Background

When schools resumed in October 2020 and the Department of Education (DepEd) shifted to home-based, distance learning, Filipino parents had to step up to support their children’s learning. The majority of the schools distributed Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) based on the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) provided by DepEd to facilitate learning without direct teacher support. Though parents coordinated with teachers, they struggled to help their children learn. This was the case in Parang Elementary School, a medium-sized school in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte. The school was chosen as one of four schools in Region V to pilot USAID’s learning continuity support package through the ABC+: Advancing Basic Education in the Philippines project. USAID’s interventions focus on early grade learners, supporting K-3 teachers, students, and parents to improve their distance learning experience.

Challenges

At the onset, Parang Elementary School teachers and the school principal identified the following challenges:

- Lack of a systematic SLM distribution and collection scheme for parents in need of instruction and guidance.
- Parents struggling to support their children.
- Mixed level of support and absence of home learning partners due to work and other demands on their time.

It was clear that parents needed more support and that the teachers needed a way to have constant communication with parents to provide guidance and reassurance. The teachers also wanted to offer a venue for parents to share their progress and discuss the challenges they encounter as they facilitate their children’s learning at home.
Parents take weekly turns, one parent leader “adopts” five learners for a day

Solution

The school created Parent Group Circles (PGC) as a way to cascade information and instruction to parents. As a first step, even before the school year started, the school trained parent leaders on beginning reading to help them teach struggling readers and to ensure their children would become strong readers.

Through the PGC, teachers and parents communicate openly. Teachers explain difficult lessons to parent leaders during the distribution and retrieval of SLMs. Parent leaders then share the information with PGC members. In turn, parent leaders share their group’s challenges and progress, especially on struggling readers, with the teachers.

The school also introduced the “adopt a home partner” approach into the PGC where one parent leader teaches the children of the PGC members for a day, and the children learn together. The approach was welcomed by working parents who agreed to share the responsibility by taking turns every week.

“One parent would teach up to five children whose homes are nearby. In some cases, the children are related or family members,” explained Lourdes Non, the school principal.

Through the Parent Group Circle, those who were close to giving up received support and encouragement from other parents.

Results

The PGCs have made teachers’ work much easier. Instead of managing more than 1,200 parents, teachers only have to meet the assigned parent leaders for the week. Through the PGC, the school has been able to efficiently manage the distribution and retrieval of the SLMs by reducing the number of parents who need to go to school on a weekly basis.

With more time, teachers are able to review the submitted SLMs to monitor learner progress. With the support they get from the PGC, teachers are better prepared to provide support during home visits where they discuss individual learner progress with home partners.

“My teachers have received feedback from home partners that the PGC system encourages their children to learn because their ‘classmates’ join them. Parents are also quick to give support to other parents when they need it,” said Non.

Parents appreciate the specific role they play to ensure their children’s learning continuity while also being able to focus on work and other matters for the rest of the week. Those who were close to giving up due to the overwhelming responsibility of teaching their children received support and encouragement from other parents.

To learn more about this BE-LCP good practice, contact:

LOURDES NON
School Principal
Parang Elementary School
parang@jesped@gmail.com