

Enhancing Grade 8 Students' Speaking Skills Using Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS): A Collaborative Learning Approach

Mary Claire C. Cabahug¹, Maryan E. Lagang²

¹Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines

²Ozamiz City National High School, Ozamiz City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the persistent problem of poor Filipino language proficiency among Grade 8 students. To improve their oral communication skills, the research introduced the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS), a strategy designed to enhance language proficiency through collaborative, interactive learning activities. The study aimed to determine the level of students' Filipino-speaking skills before and after implementing SEPS and to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two. Using a quantitative single-group pretest-posttest design, the study was conducted among 40 purposively selected Grade 8 students from a public secondary school in Ozamiz City during the school year 2024–2025. Data were collected using a speaking performance rubric and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and a paired t-test in Minitab. Results showed that all students were in the "Did Not Meet Expectations" category before SEPS, but after its implementation, they significantly improved and reached the "Outstanding" level. The statistical analysis revealed a highly significant difference in their speaking scores before and after the intervention. Based on the findings, SEPS proves to be an effective strategy for enhancing Filipino speaking skills. It is therefore recommended for integration in classroom instruction and for further application in various subjects and educational levels to support learners' speaking development.

Keywords: collaboration, confidence, Filipino language, performance, speaking, strategy, students, teaching, vocabulary

Context and Rationale

The ability to communicate effectively in Filipino is crucial for Grade 8 students, as it enhances their cognitive, academic, and social development. Proficiency in the language allows students to express their ideas clearly, engage in meaningful conversations, and develop a deeper appreciation for Filipino culture. However, many students struggle with fluency, confidence, and proper articulation when speaking Filipino due to limited practice, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of structured speaking activities within the curriculum. Traditional methods often emphasize individual learning, which may not adequately address the dynamic nature of language acquisition. The Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS) introduces a paradigm shift by integrating collaborative learning strategies to foster effective oral communication. Students were allegedly having trouble communicating, especially while speaking, in an eighth-grade class at a public high school in the Philippines. By offering a secure environment for students to engage in speaking exercises and build relationships with their peers, collaborative learning activities helped alleviate anxiety, according to a review of students' reflections (Denosta et al., 2023).

One of the speaking abilities that students possess is speaking. Although speaking skills are taught from a young age, the benefits of this training are still not widely used. Learning to talk is still a challenge for many youngsters. Shame, fear, anxiety, and lack of confidence are some of the things that prevent students from learning how to speak. They also hinder students' motivation, learning habits, and vocabulary mastery, which is still low. Students' success in speaking is also influenced by their ability to memorize vocabulary, believe in themselves, and improve their pronunciation (Lingaa et al., 2020). Several factors, including facilities, goals,

motivation, and the learning environment, influence students' speaking abilities, along with the classroom teaching and learning process. Speaking practice with native speakers improved students' oral production (Wahyuni & Afrianti, 2021). The students become more proficient speakers. The children's conduct and academic performance improved with each cycle. Action learning tactics help students communicate more effectively, lower their anxiety levels so they can speak freely without fear of making a mistake, and boost their enthusiasm for learning to speak (Putra et al., 2021). Some students receive poor grades because they are unable to use a language, and giving up on learning it makes them less inclined to seek assistance from their teachers when needed. Students' high level of ability in using the Filipino language in academic communication suggests that it is frequently recognized (Ranque et al., 2024).

The importance of verbal communication in the learning context must be recognized and developed. It demands that its use in educational settings be closely examined to encourage more opportunities to practice oral language. These initiatives are essential for fostering students' cognitive growth and should be actively encouraged and pursued (Bordeos et al., 2023). Different instructional techniques, including role-playing, gamification, translation tasks, and the "Filipino Word of the Day" strategy, are investigated as possible remedies. Other tactics, such as heightened motivation and engagement, enhanced comprehension, the capacity to meet a variety of learning requirements, communication skills, and retention, cultivate critical thinking abilities, foster a nurturing learning atmosphere, and overcome obstacles in language acquisition (Catanes, 2025).

This action research aims to enhance Grade 8 students' Filipino-speaking skills through the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS). This strategy incorporates collaborative learning to improve fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. The study will be conducted in one of the secondary schools in Misamis Occidental during the S.Y. 2024–2025. It will focus solely on oral language development in Filipino and will not explore writing or reading components. Furthermore, the study will use SEPS as the central intervention, limiting the scope to its effects on speaking performance over a short academic period. The research findings may be most applicable to similar classroom settings and learners. This study addresses the ongoing issue of poor speaking skills among Grade 8 students in the Philippines by applying an innovative and structured approach. Through SEPS, the research introduces collaborative learning techniques that encourage student interaction, build confidence, and support meaningful language use in the classroom.

Oral communication in Filipino is an essential skill that supports students' cognitive development, academic achievement, and cultural identity. However, many Grade 8 students struggle to speak fluently and confidently due to limited exposure, a lack of practice, and fear of making mistakes. These difficulties are often compounded by traditional teaching approaches that prioritize individual work over interactive speaking tasks. While existing strategies focus on grammar and vocabulary development, few integrate structured and collaborative methods to improve speaking fluency. The researcher identified a significant gap in previous studies regarding the application of collaborative learning strategies, such as the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS), to improve Filipino-speaking skills among junior high school students. This reflects an unexplored area in language teaching practices, particularly in the context of regional public schools (Miles, 2017).

Strategy

The SEPS approach follows a collaborative learning strategy, in which students work together on structured speaking tasks. This method aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which posits that learners develop language skills through social interaction and scaffolded learning experiences. Students' speaking skills can be enhanced through small-group discussion during speaking instruction. The strategy of small-group discussions can help students practice their language skills. They can freely share their thoughts and views during small-group discussions (Mogea, 2021). Students are grouped to solve problems, do assignments, and create products as part of the collaborative learning approach. It boosts students' motivation and fosters a peaceful environment, reducing classroom anxiety and encouraging conversation and a sense of self-centeredness among each individual. In addition, it broadens pupils' knowledge and abilities.

Oral communication is one of the key abilities. Learning how to communicate verbally is crucial since it allows one to express thoughts and opinions (Agustina, 2022). To overcome fear, build confidence, and

enhance their speaking abilities, students need interactive activities that involve working in groups or pairs, role-play, paired conversations, communicative games, and question-and answer sessions. Collaborative and communicative activities, such as interactive, pair, group, and conversation tasks, role-playing, and communicative games, can be used to improve students' speaking abilities. Students prepare, practice, and present oral tasks together, with the instructor providing guidance, support, feedback, and corrections as they go (Yuh & Kaewurai, 2021).

Multiple intelligences-based cooperative tactics significantly improve students' speaking abilities (Meena,2020). Speaking exercises will improve students' oral communication skills, which will be necessary to guarantee maximum engagement and usage of the target language in the near future. At that point, students will be able to use speaking to negotiate meaning and build relationships with others (Bautista & Del Valle, 2023). Small-group discussions were more effective for teaching speaking than speaking without them. Furthermore, small-group discussions can enhance students' communication skills (Bohari, 2020). To enhance the Filipino speaking skills of Grade 8 students, the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS) was implemented as a collaborative learning strategy. This approach integrated interactive speaking tasks designed to develop students' fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and vocabulary. It emphasized real-life communication through structured group activities such as peer interviews, dialogues, storytelling, and oral presentations. By creating a supportive environment where students could practice speaking with one another, SEPS aimed to reduce fear and build confidence in using Filipino.

The implementation began with a diagnostic assessment to determine the students' baseline speaking skills. Weekly lessons focused on specific speaking elements, including tone, sentence structure, and clarity. Students engaged in collaborative speaking tasks that allowed them to express themselves, listen actively, and provide peer feedback. After each activity, students reflected on their performance using rubrics and teacher guidance to track their improvement over time. To assess progress, a post-assessment was administered at the end of the intervention. Students also compiled a speaking portfolio containing recordings, self-assessments, and reflections. This structured yet flexible strategy not only supported academic improvement but also helped students develop confidence and real-world communication skills in Filipino through active participation and meaningful collaboration.

Action Research Questions

This action research aimed to enhance the Filipino speaking skills of Grade 8 students through the use of the Speaking Enhancer and Practice System (SEPS) strategy during the S.Y. 2024–2025. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of students' Filipino speaking skills before the implementation of SEPS?
2. What is the level of students' Filipino speaking skills after the implementation of SEPS?
3. Is there a significant difference in students' Filipino speaking skills before and after the implementation of SEPS?

Action Research Methods

Research Design. This study used a single group pretest-posttest design to enhance students' speaking skills. The quantitative components includes pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' speaking proficiency before and after the implementation of the SEPS approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was deemed appropriate because it enhanced Filipino-speaking skills at one secondary school by integrating the Speaking Enhancement Practice System (SEPS).

Site. The study was conducted at the Junior High School level, specifically among Grade 8 students at a particular public secondary school in Ozamiz City. The school, aligned with the resolution mandated by the Department of Education (DepEd), was at the forefront of implementing the K to 12 basic education programs, encompassing both Junior and Senior High School levels. In adherence to the DepEd directive, the Junior High School curriculum spanned Grades 7 to 10, reflecting the institution's commitment to providing a comprehensive, modern, and inclusive educational experience for its students.

Participants. The study participants included 40 Grade 8 students. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. The selection of the participants was based on the following criteria: 1) students who were enrolled in the Junior High School Department at a particular public secondary school as Grade 9 students for the academic year 2024–2025; 2) students who were admitted to a specific section or block in the Grade 9 level; 3) students who had Filipino as a subject; and 4) students who gave their full consent to serve as respondents of the study. The researcher ensured that these criteria were met before conducting the survey. However, the researcher did not include other sections of the same grade level in the study.

Instrument. The researcher used the following research instruments as the data gathering tool.

Speaking Enhancer and Practice System. The researcher intended to utilize this approach to enhance students' speaking skills and expand their comprehension of *Florante at Laura: Laura, Bakit ka Nagtaksil?* from the Filipino 8 curriculum in the fourth grading period. This approach allowed students to write scripts, perform songs, and produce poems, helping them express their thoughts and emotions more effectively. It enhanced the interactivity and relevance of learning while fostering creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

To determining the test performance, the following scale was used.

Score	Grade Equivalent	Interpretation
26-30	90-100	Outstanding
24-26	85-89	Very Satisfactory
21-23	80-84	Satisfactory
18-20	75-79	Fairly Satisfactory
Below 18	Below 75	Did not meet expectation

B. Lesson Plan. The researcher created a lesson plan centered on *Florante at Laura*, integrating the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS) to enhance Filipino speaking skills. Before its implementation, the lesson plan was carefully reviewed by the cooperating teacher and revised by the researcher. The implementation took place at a certain Junior High School in Ozamiz City, specifically with the Grade 8 students, in March 2025.

Data Gathering Methods

A. Pre-Implementation Phase

The researcher first sought permission from the Dean of the College of Education, the Schools Division Superintendent, the principal, the participating teacher, and the students parents to conduct the study. Once approval was obtained, consent forms were sent to the parents, and assent forms were collected from the students themselves. After securing all necessary permissions and forms, a pre-test was administered to assess students' Filipino-speaking skills and the concepts targeted in the study. The researcher also prepared the lesson plans and relevant materials to integrate the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS) into the teaching strategy. Assessments and activities were also prepared during this phase, based on the teacher's lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations.

B. Implementation Phase

The Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS), using a differentiated strategy, was incorporated into lessons on Filipino literature to facilitate the development of students' speaking skills. Students were given explicit instructions on the guidelines and expectations for participating in the activity. One month into the activity, an assessment was conducted to measure improvements in students' understanding of Filipino literature and their ability to express ideas.

C. Post-Implementation Phase

The post-implementation stage included drawing conclusions, providing recommendations, proofreading,

editing, and finalizing the research study. It also involved the proper dissemination of the research results to a particular group of people.

Ethical Consideration. The subjects' informed consent was obtained in accordance with the study's ethical standards and acquired before the survey. As part of ethical practice, the researchers presented participants with a full briefing on the Data Privacy Act of 2012. This was done to demonstrate a commitment to protecting personal information and to ensure accountability when dealing with sensitive data.

Before conducting the research, approval from the College of Education was sought. Participants were contacted via letters requesting their permission to participate in the study. The participants were assured that confidentiality in data collection, use, and presentation is strictly observed. For example, all names were altered to preserve people's identities for confidentiality reasons. This procedure ensured that research involving human subjects was conducted safely and ethically.

Data Analysis

With the use of Minitab software, the following statistical tools will be used:

Frequency and Percentage. These were used to assess students' performance levels before and after using the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS).

Mean and Standard Deviation. These were used to assess students' awareness levels before and after using the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS).

Paired T-Test. This tool was used to explore the significant difference in students' performance before and after using the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' Speaking Skills in the Filipino Language before the Implementation of the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS)

Table 1 shows the students' speaking skills in Filipino before SEPS was implemented. The data reveal that all 40 students (100%) were in the "Did Not Meet Expectations" category. The mean score was 7.275, and the standard deviation was 0.679. This means most students had very low speaking performance, and their scores were close to each other.

The result suggests that, before SEPS, students struggled with their Filipino-speaking skills. They likely had difficulty expressing themselves clearly, pronouncing words correctly, and speaking with confidence. The low scores show that speaking Filipino was a challenge for them, and they needed a better way to improve.

The slight standard deviation indicates there was little difference among the students' speaking abilities. Most of them performed at the same low level. This shows a consistent need across the whole class for support and improvement in speaking skills.

The three main components of language competency are poor pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Jusuf et al., 2021). Students' shyness, stage anxiety, fear of making mistakes when speaking in front of large crowds, and lack of confidence in their ability to communicate in the language are all contributing factors (Gobena, 2025).

The ideal learning environments should be created by educators and educational institutions, and provide a setting for students. More speaking instruction should be provided to help them experience correcting their pronunciation, understand how the teacher speaks, and assist pupils in routinely practicing speaking on a range of subjects. Address queries, amuse students with gaming activities, solve riddles, and listen to music and view short films without subtitles to stimulate students' interest in learning without making them bored (Tuyen, 2021).

The results clearly indicate a need for a structured speaking strategy, such as SEPS, to help students develop better speaking skills in Filipino. Without intervention, students may continue to face communication difficulties, which can affect their academic performance and self-confidence.

Table 1. Students’ Speaking Skills in the Filipino Language Before the Implementation of the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System

Speaking Skills	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Did Not Meet Expectation (DME)	40	100	7.275	0.679
Overall	40	100	7.275	7.275

Note: 26-30 (Outstanding); 23-25 (Very Satisfactory); 21-22 (Satisfactory); 18-20 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1-17 (Did Not Meet Expectations)

Students’ Speaking Skills in the Filipino Language After the Implementation of the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS)

Table 2 presents the results after SEPS was implemented. All 40 students, or 100%, reached the "Outstanding" level in their Filipino speaking skills. The mean score was 29.225, with a standard deviation of 0.733. This shows that the students significantly improved in their speaking skills.

After using SEPS, students were able to perform much better on their speaking tasks. They likely showed better pronunciation, more precise sentence structure, and greater confidence when speaking Filipino. The drastic jump in the average score—from 7.275 to 29.225—demonstrates the program's effectiveness.

The standard deviation of 0.733 indicates that most students reached similarly high levels of speaking ability. This suggests that SEPS helped almost all students, regardless of their initial skill level. The program worked equally well for everyone.

Improving learning materials, enhancing community initiatives, encouraging parental involvement, supporting teachers, and putting in place routine evaluation procedures. By encouraging cooperation among educators, parents, and the community, the project aims to provide insights for enhancing Filipino language competency, thereby promoting students' academic achievement and cultural identity (Aranas & Paglinawan, 2024).

Alpha Gen's usage and awareness of the Filipino language, with an emphasis on their ability to speak and understand it fluently. Improving the way Filipino is incorporated into contemporary instruction to promote everyday use (Jubahib & Bayani, 2024).

Through ongoing cooperation and commitment, teachers can enable students to value and appreciate the great diversity of the Filipino language, cultivating a passion for language and study that lasts a lifetime (Balana & Sadiri, 2025).

The findings show that SEPS is an effective tool for improving students' speaking skills. It may be a good strategy for other teachers to use to help students become more confident and skilled Filipino speakers.

Table 2. Students’ Speaking Skills in the Filipino Language After the Implementation of the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System

Speaking Skills	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Outstanding (O)	40	100	29.225	0.733
Overall	40	100	29.225	0.733

Note: 26-30 (Outstanding); 23-25 (Very Satisfactory); 21-22 (Satisfactory); 18-20 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1-17 (Did Not Meet Expectations)

Difference in the Students' Speaking Skills in the Filipino Language Before and After the Implementation of the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System

Table 3 compares the students' speaking scores before and after SEPS. The t-value is -251.32, and the p-value is 0.000, which means the difference is highly significant. This result indicates a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after the SEPS was used.

The average score before SEPS was only 7.275, while after SEPS, it increased to 29.225. This shows a massive jump in speaking performance. Because the p-value is less than 0.01, the result is statistically significant, indicating the improvement did not occur by chance.

This confirms that SEPS had a real and positive impact on the students. It helped them move from a poor level of speaking to an outstanding one. The speaking practice and collaboration in SEPS helped students become more comfortable and practical speakers.

The effectiveness of group techniques in improving students' speaking comprehension and encouraging their confidence in communicating concepts while studying. Learning together makes it easier to create more argument components, which raises the discourse level. Furthermore, it improves students' cognitive capacities for recall, comprehension, application, and analysis (Chrismaretta & Abrar, 2024).

Since cooperative learning techniques improved students' speaking abilities, they should be used to support secondary education (Avellaneda Buñay, 2024).

Teachers can help students improve their speaking and writing by letting them participate in goal-setting and learning process planning, promoting self-expression, and encouraging teamwork. The significance of utilizing a variety of educational resources in conjunction with the collaborative approaches was also highlighted (Murad et al., 2021).

The significant difference proves that SEPS is a valuable approach for improving speaking skills. Teachers may consider using this method not only in Filipino but also in other subjects where speaking is essential. It also encourages the use of engaging and interactive activities to support learning.

Table 3. Difference in the Students' Speaking Skills in the Filipino Language Before and After the Implementation of the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System

Variables	M	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Before Speaking Enhancement and Practice System	7.275	0.679	-251.32	0.000	Reject Ho
After Speaking Enhancement and Practice System	29.225	0.733			

Ho: There is no significant difference in the students' speaking skills in the Filipino language before and after the implementation of the speaking enhancement and practice system

Note: Probability Value Scale: **p<0.01 (Highly Significant); *p<0.05 (Significant); *p>0.05 (Significant); p>0.05 (Not Significant)

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This action research aimed to improve the Filipino speaking skills of Grade 8 students using the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS) during the 2024–2025 school year. The study used a single-group pretest-posttest design to measure students' speaking proficiency before and after SEPS implementation. Forty Grade 8 students from a public secondary school in Ozamiz City participated, selected through purposive

sampling. The intervention centered on integrating SEPS into lessons on Florante at Laura, where students engaged in scriptwriting, song performance, and poetry creation to develop confidence and fluency in Filipino. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to determine changes in speaking skill levels.

The research process included three phases: pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation. During the pre-implementation phase, consent was gathered, and the necessary lesson plans and materials were prepared. The SEPS strategy was then executed in the classroom using differentiated activities that encouraged creativity and collaboration. After a month, assessments measured improvements in speaking ability. Ethical standards were observed throughout the study, including adherence to the Data Privacy Act. Data were analyzed using Minitab software, employing frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and a paired t-test to assess the significance of changes before and after the SEPS application.

Findings

Based on the results, the following findings were made:

Before the implementation of SEPS, all 40 Grade 8 students (100%) were classified under the "Did Not Meet Expectations" category, with a mean score of 7.275 and a standard deviation of 0.679. This indicates a generally low level of Filipino proficiency, characterized by poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and low confidence in speaking. The narrow spread of scores suggests consistently low performance across all participants, underscoring an urgent need for a structured, supportive speaking strategy.

After the implementation of SEPS, all 40 students (100%) achieved an "Outstanding" performance level, with a mean score of 29.225 and a standard deviation of 0.733. This substantial improvement reflects SEPS' effectiveness in enhancing students' pronunciation, grammar use, confidence, and overall speaking fluency in Filipino. The narrow variation in scores also suggests that the strategy was equally beneficial for all students, regardless of their initial skill level.

A significant difference in speaking skills was observed before and after SEPS use. The results from the paired t-test showed a t-value of -251.32 and a p-value of 0.000, which is highly significant at $p < 0.01$. This confirms that the improvement in students' speaking performance was not due to chance but was a direct result of the SEPS intervention. Therefore, SEPS proved to be an effective strategy in boosting students' speaking skills and can be considered a valuable tool in Filipino language instruction.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Before the implementation of the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS), Grade 8 students displayed poor speaking skills in Filipino. All students fall into the "Did Not Meet Expectations" category, indicating a lack of proficiency in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and speaking confidence.

After implementing SEPS, students significantly improved their Filipino-speaking skills. All students reach the "Outstanding" level, demonstrating clear improvement in fluency, accuracy, and self-expression. The strategy proves to be effective in creating a supportive and engaging learning environment that helps students participate actively and speak more confidently.

There is a statistically significant difference in students' Filipino speaking performance before and after the SEPS intervention. This confirms that SEPS is a successful strategy for enhancing speaking skills and can be used by teachers to support language learning not only in Filipino but potentially in other subjects where speaking is essential.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

It is recommended that Filipino teachers integrate the Speaking Enhancement and Practice System (SEPS) into

their teaching strategies to improve students' speaking skills. Teachers may design activities that promote interaction, creativity, and confidence, such as role playing, poetry recitation, and group presentations.

School leaders should make the implementation of SEPS or similar strategies by providing training, materials, and time for teachers to collaborate and plan engaging speaking activities. Administrators are also encouraged to include speaking-focused programs in the school's language development initiatives.

SEPS can serve as a model for enhancing speaking skills in other subjects. It is recommended that curriculum planners include structured speaking tasks and collaborative learning techniques to help students develop communication skills across different learning areas.

Future studies may explore the long-term effects of SEPS on students' speaking performance or apply it to different grade levels and subjects. It is also recommended to include control groups for comparative analysis and to gather qualitative data, such as student reflections or teacher observations, to gain deeper insights.

Students are encouraged to take an active role in improving their speaking skills by participating in collaborative activities, practicing regularly, and seeking feedback. They may view speaking as a valuable skill that enhances their academic performance and self-expression.

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Curriculum Vitae



Personal Data

Name: Mary Claire C. Cabahug
Date of Birth: October 23, 1999
Place of Birth: Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental
Address: P-3 San Antonio, Ozamiz City
Status: Single
Citizenship: Filipino
Religion: Catholic
Email Address: clairecabahug8@gmail.com

Parents: Janet C. Cabahug

Education

Tertiary: Bachelor in Secondary Education Major in Filipino
Misamis University
H.T. Feliciano St, Ozamiz City Misamis Occidental

Senior High School: Technical Livelihood Education
San Antonio, Ozamiz City Misamis Occidental
April 2018

Junior High School: San Antonio High School
San Antonio Ozamiz City
April 2016