

TEXT FOR SAS MEDIA KIT

When was the Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation established?

In 1999, *Sa Aklat, Sisikat!* (loosely translated as “*Books Make You Cool!*”) was launched as a literacy campaign in the City of Manila. The campaign’s objective was to promote reading among public school children. Encouraged by the success of the pilot project but tempered with the reality of taking the campaign nationwide, the Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation was established as a non-profit professional Philippine organization in January 2001, in partnership with the Petron Foundation.

What is SAS’ vision and mission?

SAS’ vision is to build a nation of readers. We believe that to read is every child's right. We seek to deepen the Filipino child's love and habit of reading. We advocate the SAS Reading Program which nurtures the Filipino child's intellectual, ethical and social development.

What is the current state of Philippine education?

Consider these alarming facts:

- ◆ 15% of pupils who passed Grade 1 did not show up for Grade 2
- ◆ 10% of those who finished Grade 2 did not return for Grade 3
- ◆ One (1) out of every four (4) dropouts in public schools will never learn to read, write or count
- ◆ Diagnostic tests administered among Grade 4 pupils showed that less than 45% had mastery of Grade 3-level competencies in all subjects, therefore not all Grade 3 graduates are functionally literate
- ◆ In some schools, three (3) shifts are required during the day because the ratio of teachers to students can be 1:80 or higher
- ◆ The book to student ratio is 1:4

Sources:

1. Department of Education
2. State of Education Conference presented by Synergia at the Asian Institute of Management, March 2004

The Philippine public school system is overburdened and under-resourced. Classrooms, desks and chairs, teachers and materials to serve the needs of 13 million students are lacking. There is simply not enough time, space, supervision or even books for children to learn, practice or enjoy reading while in school.

After class, most elementary school children are required to help their families earn a living. Therefore, reading is neither a priority nor a possibility outside of school hours. As a result, the Philippine public school system generates class after class of graduates with extremely simple literacy. Without functional literacy, many of these young people cannot earn a decent living much less reach their full potential as adults. In this

situation, many Filipino public school children will remain underserved and uneducated, without a fighting chance to emerge from the cycle of poverty.

What is the SAS Reading Program?

To deepen the love and habit of reading in Filipino children, SAS runs a 31-day Reading Program for all Grade 4 students in partner public schools. SAS donates 60 of the best Filipino children's storybooks to every Grade 4 classroom in partner schools. Teachers and students then have a daily reading experience centered on these storybooks throughout the duration of the Reading Program.

These reading times involve engaging, interactive activities—dramatization, creative storytelling sessions, arts and crafts, and games—encouraging children to read as many books as they can. Each student is given his or her own SAS Reading Passport, a small colorful notebook on which short reflections are written about the books read. The Reading Passports are designed to expand analytical, critical thinking, and writing skills.

Students love the free access to so many beautifully-written and illustrated books. They derive great satisfaction from being able to track their progress using the various creative classroom materials that each class receives as part of the Reading Program.

At the end of the Reading Program, participating schools receive a sturdy, brightly-colored SAS Reading Cart for properly housing their SAS storybooks. The cart is mounted on wheels and serves as a mobile library that can be wheeled from class to class. Students from all grade levels can then enjoy the books for years to come.

What makes the Reading Program unique?

- It's the only one of its kind that has been accredited by the Department of Education
- It's sustainable through the years, having been integrated into the curricula of partner schools

How does SAS support public school teachers?

Recognizing the role that teachers can play as primary reading advocates in the classroom, SAS conducts two-day Teacher Training Workshops to prepare them for the implementation of the Reading Program in their schools. During the workshops, leading educators facilitate discussions and generate ideas on best practice, new teaching techniques, creative strategies, and reading activities. The Teacher Training Workshop also promotes program sustainability through the years.

How does SAS support public school teachers *after* the Reading Program?

Teachers from SAS partner schools who have completed the Reading Program can apply to participate in SAS' newest program, Programang Kaakbay (meaning "shoulder-

to-shoulder”). Programang Kaakbay seeks to nurture teachers to build a nation of readers by offering in-depth training and personal self-enhancement workshops at dynamic conferences. After the conferences, teachers go back to their schools with new competencies and stronger confidence to apply what they have learned and promote the love and habit of reading in their schools.

To provide ongoing support for teachers throughout the year, SAS publishes *Star Teacher* magazine and distributes it to teachers across the country. This magazine is designed to be inspiring, entertaining, and informative. It promises to be the lifestyle magazine for all types of educators. It builds pride and confidence in its readers and supports them in improving themselves as educators, persons, and proponents of reading and critical thinking among their students.

Why does the Reading Program specifically target Grade 4 students?

According to the Department of Education, the fourth grade level is critical in the development of functional literacy. This is the age when the child begins to read comfortably and intervention at this point proves to be more effective in terms of developing the love and habit of reading.

Why does SAS run the Read-A-Thon for 31 days?

The timeframe for the Read-A-Thon is based on scientific evidence indicating that any activity done consecutively 21 to 28 times develops into a habit. In this case, it is the love and habit of reading that Sa Aklat Sisikat hopes to develop. This is inspired by the fact that the habit of reading is best cultivated in the youth and encouraged by the belief that literacy is all about creating a desire to read.

Can the SAS Reading Program be sustained after initial funding?

One of the best built-in characteristics of the SAS Reading Program is that it can be sustained by the participating schools on their own long after the initial 31 days are over. The schools and their teachers are already equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, technology, storybooks, and project-related materials and motivational tools for running a most successful Reading Program.

To date, nearly all of SAS’ partner public schools continue to implement the Reading Program every year after SAS’ intervention. They are challenged to creatively recycle materials to replace the consumables of the Reading Program (such as the paper feathers and Reading Passports) and creatively develop effective and innovative strategies for fostering the love and habit of reading among their students.

How does SAS measure its impact?

SAS gives high regard to evaluating the impact of its efforts and interventions in every school. Throughout the program, SAS applies specially-designed tools to assess the effectiveness of each component of the program in building the love and habit of

reading. These tools generate information that SAS analyses thoroughly for each school.

In some cases, an independent research team is commissioned to gather baseline data prior to running the Reading Program. An impact evaluation study is also implemented during and after program implementation. The evaluation and tracking studies set benchmark indicators that later indicate whether or not the students have truly developed the love and habit of reading. Also, comparative assessments of participating students are made before and after the program to compare their attitudes toward reading, practices, comprehension skills, and proficiency.

To date, SAS has served 450 public elementary schools across the country, touching the lives of over 1600 teachers and the minds of over 91,000 students.

SAS GENERAL FAST FACTS

Achievements	1999 to 2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	TOTAL
No. of School Benefited	26	48	110	123	143	450
No. of Grade 4 Students Benefited	21000	9700	27722	13167	19770	91359
No. of Teachers Trained	193	170	466	387	408	1624
No. of Storybooks Distributed	14180	7800	36420	18960	17320	94680

What are the guiding principles of the SAS Foundation?

- a. SAS wants to build a nation of readers because with this comes empowerment.
- b. SAS wants to give the next generation a fighting chance and, in the process, create a more educated workforce and a more educated consumer.
- c. The members of the SAS Board and staff bring to SAS business discipline, professionalism and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- d. We strongly advocate the concept of social entrepreneurship. Accountability, transparency and bottom lines matter and SAS strives to do well while doing good.
- e. SAS believes that reading transforms information into knowledge, and a well-read, highly knowledgeable citizenry produces a strong, enlightened nation.

If you share our vision of building a nation of readers,
please call or write to us at :

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