

PRESS RELEASE**DepEd to kick off 16th year of *Brigada Eskwela***

PASIG CITY, May 8, 2019 – The Department of Education (DepEd), through its External Partnerships Service (EPS), is set to implement *Brigada Eskwela*—now on its 16th year—from May 20 to 25.

This year's theme, "*Matatag na Bayan para sa Maunlad na Paaralan*," reflects how DepEd recognizes the importance of the community in making schools the best place for learners to acquire the values and competencies they need to contribute to nation-building.

Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones emphasized that *Brigada Eskwela*, also known as the National Schools Maintenance Week, is escalating its implementation to maintain its success and go beyond the expected outcomes with the help of its partners.

"It is more than just about painting or cleaning schools in preparation for the return of the children. It's also a matter of seeing to it that we provide them the requisites of learners and the requisites of a good learning environment namely, safe schools, supplies, furniture, equipment, and good teachers," Briones stated.

Meanwhile, the national kickoff program and caravan is slated on May 16, 2019 at Alfonso Central Elementary School in Cavite.

Strengthening *bayanihan*

Fifteen years after the program was conceptualized, *Brigada Eskwela* continues to flourish. In 2018 alone, a total of P4.66 billion worth of resources was generated, and the number of nationwide volunteers doubled from 11 million in 2017 to 22 million in 2018.

Undersecretary for Legislative Affairs, External Partnerships, and Project Management Service Tonisito Umali, Esq. highlighted the success of the program: "*Patunay lamang po ito na patuloy pang lumawig ang kaalaman ng ating mamamayan upang dumami ang nakikipagkaisa at lalong mapaunlad ang ating bayan, mapatatag ang ating mga paaralan, at lubusang mapakinabangan ng ating mga mag-aaral.*"

Epitome of education partnerships

First established in 2003 as a voluntary effort, *Brigada Eskwela* has become one of DepEd's most important programs which aims to address resource gaps faced by the Department through strengthening partnerships with the local communities.

In the first year of its implementation, only 4,000 schools were expected to participate, but a total of 12,533 schools accepted the challenge. The tremendous efforts of various stakeholders have brought about innovations and creative ways to improve the schools' facilities in preparation for the opening of classes and towards a better learning environment.

In 2008, *Brigada Eskwela* has become a permanent part of the school calendar, and all schools nationwide are now mandated to implement the program every second week of May.

“*Brigada Eskwela* is the epitome of what education partnerships truly are. One week of partnering with our community, parents, and all of our stakeholders to ensure quality basic education for all learners is not enough. *Ito po ay dapat na ipagpatuloy, palaguin, palakasin, at paigtingin sa buong taon,*” the Undersecretary emphasized.

Stakeholders who wish to contribute may learn more information about the implementing guidelines of this year’s *Brigada Eskwela* through http://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DM_s2019_036-1.pdf.

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