AIDE MEMOIRE
21 May 2020

PROPOSAL FOR VIRTUAL NATIONAL GRADUATION CEREMONIES FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020 UNDER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The unexpected incidence of the COVID-19 global pandemic greatly affected the last quarter of the Philippine public school calendar and the activities scheduled for that time period. Not only were the 4th quarter exams cancelled but graduation rites as well. All graduation ceremonies for School Year 2019-2020 were postponed indefinitely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing implementation of community quarantines throughout the country.

PILOT RUN OF VIRTUAL GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Recognizing the importance of graduation as a symbol of hope and a celebration of the hard work and achievements of learners and parents, **DepEd Region XI**, in partnership with **Microsoft Philippines**, piloted **Virtual Graduation Ceremonies** for **three schools** in different cities.

The Virtual Graduation Ceremonies, using video conferencing technologies, were conducted in the following schools:

- Ruparan National High School in Digos City for 16 graduates;
- Panabo City Senior High School for 500 graduates; and
- Corneilo C. Reta Senior Elementary School in Davao City for 115 graduates.

A total of 1,710 learners, parents, and community members attended the Virtual Graduation Ceremonies of the three schools. The Virtual Graduation Ceremonies were offered to learners and parents on a **voluntary basis,** as not everyone had access to the equipment and internet connection needed to participate in the ceremonies.

The pilot schools followed a **program template** prepared by DepEd Region XI and Microsoft that guided the school heads in the conduct of the Virtual Graduation

Ceremonies. Technical support was provided by the Division IT Officers and the School ICT Coordinators to ensure that learners and parents could participate in the event. Awarding ceremonies were performed by parents in their respective residences and broadcasted through video conferencing as shown in the pictures below.

Awarding Ceremonies done by parents in the residence and
broadcasted through video conferencing

PROPOSAL DETAILS

Given the success of these pilot Virtual Graduation Ceremonies, the Office of the Undersecretary for Administration and the Information and Communications Technology Service (OUA-ICTS) propose that a **National Graduation Ceremonies** for School Year 2019-2020 **be conducted virtually online.** First part is a **nationally synchronized ceremony with the Secretary (and even the President) speaking before the graduates**. Second part will be for divisions or schools doing the other details like awarding of certificates and honors if they would want to. Both or either part may be undertaken.

It is proposed that the Virtual National Graduation Ceremonies be conducted on **12 June 2020**, coinciding with Philippine Independence Day. The division or school virtual graduation ceremonies can be done thereafter of on any other day within the week of June 8-12, 2020.

Microsoft Philippines has expressed their intent to continue to support DepEd in preserving the tradition of Graduation Ceremonies by offering the pre-prepared ceremony program they used in the pilot run to schools nationwide who would want to avail of it.

To ensure the successful conduct of these Virtual Graduation Ceremonies for regions, divisions, or schools who will opt to avail of the program, strong leadership involvement is ideal. Based on the pilot run in Region XI, the preparations for the conduct of the Virtual Graduation Ceremonies will require **at least two weeks**. These preparations will include online meetings with authorized representatives from the regional or division offices and principals or school heads, depending on who wants to avail of the said program. Preparations will also cover the orientation of IT Officers and School ICT Coordinators who will support the school head in ensuring that the necessary technology is in place for the conduct of the Virtual Graduation Ceremonies.

Having this Virtual Graduation Ceremony as an option for schools will demonstrate to the public that education milestones such as Graduation Rites can still be conducted safely even in challenging conditions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.
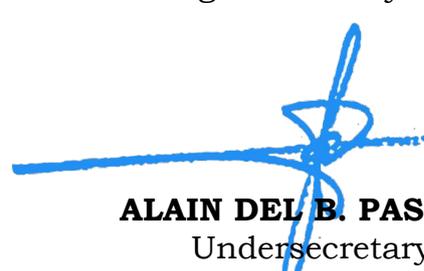
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Undersecretary

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