

# Getting schools involved in FestPac



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**E**arly in the summer, I met with Joe Sanchez, deputy superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction at the Department of Education. He was tasked by DOE Superintendent John Fernandez to identify opportunities for our school children and teachers to engage in the Festival of Pacific Arts to be held next year.

We discussed ideas on how to make the festival relevant and educational to our students and ways we could heighten the exposure and excitement of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in the classroom. Both Sanchez and Fernandez immediately recognized the benefits and exposure the event provided to schoolchildren in learning about the Pacific-wide community. They wanted to ensure the student population would take advantage of this and the only way it would happen is to make a connection between the festival and the student.

Sanchez invited our committee to make presentations at the DOE Principals Leadership Summit on Aug. 5 and at the Chamorro Studies Teachers Orientation on Aug. 13. Our programming and marketing committees quickly came up with concepts and draft lesson plans appropriate to different grade levels and that could be easily implemented. The Council of Pacific Arts and Culture also provided some educational material that could be incorporated into the lesson plans.

There were approximately 150 people in attendance at the Leadership Summit, where many ideas and techniques on curriculum approaches were shared among the assembly. Different schools made presentations on various projects and programs in a collaborative exchange that was very



exciting and motivational. What I witnessed only served as a reconfirmation of the levels of commitment that our school administrators and teachers give to each and every student in our public school system.

When it was our turn to present, we began with an overview of FestPac, its participants and the art disciplines to be featured during the event. From there we presented 10 simple ways to incorporate the festival in the schools and classrooms with examples of how the individual teachers and schools could get involved.

We even provided sample lesson plans that could be incorporated into their curricula. For instance, a draft lesson plan for the first quarter could focus on "What is FestPac?" For elementary schools this might include creating a FestPac book highlighting the various countries, their cultures, languages and traditions. High school activities might include group presentations on the festival history, disciplines and participating island nations.

Second-quarter activities could focus on the different art disciplines and include interviewing a cultural practitioner or writing an essay. The third quarter emphasis would be on the participating countries and elementary level activities would be on geography and/or learning about the indigenous people of the 27 participating island countries and territories. The final

quarter could focus on how our students can help or participate — perhaps even adopting a culture for the duration of the event.

These lesson plans were carefully crafted to be first and foremost educational, but in an interesting, engaging and relevant manner to the students. While designed to encourage students to learn more about our neighbors in the Pacific, their history and cultural traditions, they underscore the importance of taking pride in our own culture and what makes us so unique.

There are so many exciting possibilities and directions that each school and classroom can expand on, such as environmental awareness, caring for our island by keeping it clean and presentable for our visitors and ourselves while embracing and living the hafa adai spirit wholeheartedly.

Most of all, this is an opportunity for our students to understand the importance of the practice and preservation of Guam's indigenous language and our cultural identity.

All of us who attended and presented at the leadership summit and orientation for Chamorro teachers were honored to participate and overwhelmed by the engagement and attitudes of Guam DOE's teachers and administrators. There were so many great ideas that were exchanged and a keen sense of excitement permeated throughout the rooms. On behalf of the entire Festpac organizing committee, I would like to offer a *dankolo na si Yu'us ma'ase* to Jon Fernandez, Joe Sanchez and everyone who attended the leadership summit. With the full support of the Department of Education, I am confident that FestPac will be a buzzword for this school year, bringing to even more life our theme: "Dinanna Sunido Siha giya Pasifiku," or "United Voices of the Pacific."

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