

As science and math scores rise, Rwanda's education officials turn their focus to improving English proficiency and teacher training.

The Ministry of Education is ramping up efforts to improve English proficiency in secondary schools, following the release of national exam results showing promising performance in Science and Mathematics, but continued challenges in English.

In a report presented Friday, June 20, the Ministry said 66% of students passed Science and 64% passed Mathematics in the 2023/24 Ordinary Level exams. English, however, lagged behind with a 47% pass rate.

Despite the gap, officials highlighted the progress in STEM subjects as a positive indicator of ongoing education reforms. "While Science and Math results still leave room for improvement, we are encouraged by the upward trend," said Rose Baguma, director general of policy and planning at the Ministry.



Rose Baguma

The Ministry announced a national plan to assess English proficiency among primary and secondary teachers. Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente said Thursday that teachers who are unable to demonstrate sufficient command of the language will be removed from the classroom.

Ngirente's remarks followed growing concerns from lawmakers over the quality of education, particularly the impact of teachers' limited English skills on student outcomes. English has been the primary language of instruction in Rwanda since 2008.

The new data also shed light on student retention. While over 746,000 students enrolled in the first year of primary school, only 88,149 reached the final year of secondary school. The dropout and repetition rates remain high, with the 2022/23 school year seeing a 21.4% repetition rate in lower secondary, peaking at 24% in Senior 2.

Kicukiro District reported the highest repetition rate in the country at 33.6%, followed by Kirehe at 28.4% and Bugesera at 27.6%.

Still, overall results from national exams suggest steady academic performance.

The pass rate for upper secondary students was 60%, with private schools outperforming public ones—67% compared to 59%.

Education leaders say the focus now will be on strengthening English instruction to support further gains across all subjects. “It’s clear where we need to invest more energy,” Baguma said.