



My Ate Helped Me Learn How to Read

Paulen A. Aguilar

Direct Beneficiary

DEPED - Continuous Improvement
program

My name is Paulen A. Aguilar. I am a grade three pupil at Betty-Go Belmonte Elementary School (BGBES). I was two weeks old when my real mother left me at the house of our neighbour, so the Aguilars adopted me and became my parents. At first, my real mother would visit me and we would spend time together, but eventually she just stopped coming. I have

nine other brothers and sisters—and one of them is my twin, but five of them have also been given away. However, I still get to play with the others because my family and I still live next to my real mother and father.

My adoptive mom, Serena, collects gambling bets for a living and my adoptive dad George is a construction worker. They put me through school, give me a place to stay, and feed me. I do not mind if I sometimes have to walk to school whenever we do not have enough money for fare because I want to finish school. When I misbehave, Mama Serena sometimes tells me she will bring me back to my real parents and that makes me stop and think because my real mother is wanted by law enforcers and my real father steals electricity. I do not want to be like them.

What I want to be is a teacher. I am only eight years old, but I know that this is what I really want to be when I grow up.

When I was in grade two last year, I had a hard time reading. I was better at reading Filipino than English, but I still did not do well in class. My *ate*, the daughter of Mama Serena and Papa George, used to teach me but she was not very patient. I was too afraid of her and that was why I did not learn my lessons well when it was her teaching me.

One day, our teacher wrote letters to my and some of my classmates' parents informing them that their children would be assigned *ates* and *kuyas* who will teach us how to read after regular class hours. I got assigned to *Ate* Mary Claire C. Real or simply *Ate* Claire, and she was very kind to me. She would stay in school after being dismissed for the day just so she could help me with my reading. Sometimes, she would even give me money for snacks at the canteen or fare for the tricycle when I did not have any. I really enjoyed reading with *Ate* Claire.

My teacher was very serious because she invited my Mama to come every week. There was an evaluation done every Friday, where my teacher was to sit with my Mama and they were to watch me while I read through some exercises. Unlike my classmates' mamas, my Mama never came to those Friday sessions. but I went anyway. I sat with my teacher and read through the evaluation exercises for the week. My teacher kept track of my progress. I got better at reading and I later found out that my grades had improved, too!

They taught me to read by syllables first. When I started with sentences, *Ate Claire* would help me read through a storybook. I loved storybooks, especially those with princesses and *Dora the Explorer*! There was so much to learn in books and I just wanted to read! I begged my Mama to buy me a storybook of my own and she bought me one about jeepneys. It is my favourite book and I donated it to my class when we were asked to donate books for our classroom. Now, I just borrow books from the neighbours or read at the library when I can. My neighbours do not always have books to lend and we can only use the library up to thirty minutes a week, but it is okay. I still have a hard time with the longer English words and struggle a bit when reading English paragraphs—but ask me to read in Filipino and I will dazzle you!

My Mama always told me the truth about where I came from and who my real parents are. It is clear to me that I do not want to be like them; I want to be a teacher. I want to help others read so they can reach their goals, just like how others have helped me reach mine.

Paulen A. Aguilar is a third grader at BGBES. Her favourite subjects are Filipino and Edukasyon Sa Pagpapakatao or ESP (values education).