



LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICE

QUICK NOTES

Second Regular Session, 19th Congress

Public Hearing of the Committee on Basic Education joint with the Committees on Ways and Means, and Finance

Chairperson: Sen. Win Gatchalian

29 November 2023, Wednesday, 10:00 a.m., Tañada Room, Senate

Re: The National Reading Month Act

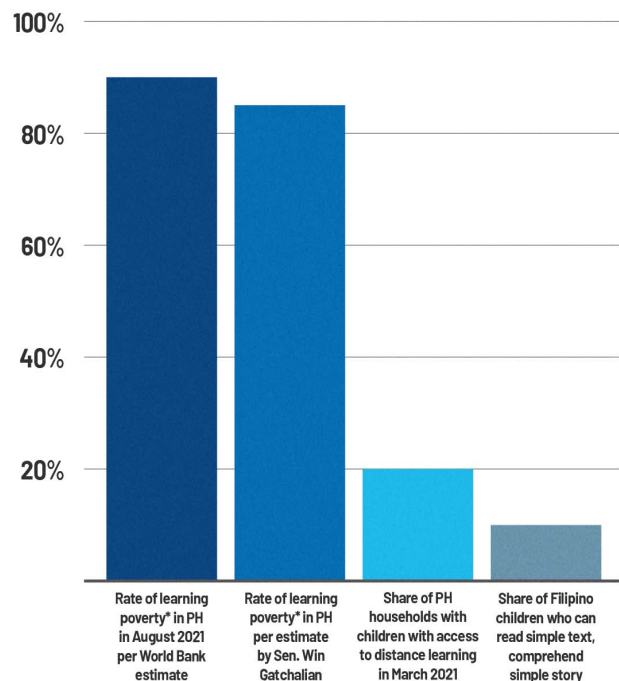
□ **Senate Bill No. 475—Sen. Win Gatchalian**

Background

- The poor performance of learners in the country was highlighted in past international standardized assessments like the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which showed that the average score of 15-year-old Filipino learners in Reading was 340 points, the lowest among the 79 participating countries together with the Dominican Republic. It also showed that 80% of learners did not reach a minimum English proficiency level.¹
- Moreover, in the 2019 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), the Philippines' average score was lower than the ASEAN average of 300 points as the results revealed that the average score of Grade 5 Filipino students in Reading was 288 points or Band 3 of the SEA-PLM 2010. The country also ranked 2nd

ALARMING PH EDUCATION NUMBERS

*Defined by World Bank as share of 10-year-olds unable to read or understand simple story

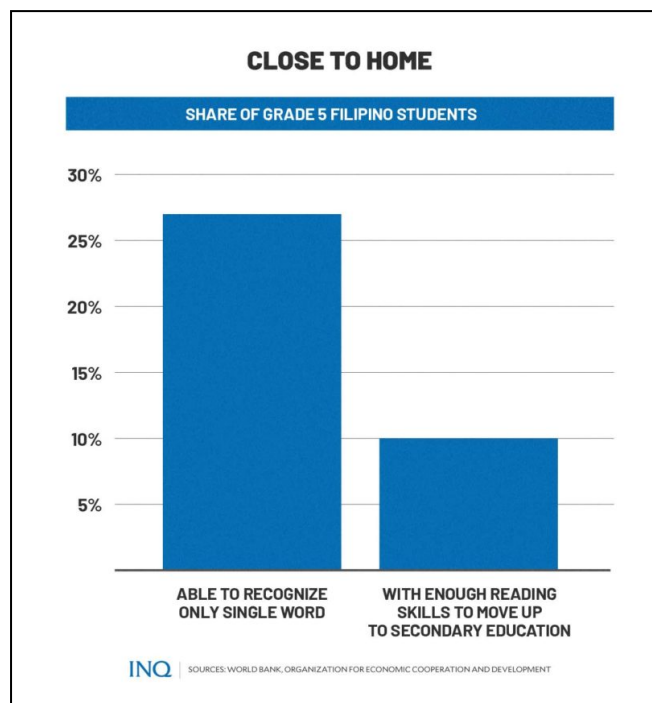


INQ | SOURCES: WORLD BANK, SENATE BASIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

¹ Paraphrased from the Explanatory Note of Senate Bill No. 475

to the last in Reading among the six ASEAN countries that participated in the assessment.²

- Senator Gatchalian underscored that reading, being one of the paramount foundations of the country's youth, must be strengthened.³ The Senator thus hopes that, through Senate Bill No. 475, the participation of communities to promote the culture of reading will be intensified.⁴



Highlights of Senate Bill No. 475

- Seeks to declare November of every year as “National Reading Month” to be celebrated through nationwide reading programs and activities that will develop the habit and inculcate a culture of reading in the country's basic education learners and their communities.
- Provides for multi-stakeholder participation to maximize and strengthen both formal and informal support structures at the regional, provincial, city, municipal, and barangay levels;
- Seeks the cooperation, assistance, and support of relevant government agencies, local government units, and private individuals and organizations involved in reading or literacy advocacies;
- Directs the Department of Education (DepEd) to: 1) adopt policies and formulate strategic initiatives that foster reading not only for information and entertainment but also to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and character that will prepare them for policy-making, nation-building and other means of contributing to economic, social, and cultural development; 2) host a book fair during the National Reading Month in coordination with the National Book Development Board; and 3) maintain an online portal for donations in support of its reading initiatives, programs, and activities.
- Mandates the National Library and all congressional, city and municipal libraries, and barangay reading centers throughout the country established under Republic Act No. 7743 to actively participate in the celebration of the National Reading Month;

² Paraphrased from the Explanatory Note of Senate Bill No. 475

³ Paraphrased from <https://wingatchalian.com/news/november-as-national-reading-month/>

⁴ Ibid.

- Provides discounts at a rate not lower than 20% of the regular price on all purchases of any reading material, whether in traditional, digital, or audio format, made in November; and
- Mandates public telecommunications entities (PTEs) to provide free access to DepEd's online educational platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs without charges.

Possible Points for Discussion

- Findings of the Senate Basic Education Committee on the learning poverty of Filipino children, which refers to the share of 10-year-olds who cannot read or understand a simple story, as defined by the World Bank.
- Role of the National Library, congressional, city and municipal libraries, and barangay reading centers in the celebration of the National Reading Month;
- Mechanisms to be undertaken by PTEs in providing free access to DepEd's online educational platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs;
- Guidelines that the DepEd would observe in adopting policies and initiatives that foster reading not only for information and entertainment but also to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and character that will prepare them for policy-making, nation-building, and other means of contributing to economic, social, and cultural development;
- Budgetary requirements and source of funds for the implementation of the bill should it become law.

Source of graphs: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net>; [unknown 1-7.jpg \(1200×1467\) \(inquirer.net\)](#)