

Report on the Bahamas High School Diploma National Review Commission (BHSDNRC) Accepted Recommendations

Background

Recognizing that education is the principle vehicle by which countries fuel sustainable development and economic growth, The Ministry of Education and Technical and Vocational Training's goal is to prepare students with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to become globally competitive, socially responsible citizens. Students are also expected to possess, among other qualities, a multiplicity of literacies, think critically and accept their role as environmental stewards.

The Bahamas High School Diploma (BHSD) program was instituted in 2014 to track and monitor student learning outcomes. The initiative named eight (8) minimum national standards or graduation requirements that served as prerequisites and performance indicators, to earning a diploma:

- 1) 4 BJC Passes: Language Arts, Mathematics, a Science, a Social Science or CTE subject (Technical Drawing, Home Economics)
- 2) Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) 2.0 Minimum
- 3) 27 Credits
- 4) 30 Hours of Community Service
- 5) 90% Punctuality
- 6) 90% Attendance
- 7) 20 Hours of Job Readiness
- 8) 3 Parents Teacher Conferences

Although the program has seen measured success, it has been met with public outcry for the following reasons:

1. Students who obtained a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or more but earned D or F grades without credit recovery opportunities, were not eligible for a diploma;
2. Students living on Family Islands have limited access to programs offered in New Providence;
3. Students with special needs and disabilities have limited access to programs;
4. The continuity of education in Grand Bahama and Abaco were negatively impacted by the passing of Hurricane Dorian on September 1, 2019. Students could not meet the requirements of the BHSD and therefore did not earn a diploma;
5. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the country went into lockdown mode March 16, 2020. The lack of devices, connectivity and other factors, prevented many students from accessing the virtual platform. Students could not meet the requirements of the BHSD and therefore did not earn a diploma;

The issues aforementioned and the desperate cries and concerns from various stakeholders including parents, teachers, administration and students across the country could not be ignored. The cry was unanimous: too many students were losing access to a program that was created to give them greater access. Therefore, in October 2022, the Hon. Glenys Hanna Martin, Minister of Education, launched the Bahamas High School Diploma National Review Commission to review the present standards.

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Minister Martin charged the Commission “to review the objects and purpose of the high school diploma, studying its core criteria, and analyzing the impacts of these criteria to determine whether the objects and purposes are being achieved,” (The Hon. Glenys Hanna Martin, Minister of Education and Technical & Vocational Training, Tuesday October 18, 2022). The Commission’s goals included:

- (1) Examine the prevailing criteria for relevance;
- (2) Scrutinize the prevailing criteria to identify current trends in student attainment;
- (3) Study current trends;
- (4) Utilize evidence-based educational research strategies; and
- (5) Employ standards and best practices with a view to restructuring the present program if needed.

The Bahamas High School Diploma National Review Commission (BHSDNRC), which included various education stakeholders, was approved by the Cabinet of The Bahamas in July 2022. Meetings started in September 2022 and continued until December, 2022.

The team obtained statistical information on the current scholastic attainment, and travelled throughout The Bahamas, meeting with a diverse group of stakeholders. 58 meetings (3 via zoom) were held. The recommendations include some modifications to the existing criteria and the need to ensure inclusive policies for special needs students.

BHSD Recommendations accepted

After reviewing the findings, the following recommendations are proffered for the class of 2023.

- a. Remove the 27 credit hours requirement, which was deemed unnecessary;
- b. Reduce the Attendance and Punctuality rates from 90% to 80%, in order to accommodate extenuating circumstances which are not within the control of students such as illness or a family emergency;
- c. Remove the three parent teacher conferences as a criteria for receiving a diploma, as students should not be penalized for the failure of parents or guardians to comply; and
- d. Retain English Language and Mathematics as a BJC requirement, but permit students to submit any other two subjects as BJC subject requirement.
- e. Establish the Bahamas High School Diploma Unit to ensure the implementation of the revised criteria for the attainment of a Bahamas High School Diploma (phase 1: two technical officers, Phase 2: ADE and 2 additional technical officers)
- f. Establish a Justification and Appeals Committee. Discussions have started. The committee will commence its work by August 2023. Those students who believed they were disenfranchised will have the opportunity to sit with the committee and present their case.
- g. Establish a committee to review the special needs inclusion. Discussions have started and the composition of the team is being identified.
- h. Increase training access from annual to semi-annual. Ongoing cycle.
- i. Review the existing BHSD criteria with a view to ensuring multiple pathways accepting equivalent certification options. Of the 6 pathways recommended, the Ministry amalgamated and have agreed to three options:

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The Academic Criterion are accepted as follows, by options outlined:

OPTION 1 (General Pathway): 4 BJs Minimum D Pass; Math, Language and any other 2 subjects, 2.0 CGPA

OPTION 2 (General Pathway): Numeracy/Literacy Equivalent OR BJs OR City and Guilds, 2.0 CGPA (The credentials will be channeled through NAECOB to the Evaluation and Assessment Division of the Ministry of Education and Technical and Vocational Training. If approved, they will be accepted as a criteria for receiving a BHSD.) We are saying to all that a career in Aquaculture, Plumbing, Electrical Installation, and Engineering is just as important as a career Scientist or Mathematician or Lawyer.

OPTION 3 (Honors Pathway): 4 BJs B Pass Minimum: Math/Language/Science, and any other subject, 3.0 CGPA

The Non-academic Criterion are accepted as follows:

1. complete thirty (30) hours of Community Service, to be completed over three years (grades 10 – 12)
 2. maintain 80% attendance, over three years (grades 10 – 12)
 3. maintain 80% punctuality, over a three year period (grades 10 – 12)
 4. participate in 20 hours of Job Readiness training to be completed over three years (grades 10 – 12)
- j. Reintroduce student intervention based on a rolling recovery programme. As soon as a student obtains a D or F grade in a subject, it is expected that they receive academic support and be allowed to recover the grade. All students will be tracked and those who do not receive a diploma will be encouraged to participate in BTVI’s SMART START program.
- k. Establish the BHSDNRC oversight committee to ensure implementation of the recommendations.
- l. Compare BHSD criteria to regional and international school exit competencies and best practices
- m. Expand competency/technical based training through the exploration of heads of Agreement articulation agreements crafted to include an education component.
- n. Reintroduce the national public relations campaign
- o. Improve data entry/data management and monitoring process.

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PRESS BRIEF

The Bahamas High School Diploma (BHSD) program was instituted in 2014 to track and monitor student learning outcomes. The initiative named eight (8) minimum national standards or graduation requirements that served as prerequisites and performance indicators, to earning a diploma. In October 2022, the Hon. Glenys Hanna Martin, Minister of Education, launched the Bahamas High School Diploma National Review Commission to review the present standards. Minister Hanna Martin charged the Commission “to review the objects and purpose of the high school diploma, studying its core criteria, and analyzing the impacts of these criteria to determine whether the objects and purposes are being achieved,” (The Hon. Glenys Hanna Martin, Minister of Education and Technical & Vocational Training, Tuesday October 18, 2022). Kindly see below the previous criteria and the revisions:

PREVIOUS CRITERIA	REVISED CRITERIA FOR THE GENERAL PATHWAYS
4 BJC Passes (A-D): English Language, Mathematics, a Science, a Social Science or CTE subject (Technical Drawing, Home Economics)	4 BJC Passes (A-D): English Language, Mathematics, and any two other subjects
Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) 2.0 Minimum	Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) 2.0 Minimum
27 Credits	Removed
30 Hours of Community Service	30 Hours of Community Service
90% Punctuality	80% Punctuality (reduced)
90% Attendance	80% Attendance (reduced)
20 Hours of Job Readiness	20 Hours of Job Readiness
3 Parent Teacher Conferences (PTC)	Removed

Accepted recommendations from the BHSDNRC:

CRITERIA	GENERAL PATHWAYS		HONORS PATHWAY
	OPTION 1	OPTION 2 INCLUSION	OPTION 3
BJCs	BJC Passes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Language D Math D Plus any Two D 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy & Numeracy Competencies Outlined (see appendix report) City and Guilds (E1-E3) 3847 	BJC Passes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Language B Math B Science B Plus any One B
GPA	2.0	2.0	3.0
BGCSE	--	--	BGCSE: 3C or SAT score of 1000 or ACT score of 20 Leadership 3 Extra-Curricular activities
Punctuality	80%	80%	80%
Attendance	80%	80%	80%
Job Readiness	20 hrs.	20 hrs.	20 hrs.
Community Service	30 hrs.	30 hrs.	30 hrs.
PTC			