

**PRESS RELEASE****Briones clarifies DepEd position on 'Oplan Tokhang'**

PASIG CITY, November 11, 2016 – Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones made clear recently that all schools will not be subjected to the Philippine National Police's (PNP) "Oplan Tokhang."

"The entire Department would like to iterate its steadfast support of PNP's campaign against illegal drugs. However, we would also like to inform everyone that both DepEd and PNP recognize and implement the long-standing policy that prohibits, with or without the drug problem, police and military personnel from entering school grounds," Briones pointed out.

The Education chief further emphasized that the reported pronouncement of PNP Director General Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa on the inclusion of schools in Oplan Tokhang could be in reference to his coordination with DepEd on how the police can help in the enhancement of drug education program.

*"Palagay ko hindi 'yan ang ibig sabihin ni General Bato. Kasi we are coordinating. They will help in the drug education program, sila ang maraming istorya, sila ang maraming level of expertise sa dangers, what it does sa lahat, police personalities going to schools and giving briefings. Pero 'yung papasukin ang eskwelahan hindi 'yan mangyayari,"* Briones stated during an earlier press conference.

In fact, as early as May and prior to the implementation of Oplan Tokhang, the Department has been instructed by President Rodrigo Duterte to provide teachers and students in Grade 4 and up with drug awareness guidelines.

DepEd has also started a statistical sampling scheme, wherein students (with parental permission) and teachers tested will not be named. The ongoing scheme will determine the extent of the problem and by how much the size of the sample can be expanded.

According to Briones, the tests are being conducted to help rehabilitate and not criminalize students and/or personnel. She further emphasized that if a teacher has been identified with the habit, the policy is to advice the teacher to take a leave to prevent harm on students and to undergo rehabilitation.

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