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## SCHOOLS' TRANSITION FROM DISTANCE LEARNING TO LIMITED FACE-TO-FACE MODALITY

**ROLANDO C. RULLAN, JR.**  
**SCHOOL PRINCIPAL I**

Capintalan National High School  
09451373155  
rullanjrrolando@gmail.com

When the Covid-19 pandemic existed in 2020, schools around the globe were affected tremendously. Class interactions which supposed to create laughter and joy of the students were unheard for some time and have brought the school environment in silence – signaling that health risks were working and hindered the teaching and learning processes. This pandemic has impacted many of these learning opportunities especially those in large groups or involving in person interaction with peers. In fact, connections between teacher and their students were hardly done through social media platform or text messaging, especially to the areas where internet connectivity is somewhat weak. On the other hand, parents while looking for their lost jobs, felt some degree of insecurities about their children’s education. Education seemed to be at the middle of darkness, and everyone is searching for a light of hope and inspiration. Then, the Department of Education has brought that torch of light which gave us the source of strength and motivation. DepEd empowered all learning faculties from the higher authorities down to the school level experts to work cohesively in giving the most needed solutions to address our situation.

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The pandemic has created opportunities for our learners to experience unfamiliar modalities of learning. We found ourselves unprepared at first, however, that situation gave us the spark of creativity and fueled us to develop varied contextualized learning materials. Thus, Department of Education collaborated with various experts to work as members of the quality assurance team, teacher-writers, artists and illustrators, content validators to produce quality printed self-learning modules in all subject areas. So, teachers were then trained to produce quality assured video lessons, which can be played and watched online or offline or to be aired in the radio broadcast in our local radio stations. In addition to that, more offline learning materials were developed using Kotobe, Powerpoint, Camtasia and Filmora. This only proved that educators have rich source of remedies that made our educational system resisted with the huge challenge of covid-19.

School heads on the other hand, made all efforts in preparing schools to become safe and that the personnel follow the proper health protocols at all times. We never stopped and we never become complacent since we know there are a lot more to do. In fact, teacher-writers have prepared Activity Sheets in all subjects, which is useful in ensuring the level of understanding of the learners as based on what they have learned from their modules. To prevent students to commit cheating during modular learning, DepED has issued Interim Guidelines for Assessment and Grading in Light of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan. This is to ensure that student's learning will be assessed holistically and authentically in terms of the achievement of

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the most essential learning competencies. Through all of these, the implementation of the distance learning modalities has become stable and systematic.

Presently, teachers are enlightened with the skills in carrying out their roles and functions in the conduct of modular learning. In fact, they have surpassed the challenges, the issues and concerns that they have met in the early stage of these learning modalities. Then eventually at the last part of the first quarter period of this school year, there was a Regional Memorandum No. 110, series 2020, which aims to guide schools for the piloting of the re-opening of classes. A lot of careful preparations has to be managed in order to secure approval for the school to accept the learners once again. With much enthusiasm and eagerness to see the presence of the learners in schools, school administrators and its personnel are now working hard to minimize the risks of pandemic and to ensure the safety of everyone. Now, a big question is in front of us, "How ready the schools are to transit or to change the learning modality?"

Any question has its own answer as our fears and insecurities has to vanish through concrete plans and actions. I know that the Department of Education has its plan with this school safety assessment tool. This is the prime instrument to be used in helping the schools be capacitated to open classes once again very soon. Just like we did at the start of adopting the distance learning modality, we should be working more cohesively as we envision into another change. The school administration, the community leaders and other stakeholders should maintain its synchronism in making decisions and in putting these decisions into workable actions.

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Physical facilities are just the primary focus of the preparation, but more things have to be considered. First, we have to make sure the safety of all school personnel by ensuring that everyone is fully vaccinated. Second, our learners and parents must be properly informed of the new changes in the modality of their learning. They must be informed about the adjustments they need to make within their activities before the re-opening of classes. Third, teachers must not only be physically fit, rather they must be emotionally and psychologically prepared. Teachers have surpassed lots of challenges and they must be recharged with positive outlook. They must be motivated to continue thinking as goal-oriented professionals.

The time of change is coming and we cannot say that the time to prepare is too short nor too long. The standpoint towards readiness may look far but moving constantly will surely bring us to the reality - that schools will have the learners in-person again. Our country is waiting for all of us to move on. The teachers as the bearer of the fire of learning and that learners will continue handling its light and make something brighter towards a better living in the near future. Our educational system was tested, we battled, and we will surely win and end this fight against this Covid-19.

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