



Stay Healthy, Learn Better

Mary Rose Maglaqui

Indirect Beneficiary

DEPED - Continuous Improvement
program

I am 32 years old and have two children, a seven-year-old and a one-year-old. The three of us live in one room. This room is in a 20-square-metre, two-storey house which we share with my other siblings and their kids. There are ten of us in the household. We are what you call informal settlers. My husband works in Saudi Arabia as a contractual worker and has been there for two years.

My seven-year-old is Dimple Anne. She is a first grader at the Betty Go-Belmonte Elementary School (BGBES). I graduated from the same school, back when it was still called Doña Imelda Elementary School, but it is different from what I remember. There seems to be a lot more going on now.

During the first grading period of this school year, Dimple was always sick. She would often have fever, colds, and sometimes mucus would even come out of her ears. I would let her stay home to rest until she got better and just write an excuse letter for her when she went back to school. It is difficult for us to go to a doctor because it is expensive. I bring her when I can for a check-up, but this is usually after she had already missed class.

I was surprised to receive a letter from her teacher in the second grading period, telling me about Project ACE (Attend Class Every day). The school invited me to participate in their activities. One time, there were doctors who talked about how to wash hands, brush teeth, and keep the body clean. I always went because I thought the teachers were trying to do a good thing. I would go to all their activities, carrying my baby with me, because I had no one to leave him with. My baby would cry and I sometimes had to breastfeed while I was there, but the teachers did not mind. It was a small sacrifice for me. The teachers always said prevention is better than cure and I believed them.

Around that time, Dimple also had a tooth problem. It caused her pain and she was missing class because of it. but I could not afford to pay for a dentist. The teacher found out and included Dimple in the dental mission of the school. The dentist pulled out Dimple's tooth for free and the toothache disappeared. She started going to school more regularly after that.

I was not very conscious about health and hygiene before. I did not know it played a big role in doing well in school. I did not realise just how important it was to make sure Dimple was healthy and strong, because being sickly forces her to miss class. Back when she was always absent, she performed poorly because she missed out on the learning in school. She was not confident and had a hard time catching up.

Things are different now. We practise the little that we know at home, making sure our surroundings are clean and our bodies are taken care of. Dimple used to forget to wash her

hands but it has now become her habit. She is less sickly and her teachers tell me her performance in class has improved.

More than education, health is the greatest wealth. I am grateful because I learned this lesson early in my children's lives. Even if I am only a high school graduate, I can still help my children do well in school by making sure they are healthy at home.

Mary Rose Maglaqui is a dedicated mother of two. She has been actively supporting and participating in Project ACE activities at BGBES.