photo challenge (tableau), which focused on advocacy themes such as Respect Women's Rights, Safe

Spaces, Empowering Women, Support Systems, Breaking the Silence, Gender Equality, and Ending Stereotypes. Winners were recognized across grade levels, with section Integrity emerging as the champion for Grades 7–8, Section Zeal taking the top spot for Grades 9–10, and Spontaneity winning for Grades 11–12. As the campaign concluded on December 12, 2025, faculty members and non-teaching staff gathered at the school grounds for a solidarity photo,

showcasing both their campaign shirts and unwavering support for a VAW-free society. The SSLG officers actively assisted in stage preparation and engagement designs, including a photo booth, to encourage wider participation. "Iyaman to all who participated in and supported the 18-Day Campaign to End Violence Against Women. Thank you for your commitment and solidarity," said Ms. Carol Anguben, teacher-in-charge of the VAW campaign. ■



ASSESSING PATHS. National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE), an aptitude test for grade 10 students, guides them to discover their skills for a great path leading to a successful future.

Photo by Trixie Hera Dulay

GVNHS Grade 10s Take NCAE Amid Challenges, Step Closer to Senior High

■ By Janice Aguindang

GVNHS Grade 10 students faced a week of tests, determination, and problem-solving as they completed the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE), bringing them one step closer to Senior High. From January 13 to the morning of January 16, students filled the school's three computer labs, divided into two sessions of 40 examinees each. While 257 learners were expected to take the test, some were absent due to accidents and other unforeseen circumstances. The 200-item examination tested students' skills, knowledge, and reasoning under time pressure, and technical glitches added to the challenge. Some had to repeat their second attempt, causing delays, while others struggled to complete the timed items. Students were instructed to restart and log in again, and the Division office promptly resolved issues to ensure smooth continuation. Those experiencing difficulties

received immediate assistance from test administrators, according to Guidance Counselor Maribel Belgica. "We conduct the NCAE to help students make wise decisions in choosing the course that they will take," Belgica said, emphasizing the test's role in guiding learners toward their academic and career paths. A survey among the examinees revealed that many struggled particularly with Abstract Reasoning. Despite these hurdles, students shared that the NCAE helped them better understand their strengths and consider future career options thoughtfully. The successful administration of the NCAE at GVNHS underscores the school's commitment to supporting students as they transition to Senior High. With guidance, technical support, and perseverance, Grade 10 learners at GVNHS are taking concrete steps toward informed academic and career decisions. ■

Community Building Towards the Future: GVNHS Inducts New Leaders

■ By Geraldine D. Paragas

"Community Building Towards the Future" guided the Mass Induction and Turnover Program of Guisad Valley National High School on August 29, 2025, at the school's covered court, emphasizing the role of student leaders in promoting unity, service, and accountability. Officers from the Supreme Student Learner Government (SSLG), Youth Environment in Schools–Organization (YES-O), Journalism clubs, Barkada Kontra Droga (BKD), Homeroom and Classroom Presidents, and the Faculty and Employees Association

(FEA) were formally inducted. Officers from the School Parent Teachers Association (SPTA) were also recognized. Head Teacher Agustin S. Padyas reminded the new leaders that they serve as bridges between students and staff. "Lead with unity, integrity, and accountability. Your actions today shape the future of our school and our community," he said. Barangay Captain Janet C. Tiamzon of Andres Bonifacio highlighted the importance of collaboration between communities and schools in cultivating service-oriented leaders.

The Presentation of Officers, Oath of Office, and Turnover of the Key of Responsibility symbolized continuity, trust, and dedication to service. Incoming officers pledged to uphold school values and continue the legacy of effective leadership. The program concluded with a call for cooperation among all school stakeholders, ensuring that GVNHS continues to nurture leaders who serve both their school and their community. ■



SERVICE-ORIENTED. With the symbolic Key of Responsibility in hand, our new batch of officers steps forward—ready to uphold duty, lead with integrity, and serve with honor.

Photo by Tyra Rain Tapang



FEARLESS BRAVERY. In the face of tremors, students showed courage and unity — safely evacuated and stronger together.
Photo by Trixie Hera Dulay

Moments of Fear, Lessons in Safety: GVNHS Students Face Baguio Earthquake

■ By Geraldine Paragas

What began as an ordinary school morning quickly turned tense when a magnitude 4.4 earthquake jolted Baguio City and nearby provinces around 10:30 a.m. on October 9, 2025, sending students of Guisad Valley National High School under their desks and into safety.

Inside classrooms, learners immediately performed the “Duck, Cover, and Hold” procedure as the ground shook. Some students clutched their bags, others reached for classmates, but teachers’ steady instructions helped keep panic from spreading.

After the tremor subsided, teachers and school staff calmly guided students out of the buildings and toward the Bonifacio Elementary School grounds. There, students waited in groups, checking on one another while teachers accounted for everyone.

According to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS), the quake had a

magnitude of 4.4 and an epicenter near Pugo, La Union, about 20 kilometers from Baguio City. The shallow earthquake was felt across the Cordillera region.

Classes were not resumed following the evacuation. Instead, students remained under supervision as parents and guardians arrived to fetch them, some embracing their children upon seeing them safe.

The City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (CDRRMC) reported that no injuries or major damages were recorded in Baguio City. Still, several schools, including GVNHS, suspended classes as a precaution.

For many students, the experience was both frightening and unforgettable—a reminder that in a city near the Philippine Fault Zone, preparedness can make the difference between panic and protection.■

School Bolsters Safety Measures After October Earthquake

■ By Zane Samoranos

In response to the magnitude 4.8 earthquake that jolted Northern Luzon in October, Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) ordered hard hats in the third week of December 2025 to strengthen disaster preparedness and protect students during future seismic events.

The earthquake, with its epicenter near Pugo, La Union, was strongly felt in Baguio City and nearby areas, prompting school officials to take steps to improve safety during possible future seismic events.

According to School Disaster Risk Management Coordinator Reid Kurt

Fagyan, the school decided to procure the protective gear even without a formal directive from the Department of Education or local government units, citing the need to act quickly to protect learners.

The hard hats will be used during earthquake drills and emergency situations to reduce the risk of head injuries, especially in classrooms with overhead fixtures and crowded spaces.

School administrators said the initiative reflects GVNHS’s continuing efforts to improve campus safety and ensure that students are better equipped in the event of another earthquake.■

A Day for the Educators: Honoring Teachers on World Teachers’ Day

■ By Geraldine Paragas



FROM THE HEART. With handmade flowers and heartfelt gestures, students show their deep appreciation for their teachers—celebrating the guidance, patience, and inspiration that shape their journey.
Photo by Tyra Rain Tapang

“A Day for the Educators” highlighted the dedication, patience, and impact of teachers during Guisad Valley National High School’s World Teachers’ Day celebration on October 2, 2025. The event showcased the vital role educators play in shaping students’ lives.

Spearheaded by the Supreme Student Learner Government (SSLG) and hosted by SSLG President Cloe M. Bie, the program opened with a cultural

and community dance performed by students and teachers, symbolizing unity and appreciation.

Students expressed gratitude through a gift-giving segment, presenting flowers, chocolates, letters, and even fresh produce, including fruits, vegetables, and a live fish. Laughter filled the school as teachers joined fun games, giving them a chance to relax after months of dedication.

A highlight was the “Teacher for a Day” activity, where students assumed

the roles of their teachers, leading lessons and managing classes. “I never realized how much work goes into teaching,” said Grade 10 student Maria Santos. “It made me appreciate my teachers even more.”

The program concluded with warm applause and a call for continued collaboration among students and staff, reminding everyone that behind every great student stands a dedicated teacher.■

SPTA Turns Over 200 Armchairs to GVNHS Students

■ By Micaella De Castro

The School Parent-Teacher Association of Guisad Valley National High School turned over 200 new armchairs to learners near the end of School Year 2024–2025, addressing the long-standing shortage of usable classroom seats.

The project prioritized classrooms with broken or incomplete armchairs, benefiting students who had been sharing seats or using damaged furniture. The distribution aimed to improve daily classroom conditions and ensure learners have proper seating during lessons.

SPTA President Christina S. Tangkay stressed that providing adequate furniture is essential to effective learning, noting that the initiative supports the association’s goal of helping improve the quality of education in the school.

With the support of the SPTA, the provision of new armchairs is expected to create a more conducive learning environment for GVians, reflecting the school community’s shared commitment to students’ comfort and academic success.■



ROOTS AND RHYTHM. With vibrant steps and traditional attire, GVNHS students celebrate Cordilleran heritage through dance at the IPED Exhibit.
Photo by Nikki Licaros

IPED Exhibit Brings Indigenous Traditions to Life at GVNHS

■ By Janice Aguidang

A vibrant showcase of culture and creativity filled Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) on October 21–22, 2025, as students presented their works for the Indigenous People’s Education (IPED) Exhibit at the school’s open gym.

Held under the theme “Wearing Culture, Enriching Future: Empowering Indigenous Communities as Bedrock of Sustainable Development,” the exhibit featured posters, photo essays, collages, and models created through integrated performance tasks. The event highlighted the role of Indigenous knowledge in shaping education, identity, and sustainable development.

Junior and Senior High School students actively participated, while Grade 12 UCSP students and SSLG members assisted in organizing the program. Visitors experienced traditional Cordillera attire, Indigenous music, and

a reflection board where students shared insights about the value of preserving cultural heritage.

Juvilyn Beray, IPED program proponent, said the exhibit is more than an academic requirement. “The exhibit allows students to understand and appreciate Indigenous culture and knowledge as an essential part of education. It is not only an opportunity for creative expression but also a way to instill respect and pride for the rich traditions of our Indigenous communities,” she explained.

Through the exhibit, students were able to showcase their academic outputs while learning to value Indigenous heritage as a living legacy that continues to influence education and community development.■



Youth Leaders Highlight Anti-Bullying, Safe Spaces at Division Convergence

■ By Geraldine D. Paragas

Standing up against bullying and building safer schools took center stage as student leaders gathered for the Division Learners’ Convergence 2025, a platform that emphasized youth empowerment, advocacy, and responsible leadership.

The Supreme Secondary Learner Government (SSLG) of Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) participated in the convergence on September 27, 2025 at Ion Hotel, Baguio City, joining student leaders, advisers, and education officials from across the division.

Discussions during the event focused on strengthening student leadership and promoting safe, inclusive learning environments where learners’ voices are heard and protected.

One of the highlights of the program was a talk by Dr. Ava Angeli Bustillo titled “Voice, Values, and Action: Mobilizing Student Leaders Against Bullying,” which called on student leaders to take an active role in preventing bullying and defending fellow learners.

The convergence also featured project pitching and the awarding of Linggo ng Kabataan winners, recognizing youth-led initiatives that promote positive change in schools and communities.

In his message, Hon. Van Dicang emphasized the responsibility of young leaders, saying, “You are not powerless, you are not voiceless. Each of you has the power to stand up and speak up to protect one another.”

Representing GVNHS, SSLG Vice President Geraldine D. Paragas, Secretary Tyra Rain F. Tapang, Auditor Jireh Emmanuel A. Dolina, and Grade 12 STEM Representative Ariane Apolpersh B. Danga, led by SSLG President Cloc M. Bie, presented a project proposal titled LakBayanihan. The proposal highlighted the importance of safe spaces in schools and ensuring that students arrive at school and return home safely.

The participation of the GVNHS SSLG reflects the organization’s continued commitment to student representation, responsible leadership, and the promotion of a safe learning environment for all learners.■

When Teachers Rise, Education Soars

■ By Dharylle R. Agcarao

The Department of Education (DepEd) has announced a major wave of teacher promotions following years of stagnation, a move expected to benefit thousands of public school educators nationwide.

“This budget allows us to promote over 100,000 public school teachers—a milestone that has never happened before,” Education Secretary Sonny Angara said, referring to DepEd’s record-high budget allocation for 2026. With the increase, around 100,000 teachers are expected to receive promotions.

The initiative is being implemented under the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) system, which aims to address long-standing promotion bottlenecks and provide teachers with clearer pathways

for professional growth. DepEd officials said the system is intended to strengthen teacher welfare and, ultimately, improve learning outcomes across the country.

In the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), 8,811 public school teachers are set to be promoted, including 1,180 from Baguio City. Among them are 22 school personnel from Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS).

Public school teachers have long been considered among the country’s most undercompensated professionals despite their heavy workload and crucial role in shaping the nation’s youth. For years, many educators faced limited opportunities for advancement, with salaries that often failed to match their responsibilities.

The latest round of promotions marks a significant shift. After years of modest pay and slow career movement, teachers are now seeing recognition translated into concrete action. Education officials say the unprecedented scale of advancement reflects a renewed commitment to restoring dignity to the profession and reinforcing the role of teachers as pillars of national development.

As DepEd rolls out the expanded promotion program nationwide, thousands of educators are expected to benefit from long-awaited career progression—signaling what the department calls a milestone moment for Philippine education.■



“Project INGA” Champions Deaf Awareness, Inclusion

■ By Bea Tamlayan

Guisad Valley National High School formally joined National Deaf Awareness Week for the first time on November 19, 2025, launching “Project INGA,” a school-wide initiative promoting inclusion, respect, and awareness for learners with hearing disabilities.

The activity was conducted during RHGP time across all grade levels, introducing participants to basic Filipino Sign Language (FSL), including numbers one to ten and the alphabet from A to Z, to provide simple ways of communicating with Deaf individuals.

“INGA,” a Kankanaey word meaning “ears,” symbolized listening, understanding, and awareness of those who communicate differently.

The program supports Republic Act No. 11650, the Inclusive Education Act,

and Republic Act No. 11106, the Filipino Sign Language Act, and follows a DepEd order requiring schools to submit reports on sign language education efforts.

The initiative was made possible through the collaboration of Ma’am Cathy Salming, Ma’am Mary Jane Ganaden, class advisers, and class leaders. Teachers trained class leaders, who later taught their classmates during RHGP time.

Ma’am Mary Jane Ganaden emphasized that Deaf individuals have the right to communicate and deserve acceptance in the community, noting that awareness builds respect and inclusion.

Through Project INGA, the school strengthened awareness of the Deaf community while promoting a more inclusive school environment.■

Young Reporters Explore, Learn, and Excel at District VIII Journalism Workshop

■ By Bea Tamlayan

Eager to tell stories that matter, student journalists from District VIII gathered at Lucban Elementary School to sharpen their craft, explore new skills, and discover the power of responsible reporting during the District 8 Journalism Training Seminar-Workshop. The two-day event, held on December 6 and 13, 2025, energized participants with hands-on activities, interactive lectures, and expert guidance from industry professionals.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the journalistic capabilities of school paper staff and advisers, preparing students for future competitions and real-world reporting challenges while fostering confidence and creativity.

Representatives from various schools in District VIII, including

Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS), participated in sessions covering news writing, photojournalism, editorial cartooning, and other campus journalism categories, allowing young reporters to apply practical skills in a supportive learning environment.

Featured speakers included Aldwin Quitasol, editorial staff of Northern Dispatch, and Raymond Sakiwat, journalist and marketing professional, who shared insights from their careers and encouraged students to pursue excellence in journalism.

Participants expressed that the seminar not only sharpened their technical abilities but also inspired them to step out of their comfort zones. Frexie Sales of GVNHS reflected, “Hindi lang dapat tayo nag-i-stay sa kung anong category ang kaya natin, dapat nag-e-

explore tayo.” Her statement captured the workshop’s mission: to encourage young journalists to experiment, take risks, and continuously grow their potential.

Organizers credited the success of the event to the collaboration of school paper advisers, facilitators, and committee members, whose guidance ensured a productive and engaging learning atmosphere.

By the end of the workshop, participants left not only with enhanced journalistic skills but also a renewed sense of purpose—ready to tell meaningful stories, hold truth to light, and make their voices heard in their schools and communities.■



Severe Education Disruption in Sudan

■ By Tyra Rain Tapang

Over 8 million school-age children in Sudan remain out of school as ongoing civil war continues to disrupt education, according to humanitarian groups.

Conflict that began in April 2023 between Sudanese Armed Forces and paramilitary groups has caused widespread violence and damage to public services, including schools. Continued fighting has forced millions of children to stop attending school.

Reports show Sudanese children have missed around 500 days of learning since fighting began, making education disruption one of longest worldwide, even longer than school closures during COVID-19.

Conditions remain critical in several areas. In North Darfur, only about 3 percent of schools remain open, while many buildings have been damaged, shut down, or used as shelters for displaced families. Across Sudan, many schools remain destroyed or unusable.

Crisis has also affected teachers and education services. Many teachers have not received regular pay, forcing many to stop teaching. Learning materials and school supplies also remain limited due to insecurity and lack of funds.

Humanitarian groups warn prolonged school closures may result in a “lost generation,” as missed years of learning can reduce future chances. Children without schooling also face higher risks of child labor, armed recruitment, and long-term poverty.

Organizations such as UNICEF and Save Children have called for urgent international support to protect children’s right to learn. Appeals include safe learning spaces, teacher support, and expanded aid for affected families.

Education disruption in Sudan forms part of a wider humanitarian crisis marked by displacement, hunger, and risks to child safety. Aid agencies continue to stress importance of protecting education during armed conflict to secure children’s future.■



FUTURE IN FOCUS. Exploring opportunities, building connections, and shaping their future—students actively engage in the career fair with curiosity and ambition.
Photo from DepEd Tayo - Youth Formation

GVians Discover College Paths and Opportunities at Career Fair

■ By Geraldine D. Paragas

Eager to plan their futures, students of Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) flocked to the Career Fair and Expo 2025 at the PFVR Gymnasium on August 2, gaining firsthand insights into colleges, courses, and scholarship opportunities.

The event offered learners a chance to explore a wide range of academic and career paths, helping them make informed decisions about life after high school. Students discovered that many institutions provide scholarships or discounts for academic excellence, involvement in cultural or performing arts programs, athletic achievements, and other accomplishments.

Representatives from numerous schools and universities were on hand, including De La Salle Araneta University, University of Santo Tomas,

Adamson University, iACADEMY, Southville International School and Colleges, Informatics, Ausphin International Institute, University of the Cordilleras, Aeronautical & Technological College, University of the East, Thames International, and Mol Magsaysay Maritime Academy.

Participants received guidance on application procedures, course offerings, and campus life, while also learning practical tips on preparing for college admissions and scholarships.

For GVians, the Career Fair and Expo was more than just an informational event—it was an opportunity to visualize their goals, ask questions directly to school representatives, and take the first steps toward shaping their future careers.■

Promoted but Not Proficient: Student Skills Plunge

■ By Bea Tamlayan

Only 30.52 percent of Grade 3 learners met proficiency standards—and by Grade 12, that number dropped to just 0.47 percent, according to data released by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2).

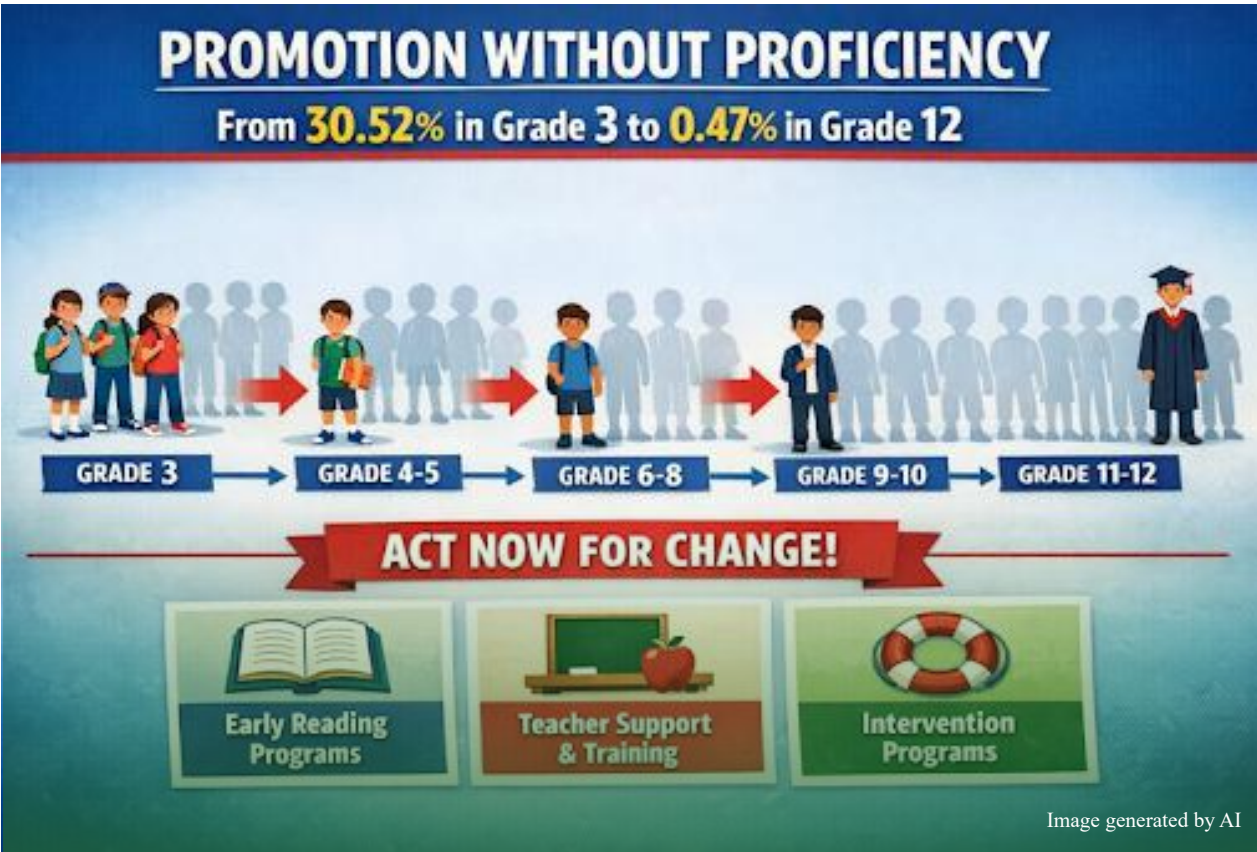
The review of standardized test results shows a steep decline in learning proficiency from elementary to senior high school.

EDCOM 2 reported that nearly seven in ten Grade 3 learners were not proficient, struggling with basic reading and numeracy skills. By Grade 6, results from the 2024 National Achievement Test showed proficiency falling to 19.56 percent, meaning only one in five students met competency standards.

The crisis worsens in high school. Only 1.36 percent of Grade 10 students and 0.47 percent of Grade 12 students were found proficient—equivalent to just 14 in every 1,000 Grade 10 learners and four in every 1,000 senior high students demonstrating expected problem-solving and communication skills.

EDCOM 2 co-chair Senator Bam Aquino said the findings “can no longer be ignored,” stressing that long-standing shortages in learning resources have contributed to poor performance.

Education advocates urged urgent reforms focused on early reading, teacher support, and continuous learner intervention, warning that promotion without mastery widens learning gaps.■



Youth Take the Lead in Climate Governance at CTC 3.0

■ By Geraldine D. Paragas

Stepping up to drive change, student leaders from Guisad Valley National High School showcased their commitment to environmental stewardship and climate action during the Change the Current 3.0 (CTC 3.0) School-led Climate Governance Workshop, turning knowledge into concrete initiatives for their school and community.

The three-day workshop, held on January 8–10, 2026, at the Schools Division Office of Baguio City, brought together student leaders from across

the region to strengthen their skills in climate governance, leadership, and environmental advocacy.

Representing the school were Cloe M. Bie, President of the Supreme Student Learner Government (SSLG); Geraldine D. Paragas, SSLG Vice President; Daisy G. Tarnate, President of the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O); and Remp Rody P. Esteban, YES-O Vice President.

Through interactive discussions, leadership trainings, and collaborative activities, participants developed climate

action and governance project proposals, shared their learnings with fellow student organizations, and submitted resolutions supporting their initiatives—turning ideas into action.

The workshop was organized by Save Philippine Seas, with support from Accenture, UNICEF Philippines, and the Department of Education – Youth Formation Division (DepEd-YFD), in partnership with the Schools Division Office of Baguio City.

Reflecting on the experience, Cloe M. Bie shared, “I realized that being

part of the change is more important than merely pointing out the problem. The world is changing, and if we don’t take action, nothing will happen. There is a reason why we are here—we can be the hope, and we can be the change.”

The event highlighted how student governments and school organizations can drive meaningful climate action, inspire their peers, and take the lead in addressing pressing environmental challenges.■



JOURNALISM IN MOTION. From classroom to newsroom: District VIII student journalists step out of their comfort zones to craft stories that matter.

Photo by Tyra Rain Tapang

Young Reporters Explore, Learn, and Excel at District VIII Journalism Workshop

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EDITORIAL



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Big Budget for Big Change?

the Kaleidoscope

“More than meets the eye”

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Department of Education’s proposed ₱1.015-trillion budget for 2026, the largest in the nation’s history, has raised renewed expectations for meaningful reform in Philippine education because it directly targets long-standing structural and learning crises identified in both national and international assessments, particularly the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), and DepEd’s own National Achievement Test (NAT). For more than a decade, the Philippine education system has struggled with overcrowded classrooms, insufficient learning materials, and persistent learning gaps, problems that were further exposed and worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented allocation suggests that education is finally being treated as a national priority rather than a secondary concern.

Overcrowded classrooms is well documented by the Department of Education (DepEd) itself. Based on DepEd data and congressional briefings, the country faces a classroom backlog of over 165,000 classrooms, a problem that has accumulated over many years due to population growth and limited infrastructure investment. As a result, many public schools operate on double or triple shifts, with 50 to 70 students packed into a single classroom, far exceeding the ideal class size of 35 to 40 learners. Such congestion reduces actual teaching time, limits teacher-student interaction, and weakens learning outcomes. At the same time, Commission on Audit (COA) reports and DepEd records have repeatedly flagged shortages and delayed delivery of textbooks, armchairs, and learning modules, especially in remote and urban poor schools, forcing teachers to rely on photocopied materials or purchase supplies using personal funds.

These material shortages contribute directly to persistent learning gaps, which are clearly reflected in formal assessments. In PISA 2018 and PISA 2022, Filipino students ranked near the bottom among participating countries in reading, mathematics, and science, with many unable to comprehend basic texts or solve simple math problems. The SEA-PLM 2019 assessment further showed that a large proportion of Grade 5 learners failed to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and numeracy.

Meanwhile, DepEd’s National Achievement Test (NAT) results over the years reveal consistently low mastery levels in core subjects. These weaknesses were intensified by pandemic-related school closures, which caused learning loss, especially among students who lacked access to gadgets, stable internet, or learning support at home.

Senator Bam Aquino, chair of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, described the proposed budget as a “fresh start” because it goes beyond short-term remedies and allocates substantial funding to programs designed to

address these long-documented weaknesses. The budget prioritizes the Basic Education Facilities Fund (BEFF) to accelerate classroom construction and repair, the DepEd Computerization Program (DCP) to provide laptops, tablets, smart TVs, and internet connectivity to public schools, and the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP), which DepEd monitoring reports show has helped improve attendance, attentiveness, and learning readiness among undernourished students.

In addition, the proposal supports the hiring of more teachers, guidance counselors, and mental health professionals, responding to DepEd data indicating teacher shortages and a rise in learner anxiety, disengagement, and behavioral issues following the pandemic. These measures address urgent needs by strengthening both the physical learning environment and the academic and emotional support systems in schools.

However, history reminds us that large budgets alone do not guarantee reform. Previous COA audit reports have cited delayed classroom projects, underutilized funds, and procurement inefficiencies, where approved budgets failed to translate into completed facilities or timely delivery of materials. In some cases, classroom construction projects remained unfinished for years due to weak monitoring, poor coordination, or administrative bottlenecks. These experiences show that effective implementation, transparency, and accountability matter as much as funding size.

Still, a massive education budget can become a powerful instrument for breaking cycles of poor literacy, poverty, and limited opportunity if managed responsibly. When funds are used transparently to build classrooms, provide learning tools, support teachers, and care for learners’ well-being, education becomes a true pathway to empowerment. With strong oversight and a genuine focus on students’ needs, this historic investment carries real hope that this time, a big budget will finally lead to a big and lasting change for Filipino learners. ■



WISDOM WELL

AGAPAI:
Are We Ready?

■ Ariane Danga

Another learning modality has entered the national spotlight—another promise of progress in Philippine education. But beneath the excitement lies a question that refuses to be ignored: will this innovation truly uplift our classrooms, or will it simply decorate a system that is already struggling?

Recently, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. approved the AGAPAI project, an initiative that highlights the use of artificial intelligence in learning. It sounds futuristic. It sounds hopeful. Yet for many students and teachers, it sounds frighteningly premature.

I am a Grade 12 student. Inside my classroom are classmates who still struggle to read, write, and comprehend even the simplest discussions. And yet they are now expected to shift into AI-assisted learning. Our teachers, many of whom continue to rely on manila paper because of limited resources, are suddenly expected to integrate advanced technology into everyday instruction. Are we truly ready for this leap, or are we being pushed toward another educational experiment doomed by neglect?

Statistics reveal a reality far removed from digital dreams. The Philippine Statistics Authority reports that around 18.9 million Filipinos in junior and senior high school are functionally illiterate. The Department of Information and Communications Technology, meanwhile, notes that nearly 12,000 public schools nationwide still lack internet access as of mid-2025. These numbers are not minor setbacks; they are warning signs.

Even at home, the struggle continues. According to the PSA, only about 48.8 percent of Philippine households have internet access. This means that more than half of Filipino families remain disconnected in a time when education increasingly depends on connection. To push AI-driven programs without first repairing these fractures is not progress—it is pretense.

Innovation should not outrun preparation. Skipping steps does not strengthen education; it widens the gaps within it. Before introducing intelligence into our machines, we must restore it in our system. Build the infrastructure. Equip the teachers. Reach the struggling readers. Provide the devices. Only then can projects like AGAPAI become bridges instead of barriers.

Because the real question is not whether our education system is modern enough for AI. It is whether it is humane enough to leave no learner behind.■



Letter to the Editor



Dear Editor,

I am writing as a concerned student regarding the condition of public school facilities in Baguio City. Many schools continue to face problems such as aging buildings, overcrowded spaces, and limited facilities that struggle to meet the daily needs of learners.

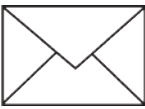
Beyond broken chairs or old classrooms, some schools also lack reliable access to clean water and well-maintained toilets. In certain campuses, restrooms have irregular water supply or are insufficient for the number of students. These may seem small, but they greatly affect students’ health, dignity, and ability to focus in school.

A school should be a safe and supportive place. When facilities are unsafe or basic necessities are lacking, learning becomes more difficult and students’ well-being is put at risk. A safe school environment is not a privilege—it is a basic right.

I respectfully urge concerned authorities and school leaders to prioritize regular inspections, repairs, and stronger support for public school facilities, including water and sanitation systems. Students deserve environments that truly support their learning, health, and dignity.

Respectfully,
CJ

Letter to the Editor



Dear CJ,

The concerns you presented are valid and aligned with the Department of Education’s commitment to ensuring a safe, inclusive, and learner-centered environment. Adequate school facilities, including access to clean water, proper sanitation, and structurally sound classrooms, are indeed essential components of basic quality education.

Persistent issues such as overcrowding, deteriorating infrastructure, and insufficient water and sanitation facilities does pose risks to learners’ health, safety, and overall well-being and these conditions may hinder effective teaching and learning, and therefore require immediate and sustained attention.

As a student publication, we support initiatives that uphold learners’ rights and welfare. We respectfully call on concerned authorities and school administrators to strengthen the implementation of regular facility inspections, preventive maintenance, and resource allocation in accordance with existing DepEd policies and standards.

Ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment is a shared responsibility and a fundamental right of every learner. Addressing these concerns is important in promoting quality, accessible, and equitable education.

Sincerely,
The Kaleidoscope



ENVISAGE

Where Did the Cheers Go?

■ Geraldine Paragas

Do you remember the thrill of cheering at school events? The laughter that echoed, the drums that beat in rhythm with your heartbeat, the joy of performing for friends and classmates? Where did that spirit go? When did the cheers disappear?

Guisad Valley National High School once thrived on life, laughter, and learning through action. Talent shows revealed hidden skills. Pageants showcased confidence and creativity. Clubs nurtured passions, built leadership, and forged friendships. UNESCO reminds us: extra-curricular activities cultivate resilience, cooperation, and values that classrooms alone cannot teach.

Today, however, the halls are quieter, the cheers softer, the friendships colder. Winning has replaced teamwork, pride has replaced patience, rivalry has replaced respect. Students who once celebrated each other now see classmates as obstacles. Effort is ignored. Character is overshadowed. The heart of extra-curricular participation—the joy of learning, the warmth of support—is fading.

Yet hope lingers. Students can cheer again, collaborate again, and grow together again. Winning does not have to wound; success can inspire. A recent Student Council survey revealed 78% of participants felt more confident and connected when teamwork and encouragement came before trophies and titles. Proof exists that values-driven participation strengthens both skill and spirit.

It is time to reclaim our school’s soul. Let the laughter return. Let the applause ring. Let pride be paired with compassion, effort with encouragement, and achievement with humility. Let extra-curricular activities teach what truly matters: character, joy, and community.

Because a school that celebrates together, competes with heart, and nurtures respect is a school where students do more than win—they flourish.■



REAL TALK

AI Dependency:
A Major Setback in Disguise

■ Dharylle Agcarao

“Humanize this text”—a phrase many students now type into AI prompts when asked to write essays. It sounds simple, but what does it cost us? Are we still capable of doing our work without a machine doing it for us?

Artificial Intelligence has undeniably transformed the way we learn. Platforms like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Cici can solve equations, generate essays, and even summarize research. For teachers, AI can lighten the workload; for students, it promises efficiency and instant help. Used responsibly, it is a powerful tool. But over-reliance is becoming a serious problem.

A 2023 Forbes study found that 43% of students admitted using AI to complete schoolwork. Many rely on it to meet deadlines and produce polished outputs without truly engaging with the

material. The result? A growing number of learners risk losing critical thinking skills, creativity, and confidence—abilities that no AI can replicate.

Take Frances, a high school student, for example. She turned in a flawless research paper using AI. Her grade was high, but she struggled to answer follow-up questions in class and could barely recall the concepts she “submitted.” Meanwhile, her classmate Paolo, who drafted his paper independently and sought guidance from teachers, not only performed well academically but also gained confidence and deeper understanding. This contrast shows that machines cannot replace the thinking and creativity that grow from our own efforts.

AI can be helpful—personalized study tools, instant feedback, and access to information are undeniable benefits. But when it becomes a crutch,

it does more harm than good. Students must recognize their limitations and take responsibility for learning, using technology as a support, not a substitute. Developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and originality is an investment that pays off far beyond grades.

Ultimately, it comes down to balance. AI should assist, not dominate our learning. By being mindful of when and how we use it, we preserve our ability to think independently, express ideas confidently, and tackle challenges creatively. After all, no algorithm can replicate the spark of a student discovering their own solution, or the satisfaction of achieving success through their own effort.

AI may offer shortcuts, but true learning comes from within. Students who master their own thinking, rather than relying on machines, will not just survive school—they will thrive in life.■

Artwork by Daricel Catanes

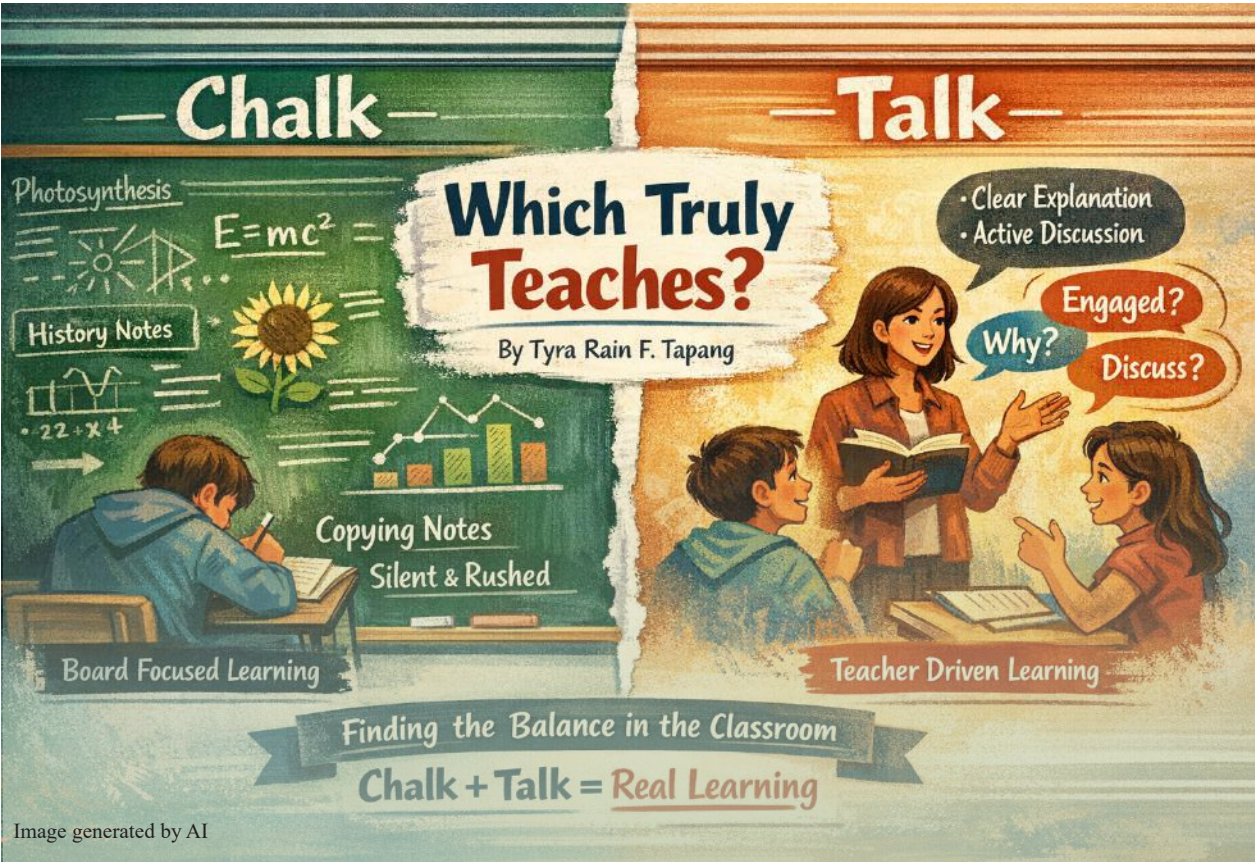


Image generated by AI

PERUSE

Chalk or Talk:
Which Truly Teaches?

■ Tyra Rain Tapang



For decades, the chalkboard has been a classroom icon—lines of neat notes, outlines, and formulas stretching across its surface. Yet, does filling the board truly equal learning? I argue that spoken explanation—teacher talk—is often the most powerful tool for understanding.

Relying solely on the board has its pitfalls. Students copying notes word-for-word often focus on speed rather than comprehension. In many classrooms, silence isn’t a sign of concentration—it’s a signal that students are racing to keep up. Questions remain unasked, confusion unaddressed. I’ve personally seen students exhausted by the act of writing, yet still unsure of the concepts being taught.

Research supports this observation. Education expert John Hattie found that clear explanations, active discussion, and interactive teaching strategies produce better learning outcomes than passive copying. Listening, asking, and discussing ideas engage the mind in ways that mere transcription cannot.

This is not to dismiss chalk entirely. Boards still serve a purpose: they

structure ideas, highlight key terms, and provide visual anchors for students. The key is balance. Writing selectively while explaining concepts allows learners to follow along without sacrificing understanding. Talk gives teachers flexibility—they can clarify doubts, adjust examples, and involve students in real-time.

I remember attending a lesson where the board remained almost empty. Instead of notes, the teacher spoke, illustrated examples, and encouraged questions. By the end of the class, the ideas had stuck—not because they were written down, but because we had discussed them, reflected on them, and connected them to our experiences.

In modern classrooms, chalk and talk should complement, not compete. Chalk structures; talk explains. Chalk guides; talk inspires. When used thoughtfully together, written words and spoken explanations transform into shared understanding—and that is where real learning begins.■

STANCE and ANALYSIS

Learning System:
Are Students Really the Problem?

■ Micaella De Castro



Whenver students struggle in school, the first reaction is often predictable: They’re lazy. They lack discipline. They’re too distracted by social media. Sometimes, the blame shifts to textbooks that are “too boring,” modules that are “too confusing,” or online learning that is “only for the privileged.”

But as a student observing these patterns, I’ve come to believe that the real problem is not the learners — and not even the tools themselves. The issue lies in how these tools are implemented, supported, and funded within the system.

Textbooks remain one of the most accessible and reliable sources of structured knowledge. They are carefully reviewed, curriculum-aligned, and widely distributed. Yet many students describe them as outdated or disengaging.

The question we should ask is not whether textbooks are boring, but how they are being used. A static reading assignment can feel lifeless. However, when paired with discussions, debates, real-life applications, and critical questioning, the same textbook becomes a foundation for deeper thinking.

A book does not teach by itself — pedagogy brings it to life. If students feel disconnected, perhaps the system needs to invest more in teacher training, classroom innovation, and learner-centered strategies rather than abandoning traditional resources altogether.

Modular learning became especially prominent during the pandemic, offering flexibility to students with limited access to face-to-face classes. In theory, modules empower learners to study at their own pace.

In practice, many students found themselves navigating unclear instructions, repetitive tasks, and minimal feedback.

When a module feels like a maze, students are often blamed for not reading carefully. Yet clarity in instructional design is not solely the learner’s responsibility. Effective modules should anticipate questions, provide step-by-step guidance, and include meaningful examples.

If learners struggle alone at home without guidance, the issue is not effort — it is support. Self-paced learning works best when there are clear directions and accessible mentors behind it.

Online learning promises flexibility, digital collaboration, and global access to information. But in a country where access remains uneven, this promise is far from universal.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2024), only 48.8% of households in the Philippines have internet access at home. That means more than half of Filipino families may struggle to participate fully in digital education.

This is not a reflection of students’ commitment. It is a reflection of economic disparity and infrastructure gaps. A learner cannot attend an online class without stable internet, a functional device, and a conducive learning space. When modernization ignores these realities, it risks widening the gap between privileged and marginalized students.

Educational reforms continue to emerge. The Department of Education introduced the Quality Basic Education Development Plan (2025–2035), aiming to digitalize, decentralize, and innovate the system. On paper, modernization sounds transformative.

However, policies succeed only when implementation matches intention. New platforms and new programs will not solve old problems if access remains unequal and teachers lack adequate training or support. Structural change without foundational support often leaves students adjusting repeatedly to shifting systems.

Too often, reforms focus on replacing structures instead of strengthening them. A new curriculum, a new platform, or a new format does not automatically improve learning outcomes. What matters is whether students understand the material, feel supported, and have equal opportunities to succeed.

Education functions best as a shared responsibility:

- Students must engage actively and take ownership of their learning.
- Teachers must guide creatively and adapt methods to diverse learners.
- Government institutions must ensure resources, infrastructure, and equitable access.

When one part fails, the entire system feels the strain. It is easier to blame students for poor performance than to confront systemic issues such as overcrowded classrooms, limited funding, inconsistent internet access, and insufficient instructional support.

But students are not the problem. They are responding to the environment given to them.

Learning should not depend on whether a family can afford Wi-Fi or whether instructions are easy to decode. Education is a right — not a privilege reserved for those with better resources.

If we truly want reform, we must look beyond quick fixes and ask harder questions:

- Are policies aligned with classroom realities? Are teachers equipped to innovate? Are marginalized students supported equally?

The future of education does not lie in blaming learners. It lies in collaboration, clarity, and commitment to equitable access.

Students are not the weakness of the system. With the right support, they are its greatest strength — and its most powerful solution.■





BOONS and BANES

Touch by Touch:
Is It Too Much?

■ Tyra Rain Tapang

In the school hallway, a couple hold hands, drawing curious glances from classmates. Hugging, hand-holding, or even a quick peck on the cheek—these public displays of affection (PDA) are increasingly common among students. But do these gestures truly reflect love, or do they cross a line that affects others in their surroundings?

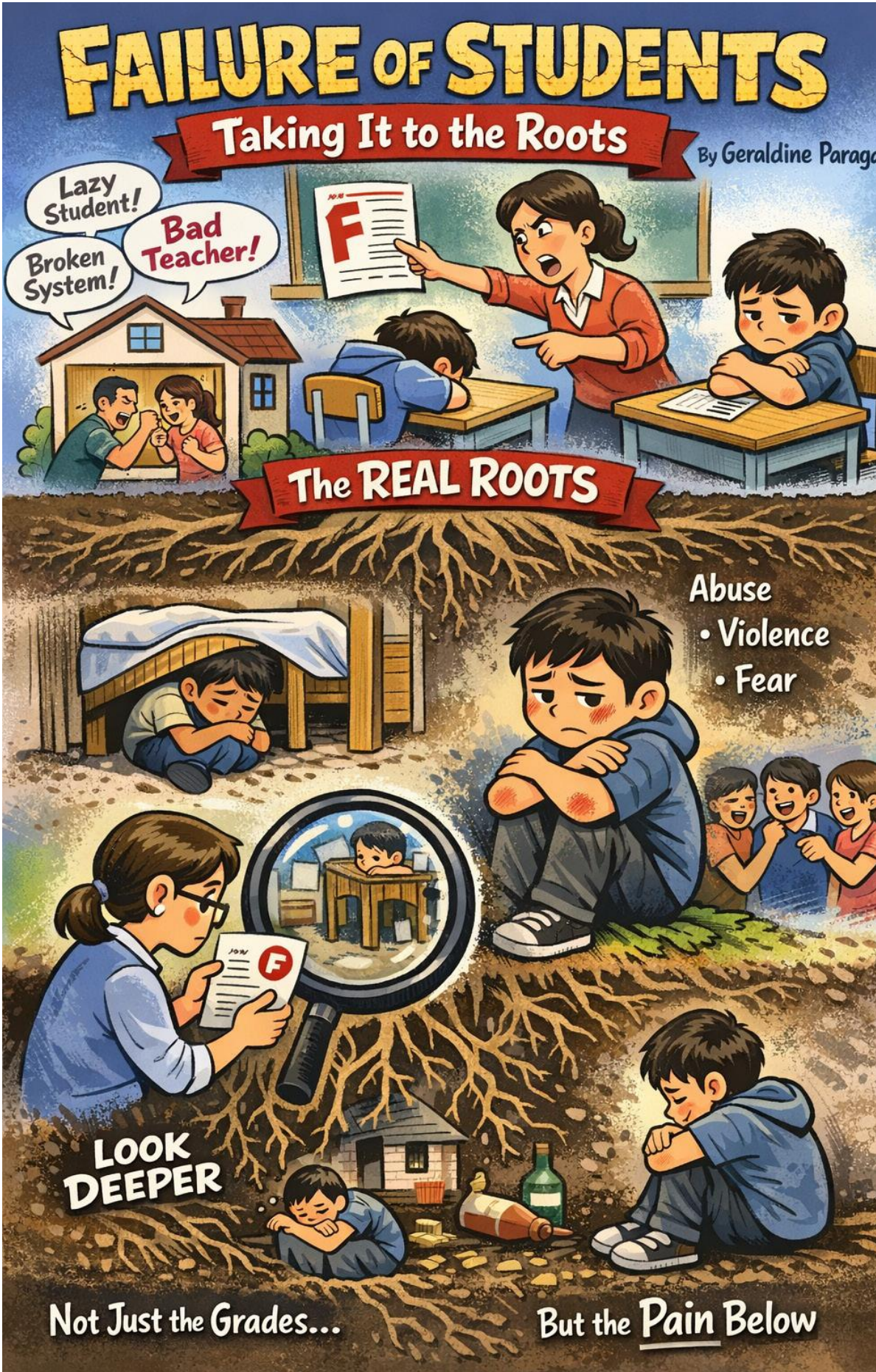
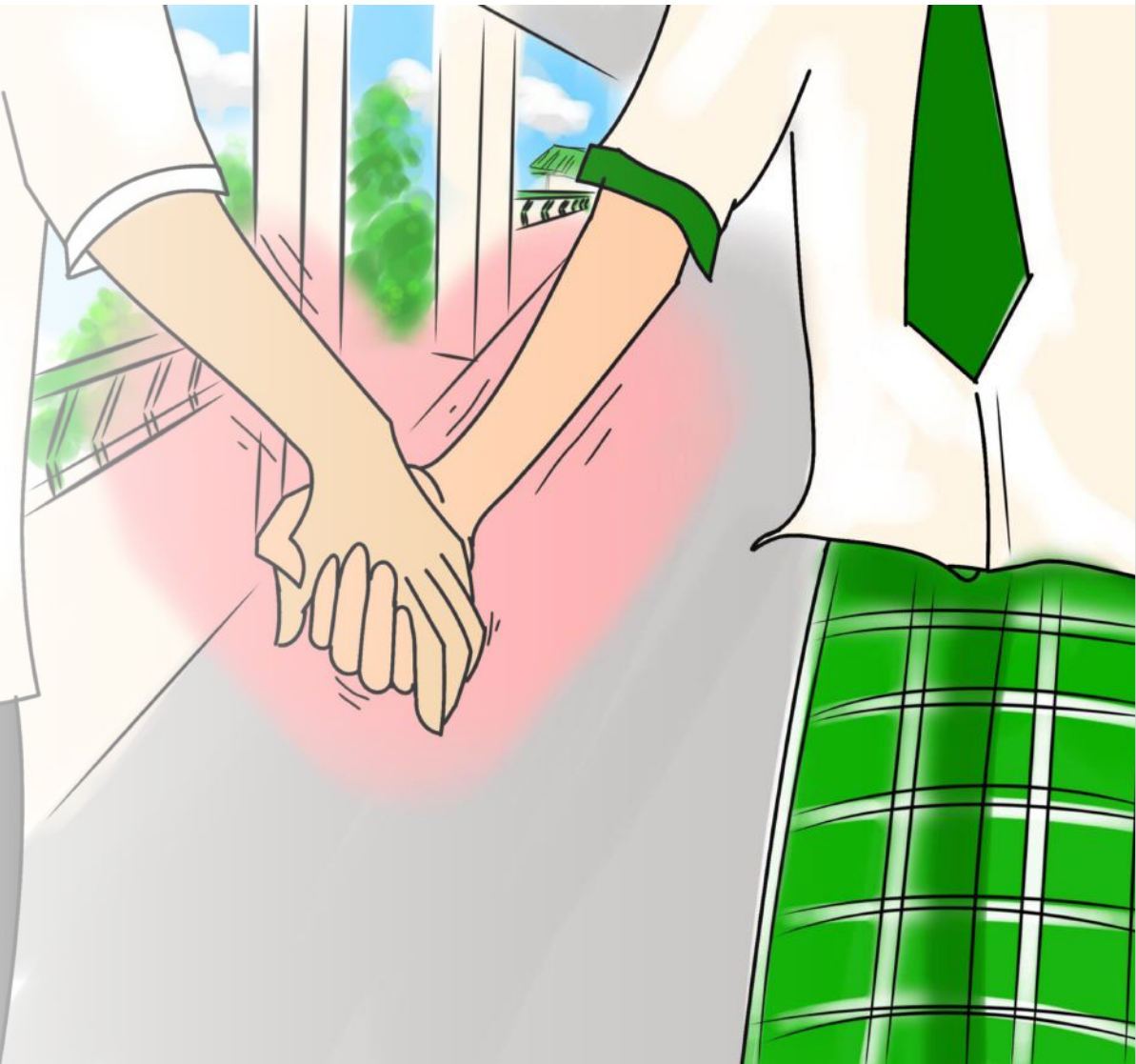
Many students view PDA as a natural way to express intimacy, especially at a young age. It can foster emotional well-being, promote a sense of belonging, and even create a warmer, friendlier atmosphere in school. Yet, while affection is a normal human need, the school environment is meant to be primarily focused on learning. When PDA becomes excessive or thoughtless, it risks creating distractions and discomfort for others.

Research supports this nuanced perspective. Derrick Meador, a public school superintendent and writer, suggests that schools must first recognize PDA as a potential issue before effectively managing it. Policies that clearly define appropriate behavior can help preserve a respectful and focused environment. John Roberts notes that critics of PDA view it as a distraction that can interfere with academic focus and make others feel uncomfortable.

The pros and cons of PDA reveal the delicate balance students must navigate. On one hand, it can strengthen emotional bonds, build confidence in expressing affection, and contribute to a positive school culture for those involved. On the other hand, it can distract classmates, challenge school rules, and create discomfort for staff and peers. These consequences highlight that affection is not inherently wrong—it is context and mindfulness that determine whether it is appropriate.

Ultimately, students should prioritize respect and mindfulness. Public affection is not about suppression but about consideration: understanding that one’s actions impact others. Schools can allow healthy expressions of friendship and love without compromising the learning environment. When affection is balanced with awareness and ethical behavior, students can enjoy the emotional benefits of relationships while maintaining a positive and focused school community.

Affection is natural, but in public spaces like schools, respect for others should always come first. Love can be expressed meaningfully without making anyone uncomfortable—and that is the hallmark of maturity and true consideration.■



OPINION OUTPOST



Failure of Students:
Taking It to the Roots

■ Geraldine Paragas

When a student fails, fingers are quick to point. “The teacher is ineffective.” “The student is lazy.” “The system is broken.” Blame travels fast inside classrooms and staff rooms. Yet one place is often left unexplored—the home. Rarely do we ask where failure may have truly begun, long before quizzes were missed and report cards turned red.

A study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) reveals a disturbing link between domestic abuse and school dropout rates. Filipino children exposed to parental violence at age 10 are about half as likely to remain enrolled by age 14 compared to those who were not abused. Another PIDS study by Aaron Carlos G. Manuel, Lyle Daryl D. Casas, and Valerie Gilbert T. Ulep found that nearly four in ten children experienced violence from their own parents at a very young age.

Behind declining grades may be bruises no one talks about. I was fortunate not to grow up in such a home. But that privilege made the contrast impossible to ignore. I have seen classmates come to school carrying more than backpacks—some carried fear. I have watched friends hide pain behind forced laughter. Worse, I have seen adults who were supposed to protect them choose not to notice.

Data from the National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children (NBS-VAC) and the Council for the Welfare of Children show that around 80 percent of respondents experienced at least one form of violence, yet only 10 percent ever disclosed it. Violence, it turns out, thrives in silence. And many students suffer quietly, afraid of consequences, ashamed, or convinced that no one will listen.

This is where many schools fail. Educators are trained to spot academic weakness, but not always human distress. A child may not confess abuse, but signs often surface—unexplained bruises, sudden aggression, withdrawal, sharp drops in performance. These are not discipline problems alone; they are distress signals. Teachers cannot solve what they refuse to see.

We often deal only with what is visible: low scores, missing outputs, poor behavior. But punishing symptoms without confronting causes only deepens the wound. If a student keeps failing, passing responsibility should never be the priority. Understanding should.

Because failure is not always born in the classroom. Sometimes, it is raised at home.

Until schools learn to look beyond grades and into lives, student failure will never truly be solved—only repeatedly misunderstood.■

FEATURE KNOWLEDGE BEYOND THE WALLS

■ By Francis Dave Toreja

At exactly 7:40 every morning, Ma'am Josephine steps into her classroom carrying more than lesson plans. Inside wait students with different burdens—some anxious over low grades, others worn down by exhaustion, a few still holding quiet excitement. She meets them all with the same steady presence. For those on the edge of giving up, her arrival offers what school rarely guarantees: a fresh start.

For Ma'am Josephine, teaching reaches far beyond discussions and quizzes. It is about uncovering hidden strengths and reshaping setbacks into beginnings. This belief led to Project UNGUNGA (Unlocking, Nurturing, Guidance, in Understanding New goals for Aspiring Mindset), a program that has left a lasting imprint on San Tomas National High School. Her commitment to literacy and student welfare is reflected in the learning materials she has authored: LIKAS for Grades 7 and 8 environmental awareness, Bansa Basa on national heroes, ADSA against drugs, smoking, and alcoholism, and ITBIK on the life of Jesus. She also developed Match Activities and Articles for Math Intervention (Ma'am E) in response to low RAT results, and Grammar, Writing, and Conversation (GWC) for shy learners in Grades 7 and 8.

"Based on our research, there are students who use a lowercase 'i' when writing 'I am,'" Ma'am Josephine shared—an insight that shaped her programs and revealed that her work addresses not only academic gaps, but the fragile sense of self behind them.

Her mission extends beyond campus through CFRPT (Christian Formation Reading and Tutorial), which she started in 2019 upon her arrival at DepEd Baguio. "Now, 21 na kami," she said, pointing to its steady growth. The results are tangible: more students are now passing IPED (Indigenous Peoples Education) assessments, reflecting progress not only in learning, but also in confidence.

These efforts earned her recognition as Most Outstanding Teacher, an honor conferred by the SDS, SGOD, and Mr. Tibangay of the Baguio Division. She traces her journey to a guiding principle: "Connect, cooperate, and communicate for us to understand each other."

Yet her work is far from finished. Project UNGUNGA is entering a new chapter as "Love Me" at GVNHS, continuing its focus on literacy, anti-drug advocacy, and student engagement. Alongside it, Project Panasyalan seeks to curb vices and smoking while strengthening character education.

Beyond classrooms and commendations, Ma'am Josephine's true measure is found in the learners she shapes. Her lessons live not only in books, but in renewed confidence, awakened purpose, and young lives slowly learning to believe in their own worth. ■

IMPACTING LIVES DAILY. Through simple classroom moments, Ma'am Josephine continues shaping young minds—proof that her influence reaches far beyond the school walls.

Photo by Nikki Licaros

Between Chalk and Codals

■ By Geraldine D. Paragas

She entered law school to follow a family legacy, not knowing it would become a journey that would test every part of her life. At first, law was simply an expectation. Over time, it became a calling she learned to love, one that demanded sacrifice, discipline, and unwavering resolve.

By day, she stood in front of a classroom as a public school teacher, shaping young minds and fulfilling her duty as an educator. Teaching paid the bills and kept her dreams afloat, especially with the rising cost of law books and school expenses. By night, she transformed into a law student, buried in codals, case digests, and endless readings. Her schedule left no room for leisure. From early mornings to late evenings, every hour had a purpose.

Balancing two demanding roles was never easy. After spending the whole day teaching from morning until late afternoon, she headed straight to evening classes. Vacant periods were not moments of rest but chances to study, often after checking papers and finishing school-related work. Law school, for her, was not glamorous. It was tiring, repetitive, and mentally draining, yet she showed up every day, choosing discipline over comfort.

The pressure intensified during the Bar review. Her days followed a strict routine filled with long study hours, short naps, prayer, and coffee. Self-doubt, she believed, had no place in preparation. Once entertained, it

weakened focus and confidence. Even when she struggled with Remedial Law, her most difficult subject, she pressed on. Fear was faced head-on, not avoided.

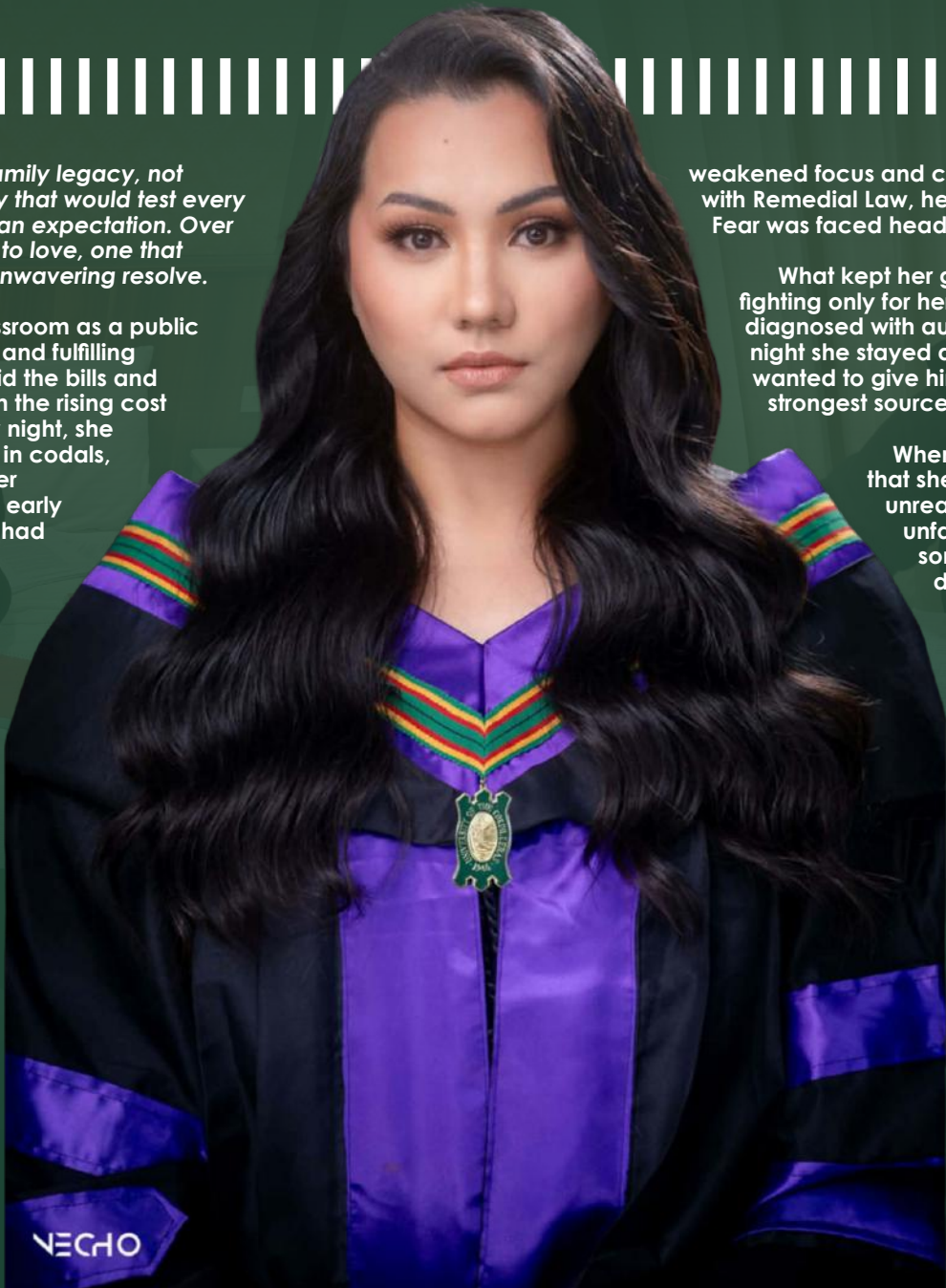
What kept her going was purpose. She was not fighting only for herself, but for her four-year-old son diagnosed with autism. Every page she read and every night she stayed awake were driven by the future she wanted to give him. Love and responsibility became her strongest sources of strength when exhaustion set in.

When the results came and she learned that she passed the Bar, everything felt unreal. Being called "Attorney" still sounded unfamiliar, as if the title belonged to someone else. Yet behind that quiet disbelief was a victory years in the making.

From her journey came lessons she lives by. Failure, she believes, is only delayed success. Setbacks are not endings but pauses that prepare a person for growth. Complaints have no place in progress. Hardships are the result of choices, and moving forward begins when excuses stop.

Her story is not one of ease, but of endurance. It reminds students, teachers, and dreamers that success does not always arrive loudly. Sometimes, it comes quietly, earned through consistency, accountability, and purpose.

This is the story of Ma'am Charisse Hill Zarate-Domitas. ■





The hallways of Guisad National High School buzzed with energy—voices overlapping, footsteps rushing, chairs scraping against the floor. Inside one classroom, a young teacher stood still for a moment, fingers tightening around a slim file case. In front of him were dozens of unfamiliar faces, curious eyes, and the restless energy of senior high students testing the presence of someone new.

He had been warned. Senior high learners, they said, could be unruly, distracted, and difficult to impress. But standing there, breathing in the faint scent of marker ink and floor wax, he realized that no story could ever replace the truth discovered inside a classroom.

The first weeks were humbling. Lesson plans were rewritten late into the night. Activities that looked promising on paper sometimes fell flat. There were moments when questions met silence and instructions dissolved into noise.

Yet, in between the struggle, something unexpected surfaced—students who lingered after class, who argued excitedly over problem sets, who stayed up late perfecting projects. What he found was not resistance, but readiness.

Slowly, the room changed. Ideas began to bounce from one desk to another. Hands rose more often. Competition boards filled. Circuits were wired, codes rewritten, and designs sketched across notebook margins. The classroom became a workshop, a laboratory, a space where mistakes were not failures but starting points.

Soon, the results spoke for themselves. Under his mentorship, Guisad students began stepping onto unfamiliar stages—first at the Division Science Fair, then in higher-level STEM competitions. There were early losses that stung and victories that left hands shaking as medals were placed around young necks. Each announcement of the school's

name echoed not only achievement, but hours of unseen guidance behind it. Yet, the transformation was not limited to trophies.

Students who once hesitated to speak learned to explain their ideas. Those who doubted their ability learned to persist. Many were inspired not just by what he taught, but by how he stayed—long after class, listening, adjusting, encouraging. His influence reached beyond equations and machines, shaping confidence, discipline, and curiosity.

The admiration, he often felt, was mutual. Balancing the demands of teaching with his own pursuit of electrical engineering, he carried both student and mentor within him. His presence at Guisad was part of a two-year return service from a DOST scholarship, yet what unfolded was more than an obligation. It became a mission—to light interest where there was uncertainty, and direction where there was doubt.

Days blended into months. The unfamiliar faces grew familiar. The nervous first walk into the classroom faded into routine, replaced by the quiet fulfillment of watching learners surpass their own expectations.

This journey in Guisad is more than the story of a new teacher adjusting to his post. It is a testament to patience, mentorship, and the quiet power of belief. Competitions will end. Students will move on. But the confidence sparked, the discipline formed, and the dreams awakened will continue long after classrooms are empty.

In the end, Guisad's newest teacher proved that teaching is not merely the delivery of lessons, but the shaping of lives—one encouragement, one challenge, one spark at a time.

He is Jared Ang.■

A City in Full Bloom:

The Story Behind Panagbenga

■By Breathly Ann Ciriaco

Flowers, music, and people fill the City of Baguio as February comes. Bright and colorful flowers flashed through the crowd's eyes as performers marched, the fragrant scents of flowers hitting as the wind blew. Tons of people think that Panagbenga is just a festival. But is there more to it?

The name “Panagbenga” comes from the Kankanaey language, an indigenous language from the Cordillera region, meaning “season of blooming”. The festival started back in 1995 after the tragic 1990 earthquake struck the city. The lethal phenomenon has caused severe damages to the city—affecting buildings, roads, and as well as the lives of people who lived there.

The idea was proposed by Atty. Damaso E. Bangaoet Jr.—as a way to boost the city's spirit and revive its economy—wishing to bring back hope to people. It usually lasts for a month—a month full of vibrant and lively flowers, performances, and local foods and souvenirs. Flowers were chosen as the main symbol of the festival because they bloom even after such disasters.

The famous festival is known for its Grand Float Parade where giant floats are creatively decorated with flowers and local artistry, street dancing performances where communities showcase traditional dances in colorful costumes, and market & food fairs where local vendors sell souvenirs, crafts, and foods.

However, it's not just a festival. It represents the city's hope and unity. The festival shows how even after such disasters, people still rose back onto their feet. It's not just for tourists to enjoy and take photos. The festival helps give recognition to farmers who grew the flowers. It gives the community a chance to show their talents and traditions off.

Panagbenga festival is Baguio's way to remember the past while moving forward—turning the sorrowful past into something meaningful. Behind every petal, is a city that faced multiple challenges, yet still chose to bloom over and over again no matter what. The history of the festival teaches us to fight and be strong even after hardships. The next time we watch the flowers filling the streets, we will recall how it's a symbol of courage. A symbol of promise that Baguio City will always find ways to bloom again.■



AGE IS JUST A NUMBER:

“Embracing lifelong learning”

■By Elvira M. Dela Cruz

WHEN DREAMS REFUSE TO AGE

Some dreams do not fade with time—they wait patiently for the right moment to rise again. In a society that often tells us when to start, when to stop, and when it is “too late,” there are stories that gently yet powerfully remind us that purpose has no age limit. This year, as Guisad Valley National High School celebrates Sixteen Years Strong: Growth, Unity, and Achievement, we are invited to listen to a story born from courage, faith, and an unshakable belief in education. This inspirational message is a testament to resilience—a reminder that setbacks are not endings, that dreams do not expire, and that learning is a lifelong journey meant to be embraced at any stage of life.

Blessed afternoon to our school Administrators, respected teachers, proud parents, and most especially, the bright learners of Guisad Valley National High School.

It is a profound honor to stand before you today not only as your guest speaker, but as a proud alumna of this institution.

As we celebrate Sixteen Years Strong: Growth, Unity, and Achievement, my story is proof that growth is always possible, unity gives us strength, and achievement comes to those who choose not to give up.

I pursued my goal, knowing that along the way I would face hardships – challenges that many of you may also encounter.

People often asked me what made me continue, and what inspired me to keep studying despite my age?

Many asked: Why now? Why at this age? Why amid a global crisis?

My answer is simple: I had a dream, and I refused to let age be the reason I stopped believing in what I prayed for.

I would like to share a personal story with you – a story about determination, hope and the belief that learning knows no boundaries.

In 2020, at a time when the world was facing unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic. I made a decision that some might have thought was unusual. I returned to school, (after ALS and PEPT), I enrolled in the Senior High program, despite being in my fifties.

YES! – an age when many believe learning should slow down.

But this school taught me something powerful: education has no limit, no deadline and no boundaries.

You might be wondering why, at my age, I decided to go back to school.

Well... it's not because once you graduate, life is over! Learning doesn't stop – it's like your phone battery: you just keep recharging!

Now, I have to admit, I had to prepare myself...especially for people who might tease me or even try to bully me. Are there any bullies here? Don't worry, I can handle it – I've survived social media, so this is easy!

But seriously, I asked myself: **What is my purpose?** Should I waste my energy on people who don't support me or make my journey harder? Absolutely not.

That's when I realized: not every voice around you deserves your attention. What really matters is knowing what you want, staying focused, and being determined to reach it – no matter your age.

So, here's my message to all of you: age is just a number. Don't let it – or anyone else - stop you from chasing your dreams. And if anyone laughs at you along the way... just smile back, work harder, pray for them and show them what determination looks like!

When you have a clear goal and determined heart, nothing – not even bullies, not even pandemic – can stop you.

What inspired me to continue were my parents.

When I first dreamed of becoming an architect, my heart was full of hope. But my father was honest with us – he told us he could not afford to send us all to college.

I am the youngest of nine children, and hearing that I couldn't continue 'till college, broke my heart.

Yet I never held any grudge against my parents. I understood our situation in life, and instead of anger, I chose gratitude, because even if we were not rich in money, my parents – especially my father, made sure we were rich in values. He taught us how to become good people, and that lesson stayed with me until I found my way back to school.

That is why I am here today – to remind you that delays do not mean denials, and dreams do not expire.

I want to share with you why it is so important for students to finish their education. I never stopped dreaming of becoming somebody someday.

My first job in Manila was as a T-shirt designer, where we created designs, brands and logos. Then, I worked as a soft toy designer in Pampanga before I went abroad as an OFW.

In the Middle East, I worked as a hairstylist and overall beautician. But one

experienced truly changed my perspective on life and the value of education.

I was given the chance to create a portrait of King Saud, the one who discovered oil in Saudi Arabia.

Why do I share this with you?

My employer realized that I was an artist beyond my job description. She encouraged me to create this huge charcoal portrait, which I completed using only graphite pencils and erasers for highlights.

Fast forward: I became the third and final choice of the Chief Engineer, who needed someone to complete the portrait in seven days after previous fellow Filipino artists couldn't succeed. I was the one who made it possible. He even (the Chief) told me that the work I did was worthy of a “Noble Prize” – glory to God! He then offered me a position in his company, which would have been a huge opportunity and achievement.

Unfortunately, it didn't happen because I didn't have the proper documents, including a degree, to complete all the requirements.

This experience reminded me once again, more than ever, that EDUCATION is essential.

With the right credentials, you can go further, be promoted, and unlock opportunities that might otherwise remain closed.

So, my advice to all of you is: **do not**

rush to go abroad or take opportunities without completing your education. What I did was what people call 'diskarte sa buhay' – resourcefulness in life, even without finishing my studies.

But I hope that you, as students today, also learn to be resourceful, while using education as your foundation.

That is the key to long-term success.

Before I end, I want to leave everyone – students, teachers, and fellow parents, with this thought: **“education is not just about earning a degree or finishing a program. It is about preparing yourself for opportunities, unlocking your potential, and building the foundation for your dreams.”**

I shared my story with you – not to boast, but to show that dreams can be pursued at any stage of life. I learned a very important lesson: **“talent alone is not enough. Education, credentials, and perseverance are what make our dreams fully possible.”**

To the students: never let fear, age, or criticism stop you. Stay focused, be determined, and used your resourcefulness – or diskarte sa buhay wisely. Combine it with education, and nothing can stop you from reaching your goals.

To the teachers: continue inspiring and guiding your students, reminding them that learning is a lifelong journey and that their dreams are valid.

To my fellow parents and adults who are thinking if returning to school: it is never too late. Your courage to continue learning will not only change your life but it will set an example for your children and everyone around you.

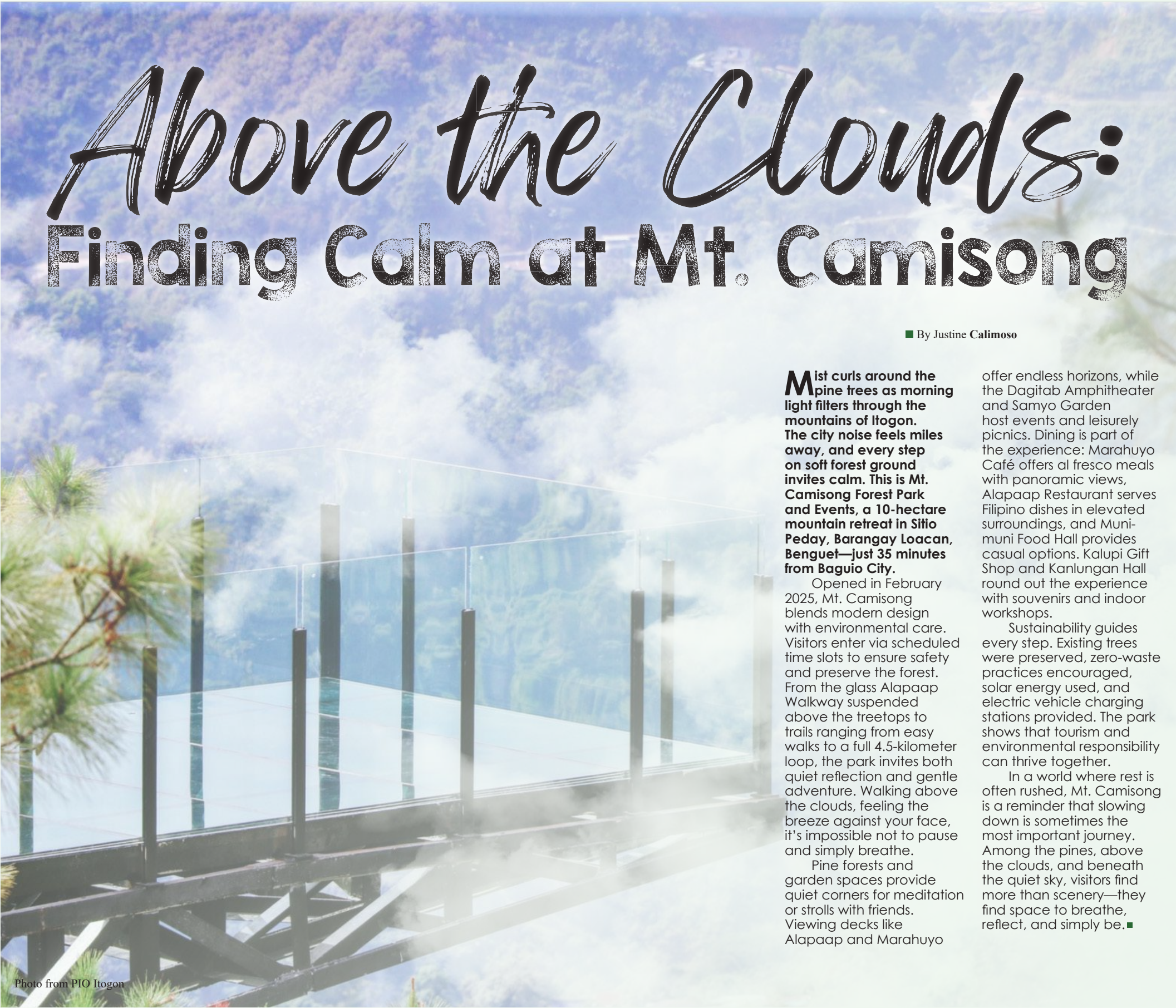
So, to everyone here today, remember this: pursue your dreams with determination, embrace education as your key, and never stop learning. **“When talent, resourcefulness, and education come together, there is no limit to what you can achieve”.**

My heartfelt congratulations on this significant milestone. May Guisad Valley National High School continue to guide and inspire countless generations of learners and may each of you continue to grow in strength, aim higher with courage and achieve excellence in your own unique paths.

Mabuhay po kayong lahat, God bless us all, at maraming salamat po.

Long after the hall grows quiet, the message continues to echo—not as a speech remembered, but as a truth felt. It settles in the hearts of those who once doubted, those who paused their dreams, and those still searching for courage. In that stillness, one lesson remains: learning waits, faith endures, and dreams are patient. When we choose to rise, no matter the season of our lives, education becomes more than a path—it becomes a promise that it is never too late to begin.■





■ By Justine Calimoso

Mist curls around the pine trees as morning light filters through the mountains of Itogon. The city noise feels miles away, and every step on soft forest ground invites calm. This is Mt. Camisong Forest Park and Events, a 10-hectare mountain retreat in Sitio Peday, Barangay Loacan, Benguet—just 35 minutes from Baguio City.

Opened in February 2025, Mt. Camisong blends modern design with environmental care. Visitors enter via scheduled time slots to ensure safety and preserve the forest. From the glass Alapaap Walkway suspended above the treetops to trails ranging from easy walks to a full 4.5-kilometer loop, the park invites both quiet reflection and gentle adventure. Walking above the clouds, feeling the breeze against your face, it's impossible not to pause and simply breathe.

Pine forests and garden spaces provide quiet corners for meditation or strolls with friends. Viewing decks like Alapaap and Marahuyo

offer endless horizons, while the Dagitab Amphitheater and Samyo Garden host events and leisurely picnics. Dining is part of the experience: Marahuyo Café offers al fresco meals with panoramic views, Alapaap Restaurant serves Filipino dishes in elevated surroundings, and Muni-muni Food Hall provides casual options. Kalupi Gift Shop and Kanlungan Hall round out the experience with souvenirs and indoor workshops.

Sustainability guides every step. Existing trees were preserved, zero-waste practices encouraged, solar energy used, and electric vehicle charging stations provided. The park shows that tourism and environmental responsibility can thrive together.

In a world where rest is often rushed, Mt. Camisong is a reminder that slowing down is sometimes the most important journey. Among the pines, above the clouds, and beneath the quiet sky, visitors find more than scenery—they find space to breathe, reflect, and simply be. ■

Photo from PIO Itogon

A Walk Through Bayan Park

■ By Geraldine Paragas

A pair of worn rubber shoes taps softly against the pavement. Around me, pine needles whisper in the breeze, and somewhere near the playground, a child's laughter breaks into the afternoon calm. Stepping into Bayan Park feels like stepping out of the city's rush and into a gentler rhythm—one that breathes, listens, and waits.

Nestled in the heart of Aurora Hill, one of Baguio City's busiest communities, Bayan Park stands as a pocket of green in a maze of noise and motion. Joggers trace the winding paths, grandparents rest on newly painted benches, and teenagers test their balance at the skatepark. Overhead, clouds drift lazily, as if even the sky has agreed to slow down here.

Years ago, this scene would have been unthinkable. Bayan Park was once a rough, uneven field where a cracked basketball court and patches of grass were all it had to offer. But after years of rehabilitation, the space has been transformed into a true community park. An outdoor gym now hums with quiet determination, the skatepark pulses with youthful energy, and at the center lies an open ground where conversations bloom as easily as the newly planted trees.

Near the path, a group of students sits cross-legged on the grass, notebooks spread between snack wrappers and shared jokes. One of them reads aloud while another corrects an answer, their voices rising and falling with the wind. The

scene is simple, yet familiar. As a student of Guisad Valley National High School, I know the weight of crowded hallways and endless deadlines. Here, learning feels lighter. The air itself seems to remind us that growth does not always demand haste—sometimes, it only asks for space.

Bayan Park is not merely a place to pass the afternoon. It is proof of what a community can build when it chooses cooperation over neglect. During the park's reopening, Mayor Benjamin Magalong called on residents to protect and care for the space, stressing that its beauty would survive only through shared responsibility. Looking around—the clean walkways, the unscarred walls, the families lingering long past sunset—it is clear that the call did not fall on deaf ears.

At the small amphitheater near the far end of the park, the sun begins its quiet descent, spilling gold and rose across the hills. A jogger slows to a walk. A mother gathers her child. The wind moves gently through the trees, and for a moment, everything seems to hold its breath.

Sitting there, I realize Bayan Park offers more than scenery. It offers a lesson—in patience, in renewal, in the quiet strength of shared effort. Walking home as the sky deepens into evening, I carry that lesson with me. In a city that rarely sleeps, it is comforting to know there is still a place where one can pause, breathe, and remember that even in constant motion, there is always room to grow. ■



PIO - Baguio City | 2
Neil Clark Ongchang

Photo from PIO Baguio City

Photo from Netflix



GONNA BE GOLDEN: STUDENTS AS MODERN DEMON HUNTERS

By Geraldine Paragas

Under the bright stage lights, three idols sing about courage, unity, and shining through the darkness. Behind the glitter and choreography, they fight a different kind of battle—one students know all too well.

KPop Demon Hunters, the animated musical that captured hearts around the world, follows a K-pop girl group who secretly live double lives as protectors of humanity. By day they're performers admired by millions; by night they battle the demons threatening their world.

But if you look closely, their story isn't just fantasy—it's also a reflection of student life.

Just like the characters Rumi, Mira, and Zoey, students face demons too. Not with weapons or spells, but with pens, notebooks, and endless requirements. These demons are not monsters from another world; they are deadlines, exams, pressure, anxiety, and self-doubt. They whisper, "You're not good enough," or "You can't make it." And every day, students rise to fight them.

In one of the film's most inspiring songs, "Golden," the lyrics say:

"I was a ghost, I was alone
Given the throne, I didn't know how to believe
I'm done hidin', now I'm shinin' like I'm born to be
We're goin' up, up, up—it's our moment
You know together we're glowing
Gonna be, gonna be golden."

These words echo the journey of many students—uncertain at first, learning to

believe in themselves, and eventually discovering their own light. It's the feeling of finally understanding a lesson you once struggled with, of getting recognized for your hard work, or simply surviving a difficult week with your spirit still intact.

Rumi's journey in the film mirrors what students often go through: juggling identities, handling expectations, and fighting inner fears. She hides her half-demon heritage, afraid she might not belong. Many students hide parts of themselves too—their dreams, their emotions, their true ambitions—just to fit in or meet others' standards. But like Rumi, they eventually learn that strength comes from embracing who they are.

Being a student is its own kind of demon hunt. Each day brings new challenges—group projects that test patience, grades that test confidence, and responsibilities that test endurance. Yet every sunrise, students still show up, ready to fight again. That's real bravery.

The movie ends with the message that being "golden" isn't about perfection; it's about shining even when surrounded by shadows. For students, that means continuing to dream, to learn, and to believe even when life gets hard.

Because in the end, we're all demon hunters in our own way—slaying fear, doubt, and exhaustion until we, too, can proudly say: "I'm done hidin', now I'm shinin' like I'm born to be."

ROBLOX MASS LEAVES STUDENTS UNEASY

When a group of Grade 7 students recreated a Catholic Mass inside Roblox, what began as a creative experiment quickly turned unsettling.

The virtual cathedral looked impressive—pews lined up, stained glass glowing, and avatars kneeling in sync. Yet as the prayers echoed through the game's chat box, some students felt a chill. The solemnity of the ritual seemed strangely hollow in a world of blocky characters and playful emotes.

One participant described the moment when the "sign of peace" turned into a flurry of dancing avatars: "It was funny at first, but then it felt wrong. Like we were mocking something sacred without meaning to."

Adults watching were divided. Some admired the effort to bring faith into digital spaces, but others worried the Mass had been stripped of reverence, transformed into spectacle. The line between devotion and entertainment blurred, leaving students with a lingering sense of unease.

The Roblox Mass wasn't dangerous, but it was haunting in its own way—a reminder that when sacred traditions are transplanted into playful worlds, they can lose their weight, leaving behind a question that feels almost eerie: what happens when the holy becomes a game? ■



Artwork by Daricel Catanes



ETAG CORDIMENTS: INFUSING CORDILLERAN HERITAGE INTO MODERN FOOD SCIENCE

■ By Zane Samoranos

HERITAGE MADE MODERN. The final “Etag Cordiments” products—bouillon cubes and powdered seasoning—showcase the modernized form of the traditional Cordilleran delicacy, combining heritage flavor with convenience for the modern kitchen.

When tradition meets innovation, science finds its flavor. This is the breakthrough achieved by student-researcher Harris Lang-akan in his study, “Etag Cordiments: An Innovative Product Development Transforming Etag into Bouillon Cubes and Powdered Seasoning.”

Rooted in Cordilleran culture, Etag—a traditional pork delicacy preserved through salt-curing and smoking—has long been a staple of Northern Luzon heritage.³ However, its consumption has largely been

limited by its perishable nature and traditional preparation methods. Lang-akan saw an opportunity: transforming this indigenous delicacy into a modern kitchen essential.

The project utilizes food dehydration and pulverization techniques to convert the cured meat into shelf-stable bouillon cubes and powder. By reducing the product's water activity, the research effectively inhibits the growth of spoilage-causing microorganisms, extending the shelf life of the etag flavor profile from weeks to months.

“I wanted to modernize etag without losing its traditional essence,” said Lang-akan. “By turning it into seasoning, we can introduce the taste of Cordilleran culture to more households, even beyond our region.”

The methodology involved a rigorous process of drying, lipid extraction, and formulation to ensure the powder remains free-flowing and the cubes maintain solubility. Lang-akan then conducted sensory evaluations using Hedonic Scaling (to measure liking) and Just-About-

Right (JAR) Tests (to measure intensity). The results confirmed that the etag-based seasonings retained their signature “umami”—the savory fifth taste—proving that traditional ingredients can compete with synthetic commercial flavorings.

Adviser Rocky Solimen noted that the project exemplifies the “localization” thrust of the science curriculum. “It’s inspiring to see students using scientific methods to honor local traditions. This is what research should do—improve lives while preserving culture.”

Beyond the laboratory, these “Cordiments” hold significant economic potential. By transforming a raw indigenous product into a value-added commodity, the project offers a blueprint for local MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) to scale up Cordilleran products for the national market.

“My project shows that innovation does not mean forgetting where we come from,” Lang-akan reflected. “Through science, we can bring the taste of tradition into the modern kitchen.” ■

RISE Expo: Blending Science and Indigenous Culture to Drive Innovation

■ By Ariane Apolpersh Danga

The Research, Innovation, and Science Exploration (RISE) Expo is redefining how science education connects with culture and community. Organized under the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) program of the Department of Education, the event provides learners with a meaningful platform to merge scientific principles with indigenous knowledge, fostering both innovation and cultural preservation.

At the expo, students apply science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to enhance local and indigenous products—making them more functional, durable, and commercially viable—

while respecting the cultural identity embedded in each item. Instead of replacing tradition, the goal is to strengthen it through research and innovation.

One standout project, “Etag Cordiments” by student innovator Harris Lang-Akan, transformed the traditional Cordilleran cured meat, etag, into shelf-stable bouillon cubes and powdered seasoning. By using food processing and preservation techniques, the product offers a modern culinary solution while retaining its authentic taste and cultural value. The innovation also highlights the importance of adding scientific value to indigenous food products, allowing them to reach broader markets without losing their

cultural essence.

“RISE Expo isn’t just about innovation—it’s about celebrating our roots while exploring what science can do,” Lang-Akan said. Projects like his demonstrate that traditional knowledge can inspire modern solutions, bridging the gap between cultural heritage and technological advancement.

Beyond showcasing products, the RISE Expo emphasizes applied learning, encouraging students to go beyond textbooks. Participants engage in real-world problem-solving, critical thinking, and research-based decision-making. These experiences help learners understand how science can address community challenges such as food security, sustainability, and livelihood development.

The event also promotes ethical and culturally sensitive innovation. Students are guided to respect indigenous intellectual property and avoid cultural misrepresentation, ensuring that progress does not come at the expense of identity or heritage.

In this way, the RISE Expo supports both scientific growth and cultural empowerment, especially among indigenous youth.

Educators involved in the program highlight that integrating indigenous knowledge into STEM not only enriches learning but also strengthens students’ sense of belonging and pride. By valuing local traditions alongside modern science, learners develop a deeper

understanding of sustainability, environmental stewardship, and responsible innovation.

By combining STEM skills with cultural appreciation, the RISE Expo highlights a powerful lesson: science and culture, when intertwined, can shape a more inclusive, sustainable, and innovative future—one where progress uplifts communities while honoring their history and identity. ■



TERRASCANN: Student-Built Robot Brings Smart Soil Testing to Farms

■ By Daisy Tarnate



SMART FARMING TECH. TERRASCANN, the student-built autonomous robot from Guisad Valley National High School, conducts on-site soil testing, instantly measuring nutrient levels and pH to help farmers make faster, smarter decisions.

Photo by Zane Samoranos

A small robot rolled steadily across a patch of soil, paused, and lowered a probe into the ground. Within seconds, data flashed on a mobile screen—revealing what once took months to discover. This is TERRASCANN, an autonomous robot developed by students of Guisad Valley National High School to modernize the way soil health is tested.

Created by young researchers Daisy G. Tarnate, Vanhertzel A. Bernabe, and Rey Mark T. Navarro, TERRASCANN recently earned top recognition at the Regional Science Festival on November 21, 2025, for its potential to help farmers make faster, smarter decisions about their land.

TERRASCANN is designed to detect the soil’s most essential macronutrients: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K)—the primary elements responsible for leaf growth, root development, and disease resistance. Over time, repeated planting drains these nutrients from the soil, forcing farmers to rely on fertilizers to restore balance. However, fertilizers are only effective when soil conditions are right.

“One of the biggest problems farmers face is not knowing what their soil really needs,” said Tarnate, one of the project developers. “Without accurate and timely data, they may apply the wrong fertilizer, waste money, and even harm the environment.”

Aside from measuring nutrient levels, TERRASCANN also analyzes soil pH, which determines how acidic or basic the soil is. Most crops thrive in a near-neutral pH range of 6.0 to 7.0. Outside this range, plant roots struggle to absorb nutrients—even if those nutrients are present in the soil.

Traditionally, farmers depend on soil laboratory testing, a process that can take months or even up to a year to deliver results. This long wait delays planting decisions and increases the risk of poor harvests.

TERRASCANN addresses this challenge by providing on-site, real-time soil analysis. The robot is autonomous, meaning it can move across fields with minimal human guidance. Equipped with a 7-in-1 soil sensor, it instantly measures NPK levels, pH, and soil moisture. Using Internet of Things (IoT) technology, the robot wirelessly sends the collected data to a mobile phone or

online platform, allowing farmers to view results almost immediately.

“Instead of waiting for lab reports, farmers can now see what’s happening beneath their soil in seconds,” Bernabe explained. “This helps them respond quickly and choose the right treatment for their crops.”

Beyond speed and convenience, the developers emphasize TERRASCANN’s broader impact. By guiding farmers toward precise fertilizer use, the robot can reduce chemical runoff, prevent soil degradation, and promote sustainable farming practices.

Navarro added, “Our goal is to protect both farmers and the environment. When technology is used wisely, it can increase productivity without sacrificing the land we depend on.”

From classroom concept to field-ready innovation, TERRASCANN demonstrates how student ingenuity can address real agricultural challenges. As food security and sustainable farming grow more urgent, this student-built robot offers a glimpse into a future where smart technology works hand in hand with the soil that feeds the nation. ■

Push Comes to Shove: The Sumobot Competition

■By Daisy Tarnate

Robots collided and strategies clashed at the 2025 Division Science and Mathematics Festival, where student teams tested their engineering skills in the Sumo Robot category. Competitors faced the challenge of designing autonomous machines capable of outmaneuvering opponents and staying within strict technical limits.

Preparation was intense. Allen Silog and Robert Karl Amurao’s team encountered a critical issue with their robot’s center of mass, which affected turning performance. “We had to replace some parts to follow the new weight limit and troubleshoot why our robot wasn’t turning properly,” Silog said, describing the last-minute adjustments required.

Design strategies varied widely. Silog’s team minimized reaction time by installing sensors on both the front and back of their robot, enabling a 180-degree turn to track opponents. Other teams favored two-wheel designs and custom ramps to flip adversaries—a tactic Silog admitted they hadn’t anticipated.

Once matches began, no interaction with the robots was allowed. Teams relied entirely on pre-programmed autonomy and sensors. Despite careful preparation, Silog and Amurao’s robot was eliminated in the early rounds. “Our sumobot was a bit rushed, so it had some minor problems,” Silog said, noting troubleshooting as the main challenge.

The competition highlighted the breadth of engineering approaches in achieving the same goal: displacing opponents from the ring. From fast-reacting pushers to flipping ramps, students demonstrated creativity, problem-solving, and mechanical design skills. Supervisor Jared Lyle Ang guided participants throughout, emphasizing that the educational value of the event extended far beyond rankings.

In the end, the Sumobot competition proved that success depends not only on parts or speed, but on strategy, precision, and engineering insight—lessons students can carry into future innovations.■



GEARS AND STRATEGY: Team members adjust sensors and test their Sumobot before the competition, showcasing engineering skills and strategic planning at the 2025 Division Science and Mathematics Festival.

Photo by Esther Billao



Artwork by Esther Billao

Out Of Water: The Worlds Growing Water Bankruptcy

■By Zane Samoranos

The world faces a new crisis called the “global water bankruptcy.” It was declared in a January 2026 UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) report, where nations overuse rivers, lakes, and aquifers faster than nature can refill them—think of it as draining your savings account dry with no paycheck in sight. Since the 1990s, over half of the planet’s large lakes shrunk, 35% of wetlands have vanished, and economic hits from water loss and soil damage top \$300 billion yearly, hitting everyday farms, families, and cities hardest.

Picture your household budget stretched to the limit: water systems go insolvent when extraction outpaces renewal, draining reserves that nature can’t quickly refill. More than 70% of major aquifers worldwide show long-term drops, with 50% of drinking water now from stressed underground sources; Kaveh Madani, UNU-INWEH director and report lead, warns: “This report tells an uncomfortable truth: many regions are living beyond their hydrological

means, and many critical water systems are already bankrupt.”

Cities like Kabul, a capital of Afghanistan, risk running wells run empty as the first modern city nears total exhaustion. Mexico City sinks 20 inches yearly from groundwater drain, cracking buildings and other infrastructure. Nearly 75% of people live in water-scarce nations, sparking massive food price jumps, and intensifying hardships for farmers with the shortages.

Addressing water bankruptcy demands major practical shifts—farmers adopting efficient crops, cities installing smart meters, and policies matching real water flows. These plans resemble financial recovery: protect leftover resources using drip irrigation and pipe repairs to cut waste, separate economic expansion from heavy water reliance through efficient tech, and support at-risk communities via international forums like UN Water Conferences. All of this is backed by UN data, and it strives to hold up and support communities to avoid collapse, turning scarcity warnings into actionable plans for recovery.■

Final Global Health Agencies Tighten Watch as Nipah Virus Remains a World Threat

■By Khaedyne Comicho

International health agencies are reinforcing disease monitoring systems as Nipah virus, a rare but deadly zoonotic disease, continues to pose a global health risk. While it is not as widespread as other infectious diseases, its potential impact has drawn serious attention from medical experts and policymakers around the world. Strengthening monitoring systems allows countries to detect unusual cases early and respond before outbreaks grow larger.

Health officials emphasize that preparedness is not only about reacting to emergencies but also about building strong systems in advance. Surveillance networks, trained medical staff, and

rapid reporting procedures play a key role in preventing local cases from becoming international concerns. By investing in these systems now, countries aim to reduce the risk of future health crises.

Nipah virus is transmitted mainly from animals to humans, particularly fruit bats, and can also spread through close human contact. In some past outbreaks, the virus was linked to contaminated food or direct exposure to infected animals. Because of this, public awareness about safe food handling and avoiding contact with wildlife is considered an important preventive measure.

Since its discovery in 1999, it has caused sporadic outbreaks in parts of Asia, especially in countries like Bangladesh and India. These outbreaks, though limited in number, have often required strict quarantine measures and community monitoring. Each incident has provided valuable lessons on how the virus behaves and how quickly it can spread without proper control measures.

Although cases remain limited, experts warn that the virus’s high fatality rate and absence of a specific treatment make early detection essential. Patients infected with Nipah virus may experience symptoms ranging from fever and headache to severe respiratory illness and brain inflammation. Because

symptoms can worsen quickly, early medical care can improve the chances of survival and reduce further transmission.

Health authorities have increased surveillance, hospital readiness, and laboratory coordination to prevent wider spread. Hospitals are being trained to quickly identify suspected cases and isolate patients when necessary. Laboratories are also improving their testing capacity to ensure accurate and timely results, which are crucial in managing outbreaks effectively.

Scientists are also expanding vaccine and diagnostic research, sharing data across borders to better understand the virus and strengthen outbreak response. International collaboration

allows researchers to compare findings, track patterns, and develop better tools for detection. Although no licensed vaccine is currently available, ongoing studies aim to create safe and effective options in the future.

Global health leaders say Nipah virus is a reminder that emerging diseases remain a constant threat, and that sustained international cooperation is critical to protecting public health. In a world where travel and trade connect nations closely, viruses can cross borders quickly. Continuous vigilance, research, and shared responsibility are necessary to reduce risks and protect communities worldwide.■

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Zane Samoranos



Pills or Plates?
The Wasteful Woes
of Supplements

Usually, when I’m at the grocery store eyeing those shiny bottles of supplements, I’m half-tempted by an influencer’s claim that they made her skin “white as snow.” But I just had to consult with someone in the know, so I text my older cousin, who’s deep into med school, and she replies: “Zane, just eat actual food instead. Supplements? Your kidneys filter out the excess right into your urine. It’s mostly wasted.” Most people don’t know that she’s spot-on, and the science backs it up. Water-soluble vitamins like C and B vitamins do pass through quickly if you take too much, often turning your pee neon as proof. As an 11th grader sorting through

the hype, I’m split 50/50: not all supplements are useless, but they’re no substitute for real food. I caught up with her during a family phone call, still poking the bear by asking about supplements. She explained, “Pills absorb at only half the rate. Citrus fruits deliver vitamin C, while oranges provide it alongside fiber, without risking digestive upset from megadoses.” This matches major studies, like those from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which show that multivitamins don’t prevent heart disease or cancer in healthy adults. Most people get enough vitamin C—about 75–90 mg daily—from fruits and vegetables, easily covered through a balanced diet.

Overdoing it can bring risks: excess vitamin C may cause diarrhea or strain the kidneys. Doctors aren’t against supplements—they’re against overuse. For younger kids, science backs supplements more strongly in certain cases. Take a neighbor’s 3-year-old who avoids all veggies: gummy vitamins with 10 mcg vitamin D and 7 mg iron help cut risks of rickets and anemia, based on standard kids’ health guidelines. They’re more reliable because of stricter rules on kids’ products that must pass rigorous tests for purity, exact doses, and real-world trials on children; unlike adult supplements, which get lighter checks and often have fillers in unproven “immunity” tabs.

The science boils down to accuracy over hype, supplements excel for diagnosed deficiencies like vitamin D amid Baguio’s low sunlight or iron for picky kids. However it falters more as daily crutches for well-fed adults, where routine multivitamins show no broad benefits in major trials. The nutrients from actual food consistently outperform isolated pills in absorption and safety, avoiding risks like excess flushing or overload side effects. So instead of listening to the internet, heed your doctor to swap doubt for decisions that actually work. ■



The Silicon Spine:
Re-engineering
the Philippine
Bureaucracy

■ By Zane Samoranos

The Philippines is gradually transforming its paper-based bureaucracy into a more connected digital system under the Republic Act No. 11995, also known as the E-Governance Act of 2023. The law aims to modernize government services by improving coordination among agencies, strengthening cybersecurity, and making public services faster and more accessible. For decades, government offices operated in separate “information silos.” This meant that agencies kept their own databases, often requiring citizens to physically bring documents from one office to another. Applying for permits, clearances, or licenses could take days or even weeks because systems were not interconnected. RA 11995 seeks to solve this by promoting interoperability, or the ability of government systems to share information securely. Instead of repeatedly submitting the same documents, agencies are encouraged to verify records electronically through secure data-sharing systems. Several digital initiatives are already in place: The Philippine Statistics Authority offers online requests for civil registry documents. The National Bureau of Investigation provides online appointment systems for clearance applications.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue has expanded electronic filing and payment systems for taxpayers. These programs reflect the government’s push toward a more streamlined, “one-stop shop” experience, although full integration across all agencies is still ongoing. To support digital transformation, the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) plays a central role. The DICT is responsible for developing national digital infrastructure, cybersecurity policies, and government connectivity programs. One major initiative is the GovNet project, which connects government offices through a secure network to improve communication and data exchange. The country is also investing in the National Broadband Plan, launched in 2017 and continuing through the present, to expand high-speed internet access—especially in remote and underserved areas. Reliable connectivity is essential for digital governance to function effectively. Cybersecurity is another key component of the reform. The Philippines implements security measures such as digital certificates and encryption to protect online transactions. These tools are based on systems like Public Key Infrastructure (PKI), which use advanced cryptography to verify identities and secure data. In simple

terms, digital signatures work like tamper-proof seals—if information is altered after signing, the system detects it immediately. At the local level, many local government units (LGUs) are developing eLGU portals that allow residents to apply for permits, pay fees, and access services online. While not yet uniform nationwide, these platforms represent gradual progress toward more transparent and efficient public service. Still, the transition is not instant. Challenges remain, including uneven internet access, cybersecurity risks, budget constraints, and the need for digital literacy training among both government employees and citizens. Full implementation of RA 11995 requires careful planning, funding, and cooperation across agencies. Rather than an overnight revolution, the Philippines’ digital transformation is a step-by-step process. The E-Governance Act provides the framework, but real progress depends on sustained implementation and public trust. By viewing governance not only as a political system but also as an information system, the country is slowly building what could be described as a digital backbone—one designed to make services faster, more transparent, and more accountable for all Filipinos. ■

Traffic jams, road accidents, and unsafe crossings have long been part of the daily struggle for many commuters. For drivers, pedestrians, and public transport passengers, these problems are not rare events but regular experiences. Long waiting times at intersections and poorly lit roads can increase stress and risk. For a group of young innovators from the S.T.E.M. strand of Guisad Valley National High School, these everyday challenges became the starting point for scientific exploration. Their response? A smart system called “Traffic Eyes: Cat’s Eye Perspective into Smart Traffic Management System Using Proximity Sensors.” Instead of accepting traffic problems as normal, the students chose to study them closely. They observed how vehicles move, how drivers react to signals, and how limited visibility affects safety at night. By looking at common road features in a new way, they discovered that even simple tools could be improved through technology and creativity. Inspired by the familiar cat’s eye—those reflective road studs that guide drivers at night—the team reimagined a simple traffic tool into an intelligent safety device. Traditional cat’s eyes merely reflect headlights to improve nighttime visibility. They have helped drivers stay within lanes for many years, especially on dark highways and curved roads. The students’ version, however, integrates proximity sensors and Arduino technology, transforming passive reflectors into active components of a smart traffic system. This shift from passive to active design is what makes the project unique. Rather than waiting for light to hit them, the upgraded road studs take part in monitoring traffic conditions. By combining basic road materials with modern electronics, the students created a system that responds to its surroundings. Instead of only bouncing back light, these upgraded cat’s eyes detect approaching vehicles in real time. Using ultrasonic proximity sensors, the device measures distance by emitting sound waves and calculating how long they

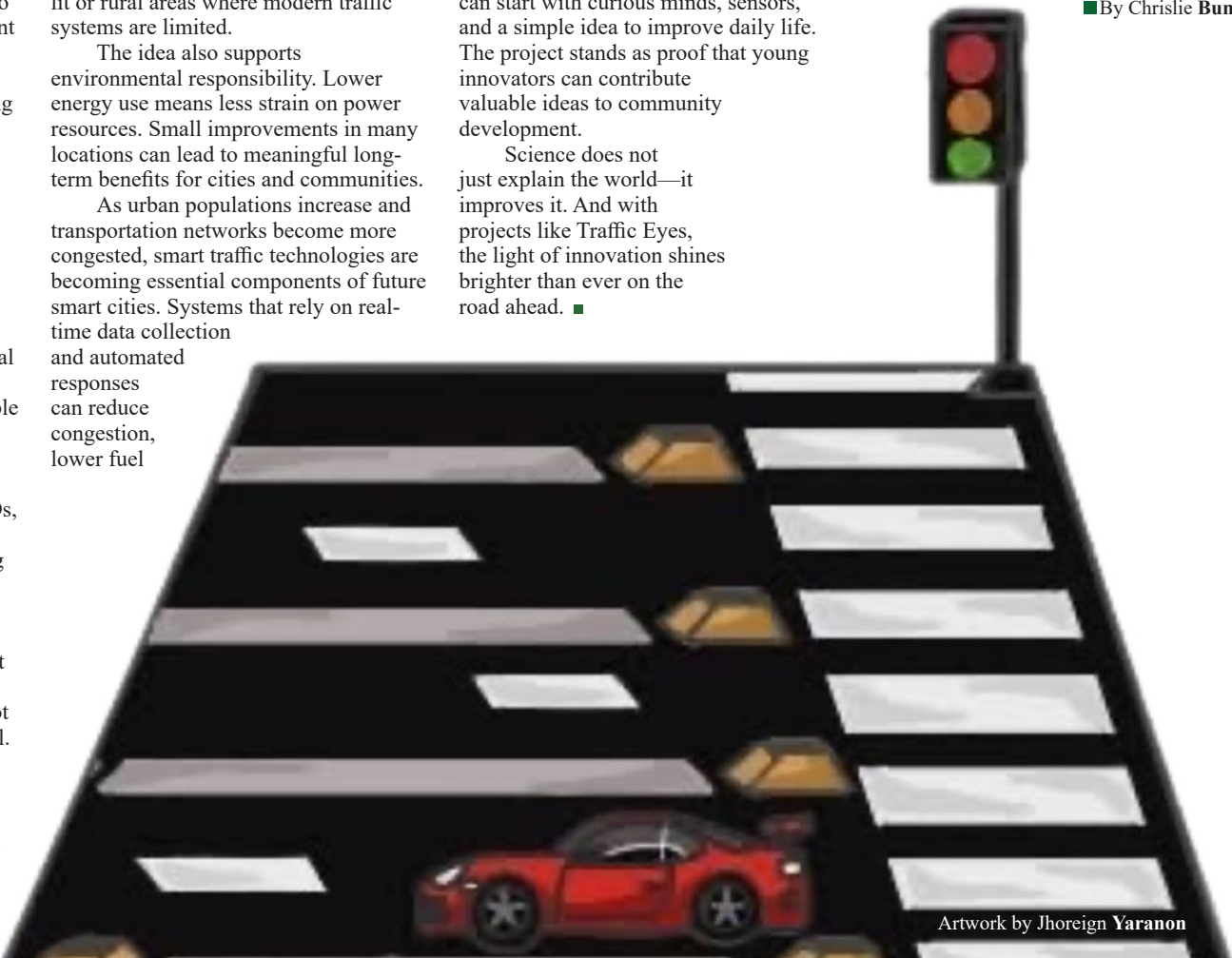
take to return after hitting an object. This process allows the system to determine how close a vehicle is with accurate timing. When a vehicle enters a programmed detection range, the system automatically illuminates the road studs and can trigger alerts or communicate with nearby traffic mechanisms. Such automation reduces the need for constant human control. The system reacts immediately, which is important in situations where quick responses can prevent accidents. It also shows how sensors and simple programming can work together to create smart infrastructure. In simple terms, these smart cat’s eyes function like vigilant sentinels embedded in the pavement—constantly monitoring movement and responding instantly. They remain inactive when no vehicles are present, but once movement is detected, they light up to guide and warn drivers. This makes roads more visible and interactive, especially during nighttime or low-visibility conditions. “We wanted to design something that not only improves road safety but also makes traffic systems more efficient,” explained Jake Frias, one of the student researchers. “Our goal is to use science and technology to create solutions that truly help people.” His statement reflects the team’s desire to move beyond theory and create practical solutions for real communities. The project brings together multiple S.T.E.M. disciplines: Physics – understanding wave reflection and sensor detection Electronics – wiring sensors, LEDs, and microcontrollers Computer Science – programming automated responses Engineering Design – building a durable and functional prototype Each discipline plays an important role in making the system work. Without physics, the students would not understand how ultrasonic waves travel. Without electronics and programming, the sensors would not communicate with the lights. Engineering design ensures that the device can survive real road conditions such as heat, rain, and pressure from vehicles. The system uses Arduino

technology to process signals from the ultrasonic sensors and automatically turn on lights or send alerts when vehicles are detected. This highlights how coding and electronics can be applied to real-life traffic problems. Through careful programming, the students were able to set detection ranges and control how the system responds in different situations. Beyond its technical creativity, Traffic Eyes promotes both road safety and sustainability. By illuminating only when vehicles are detected, the system conserves energy compared to constantly powered lighting. This smart use of electricity reduces waste and lowers operating costs. Automated signaling may also reduce human error, improve driver awareness, and potentially decrease accidents—especially in poorly lit or rural areas where modern traffic systems are limited. The idea also supports environmental responsibility. Lower energy use means less strain on power resources. Small improvements in many locations can lead to meaningful long-term benefits for cities and communities. As urban populations increase and transportation networks become more congested, smart traffic technologies are becoming essential components of future smart cities. Systems that rely on real-time data collection and automated responses can reduce congestion, lower fuel

consumption, and improve emergency response efficiency. When traffic flows more smoothly, drivers spend less time idling, which also helps reduce air pollution. What makes Traffic Eyes particularly inspiring is that it began inside a classroom. The project demonstrates how S.T.E.M. education equips students not only with theoretical knowledge but with the ability to apply science to real-world problems. It shows that innovation does not always require expensive laboratories—sometimes it starts with curiosity, teamwork, and determination. As cities grow and roads become busier, innovations like Traffic Eyes show that meaningful change does not always begin in large laboratories—it can start with curious minds, sensors, and a simple idea to improve daily life. The project stands as proof that young innovators can contribute valuable ideas to community development. Science does not just explain the world—it improves it. And with projects like Traffic Eyes, the light of innovation shines brighter than ever on the road ahead. ■

TRAFFIC EYES:
ILLUMINATING
THE FUTURE
OF SMART
TRAFFIC
MANAGEMENT

■ By Chrislie Bumakil





Baguio City Welcomes Palarong Panlungsod 2025

■ By Dharylle Agcarao

Baguio City formally opened the Palarong Panlungsod 2025 on November 27, 2025 at the Melvin Jones Grandstand, gathering student-athletes from several districts—representing not only their schools but also the real essence of sports.

Even before the program officially began, the venue was already stirring life. Among the first to arrive were the student-athletes from District 8, easily recognizable in their bright green uniforms that stood out against the early morning scene. While other delegates were

still making their way to the venue, District 8 athletes were already settled, energized, and visibly eager—true early birds ready to embrace the moment.

As the stands gradually filled, the atmosphere transformed into a full celebration as over 3,500 athletes from Baguio City’s 10 school districts gathered at the opening of Palarong Panlungsod 2025. One by one, delegates marched in, carrying their banners with pride and excitement, each step echoing the months of preparation behind them. For these young competitors, the

event symbolized more than athletic rivalry—it was about representing their schools, districts, and communities on a larger stage.

Mayor Benjamin Magalong joined the opening ceremony and delivered a message that resonates deeply with the athletes. He reminded them that true excellence in sports is measured not only by strength and skill, but also by respect, integrity, and camaraderie. In his address, the mayor emphasized, “Ang Palarong Panlungsod ay higit pa sa paligsahan—ito ay isang oportunidad para mangarap, isang larangan ng

pagkatao at paalala na ang isports ay kasing halaga ng paaralan sa paghubog ng mga leaders ng kinabukasan”. His words reinforced the idea that values learned on the field are victories that last far beyond the games.

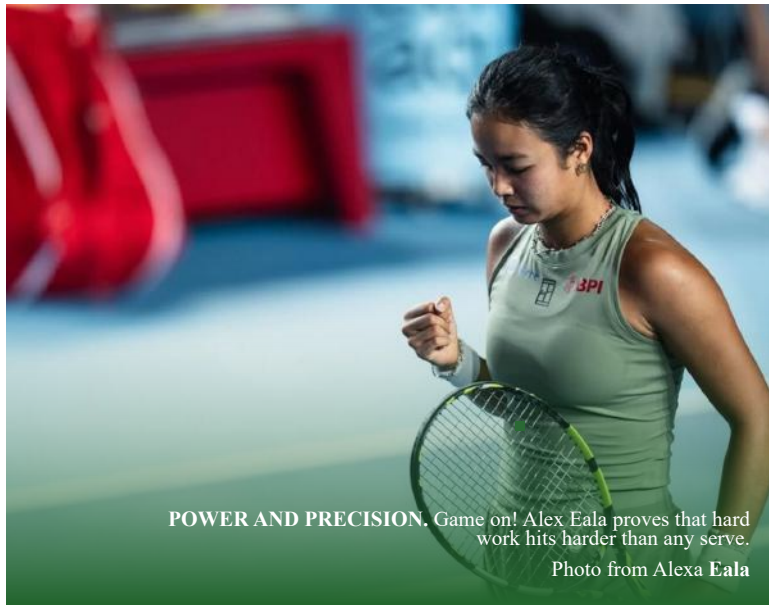
The event was formally led by School Division’s Superintendent Soraya T. Faculo, with the support of Assistant Schools Division Superintendent Carmel F. Meris, CES-SGOD Nino Tibangay, and CES-CID Juliet Sannad. Their presence underscored the School Division’s commitment to nurturing

well-rounded learners through sports and healthy competition.

Cheers erupted across the grandstand—as the torch was finally raised, officially leading in the week of athletic battles, teamwork, and unforgettable moments. From the early arrival of District 8 in bright green to the unified roar of thousands of young athletes, Palarong Panlungsod 2025 opened not just with excitement—but with a powerful display of sports in Baguio City. ■

Alex Eala Breaks WTA Top 50, Makes Philippine Tennis History

■ By Ariane Danga



Alexandra “Alex” Eala became the first Filipina to enter the Women’s Tennis Association) WTA Top 50 in 2025, marking a historic milestone for Philippine tennis.

The Quezon City–born athlete first gained international attention after winning the 2020 Australian Open girls’ doubles and the 2021 French Open girls’ doubles titles. In 2022, she made history again by capturing the US Open junior singles title, the first Grand Slam singles win for a Filipino.

Eala also claimed the women’s singles gold medal at the 2025 SEA Games, the first Filipina champion in the event since 1999. She trained at the Rafael Nadal Academy in Spain, sharpening her skills for elite competition.

Her achievements earned her Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) Athlete of the Year, shared with gymnast Carlos Yulo, highlighting her rise as one of the Philippines’ brightest international sports stars. ■

Lifting Through The Ranks



■ By Janice Aguindang

Ronel Morareng and Kent David Malinay of Guisad Valley National High School placed 5th and 6th, respectively, in the men’s weightlifting event during the district meet on October 5, 2025, at the Baguio City Athletic Bowl.

Under the guidance of Coach Gerald A. Lee, both athletes delivered

strong performances throughout their attempts, demonstrating technique, focus, and determination against a competitive field.

“Both athletes showed discipline and consistency in their lifts,” said Coach Lee. “Their placements reflect the hard work they’ve invested during training, and I’m confident they will continue to improve in

future competitions.”

The district meet offered valuable experience for both lifters, providing a platform to hone their skills and prepare for higher-level competitions. While neither athlete reached the podium this time, their top-six finishes signal potential for GVNHS in upcoming city and regional weightlifting events. ■

Let the Games Begin: District 8 Athletic Meet 2025 Opens in Baguio

■ By Ariane Danga

The District 8 Athletic Meet 2025 officially opened on October 9, 2025, at Bonifacio Elementary School in Baguio City, uniting athletes, coaches, teachers, and students from various schools for a week of competition and sportsmanship.

Hosted by Bonifacio Elementary School, with Baguio Central University serving as masters of ceremony, the opening program began with a parade of athletes representing Pinsao Elementary

School, Pinsao National High School, Informatics Baguio, Data Center College of the Philippines, AMA Colleges Baguio, Guisad Valley National High School, Lucban Integrated School, Fairview Elementary School, Holy Ghost Elementary School, Bonifacio Elementary School, and Baguio Central University.

Guest speaker City Councilor Vladimir D. Cayabas urged participants to compete with honesty, discipline, and teamwork, reminding

them that sports build both skill and character. The program was energized by dancesport performances from Lucban Integrated School and AMA Colleges Baguio, drawing loud cheers from the crowd.

A symbolic highlight followed with the lighting of the urn by Lara Czarina Langaen, Rheejean Ambit Parayao, Rafunsel Maniego, and Chrissea Mae Joy D. Baldan, marking the official start of the competitions. This was immediately followed by the Oath of Sportsmanship, Coaches’

Oath, and Officials’ Oath, reinforcing the spirit of fair play.

Action officially began with the ceremonial toss led by Christopher D. Basing-at, opening the first basketball game between Lucban Integrated School and Bonifacio Elementary School. Bonifacio players Fernandez (#15) and Marasigan (#36) stepped onto center court, with Marasigan making the opening touch.

District sports coordinator Nancy B. Dumlali then formally declared the meet open, announcing,

“Let the games begin!”, and releasing the official schedule of competitions.

With the final rites concluded, athletes moved to their respective venues, ready to test their speed, strength, and teamwork in the days ahead. More than a contest of medals, the District 8 Athletic Meet 2025 stands as a celebration of youth, unity, and the enduring power of sports to bring communities together. ■

GVNHS Dominates District 8, Secures City Meet Berth

■By Janice Aguindang

Champions are not only measured by trophies, but by how loudly they answer pressure — and Guisad Valley National High School answered with authority. With confidence, discipline, and a clear sense of purpose, the team proved that their journey this season is built not only on talent but also on preparation, resilience, and a strong commitment to excellence.

GVNHS turned the District 8 5v5 basketball tournament into its personal showcase, carving out decisive wins and announcing itself as a rising force in Baguio high school hoops. From the first game to the championship round, the squad demonstrated consistency and composure, displaying maturity beyond their years. Every possession, every defensive stop, and every fastbreak reflected a team determined to leave a mark and raise the standard of their program.

What made their run remarkable was not just the score lines, but the way

they played—patient half-court sets, suffocating defense, and a transition game that punished every opponent’s mistake. Their ball movement created open looks, while their communication on defense disrupted offensive rhythm. Observers noted how the team maintained focus regardless of the situation, refusing to become complacent even when holding large leads.

Their opening match against Data Center College of the Philippines set the tone for what would become a dominant campaign. A 50–29 rout showed how prepared the team was; guards attacked the lanes fearlessly while the big men controlled the boards and protected the paint. The victory not only energized the squad but also sent a strong message to the rest of the field that GVNHS was ready to compete at the highest level.

Against Baguio Central University, the contest proved tighter and more physical, testing the team’s composure and decision-making. The game remained close entering the fourth

quarter, with both sides exchanging baskets and defensive stops. However, GVNHS found a hero in Sebastian Rhaine G. Mercado. His back-to-back triples in the final period shifted the momentum and broke the game open, sparking a decisive run that secured the win. Mercado’s clutch performance earned him Most Valuable Player recognition and highlighted his ability to rise under pressure.

The championship bout with Pinsao National High School became a statement victory. From the opening tip, GVNHS showcased relentless energy, storming to a 59–24 finish. Their full-court traps forced turnovers, while crisp and unselfish ball movement created high-percentage scoring opportunities. The crowd watched in awe as the team executed with precision, turning defense into offense and maintaining intensity until the final buzzer.

Beyond the scores and highlights, the team’s success was built on unity and trust. Players consistently encouraged

one another, celebrated small victories on the court, and remained composed in challenging moments. Their chemistry allowed them to adjust quickly and respond effectively to different playing styles throughout the tournament.

Team captain Henjie Gawongna described the title as only the beginning. “Winning the district feels good, but we know the real battle is ahead. We have to be better in our defense and decision-making,” he said. His statement reflected the squad’s mindset—focused not on past achievements but on future challenges.

Behind the trophies and cheers are hours of unseen work—wind sprints after class, repetitive shooting drills, and coaches demanding discipline and accountability. Those sacrifices have shaped a team that plays for each other more than for medals. Their commitment to training and continuous improvement has become the foundation of their success, inspiring younger athletes in the school community.■

Displaying sharp teamwork, quick transitions, and disciplined ball control, Guisad Valley National High School (GVNHS) powered its way into the Lungsod football finals after shutting out Small World Christian School Foundation, 3–0, in the semifinals held on January 10, 2026. From the opening whistle, the GVNHS strikers immediately asserted dominance, dictating the tempo of the match and applying relentless pressure that left their opponents scrambling to keep up. Their aggressive yet organized approach on both ends of the pitch proved decisive in securing the final spot in the championship round.

GVNHS wasted no time in establishing control, striking early in the first half to set the tone of the game. With crisp passing sequences and well-timed runs, the team steadily broke through the defensive lines of Small World Christian School Foundation. By halftime, GVNHS had already built a commanding 2–0 advantage, energizing their supporters and placing themselves firmly in control of the match. Their defensive unit remained composed and disciplined, successfully shutting down counterattacks and preserving a clean sheet.

In the second half, GVNHS continued to dominate possession while maintaining their defensive structure. The squad’s ability to transition quickly from defense to offense created multiple scoring opportunities. The final goal, delivered with precision and confidence, sealed the 3–0 victory and officially punched their ticket to the championship match.

Grade 12 standout Shan Sanggawa spearheaded the offensive charge, delivering a stellar performance by completing a hat trick and earning Most Valuable Player honors. His sharp finishing and relentless drive in front of

goal proved unstoppable throughout the semifinal clash. Sanggawa’s performance not only lifted his team but also showcased his growth and leadership on the field.

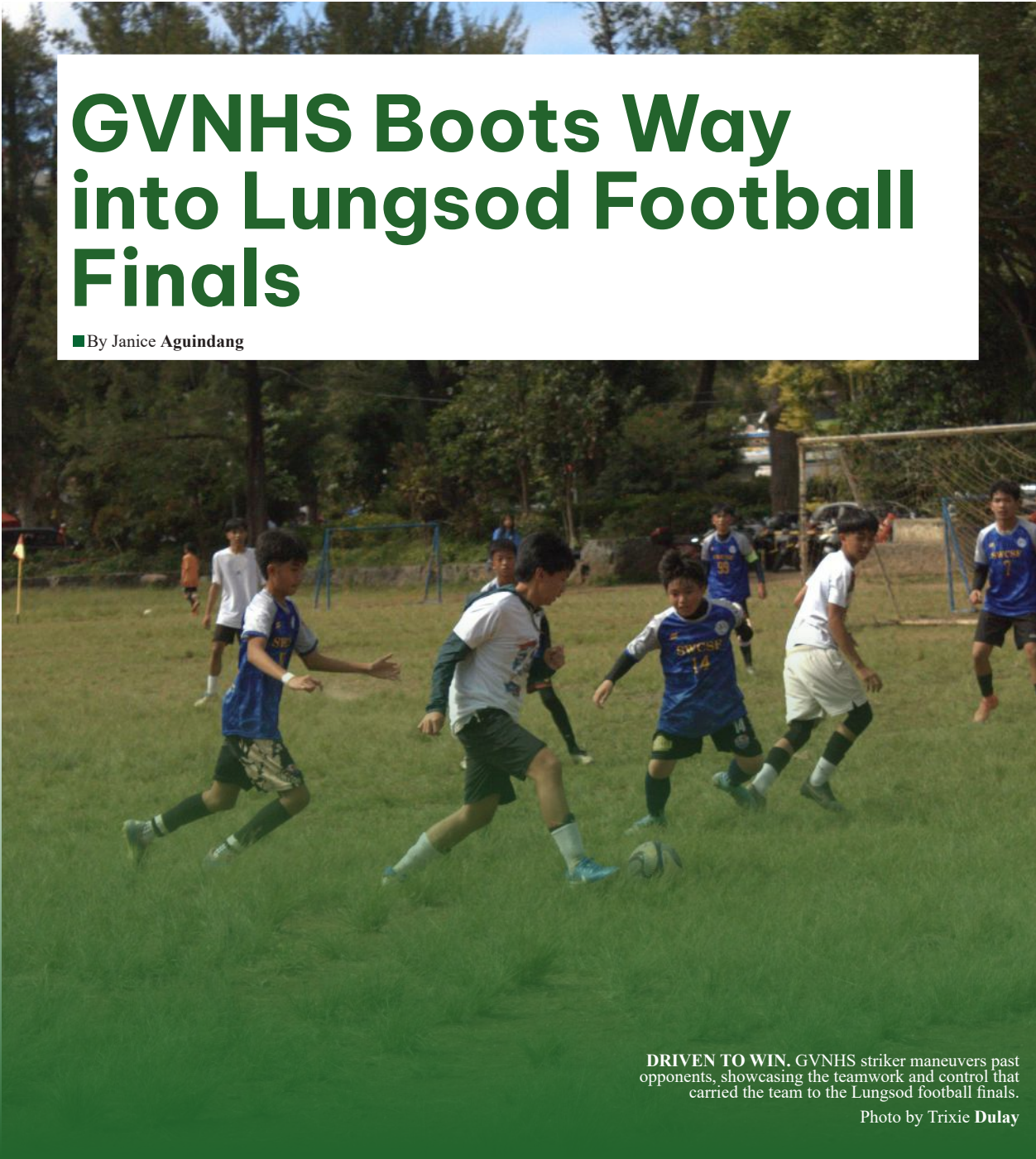
Team captain Seanfield Comicho played a crucial role in orchestrating the midfield, providing key assists and demonstrating steady leadership under pressure. His vision and composure allowed GVNHS to maintain control of the game’s rhythm, while his guidance kept the squad focused and united. The team’s overall success reflected the strategic direction and preparation instilled by coaches Samuel Jr. Mendoza and Jake Dacay, whose training

emphasized discipline, teamwork, and tactical awareness.

The victory propelled GVNHS into the Lungsod football finals against Baguio City National High School on January 11. Despite their strong semifinal momentum, GVNHS ultimately finished in second place after the championship showdown. Nonetheless, their impressive run throughout the tournament highlighted their determination, skill, and unity as a team.

Sanggawa expressed gratitude despite the outcome, saying, “Masaya kami kasi nagkaroon kami ng chance na makapasok sa championship at lalo pa naming gagalingan sa susunod.” His statement reflected the team’s positive mindset and commitment to continuous improvement.

For GVNHS, reaching the championship match was already a rewarding milestone. The experience strengthened their bond as teammates and fueled their drive to train harder for future competitions. As Comicho emphasized, the team remains determined to bring greater honor to GVNHS in the seasons ahead, carrying with them the lessons learned and the pride earned from their remarkable Lungsod football campaign.■



sportscolumn

Janice Aguindang



More Than a Game: The Power of Sports in Shaping Student Success

Books sharpen the mind, but sports strengthen the whole person. In many Philippine schools, students are often pressured to focus solely on academics, chasing high grades, medals, and honors. Yet beyond the four corners of the classroom lies another powerful teacher—the playing field. On courts, tracks, and open fields, students learn discipline, teamwork, leadership, and resilience, lessons no textbook alone can fully provide.

On dusty barangay courts and crowded school gyms, dreams are built long before trophies are lifted. When a student trains for basketball, volleyball, athletics, or any school sport, commitment becomes part of daily life. Early morning practices demand time management. Exhausting drills teach perseverance. Tough losses test emotional strength. Victories, no matter how small, boost confidence. More importantly, sports create friendships and unity among classmates from different backgrounds. A team does not win because of one star player—it wins because every member trusts, sacrifices, and works together.

Sports also shape character in ways that last beyond graduation. Student-athletes learn to handle pressure, accept criticism, and bounce back from failure. These experiences prepare them not only for competitions but also for real-life challenges. In a fast-changing world, resilience and adaptability are just as important as academic knowledge.

However, participation in sports among Filipino youth remains a growing concern. Based on the 2022 Philippine Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents, only about 15.4% of adolescents in the Philippines meet the recommended daily physical activity level of at least 60 minutes.

This means fewer than two out of ten students are active enough to enjoy the full physical, mental, and social benefits of exercise. The statistic is alarming in a country where basketball courts stand in almost every barangay, yet many young people remain inactive.

The numbers reveal a challenge, but also an opportunity. Schools must continue strengthening sports programs, not only during intramurals but throughout the entire school year. Equal attention should be given to both academic and athletic development. Parents and teachers must also encourage participation, reminding students that sports are not distractions from studies

but partners in success. When guided properly, sports can even improve focus, motivation, and academic performance.

In the end, sports are not only about trophies and medals. They are about building stronger, healthier, and more confident young Filipinos. If we want students to succeed not just in exams but in life, we must give them the chance to run, jump, compete, fail, and rise again. Because long after the final whistle is blown, the lessons learned on the playing field remain.■

the Kaleidoscope

“More than meets the eye”



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GVNHS Athlete Leads Baguio City at Batang Pinoy 2025

■By Janice Aguidang

After winning gold at the CARAA meet, 12-year-old Vahn Kristoff Lamorena carried his momentum to the 2025 Batang Pinoy National Games, reaching the quarter-finals and boosting Baguio City's team morale.

Lamorena earned the honor after a dominant performance in the District Eliminations and a gold medal finish at the Cordillera Administrative Region Athletic Association (CARAA) meet. His composure and technique impressed judges and spectators alike, signaling a promising start for Baguio City's Batang Pinoy team.

In an interview, Lamorena credited his success to hard work and dedication: “Training ng mabuti, sacrifices po at naglaan ako ng oras para sa training at sa pag-aaral. Hindi ako makapaniwala dahil first time ko po yun sa National's at nagulat po ako kasi nakaabot po ako,” he said.

Coach Kevin De Guzman praised the young athlete's discipline, noting, “Sa edad niya maganda, kasi sa edad palang niya may na achieve na siya. Sa sports, okay kasi Grade 7 nagsimula ng mag-start na simulan ang tinatak niya.”

Lamorena's performance marks a historic milestone for Baguio City at the Batang Pinoy, demonstrating that perseverance and commitment can lead to success on the national stage. ■

BATANG PINOY PRIDE. With precision and skill, 12-year-old Lamorena shines in the ring, boosting Baguio City's Batang Pinoy hopes.

Every Breath They Take, Every Move They Make: Athletes Afternoon Sessions

■By Tyra Rain Tapang

No matter the sport, every afternoon at the school grounds becomes a living testament to perseverance and discipline as GVIANs athletes gather to train with unwavering commitment. Once 4:00 PM strikes, the grounds come alive with movement, sweat, and determination—a living proof that these athletes are not merely preparing for competitions, but shaping versions of themselves.

Basketball players run drills under the fading sun, practicing teamwork, speed, and precision. Nearby, volleyball athletes sharpen their reflexes and coordination, mastering every serve and spike. On another side of the grounds, badminton players focus on agility and control, while boxers endure intense conditioning and sparring that test both body and mind. Meanwhile, arnis practitioners rehearse disciplined movements, honoring both sport and tradition.

In interviews, several athletes shared that afternoon training has become more than just a routine—it is a commitment. After a full day

of academic responsibilities, they still choose to show up, pushing through fatigue to improve their skills. Each session strengthens not only their physical abilities but also their mental toughness, teaching them patience, focus, and resilience.

For the 5v5's Team Captain, Joshua Quiamco, basketball is both a challenge and a teacher. He explained that every drill and every sweat contribute to the team's overall success. “Every practice counts because it brings us closer to winning as a team,” he said. Beyond preparing for upcoming events and competitions, these afternoon trainings mold athletes into individuals grounded in self-control and determination.

The discipline learned on the court, ring, and training mat carries over into their lives, helping them face struggles with courage and confidence.

As the sun sets and the school grounds slowly quiet down, one thing remains clear — the true victory of GVIANs athletes lies not only in medals or trophies, but in the unbreakable character they continue to build—one afternoon at a time. ■

Bright Lights, Stronger Steps: Dancesport Athletes Electrify The Dance Floor

■By Janice Aguidang

Bright lights, sharp lines, and nonstop energy filled the floor during the Dancesport Competition held on January 18, 2026 at Baguio City National High School (BCNHS) Auditorium. Within the intense hours, dancers battled through rounds with elegance and fire, turning the floor into a true test and competitive spirit.

In the standard dance, Neil Wright Nisperos and Paula Gambao delivered a remarkably consistent performance securing 4th place finishes in Slow Waltz, Tango, Quickstep, anchored by strong frame, musical control, and floor awareness. Quiel Lopez and Kylie Mendoza placed 6th in both Slow Waltz and Quick step, while Jogyne Mones and Kashmere Chloe Simeon claimed 7th in Slow Waltz, showing promising partnership and poise. The Tango field remained intense, with Kyle Cedric Gragasim finishing 6th, and Ciel Drei Bajal with Uziel Jimenez pushing through to the standard Semi-Finals.

The Latin Category of the competition ignited the atmosphere with rhythm and expression. Dave Calimoso and Frinzes Cabaluna, together with Adonis Hernandez and Trisha Losarita advanced to the Cha-Cha-Cha Semi-Finals, delivering sharp timing and dynamic hip action. In the Rumba, Jadrian Sovilla and Juliana dimalanta impressed with emotional depth and control, later returning strong in Jive, joined once again by Hernandez and Losarita, whose explosive energy and endurance kept the crowd engaged.

Behind every polished performance was the steady guidance of Coaches Gal Andrea Pascua and Charrise Dotimas, whose preparation and mentorship were evident on the floor with the assistance of mentors Jared and Missy, both Alumni of GVNHS. As the final echoed through the hall, Coach Dotimas captured the moment sharing, “They stepped onto the floor as

beginners, but the music told a different story—every spin, every rise, every fall echoed the souls of seasoned dancers as if the floor itself already knew their names”.



Photo by Nikki Licaros