

Parental Involvement in the Extended Hybrid Learning of Learners with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The changes in the educational landscape due to the onset of external factors like the pandemic and natural disasters, and internal developments have moved the educational community to innovate ways to respond to the needs of the learners especially those with disabilities. With the unfailing commitment to continue serving all learners, Bayombong Central School & Special Education Center has made in place its learning continuity plan to ensure the provision of educational services to the learners with disabilities who cannot attend certain periods of in-person classes due to some reasons. With this learner-oriented framework, the school operates in addressing their learning needs through extended hybrid learning where the parents serve as the co-facilitators of learning while the learners are at home or in other setting. Specifically, the general objective of this program was to ensure that learners are still involved in the inclusive learning activities while capacitating the parents to understand their child's learning characteristics and implement strategic ways to help the child progress academically and socially. This activity involved all the learners with disabilities in inclusive setting for School Year 2022-2023. Activity progress report reveals that the learners met the minimum curriculum content and performance standards with their involvement in inclusive classrooms with the support given to them. Likewise, parents have reported more optimistic perception regarding their respective child's performance and are more equipped in helping them succeed in school. Further, this served as an essential component in the design of school-led parent support program.

Keywords: learning continuity, inclusive learning, extended hybrid learning

Introduction of Best Practices

The global outbreak of the highly contagious COVID-19 introduced possibilities in the learning modalities to ensure continuity of learning. With its unfailing commitment to continue serving its community, the Department of Education has introduced the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) for the schools to find ways for learning to push thru amidst the threat and uncertainties brought about by the pandemic. The sudden shift in the system of implementing education has highlighted the significant role of the parents as the school's partners in the implementation of the learning continuity while the learners are at home or in other setting outside the school.

As an advocate of inclusion and a pioneer school in the Schools Division Office of Nueva Vizcaya for special needs education, Bayombong Central School and SPED Center continues to find ways to bridge the gaps in the learning experiences of its learners with disabilities in an inclusive learning setting. With its initial implementation of the distance learning modalities during the SY 2020-2021, Bayombong Central School and SPED Center revisited its learning continuity plan and looked into the opportunities of addressing the concerns of the learners with disabilities, the parents and the teachers. This led to the consideration of parental involvement in the extended hybrid learning set-up for the learners with disabilities which is an enhancement of the existing school's learning continuity plan and in compliance with the directives of the department.

Korkmaz and Duman (2014), Vigilant et al. (2014) and Baidi (2019) posit that parents play an important role in educating and structuring their children's learning at home. The role of the parents that they assume significantly contributes to the academic success of the learners. While there may be challenges along the way, it is through the collaboration of the parents with the school that learning continuity can be achieved. (Lardizaval-Dado, 2020). Myupchar (2020) also found out that parents must be capacitated to understand their learners with disabilities as to their learning characteristics and to implement ways to help them progress holistically despite the possible disruption of the educational-related services provided by the school and its allies.

With parental involvement in the extended hybrid learning for learners with disabilities in the inclusive education setting, there is higher possibility of properly ensuring the provision of educational services to the learners who cannot attend certain periods of in-person classes due to some reasons. In partnership with the school and thru proper monitoring, the parents are made aware on the present level of achievement of the learners and that the learners are involved in the inclusive learning activities which lead to their holistic development.

Justification of Best Practices Implementation

The occurrence of the pandemic even the present situation towards post pandemic has posed challenges most especially to the learners with disabilities and their respective families. The sudden shifts in the implementation of education during the pandemic has highlighted the role of the parents/family members as the school's partners in the implementation of learning continuity while the learners with disabilities are at home.

As the whole community gradually bounce back to the new normal with the post-pandemic trend, the school has considered the insights it gained in the implementation of relevant distance learning modalities for the learners especially those who need special needs education services. The design and feasibility of the proposed solutions crafted emanated from the responses of the learners with disabilities and their respective family members when asked on their issues and concerns and how can the school help them ensure the learning continuity for the learners amid the different restrictions that the situation poses.

The continuous innovations of educators and active involvement of other stakeholders are needed to achieve the intended goals for the learners' development (Manosca, 2021). The active collaboration of the parents and teachers in the learning proper of the learners are essential to achieve the objectives set in their learning kits. The parents may ask assistance from the special education teacher or general education teacher via SMS, electronic mail, and phone call among others. Home visitation is also done to ensure that the learners are engaged in the expected learning tasks (Benavides & Guan, 2021; Manlangit, Paglumotan & Saperas, 2020, Llego, 2020, Sarao, 2020). Also, the school still assumes the primary role of designing the educational program and in monitoring the progress of the learners.

Objectives of Implementation

The objectives of best practice implementation are:

1. To ensure that the learners with disabilities receive the intended appropriate educational services when they are at home or in any other setting other than in in-person classes;
2. To monitor the academic performance of the learners with disabilities in the inclusive learning setting with the program;
3. To determine parents' satisfaction level on the implementation of the program.

Best Practices Implemented

With this learner-oriented framework, the school operates in addressing the learning needs of learners with disabilities in the inclusive learning setting thru the consideration of the parental involvement in the extended hybrid learning for learners with disabilities in an inclusive setting. In this program, the parents serve as co-facilitators of learning while the learners are at home or in instances where they cannot attend certain periods of in-person classes. Likewise, the program considers the school's role in addressing the arising needs among the school community members, in strengthening coordination and cooperation of the school community and its respective councils, and mobilizing partnerships for the augmentative support in the implementation of the extended hybrid learning for learners with disabilities. Specifically, the program was implemented through the following sub-activities:

Production of Learning Kits with Parent's Facilitation Guide

With the guidance of the Schools Division Office of Nueva Vizcaya, Bayombong Central School and Special Education Center with the support of Municipal Local Government Unit (MLGU) of Bayombong undertakes the urgent and necessary development, production and provision of learning resources. The learning kits and learning activity sheets production and quality assurance aims to address the need for learning continuity for learners with disabilities through the utilization of the learning kits and learning activity sheets and integrated the principles of contextualization or localization in the materials while addressing the specific learning needs of the LWDs. As the co-facilitators of the implementation of extended hybrid learning, parents are given the learning kits which contain the specific notes to be said or done as they

conduct the instructional episodes. Contained as well in the learners' learning kits are the major instructional materials.

One-On-One Sessions

Cognizant that learners with disabilities have challenges with independent learning, the special education teachers and the general education teachers conduct one on one sessions under the guidance of their respective parents to deliver instruction, monitor the progress of the learners and communicate with them. More than the provision of learning kits and learning activity sheets, the school has utilized digital technology in reaching out to the learners with special needs.

Periodic Home Visitations

More than the virtual connection with the learners, the teachers conduct periodic home visitations. Teachers take this opportunity to spend time learning more about the learners' home learning scenarios as well as about the parents' concerns. As such, this helps the learners have balanced socialization development and maintain warm relationship with their teachers.

Constant Communication with Parents on Distance Learning

In this time where parents are adjusting as they assume their role of co-facilitating instruction at home, the school provides constant parent support thru telecommunication. This 'kumustahan' with the parents aims to have informal discussion with the parents on their challenges and giving suggestions on how they can possibly help more their respective children in terms of academic development.

Flexible Teaching Strategies

More than the provision of learning activity sheets, learning kits, online instruction and monitoring, the special education and general education teachers endeavor to explore other flexible teaching strategies. The use of recorded audio-visual presentations is sought by recording lessons as a means of giving instructional support to the learners. Modeling of skills to be developed are highlighted in the audio-visual presentations. Some of the audio-visual presentations prepared include module explainers and video-taped lessons.

Impact of Best Practices Implemented

The involvement of the parents in the extended hybrid learning of the learners with disabilities in the inclusive learning setting thru the school's program led to the sustained participation of the learners in their respective grade levels. The learners were able to meet the minimum curriculum content and performance standards with their involvement in inclusive classrooms with the support given to them. Hence, the learners with disabilities who were included in the inclusive learning setting were promoted to the next grade level.

Table 1
Distribution of Learners According to Academic Performance

Academic Performance	Frequency	Percent
Outstanding	5	14.3%
Very Satisfactory	25	71.4%
Satisfactory	5	14.3%
Total	35	100.0%

The school year-end progress report of the learners with disabilities who participated in the inclusive learning setting and have received parental support through the school's project reveals that the learners had satisfactory to outstanding academic performance. Most of the learners achieved a very satisfactory level of academic performance with average grades within the range of 85-89%. The learners within this level has developed the fundamental skills and knowledge and can apply these in the authentic performance tasks given to them independently.

Meanwhile, five learners achieved an outstanding academic performance meeting the average grades within the range of 90-100% and the other five achieved satisfactory performance with averages grades within the range of 80-84%. Learners in advanced level exceeds the basic requirements in terms of fundamental skills and knowledge and can apply these with automaticity through authentic performance task while those in the latter need guidance or assistance from teachers and peers in the authentic performance tasks.

Further, the parents' satisfaction on the program implementation was evaluated before and after the implementation with regards to the performance of the learners with disabilities.

Table 2
Parents' Satisfaction of the Program Implementation

Behavior Indicators	Before the Implementation		After the Implementation		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	QD	Mean	QD	
Do you think your child is interested in extended hybrid learning opportunities in emergency situations?	1.37	SD	3.71	SA	.000
Do you think your child can focus on learning during the intended extended hybrid learning sessions in emergency situations?	1.40	SD	3.63	SA	.000
Do you think your child needs monitoring during the intended extended hybrid learning sessions in emergency situations?	1.34	SD	3.77	SA	.000
Do you think the program is a good alternative to ensure learning continuity when they are not present for in-person classes?	1.46	SD	3.86	SA	.000

Legend: Strongly Disagree- 1-1.4 Disagree-1.5-2.4 Agree- 2.5-3.4 Strongly Agree- 3.5-4.0

Based on the evaluation of the parents on the extended hybrid learning designed by the school with the participation of the parents as co-facilitators of learning, it can be gleaned above that there is significant difference on the perception of the parents before and after the implementation of the program. From 'strongly disagree' viewpoint of the parents before the implementation of the program, the parents had evaluated the implementation from 'strongly agree' viewpoint. The parents consider the implementation of the extended hybrid learning with their participation as co-facilitators to be a good strategy in ensuring learning continuity in cases of emergency where the learners with disabilities can not attend the in-person classes.

Summary and recommendations

The changes in the educational landscape have posed challenges in the implementation of teaching and learning process, as well as the realization for possibilities to innovate ways to respond to the needs of the learners especially those with disabilities. With its recent experience from the pandemic, Bayombong Central School and Special Education Center has made place its learning continuity plan to ensure the provision of educational services to the learners with disabilities who cannot attend to certain periods of in-person classes due to emergency situations. As a highlight of this learning continuity plan, the school features its extended hybrid learning with the parents' involvement.

Specifically, the general objective of this program was to ensure that learners are still involved in the inclusive learning activities while capacitating the parents to understand their child's learning characteristics and implement strategic ways to help the child progress academically and socially. This activity involved the 35 learners with disabilities who are in the inclusive learning setting for School Year 2022-2023.

Looking into the impact of the program, the school year-end progress report of the learners with disabilities who participated in the inclusive learning setting and have received parental support through the school's project reveals that the learners had satisfactory to outstanding academic performance. Moreover, the parents' satisfaction on the program implementation was evaluated before and after the implementation with regards to the performance of the learners with disabilities. Results revealed that they had better appreciation of the implementation of education in the new normal through localized and available learning support and parent-support initiatives.

The implementation of the program paved way to a better and more positive attitude among parents and promotion of appreciation of learning continuity. This program also capitalizes on the role of parents, learners and school community for shared responsibility in advancing learning opportunities. Further, this project sees its flexibility to be utilized when classes are disrupted due to natural disasters and/or other emergencies. This historic endeavor of the school community demonstrates resilience in responding to the arising needs amidst adversities as it remains committed in accomplishing its duties and responsibilities. This school's commitment is highly dependent with the genuine Filipino 'bayanihan' spirit where the school community together with its benevolent stakeholders moves together and heals together.

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