UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF K-12 PROGRAM
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A 12-year program is found to be the best period for learning under basic education. It is also the recognized standard for students and professionals globally. The Philippines was the last country in Asia and was one of only three countries worldwide with a 10-year pre-university cycle (Angola and Djibouti are the other two).

The K to 12 Program covers 13 years of basic education. Kindergarten to Grade 3, Grades 4 to 6, Grades 7 to 10 (Junior High School) and Grades 11 and 12 (Senior High School). Senior high school (SHS) refers to Grades 11 and 12, the last two years of the K-12 program that DepEd has been implementing since 2012. The first year of SHS was implemented in 2016, by 2018, we’ll be having the first batch to graduate in the K-12 Curriculum.

High school in the old system consisted of First Year to Fourth Year. What corresponds to those four years today are Grades 7 to 10, also known as junior high school (JHS). Take note now: “Senior high” has two grade levels and no longer means just the very last year of high school; “junior high” has four grade levels and does not mean just the second to the last year of high school.

To further explain: Under Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), you will have to complete Kindergarten, Grades 1 to 6 (elementary), Grades 7 to 10 (junior high school) and Grades 11 to 12 (senior high school)—in all 13 years—before you can receive a high school diploma. Students begin to study in SHS the subjects that will introduce them to their preferred career path.

Students cannot be forced to spend two more years in school, but if they stop at Grade 10, they will only receive a JHS certificate, not a high school diploma. Hence, SHS is not compulsory.
Students who belong to the K-12 generation but do not complete Grade 12 will be disadvantaged in that they will not be accepted into a college degree or technical-vocational certificate program without a SHS diploma. They will also miss out on an opportunity to learn skills that can qualify them for employment right after SHS, or prepare them for starting up a business.

DepEd has always been transparent in the planning and implementation of K to 12. There have been regular consultations with various sectors since 2010, before the law was passed, during the crafting of the IRR, and during implementations. DepEd representatives have also attended various fora and conferences, including legislative inquiries, regarding K to 12. We are open to criticisms and suggestions regarding this.

References:

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- K to 12 General Information