

Mainstreaming in the Senior High School Classrooms at Legazpi City National High School

Krismelleh Cassandra Lorenzita B. Millare

Legazpi City National High School (Department of Education)

*krismelleh.belaro@deped.gov.ph

ABSTRACT

Education is a basic human right. This is expressly stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reiterated by the 1987 Philippine Constitution. As the agency of the government in charge of managing the educational system in the Philippines, the Department of Education has issued department orders to ensure that this basic human right to education is upheld especially to learners with disabilities. That is why inclusive education was introduced to the Philippine education system. One method of inclusion is the concept of mainstreaming in the classroom. Mainstreaming is the method of placing learners with disabilities to a regular classroom setting together with regular students giving them the same access to knowledge and the same environment to grow into. Legazpi City National High School (LCNHS), formerly Pagasa National High School, implements mainstreaming in the classroom. Among the best practices in the school are: Integration of Sign Language; Project LCD-FILE (LCD for Interactive Learning Experience), and; Lesson Contextualization. The objectives of best practice implementation are: To expose the mainstreamed learners to a more diverse social environment; To achieve a high passing rate for National Certification; and to provide more employment opportunities for the mainstreamed learners. The best practices indeed contributed to exposing the mainstreamed learners to a more diverse environment which allowed them to grow and hone their potentials; secured them a National Certificate, and; gave them more opportunities for employment.

Keywords: Mainstream, LCNHS, LSEN

Introduction of Best Practices

The protection and promotion afforded by the state among its citizens extends to those with disabilities and those belonging to minorities and indigenous groups. The 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates that education must be made accessible to all regardless of differences that set them apart. This is anchored on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stating that “Everyone has the right to education.” (un.org/) This is further reinforced as one of Sustainable Development Goals: “Ensuring Inclusive, Equitable, and Quality Education and the Promotion of Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All.” (sdgs.un.org/goals)

The Department of Education (DepEd) mandated Inclusive Education as a strategy for increasing the participation rate of children by virtue of DepEd Order 72, s. 2009. DepEd sees the urgency of providing all children with their basic constitutional right to education most especially children with disabilities. The department guarantees these children appropriate education within regular or inclusive classroom setting. (deped.gov.ph) To further support this advocacy, a special law was enacted to

institute a policy for inclusion and services for learners with disabilities in support of inclusive education. This special law known as Republic Act 11650, further establishes learning resource centers of learners with disabilities in all school districts, municipalities and cities. (lawlibrary.chanrobles.com)

Legazpi City National High School (LCNHS), formerly Pag-asa National High School, led by its dynamic leader Dr. Jeremy A. Cruz, was one of the prime movers of the Inclusive SPED (iSPED) Program. Anchored on Dr. Cruz's advocacy on Inclusion and Poverty Alleviation through Responsive Education (Cruz, 2018) the provision of inclusive education in the school draws support from the philosophy that all learners with special needs must receive appropriate education and services within the system. It is a basic freedom for all kinds of learners and a guarantee for one to get an education with other learners regardless of human differences in a school within a school setting. Dr. Cruz has this vision of giving more opportunities to these LSENs to socialize within a larger community and be at par with regular students as well. It is his dream to secure these LSENs a place in society where they can still be productive members despite their disabilities. To concretize this vision, mainstreaming was implemented within the school.

In 2014-2015, the school started its mainstreaming program accommodating 31 Learners with Special Education Needs (LSENs) from grades 7-10. The visually impaired learners are placed in full mainstreaming while the hearing-impaired together with the intellectually challenged are placed in partial mainstreaming. In 2016-2017, the school had 64 LSENs attending classes in grades 7-12.

The word 'mainstreaming' comes from the concept that students with disabilities can be incorporated into the 'mainstream' of education, instead of placing them in separate classrooms and giving them completely separate instruction," (BrightHubEd). It is expected that this method may provide positive results. Both the regular and the mainstreamed students may learn from one another through their interaction in the 'real' and 'actual' setting. The regular learners may also learn the value of respect and concept of inclusivity while dealing with these LSENs.

In order to support mainstreaming in classroom, LCNHS, through the ingenuity of the school principal, Dr. Cruz, came up with best practices to fully implement it. These are: Integration of Sign Language; Project LCD-FILE (LCD for Interactive Learning Experience), and; Lesson Contextualization.

Justification of Best Practices Implementation

Mainstreaming in classroom is revolutionary, hence, needing all the possible resources and aids to be fully implemented in the school. LCNHS' best practices are for the purpose of achieving the goal of exposing these learners with disabilities to regular classrooms, thereby giving them more opportunities to socialize in a diverse environment and be given access to a wider scope of knowledge and information. All these efforts are geared towards affording these learners future employment opportunities once they graduate from the Senior High School.

Objectives of Implementation

The objectives of best practice implementation are:

1. To expose the mainstreamed learners to a more diverse social environment;
2. To achieve a high passing rate for National Certification;
3. To provide more employment opportunities for the mainstreamed learners.

Best Practices Implemented

Integration of Sign Language in Classroom Teaching

During the first few years of Mainstreaming, the school's practice was to assign a SPED teacher inside a classroom to help sign for the hearing-impaired learners, who were the common mainstreamed learners with disability. The regular classroom teacher is partnered with a SPED teacher to facilitate the conduct of the discussion. Figure 1 shows a SPED teacher, Ms. Teresita Almayda, signing to the mainstreamed hearing-impaired learners to facilitate the discussion in a regular class

Figure 1

A SPED teacher signing for Mainstreamed Learners



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

Eventually, sign language tutorials were provided to the school community every day during the conduct of flag ceremony. This made the both the learners and the teachers learn sign language. To further integrate sign language, this was made part of the teacher's In-Service Trainings (INSET) and School Learning Action Cell (SLAC). As can be seen in Figure 2, Ms. Teresita Almayda shares her knowledge on Sign Language to other educators.

Figure 2

Sign Language Integration in School Trainings



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

Project LCD-FILE (LCD For Interactive Learning Experience)

Since most of the mainstreamed learners are hearing-impaired, the visual learning style must be employed most of the time inside the classroom. Powerpoint presentations must always be prepared by the teachers to aid the discussion. This gave rise to the inclusive classroom. This endeavor is further supported by the school's program called Project LCD-FILE which has the objective of permanently installing LCD projectors and other resources to classrooms especially those with LSENs. Equipping classrooms with these teaching aids help target more learning styles benefitting not only the mainstreamed learners but even the regular students. But aside from these resources, the teacher still has to make it a habit to write on the board for additional information and explanations integrated in the discussions. Figure 3 shows the installation of LCD Projectors as well as Televisions to most the classrooms of LCNHS.

Figure 3

Installation of LCD Projectors and TVs for an Inclusive Classroom



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

Lesson Contextualization

The Senior High School has a very rigorous curriculum. The subjects and lessons can be quite challenging among regular students, how much more to the mainstreamed learners. The teachers must make it a point to contextualize written tests and performance tasks for the mainstreamed learners. Through contextualization, the mainstreamed learners can better cope with the lessons. In Figure 4, LSENs are scene performing the procedure for Bread and Pastry Production together with regular students. But for the LSENs, the teachers must specifically label the ingredients and measurements for the LSENs to perform the procedure accurately. This was attested by Ms. Jenny Balute, a SPED teacher, when she was interviewed in a local TV station here in the Philippines.

Figure 4
Lesson Contextualization for the LSEN



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

Impact of Best Practices Implemented

The success of the Inclusive Special Education in LCNHS has brought numerous awards such as the Most Inclusive Educational Programme in Asia 2019 (Silver) in Singapore and DepEd-recognized Model School in Inclusive Education. This has also inspired so many stakeholders to help the school's advocacy. Figure 5 shows pictures of receiving one of the prestigious awards.

Figure 5
EduTECH Awards



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

LCNHS sustained and maintained its networking with government and civil society organizations. The combined power of different agencies working together creates a greater effect on iSPED. This led to the birth of several laboratories in the school like the Beauty Parlor, Dressmaking and Tailoring Shop, Computer Laboratory, and Coffeeshop to serve as training grounds for the LSENS especially those with intellectual and other disabilities. Some pictures from the COFFEEWELL are scene in Figure 6 where the student-employees are the LSENS.

Figure 6
COFFEEWELL (Laboratory for LSEN)



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

The Senior High School curriculum also provides for an immersion program which will practically train the learners in their chosen fields of specialization. This training is also undertaken by the mainstreamed learners. To further the campaign on inclusion, THE RED PARADE was introduced, a unifying platform to raise awareness of and support inclusion and celebrate the abilities of differently abled persons. It seeks to gather groups and individuals who are united by a common belief that people with special needs have abilities and are able to contribute to society. Through The Red Parade Project, the learners with disabilities are given an opportunity to showcase their abilities in arts and crafts as well as their talents in singing, dancing, and even modeling. Figure 7 shows the conduct of the annual RED PARADE which celebrates disabilities as uniqueness.

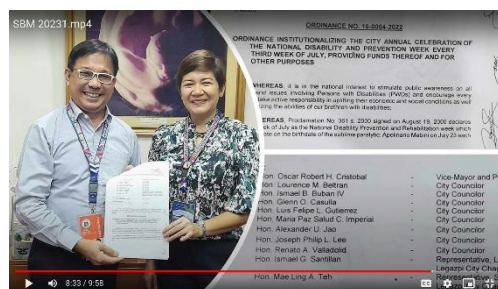
Figure 7
The Red Parade



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

Significantly, THE RED PARADE PROJECT made possible the approval of Legazpi City Mayor on the Ordinance Institutionalizing the City Annual Celebration of the National Disability and Prevention Week Every Third Week of July. This is shown in Figure 8 where Dr. Cruz (the school principal) stands beside Hon. Geraldine Rosal (the City Mayor) during the approval of the said ordinance)

Figure 8
Ordinance Institutionalizing the City Annual Celebration of the National Disability and Prevention Week



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

LCNHS has always taken pride of the National Certificate holders in its Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Track, and this includes LSEs. Figure 9 shows the number of NC II Passers both from mainstream and transition programs. This shows that in SY 2017-2018 there were three NC II passers in the Mainstream program; in SY 2018-2019 there were four NC II passers in the Mainstream program and 16 from the transition program, and; in SY 2019-2020 there were four NC II passers from the Mainstream program.

Figure 9
NC II Passers (Mainstream and Transition)



From: SBM Creatives (LCNHS)

The intensive trainings in the mainstream classrooms have historically produced 27 National Certificate II holders in a span of three years. These NCII holders are both from the Mainstream and Transition Programs of the school. The trainings and exposure provided by the school to its LSEs has significantly resulted to their employment. Table 1 presents the gainfully employed SHS-Mainstreamed graduates.

Table 1
Gainfully Employed SHS-Mainstreamed Graduates

Disability	No.	Employment
Hearing-Impaired	2	Service Crew at McDonalds
Intellectually challenged	12	Beauty Salon attendant

One of the exit programs of Senior High School helped them become gainfully employed and become a productive member of the society despite their disabilities. Pamela M. Loteria and Jenica Mae Serrano, two hearing-impaired Food Processing graduates are now working as regular employees at McDonald’s Food Chain. Similarly, 12 LSEs with intellectual disabilities and who are graduates of Beauty and Nail Care course are now employees at beauty salons in the locality. Figure 10 shows an attestation that one of the school’s graduates in the mainstream program is now gainfully employed.

Figure 10

Jenica Mae Serrano, gainfully employed as Crew at McDonald's Food Chain in Legazpi, Albay



Indeed, the mainstreaming in the classrooms at LCNHS has produced massive changes in the lives of the LSENs as well their parents. Not only did they feel the sense of belongingness in the school community but they were also provided equal opportunities to find their place in the society.

Summary and recommendations

The DepEd's thrust to inclusive education has brought revolutionary changes in the education system. It has provided a paradigm shift not only in the education system but in the society as a whole. LCNHS is one of the schools which implemented mainstreaming in the classrooms. The LSENs mainstreamed were hearing-impaired, visually-impaired and intellectually challenged. In order to support mainstreaming in the classrooms, there are some best practices observed in LCNHS.

The first best practice implemented is the integration of sign language during flag ceremonies and even in the teacher-trainings. Both the teachers and regular students are encouraged to study sign language to better communicate with the hearing-impaired LSENs. Second best practice is the LCNHS' Project LCD-FILE (LCD For Interactive Learning Experience) which permanently installs LCD Projectors in classrooms to provide visual aids for learners especially the hearing-impaired. Third best practice is lesson contextualization to adjust the lessons to help the LSENs cope better in learning. There were set objectives for these best practices which were remarkably realized through the implementation.

The LSENs were exposed to an environment where regular students interact with them. They adapted to this environment and grew out well-adjusted among these regular students. They were given more exposure to express their talents and skills and were not only treated equally with the others but were also better appreciated as individuals excelling in different crafts and expertise. The rigorous trainings they had alongside the regular students allowed them to secure themselves National Certificate in different Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Specializations. Most importantly,

great number of these LSEs are currently employed, practicing their fields of expertise and are reaping the benefits of employment. All these great impacts are manifestations of the success of the mainstreaming practice implemented in LCNHS.

The success of the mainstreaming may be apparent in LCNHS, but there are so much room for improvement. More teacher-trainings may be conducted to better learn strategies and approaches in teaching the LSENS particularly the intellectually challenged mainstreamed learners. More comprehensive assessments may be done to identify students who are ready to be mainstreamed to achieve better results.

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Note – All figures are taken from the archives of *The SBM Creatives (LCNHS)