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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DepEd-SDO of Bulacan Office of the SDS

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PRESS RELEASE

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**Briones welcomes 24.7M learners for SY 2020-2021, declares opening of classes a victory**

PASIG CITY, October 6, 2020 – Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones on Monday officially opened School Year 2020-2021, signifying the formal start of the country's transition to distance learning.

"We declare our victory over COVID-19, the destroyer of our lives, the destroyer of our economy and of our way of life and society. But we will not allow COVID-19 to destroy our children's education and their future," Secretary Briones emphasized during the School Opening Day National Program anchored on the theme *Handang Isip, Handa Bukas!*

In a nationally televised speech, Sec. Briones declared the opening of classes to 24.7 million enrolled learners and 866,512 teachers in basic education across the country on October 5, which coincided with the celebration of World Teachers' Day.

"In spite of the pandemic—with the outpouring support from our learners, teachers, stakeholders, and supporters, victory is assured for education. Today we claim victory," she added.

The Education chief expressed her appreciation to the teachers, division superintendents, district supervisors, heads of schools, regional officials, and central office executives who actively worked together to make the new school year possible.

"Whatever is happening in the country, whatever challenges we are facing, education must continue, education cannot wait, our learners cannot wait, we continue with the process so we can give hope and continuity, and contribute to the normalization of activities of our country," Briones said.

Briones also thanked President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, members of the Cabinet, lawmakers, local government units, civil society organizations, experts, and other stakeholders, who supported the Department in its implementation of the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP).

"Indeed, nothing can get in the way of the instructions and formations of our learners -- not even the pandemic. This time also ushers us in a new era in our basic education program as we now ventured into distance and online learning," President Duterte said in a recorded message.

This is the first time in Philippine history that the entire basic education system will forego face-to-face classes and adopt various distance learning modalities as modes of instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners will start their classes for SY 2020-2021 through either modular, TV- or radio-based instruction, online, or a combination of the said modalities.

To check on the actual implementation of distance learning, DepEd executive committee members and directors visited schools and field offices nationwide and provided updates on the ground during the program.



## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DepEd officials and guests also joined panel discussions on *Oplan Balik Eskwela* (OBE), Health and Safety Protocols, and Education Continuity, and other pressing matters to fully inform the public of the Department's initiatives for the school year.

DepEd TV teacher-broadcasters Pamela Amor Villanueva of Bagong Silang High School and Jamil Carvajal of T. Paez Integrated School hosted the virtual event at the Bulwagan ng Karunungan in DepEd Central Office in Pasig.

The venue also houses the Department's *Oplan Balik Eskwela* Public Assistance Command Center, which receives and handles inquiries and complaints about the opening of classes.

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