

# Collegial Care and Support System (CCASS): An Innovative Intervention of Putting Sympathy into Action in Schools

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Received May 27, 2021; Revised July 05, 2021; Accepted July 14, 2021

**Abstract** The aim of the study was to explore the impact of Collegial Care and Support System (CCASS), an intervention that provides small financial aid to the teachers of Indahag Elementary School (IES) who or whose immediate family members are hospitalized. The study employed mixed method research design. All 40 IES personnel were chosen as research participants. A 10-item researcher-made questionnaire was used to determine their attitude towards the intervention. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to collect the necessary data. Results of the first FGD were used to validate the attitude of teachers towards CCASS while the second FGD was used to determine the experiences of those who benefited from it. Findings revealed that generally teachers have Very Positive attitude towards CCASS. Financial constraints serves as the greatest factor that may hinder them from paying their CCASS contribution. But mutual encouragement among colleagues and their present health condition are enough to overcome any negative attitude towards the intervention. Those who benefited from CCASS expressed overwhelming gratitude. They have also shown strong commitment to help others as a result of receiving help when it mattered. However, some participants felt awkwardly surprised upon receiving CCASS financial aid. Such response was linked to the financial capability and personal experiences of teachers. The researchers recommended the sustainability of CCASS intervention, stipulating the same in the teachers' club constitution and bylaws. School administrators should put in place a system that will give teachers opportunity to help one another.

**Keywords:** DepEd teachers, hospitalization support, health care, school Intervention, support system

**Cite This Article:** Al Stephen R. Lagumen, Jinnefer D. Espina, and Juan A. Mingo, "Collegial Care and Support System (CCASS): An Innovative Intervention of Putting Sympathy into Action in Schools." *Journal of Innovations in Teaching and Learning*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2021): 123-126. doi: 10.12691/jitl-1-2-9.

## 1. Introduction

Teachers play a vital role in fulfilling the mission and vision of the Department of Education (DepEd). They are the ones who keep the school engine running. The success of the school as an organization depends largely on them. Teachers have the power to realize the dreams in every child, which makes their presence in the school inarguably indispensable. Their instructional competence and performance are important predictors of the learners' academic success [1,2]. As public servants, DepEd teachers must be willing to give no less than their very best for effective learning to happen.

However, teachers also have their own share of challenges. They have concerns to take care of and needs to attend to. When it comes to matters pertaining to health and physical wellbeing, DepEd teachers are among the most vulnerable. Unlike the uniformed personnel such as members of Philippine National Police (PNP), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Bureau of Fire Protection

(BFP), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), DepEd teachers do not have special health privileges in case of work-related accidents and diseases [3]. Besides, there is no exclusive institution that takes care of their physical health. Yes, they are entitled to PhilHealth benefits just like any private employees. But such benefits are limited and do not suffice the health needs of teachers and/or their dependents [4]. So whenever they or their loved ones are hospitalized, the teachers will have to source out virtually every available financial means to the detriment of their meager income.

Based on available data, the absences of teachers at Indahag Elementary School (IES) for school year 2018-2019 reached a total of 270 days. Ninety-one percent of these absences were health-related, which means that either the teachers themselves or their loved ones had become terribly sick. Both of these scenarios entail negative financial implications on the part of the teachers and their respective families. A survey on DepEd teacher loans conducted by Ferrer [4] revealed that 45.8% of teachers borrow money due to health-related emergencies. Moreover, Acedillo [5] found that majority of teachers do

not have enough savings to be used in case of emergency. If no complementary financial assistance is extended to them when they or their loved ones are hospitalized, starting a loan or adding up to the existing number of loans becomes the most convenient and sensible option. No wonder many DepEd teachers have resorted to indebtedness [6].

This study is conducted to explore the impact of Collegial Care and Support System (CCASS), an intervention that provides small financial aid to the IES teachers who or whose immediate family members are hospitalized. IES implemented CCASS in school year 2019-2020, which entitled its 40 teaching and non-teaching personnel to petty yet much needed financial aid whenever extreme health-related problems arise. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the attitude of teachers towards CCASS?
- 2) What are the experiences of those who benefited from CCASS?

## 2. Methods

This study employed mixed method research design [7,8]. Both quantitative and qualitative research designs were utilized [9]. Total population sampling technique was used in selecting the participants of the study. The instruments used in the study were the researcher-made survey questionnaire and focus group discussions (FGDs). All 40 participants were asked to answer the survey questionnaire on CCASS. Ten participants representing all grade levels joined the first FGD. Results of the first FGD were used to validate the attitude of teachers towards CCASS. A second round of FGD was conducted and participated by five participants who benefited from CCASS intervention. Their responses were used and analyzed to determine the experiences of teachers who benefited from CCASS. Both FGD proceedings were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researchers [10].

Six months prior to the data collection process, the researchers developed CCASS intervention to provide financial aid to the IES teaching and non-teaching personnel whenever they or their immediate family members are admitted to the hospital. Although the researchers initiated the idea of CCASS, it was the IES teachers who decided as to how much and for whom will

CCASS contribution be in one of their faculty meetings. For every school personnel who is confined to the hospital, each IES teaching or non-teaching personnel is required to give Php100.00 as financial aid. To put it in perspective, IES can generate Php3,900.00 whenever one of its 40 personnel is hospitalized. When such hospitalization involves one of the school personnel's immediate family members, the amount is reduced to Php50.00.

CCASS follows a simple implementation process. Whenever hospitalization occurs involving IES personnel or their immediate family members, the school principal informs the rest of the personnel regarding the incident through a school memorandum. Depending on the case, the teachers' club treasurer then collects either Php100.00 or Php50.00 from each of them. The full CCASS contribution is finally sent to the concerned teacher for medication purposes. Every CCASS transaction is recorded by the teachers' club secretary.

CCASS intervention is limited to the IES teaching and non-teaching personnel and their immediate family members. It is applicable only when the patient is confined to the hospital. One confinement is equivalent to one CCASS contribution. Nevertheless, CCASS is not limited to only one confinement per teacher, nor is it limited to one individual per CCASS transaction. As a matter of fact, one teacher may avail of CCASS financial aid multiple times in a particular school year for the same or different patients.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. Attitude of Teachers towards CCASS

Table 1 shows the attitude of teachers towards CCASS. As revealed, the teachers' general attitude towards the intervention is very positive ( $\bar{X}=3.74$ ;  $SD=0.63$ ). Among the statements that revealed such attitude, their belief that they can benefit from CCASS when the need arises ( $\bar{X}=3.83$ ) ranks the highest, followed by CCASS as a great way to help their colleagues ( $\bar{X}=3.78$ ) and IES personnel have equal opportunity to benefit from CCASS ( $M=3.78$ ). Their take on the amount of CCASS contribution being not too big nor too small ranks the lowest ( $\bar{X}=3.65$ ).

Table 1. Attitude of Teachers towards CCASS (N=40)

Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. CCASS is beneficial for all IES personnel.	3.75	0.59	Very positive
2. CCASS is a great way to help my colleagues	3.78	0.62	Very positive
3. It is okay with me to pay CCASS contribution	3.70	0.65	Very positive
4. I pay immediately whenever CCASS contribution is collected	3.73	0.60	Very positive
5. CCASS contribution is not too big nor too small for me	3.65	0.74	Very positive
6. CCASS is fair for every IES personnel.	3.75	0.59	Very positive
7. IES personnel have equal opportunity to benefit from CCASS	3.78	0.58	Very positive
8. When the need arises, I believe that I can benefit from CCAS	3.83	0.55	Very positive
9. I like CCASS as an intervention.	3.70	0.72	Very positive
10. If given the chance, I will recommend CCASS to teachers in other School	3.73	0.72	Very positive
<b>Teacher's Attitude towards CCASS</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>Very positive</b>

Such finding is in consonance with the result of the first FGD which delved into the said attitude. The participants stated that:

*CCASS is a great help for us teachers, especially to those who are in financial crisis. It is a much needed help not only to the teachers, but also to their immediate family members. CCASS gives us the opportunity to share our love to others. We belong to one workplace, and we are like family here. So it is just fitting to unite and extend help to our co-teachers who are in need. (5)*

However, some of the participants admitted that:

*There are times when we would be tempted to complain, especially when fees pile up or when we don't have extra money. As we all know, budget becomes tight at times. But the mere fact that we are physically well overcomes our negative thoughts. We would then become thankful for our health and physical condition. This would push us to look for means and ways on how we could pay our CCASS contribution. Some of us would borrow money from our colleagues and pay it the following day. (1)*

Others viewed CCASS as a way of expressing sympathy to their colleagues who are in great pain. They shared that:

*We know how difficult it is to be confined in the hospital. You need to spend much for both food and medicine. With CCASS, we realized that our small contribution becomes a big help to those who are in need. We can always find money as long as we want; but life is more precious than money. After all, it's better to give than to receive. (8)*

The results of the survey on teachers' attitude towards CCASS and the first FGD are consistent. The reasons behind the highest and the lowest ranked responses in the survey were disclosed in the FGD. It can be gleaned that most IES teachers are amenable with CCASS intervention. However, a few of them have struggled to pay CCASS contribution due to financial constraints. But mutual encouragement among colleagues and their feelings of gratitude because of their outstanding health condition are enough to overcome any negative attitude towards the intervention [11].

### 3.2. Experiences of Teachers Who Benefited from CCASS

The following themes have emerged from the second FGD that delved into the experiences of teachers who benefited from CCASS financial aid: Thankfulness for a Very Helpful Program, Awkward Feeling of Surprise, and Strong Commitment to Help Others. Table 2 shows the frequency distribution and percentage of the themes on the Experiences of Teachers who Benefited from CCASS.

**Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Themes that Emerged on the Experiences of Teachers who Benefited from CCASS**

THEMES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Thankfulness for a Very Helpful Program	11	47.83
Strong Commitment to Help Others	8	34.78
Awkward Feeling of Surprise	4	17.39
TOTAL	23	100

**Thankfulness for a Very Helpful Program.** The teacher participants expressed their heartfelt gratitude to all IES personnel and to God for the financial aid that they received through CCASS. One participant said that:

*Indeed, CCASS is a great help to me. I spent ten days in the hospital due to dengue fever. It was the time when we ran out of money because Christmas and New Year had barely passed. When I received the envelope and started counting, I was surprised to discover the amount inside. I said, "Thank you so much Lord!" I knew it was a much needed help for me. (5)*

Another participant shared that:

*In my case, it was my daughter who had dengue fever. We paid much for her hospitalization. That's why I was so thankful upon receiving the CCASS financial aid. CCASS showed the togetherness of IES teachers in times of need. (4)*

One participant tried to encapsulate CCASS in a single term, saying:

*If there is a word that means "more than helpful", I could have used it to describe CCASS. It helped ease my financial burden, which makes me so thankful. CCASS intervention highlights the unity of the IES personnel. (1)*

**Awkward Feeling of Surprise.** Though thankful, some teachers admitted that they felt awkward upon receiving CCASS financial aid. One participant confided that:

*I must admit that when I received the CCASS financial aid, I felt awkwardly surprised. I mean, at the back of my mind, it's like I was receiving alms. The thing is I am not used to receiving help from anybody. Instead, I give help to those who are in need. This is probably why I felt awkward. But in the end, I realized that CCASS is really helpful, especially to those who are in dire need. (2)*

Another participant shared that:

*At first, I was hesitant to accept the money. But I realized that it was voluntarily given to meet my needs. So, I happily received it and thanked my colleagues for their generosity. (3)*

**Strong Commitment to Help Others.** Because of the help they received through CCASS, the teacher participants have unanimously expressed their willingness to help others and support the intervention. They promised that:

*Whatever happens, we are committed to pay our CCASS contribution whenever the need arises. Being confined in the hospital is not easy. But receiving help from colleagues in the form of CCASS financial aid is so comforting. (1) We not only knew how helpful is CCASS to the teachers, but we experienced it ourselves. (5) Many among our colleagues are naturally helpful even prior to the implementation of this intervention. And CCASS provides us with the opportunity to help others. So we would rather choose to give than to receive. (4)*

Teachers who have benefited from CCASS intervention are so thankful. They found CCASS intervention very helpful. But the level of gratitude varies from teacher to teacher. When the teacher is experiencing great financial crisis, CCASS financial aid will most likely be welcomed with great gratitude and feelings of elation. But when the teacher is financially well despite incurring hospitalization

expenses, the level of thankfulness somehow dwindles. Teachers' personal experiences also play a crucial role towards their response upon receiving CCASS financial aid. Despite the minute differences in feelings, teachers are unanimously committed to support CCASS as an intervention.

Findings of the present study show that teachers' attitude towards CCASS is generally Very Positive ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.74). Financial constraints serves as the greatest factor that may hinder them from paying their CCASS contribution. However, mutual encouragement among colleagues and their present health condition are enough to overcome any negative attitude towards the intervention. Those who benefited from CCASS expressed heartfelt gratitude for such a very helpful program. They are committed to help others as a result of receiving help when it mattered. However, some teachers felt awkward upon receiving the CCASS financial aid. Such response was linked to the financial capability and personal experiences of teachers.

The results of the study support the findings of Pescon and Lampa (2019) who discovered that, if given the opportunity, teachers will naturally extend help to their colleagues. The study also proved their claim that the more teachers received help, the more they become willing to help others. This implies that the presence of a system like CCASS can motivate teachers to practice generosity and helpfulness in the workplace.

#### 4. Conclusion

Teachers' positive attitude towards CCASS reflects their general attitude towards any organized collegial humanitarian programs and help-giving activities. Teachers are naturally caring and helpful. If given the chance, they will voluntarily extend help to their fellow teachers who are in need. It is the responsibility of the school principal to provide the teachers with the opportunity to help their colleagues. CCASS is a great way to motivate them to practice generosity and care in the workplace. The researchers recommended that CCASS intervention be sustained at IES for the succeeding school years, and its implementation process be stipulated in the teachers' club constitution and bylaws. Other schools may

also adopt CCASS as an intervention for the benefit of their personnel. The more teachers the school has, the bigger the CCASS financial aid can be. School administrators should find means and ways on how to ameliorate the financial burden of teachers who or whose immediate family members are hospitalized. Finally, the researchers recommended that the government should look into the present health benefits of DepEd teachers and commit to improve the same.

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