

Efficacy of the Compliance of the Child-Friendly School System in Public Elementary Schools of District I-B, San Carlos City Division

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Abstract

The concept of a child-friendly school (CFS) emphasizes the creation of an inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environment where children's rights, health, and well-being are prioritized. This study was conducted to assess the efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System in public elementary schools of District I-B, San Carlos City Division for the school year 2024–2025. Specifically, it sought to determine the level of compliance in areas such as children's health and well-being, safe and protective spaces, high academic achievement and success, community support for education, children's participation in school and community, and enrollment and completion.

The study employed a descriptive research design with teachers and school heads as respondents. A researcher-made questionnaire served as the main instrument for data collection, while weighted mean and t-test were used to analyze the responses.

Findings revealed that both teachers and school heads perceived the implementation of the child-friendly school system as moderately effective across all dimensions. The results also indicated no significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and school heads, suggesting a consistent understanding of the system's implementation and impact. Moreover, challenges encountered were rated as moderately serious, highlighting the need for continuous improvement in school and community collaboration.

In conclusion, the child-friendly school system in the district was found to be generally effective in promoting a positive, inclusive, and safe learning environment. However, further enhancement is needed to strengthen community involvement, improve resource provision, and address existing implementation challenges. The findings serve as a basis for developing a plan of action aimed at sustaining and improving child-friendly practices within the division.

Keywords: *Child-Friendly School, Inclusive Education, School Governance, Learner Well-Being, Safe Learning Environment*

INTRODUCTION

A child-friendly school is one that places the learner at the center of all educational activities, ensuring that the school environment is inclusive, safe, healthy, and conducive to learning. It upholds every child's right to education, protection, and participation while promoting respect, equality, and holistic development. The concept aligns with the Department of Education's (DepEd) Child-Friendly School System (CFSS), which emphasizes the creation of learning environments that are rights-based, inclusive,

gender-sensitive, and supportive of learners' physical and emotional well-being. Implementing child-friendly principles has been shown to improve academic performance, attendance, and social-emotional skills, as learners who feel valued and safe become more motivated and engaged. Previous studies have also found that schools adopting child-centered approaches not only enhance intellectual growth but also foster empathy, cooperation, and civic responsibility among students. However, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate facilities, and low stakeholder participation continue to hinder the full realization of child-friendly standards, particularly in developing contexts.

Grounded on the belief that an effective school system must nurture both the academic and personal development of learners, this study aimed to assess the extent of implementation of child-friendly school practices in public elementary schools. Specifically, it sought to determine the level of implementation of child-friendly practices in terms of teaching-learning processes, school governance, health and safety, and child rights promotion. It also aimed to identify whether significant differences exist between the perceptions of teachers and school heads and to explore the challenges encountered in sustaining such practices. The study hypothesized that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and school heads regarding the extent of implementation of child-friendly school practices. Through this investigation, the study intended to provide valuable insights and recommendations that could help strengthen the promotion of child-friendly education and create school environments that holistically support every learner's growth and well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design aimed at assessing the efficacy of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) system in public elementary schools. The design was appropriate for exploring the perceptions of teachers and school heads regarding the extent of compliance and identifying challenges in the implementation of the system.

Participants

The participants consisted of a total enumeration of 127 teachers and 7 school heads from all public elementary schools in District I-B, San Carlos City Division. Participants were selected because of their direct involvement in implementing and experiencing the child-friendly school system, providing comprehensive insights into its efficacy.

Instruments

Data were collected using a standardized questionnaire checklist adapted from Leopoldo Torio (2022). The instrument consisted of two parts: Part I assessed the extent of efficacy of the CFS system across six dimensions—children's health and well-being, safe and protective spaces, high academic achievement and success, community support for education, children's participation in school and

community, and enrollment and completion. Part II evaluated the degree of seriousness of problems encountered during the implementation of the CFS system. The questionnaire utilized a Likert-scale format to measure perceptions and ratings.

Procedure

Permission was first obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to teachers and school heads in each school. The data collection process took two weeks, and a 100% retrieval rate was achieved. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, specifically weighted mean scores, were used to determine the extent of efficacy of the child-friendly school system. The t-test was applied to examine significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school heads at a 0.05 level of significance. Additionally, the degree of seriousness of problems encountered was analyzed using a 3-point Likert scale to categorize challenges as serious, moderately serious, or least serious.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

EXTENT OF EFFICACY OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SYSTEM ALONG WITH CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Table 2 shows the perceived efficacy of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) System in promoting children's health and well-being, with an overall weighted mean of 2.90, indicating moderate effectiveness. The top-rated areas include treating or referring pupils with health problems, ensuring a steady supply of clean drinking water, and providing feeding programs for malnourished children, highlighting strengths in addressing immediate health needs. Conversely, maintaining and updating health records, offering nutritious food on school premises, and ensuring fully functional school clinics received lower ratings, indicating areas needing improvement. These findings suggest that while schools are effective in certain health initiatives, gaps in documentation, nutrition, and clinic accessibility limit the system's overall impact. The results emphasize the need for targeted interventions, such as staff training, enhanced health services, and improved resource allocation, to strengthen student well-being. Study limitations include reliance on the perceptions of teachers and school heads, and future research could incorporate observational data and student outcomes for a more comprehensive assessment of CFS health initiatives.

Table 2

Extent Of Efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System along with Children's Health and Well-Being as Perceived by the Teachers and School Heads

Children's health and well-being	Teachers		School heads		Overall	
	Mean	DE	Mean	DE	AW M	DE
Maintain and regularly updates a health record of each pupil.	2.56	ME	2.76	ME	2.66	ME
Hold annual weighing and health examination of your pupils.	2.61	ME	2.69	ME	2.65	ME
Hold annual dental examination of your pupils.	2.83	ME	2.83	ME	2.83	ME
Treat or refers pupils with health problems.	3.4	ME	3.14	ME	3.27	ME
School has a feeding program for malnourished children	3.24	ME	3.25	ME	3.25	ME
Serve or sells healthy and nutritious food in your premises.	2.74	ME	2.73	ME	2.74	ME
The school has a functional clinic.	2.63	ME	2.64	ME	2.64	ME
The school has a steady supply of clean and safe drinking water.	3.12	ME	3.23	ME	3.18	ME
Total	2.89	ME	2.91	ME	2.90	ME

EXTENT OF EFFICACY OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SYSTEM ALONG WITH SAFE AND PROTECTIVE SPACES AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Table 3 presents the perceived efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System in providing safe and protective spaces, with an overall weighted mean of 2.77, indicating moderate effectiveness. The highest-rated areas include having safe facilities to address hazards, regular maintenance and cleanliness of classrooms and premises, and teachers' use of non-threatening discipline, reflecting strengths in structural safety, hygiene, and positive classroom management. Conversely, the lowest-rated indicators are the school's program for children with special needs, availability of emergency and first aid kits, and the conduct of regular evacuation drills, highlighting gaps in inclusion and emergency preparedness. These findings suggest that while schools maintain a generally safe environment, critical areas requiring

immediate attention—such as specialized programs, first aid accessibility, and disaster drills—need targeted interventions to enhance the overall safety and responsiveness of the learning environment. Addressing these gaps will contribute to a more inclusive, prepared, and supportive setting for all students.

Table 3

Extent Of Efficacy of The Child-Friendly School System Along with Safe and Protective Spaces as Perceived by the Teachers and School Heads

Safe and Protective Spaces	Teachers		School heads		Overall	
	Mean	DE	Mean	DE	AWM	DE
Classrooms have proper ventilation and lighting and enough space for 45-50 pupils.	2.86	ME	2.88	ME	2.87	ME
Classroom desks and other furniture are sized to the age of the pupils. In the case of shared desks, each pupil has enough space to do seatwork.	2.61	ME	2.63	ME	2.62	ME
Classrooms' layout and furniture allow pupils to interact and do group work.	2.71	ME	2.71	ME	2.71	ME
Classrooms have a bulletin board or a corner that displays helpful learning materials such as posters, illustrations, newspaper and magazine clippings, and your pupils' own works.	2.81	ME	2.87	ME	2.84	ME
Classrooms, facilities, and premises are regularly maintained and kept clean.	3.01	ME	3.05	ME	3.03	ME
School has safe facilities in place to address hazard threats (e.g. Fire exits, fire extinguishers, appropriate electrical wirings).	3.32	ME	3.29	ME	3.31	ME
School has identified and prepared alternative learning spaces in cases of emergencies.	3.07	ME	3.21	ME	3.14	ME
School has adequate emergency/first aid kits that are readily available.	2.13	LE	2.18	LE	2.16	LE
Conduct regular evacuation Drills for earthquake, fire, flooding, or tsunami.	2.43	LE	2.43	LE	2.43	LE
The School has a library for reading and for study.	3.2	ME	2.92	ME	3.06	ME

The School has facilities and equipment for recreation and sports.	2.51	ME	2.64	ME	2.58	ME
The school has sufficient lawn space and vegetation.	2.8	ME	2.87	ME	2.84	ME
The school has duly assigned personnel in charge of securing its premises, its properties, and those of its pupils and teachers.	2.73	ME	2.81	ME	2.77	ME
Coordinate with the barangay and local authorities to ensure the safety and protection of your pupils.	2.93	ME	3	ME	2.97	ME
The School has a policy against discrimination with regard to gender, cultural origin, social status, religious belief, and others.	2.65	ME	2.71	ME	2.68	ME
The school has a program for children with special needs.	2.07	LE	2.09	LE	2.08	LE
Teachers use non-threatening styles of discipline.	3.09	ME	3.02	ME	3.06	ME
Total	2.76	ME	2.78	ME	2.77	ME

EXTENT OF EFFICACY OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SYSTEM ALONG WITH HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Table 4 presents the overall perceived efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System in promoting high academic achievement and success, with an overall weighted mean of 3.31, indicating moderate effectiveness. The findings suggest that the system is generally effective in providing structured instruction, adequate learning materials, and using performance data to improve student outcomes. However, areas such as promoting cooperative and hands-on learning, effectively communicating the school's vision and mission, and ensuring consistent monitoring and assessment practices require improvement. These results align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of experiential learning, clear institutional goals, and systematic assessment in enhancing academic performance. For practice and policy, schools should prioritize professional development in cooperative learning strategies, strengthen communication of school-wide goals, and implement regular, consistent student assessments to optimize learning outcomes. Limitations of the study include reliance on self-reported perceptions of teachers and school heads, which may introduce bias, and the focus on a single school division, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts.

Table 4

Extent of Efficacy Of The Child-Friendly School System Along With High Academic Achievement And Success As Perceived By The Teachers And School Heads

High Academic Achievement and Success	Teachers		School heads		Overall	
	Mean	DE	Mean	DE	AWM	DE
The school has a clear vision/mission statement that is prominently displayed and adequately explained to all school personnel.	2.87	ME	2.85	ME	2.86	ME
Provide each student with a complete set of textbooks.	3.09	HE	3.37	HE	3.23	HE
Teachers regularly prepare their lesson plans.	3.8	HE	3.75	HE	3.78	HE
The school encourages and promotes cooperative and “hands-on” learning (“learning by doing”).	3.13	ME	3.04	ME	3.09	ME
The school has data on the school’s past three years performance in the division, regional or national tests for the purpose of improving its current year performance.	3.6	HE	3.59	HE	3.60	HE
Teachers regularly monitor and assess their pupils’ academic performance, with the view of improving their performance.	3.36	ME	3.3	ME	3.33	ME
Total	3.31	ME	3.32	ME	3.31	ME

EXTENT OF EFFICACY OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SYSTEM ALONG WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Table 5 presents the overall perceived efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System in promoting community support for education, with an overall weighted mean of 2.96, indicating moderate effectiveness. The findings suggest that schools demonstrate strong community collaboration through active Parent-Teacher Associations, coordination with local institutions to protect children, and partnerships with external stakeholders for disaster preparedness and capacity building. However, lower-rated areas such as engaging illiterate parents in literacy programs, leading adult literacy initiatives, and mobilizing community resources reveal gaps in fostering broader parental and community involvement. These results highlight the importance of strengthening adult education programs, improving outreach strategies, and enhancing partnerships with local organizations to maximize community support. For practice and policy, schools should develop targeted initiatives to engage parents more actively, expand literacy programs, and

coordinate resource mobilization efforts, thereby creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Study limitations include reliance on teacher and school head perceptions, which may introduce subjective bias, and the focus on a single school division, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts.

Table 5

Extent of Efficacy of The Child-Friendly School System along with Community Support for Education as Perceived by the Teachers and School Heads

Community support for education	Teachers		School Heads		Overall	
	Mean	DE	Mean	DE	AWM	DE
The school has a parent-teacher association (pta) that has elected leaders, meets regularly, and has a written plan of action.	3.4	ME	3.32	ME	3.36	ME
Coordinate with barangay institutions to identify children who are physically or sexually abused or are made to do hard physical labor, for the purpose of identifying their special needs.	3.33	ME	3.32	ME	3.33	ME
Coordinate with the barangay and local institutions to enroll illiterate parents in literacy programs.	2.51	ME	2.58	ME	2.55	ME
Take the lead in conducting literacy programs for illiterate parents.	2.67	ME	2.72	ME	2.70	ME
Enlist the support of community organizations to help raise funds and resources for learning.	2.95	ME	2.94	ME	2.95	ME
Invite parents to discuss with your teachers the learning experiences and progress of their children.	2.84	ME	2.86	ME	2.85	ME
Consult parents in the drafting of its policies and the planning and efficacy of school activities.	2.93	ME	2.91	ME	2.92	ME
Organize and capacitate the school disaster risk reduction and management committee	2.87	ME	2.93	ME	2.90	ME
The school has strong partnerships with external stakeholders in order to address disaster risk reduction and the cca-related needs of the school (i.e. Data and statistics, capacity building, resources, etc).	3.09	ME	3.02	ME	3.06	ME
Total	2.95	ME	2.96	ME	2.96	ME

EXTENT OF EFFICACY OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SYSTEM CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Table 6 presents the overall perceived efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System in promoting children's participation in school and community, with an overall weighted mean of 3.11, indicating moderate effectiveness. The findings suggest that schools perform well in involving students in meetings and planning sessions related to their well-being and providing mechanisms such as school publications or opinion boxes for students to express their views, fostering a child-friendly and participatory environment. However, lower-rated areas, such as encouraging students' involvement in community work and participating in disaster preparedness planning, indicate limited opportunities for students to engage in broader community and safety initiatives. These results imply that schools should develop targeted programs to strengthen student engagement in community activities and disaster management, promoting responsibility, civic awareness, and a more inclusive educational experience. Limitations of the study include reliance on teacher and school head perceptions, which may be subjective, and the focus on a single school division, restricting the generalizability of findings to other contexts.

Table 6

Extent of Efficacy of The Child-Friendly School System Along Children's Participation in School and Community as Perceived by the

Teachers And School Heads

Children's Participation in School and Community	Teachers		School Heads		Overall	
	Mean	DE	Mean	DE	AW M	DE
Involve students in meetings and planning sessions that concern their well-being.	3.13	ME	3.1	ME	3.12	ME
Involve students in the organizing, planning, and execution of the disaster preparedness and response plan.	2.68	ME	2.67	ME	2.68	ME
Encourage its students to get involved in community work.	2.93	ME	2.85	ME	2.89	ME
The school has a mechanism, such as a school publication, students' bulletin board, or opinion	3.8	ME	3.72	ME	3.76	ME

box – for pupils to express their opinions about school and community issues.						
Total	3.14	ME	3.09	ME	3.11	ME

EXTENT OF EFFICACY OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SYSTEM ALONG ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Table 7 presents the overall perceived efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System in terms of enrollment and completion, with an overall weighted mean of 3.31, indicating moderate effectiveness. The findings show that schools perform strongly in coordinating with local barangay councils to identify out-of-school children and in regularly monitoring student attendance, reflecting effective systems to promote enrollment and school completion. However, lower-rated areas, such as maintaining a comprehensive master list of all school-age children and conducting impactful enrollment campaigns, indicate gaps in ensuring that every child is reached and supported. These results suggest that schools should strengthen data tracking systems for school-age children and enhance initiatives to engage parents in enrollment, thereby improving overall access to education and supporting the objectives of a child-friendly school environment. Limitations include reliance on teacher and school head perceptions and the study's focus on a single school division, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Table 7

Extent of Efficacy of The Child-Friendly School System Along with Enrollment and Completion as Perceived by the Teachers And School Heads

Enrollment and Completion	Teachers		School Heads		Overall	
	Mean	DE	Mean	DE	AWM	DE
The school has a master list of all school-age children in the community, whether enrolled or not.	2.4	ME	2.32	ME	2.36	ME
The school regularly coordinates with the local barangay council to identify school-age children who are out of school, for the purpose of bringing them to school.	3.67	ME	3.63	ME	3.65	ME
The school conducts campaigns to encourage parents to enroll their children.	3.04	ME	3.49	ME	3.27	ME

The school has a system to regularly check on the attendance of its pupils and address problems concerning non-attendance.	4	ME	3.91	ME	3.96	ME
Total	3.28	ME	3.34	ME	3.31	ME

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN THE EXTENT OF EFFICACY OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Table 8 presents the comparison of perceptions between teachers and school heads regarding the extent of efficacy of the Child-Friendly School System across six areas, with overall weighted means of 3.05 for teachers and 3.06 for school heads, both indicating moderate effectiveness. The computed t-value of 0.2642 is less than the critical value of 2.001 at the 0.05 level of significance, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and school heads. The findings suggest that both groups similarly perceive the effectiveness of the child-friendly school system across all measured domains, implying a shared understanding and consensus on the system's implementation and impact within the schools.

Table 8

Significant Differences in the Extent Of Efficacy of The Child-Friendly School System of Public Elementary Schools

	Teachers		School Heads	
	Weighted Mean	DE	Weighted Mean	DE
Children's health and well-being	2.89	ME	2.91	ME
Safe and Protective Spaces	2.76	ME	2.78	ME
High Academic Achievement and Success	3.31	ME	3.32	ME
Community support for education	2.95	ME	2.96	ME
Children's Participation in School and Community	3.14	ME	3.09	ME
Enrollment and Completion	3.28	ME	3.34	ME
Total	3.05	ME	3.06	ME

Computed *t*-value: 0.2642 @ *df* 4
 Alpha: @ 0.05 level of significance
 Critical Value: 2.001 *df* 4
 Decision: accept the null hypothesis
 Interpretation: No significant difference

EXTENT OF SERIOUSNESS OF PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY TEACHERS

Table 9 presents the extent of seriousness of problems encountered by teachers in the implementation of the Child-Friendly School System, with an overall weighted mean of 2.17, indicating a moderately serious level of concern. The findings suggest that addressing resource limitations, professional development, and classroom management issues should be prioritized to enhance the effectiveness of the Child-Friendly School System, while also attending to less urgent concerns to support a well-rounded and conducive learning environment.

Table 9

Degree of Seriousness of Problems Encountered

Indicators	Teachers		Rank
	Mean	DE	
Insufficient materials and infrastructure:	2.67	S	1
Overcrowded classrooms	2.47	S	3
Lack of professional development:	2.56	S	2
Struggle with effectively addressing bullying, child abuse, and other forms of violence in school	1.60	MS	9
Lack of school counselors and mental health professionals	2.12	MS	7
Lack of parental engagement	2.33	MS	4
Difficulty in shifting from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to more student-centered, inclusive pedagogy.	2.09	MS	8
Lack of clear action plans for efficacy, leading to confusion or half-hearted efforts.	1.45	LS	10
Insufficient budget allocation.	2.29	MS	5

Limited time for efficacy.	2.15	MS	6
Total	2.17	MS	

Conclusion

The study revealed that the Child-Friendly School (CFS) system in public elementary schools of District I-B, San Carlos City Division, is generally perceived as moderately effective across key dimensions, including children's health and well-being, safe and protective spaces, high academic achievement, community support, children's participation, and enrollment and completion. Both teachers and school heads shared similar perceptions, indicating consistency in how the system's efficacy is viewed across different roles. Challenges encountered were found to be moderately serious, suggesting areas where improvements could enhance the system's overall impact.

Based on these outcomes, it is recommended that professional development programs be implemented to support teachers in managing classroom challenges, promoting mental health, and fostering student engagement. Schools should strengthen partnerships with parents, community members, and local organizations to reinforce educational support and student development. Resource allocation should be optimized to ensure both physical and human resources meet the needs of students effectively. Finally, the proposed action plan should be considered for implementation across the division to enhance the overall compliance and efficacy of the child-friendly school system.

For future research, studies could examine the long-term effects of child-friendly school interventions on student academic performance, socio-emotional development, and community engagement. Comparative studies between conventional and child-friendly schools could also provide deeper insights into best practices for creating supportive and inclusive learning environments.

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