EQuALLS2 was launched in July 2006 to increase access to quality education and livelihood skills in the Philippines. With specific emphasis on poverty- and conflict-affected areas of Mindanao, EQuALLS2 targets schools, villages and municipalities to strengthen formal and alternative education and reintegrate out-of-school youth into the economy. Since 2006, the EQuALLS2* Project has been working in partnership with the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Education of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (DepEd ARMM) to adapt and strengthen the National English Proficiency Program (NEPP) in elementary schools in Mindanao. The project’s focus on improving teachers’ English use and instruction has evolved to emphasize the importance of reading skills, in light of the alarmingly low reading assessments of elementary school students and their teachers.
Whole School Reading Program

The Whole School Reading Program (WSRP) was structured as a school-based approach to strengthen teachers’ English reading fluency and comprehension skills and students’ English reading skills. It was designed to address the following findings:

• National Achievement Test results revealed a correlation between low math and science scores and gaps in students’ reading comprehension.

• The scores also revealed that many early grade students (grades 1–3) and intermediate students (grades 4–6) were struggling readers. The WSRP, therefore, was designed to include the whole teaching staff (all subject areas) and the whole student population (grades 1–6) within a given school.

The WSRP was developed on the premise that providing teachers with the tools (e.g., passages for oral reading practice and monitoring) and time to improve their reading skills through reading and discussion sessions, coupled with intensive training in reading instruction, leads to improved results for teachers and students. The underlying hypothesis is that when teachers become aware of their own and their students’ reading abilities, they are motivated to improve their fluency and comprehension skills, as well as how they teach reading and/or use English in math and science.
Main Components of WSRP

- Use of teacher and student reading skills assessments to inform the design of interventions and progress of programs
- Training of primary teachers in early grade reading using the Guide to Early Reading Instruction, an 8-week instructional program on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and writing
- Distribution of materials keyed to practices outlined in the Guide to Early Reading Instruction such as decodable books
- Face-to-face training of all school teachers across the curriculum (see box for content of courses)
- Follow-up, self-managed learning activities in which teachers work independently and in pairs to develop reading fluency and comprehension
- Videos to model key reading instructional practices
- Leadership by the school head in planning and coordinating school-wide interventions for students who are non-readers or ‘frustration level’ readers
- Targeted remediation activities for students identified as reading below grade level
- Distribution of over 1 million supplementary books and a teacher’s guide on how to use the texts for reading enhancement activities

**Course 1:** Learning to read (phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition)
**Course 2:** Reading to learn (vocabulary development, fluency, comprehension)
**Course 3:** Reading-writing connections and YouTube videos to model practices

**In between courses:**
- Participation in self-managed learning activities to strengthen teachers’ personal fluency and comprehension
- Weekly teacher “read aloud” with a partner teacher, plus discussion
- Monthly timed assessments of teachers’ fluency
Results

• After 6 months of targeted interventions, WSRP students significantly outscored non-WSRP students on all basic reading skills.

• Reading comprehension increased the most: 316% for grade 2 students.

• Grade 2 WSRP students scored an average of 53% higher than non-WSRP students on all skills tested.