

As the 2025/2026 academic year kicks off this week on Monday 8, 2025 with major education reforms, officials from the Ministry of Education say the new pathways will transform the way students learn and prepare for the future.

At the heart of the changes is the introduction of three new education pathways for instance in upper secondary education—Mathematics and Sciences, Arts and Humanities, and Languages—replacing the old subject combinations that often pushed students into early specialization.

These new pathways are designed to bridge existing gaps and ensure that Rwanda's education system aligns with the country's long-term development goals," says Jean Claude Hashakineza, Director General of Education Communications at the Ministry of Education.

Speaking at GS Kicukiro in Kigali on Monday, September 8, Education Minister Joseph Nsengimana stressed that the success of the reforms depends on shared responsibility. He noted that while schools are prepared to deliver lessons, parents also have a duty to monitor their children's progress, provide support, and work together with educators.

The reforms, endorsed by the Cabinet in June, are intended to raise learning standards and bring Rwanda's education system in line with the country's long-term development agenda. According to the Ministry of Education, a key challenge has been the high repetition rate in lower primary schools, with around 35 percent of Primary One pupils forced to repeat the year. This is mainly linked to overcrowded classrooms and the double-shift system, which prevents teachers from fully covering the curriculum.

In 2021/2022 the primary school repetition rate was 30.2%, with boys at 31.4% and 26.1% of girls according to the Statistical yearbook2024.

To address this, the government has introduced a new timetable requiring all schools [to adopt a five-lesson-per-day model, or 25 lessons per week](#) and at least 49 children per each class, in line with international benchmarks. This adjustment is expected to give teachers more time to cover material thoroughly while ensuring students have space to master foundational skills while avoiding overcrowding in classes.

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“We asked ourselves: what should a child know by the end of Primary Three?” Nsengimana noted. “Literacy in English and Kinyarwanda, numeracy, science, and ICT are the building blocks for all future learning. If the foundation is weak, everything built on top is at risk. That’s why we are treating preschool to Primary Three as a critical investment period.”

“From preschool to Primary Three, the reforms focus on building a strong foundation in literacy. Getting this right will ensure that students develop essential reading and writing skills early on.” Hashakineza said

At the secondary level, all students, regardless of their chosen pathway, will continue to study a set of core subjects including Mathematics, English, ICT, Entrepreneurship, Physical Education, and General Studies. The government says this approach will broaden students’ options and better prepare them for diverse career paths. The rollout begins this academic year with Senior Four and will gradually extend to Senior Five and Six.

Despite the changes and challenges, students are approaching the new school year with determination. “I am excited about the new pathways, because I can choose subjects that match my interests. I feel more in control of my future. Claudine Umulisa a senior four student from Gatsibo

“In my rural school these changes are a bit challenging, but I’m motivated to do my best with the support of my teachers.” added Denise Agahozo a senior four student in Rukara Sector, Kayonza District.

Teachers have also shared their views on the new education pathways, acknowledging both the opportunities and challenges they present. Nziyonizeye Albert, a Senior Four teacher said, “The new pathways give students more flexibility but teachers also need guidance. We need to adapt our teaching methods and ensure every student gets the support they need.” Albert added

“As a parent, I now understand I have to check on my children’s progress regularly and work with teachers, it’s not about sending them to school, we must guide them through their learning,” said Jean Bosco Ndagijimana, a father of three in Kayonza District

Education experts have warned that rural schools may face challenges with ICT access and classroom sizes. The Ministry of Education on sensitizing about the reforms explained, “We are planning to provide additional resources and support so all students benefit equally from the reforms,”

“These reforms are not just about learning: they’re about preparing a skilled workforce that will contribute to the Rwanda’s Vision 2025 and national development,” Hashakineza

According to the 2025/26 academic calendar issued by the Ministry of Education, the first term will run from September 8, 2025, to December 19, 2025.

Students will then have a two-week break, with the second term starting on January 5, 2026, and ending on April 3, 2026.

The second term break will last three weeks, and the third term will begin on April 20, 2026, ending on July 3, 2026.

Additionally, the MINEDUC calendar also indicates that practical exams in vocational, teacher training, and accounting schools will start on June 1, 2026, and conclude on June 19, 2026.

National exams for primary schools will begin on July 7, 2026, and end on August 9, 2026, while secondary school exams will start on August 15, 2026, and conclude on August 24, 2026.