

## **A Bridge of Hope**

# **HELPING KIDS COPE WITH SCHOOL**

Twelve-year-old Angelo had been looking forward to the day when he would walk up the stage to receive his elementary diploma and move on to high school. His parents have pinned their hopes on the young boy, the eldest in a brood of six, to finish college, find a good job and in turn, help send his younger siblings to school.

Unfortunately, after taking the High School Readiness Test (HSRT) last May, Angelo was among the 700,000 incoming high school students who were found not yet ready for high school. Now, it is up to his parents whether to send him on to high school where he may perform

poorly or invest in a year of remedial classes and get a fighting chance at the future.

That the Philippine educational system has greatly deteriorated in the past two decades is an accepted fact. The 2000 Philippine Human Development Report noted that the students' low scores in standard tests at the national and international levels reflect the poor quality of education. Results of the National Elementary Achievement Test showed that students answered correctly less than 50 percent of the questions. In the Third International Mathematics and Science Test among 13- to 14- year-old students of 38 countries, the Philippines ranked second from the bottom in the mathematics category and third from the bottom in the science category.

The Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2001-2004 recognizes this situation and has called for, among others, progressive curricular reforms and the institution of a system of assessment and testing. These strategies aim to make teaching more learner-centered and develop a unified policy on testing that will evaluate performance of the school system and also improve instruction and curricular structures.

### **HS Bridge Program: A Bitter Pill**

The government through the Department of Education (DepEd), has thus finally decided to implement the High School Bridge Program. The program is akin to a bitter pill that aims to cure an illness. The results of the HSRT showed that 91.7 percent of the 1.4 million incoming freshmen who took the test scored 50

