

Cuba is shortening the school year and eliminating college entrance exams



The Cuban school year is taking place under exceptional circumstances this year (Source: [Cubadebate](#))

Cuba's Minister of Education, Naima Ariatne Trujillo Barreto, [announced](#) on state television on Tuesday that the current 2025–2026 school year will end early. Classes are to be phased out between June 15 and 30—the end of the school year was originally scheduled for July. The minister cited the severe consequences of the crisis resulting from the intensified U.S. blockade as the reason: fuel shortages, ongoing power outages, and massive transportation problems made it impossible to continue regular school operations until the planned date.

According to Trujillo Barreto, this is the third time adjustments of this magnitude have had to be made. She described the school year so far as a process “of extraordinary sensitivity, sacrifice, and enormous dedication.”

Power outages and long walks characterize everyday school life

The Minister of Education described the difficult conditions under which students and teachers have maintained classes. Children, parents, and teachers have had to walk long distances due to a lack of transportation. Power outages have not only made it difficult to prepare meals in schools but have also disrupted learning at home.

“After a night without electricity, it’s a real challenge just to get the students to school, motivate them, and conduct classes. And for the teachers, who suffer under exactly the same conditions—without electricity or facing uncertainty about whether they have water at home—it was an enormous feat of strength to focus on teaching,” Trujillo Barreto noted.

At various points during the school year, between 10,000 and 22,000 students found themselves in exceptional circumstances—because they lived far from their schools or had no regular contact with their educational institutions.

No Complete School Closure

The minister expressly emphasized that the early end of the school year should not be equated with a complete closure of the institutions. Schools are to remain open as contact points for particularly vulnerable children and provide care services. “We will continue to provide exactly the support that people have come to expect from educational institutions—mindful of our great responsibility to society and families,” she affirmed.

Graduation ceremonies for graduating classes—sixth, ninth, and twelfth grades—are to take place, albeit on a smaller scale: in the respective neighborhoods, schools, or communities. “We cannot limit the opportunity for this significant event, which marks the completion of a school stage,” said Trujillo Barreto. Special education schools will close as early as May, before the rest of the system, as their students require special support.

University entrance exams to be eliminated

At the same time, Minister of Higher Education Walter Baluja García announced that university entrance exams for the 2026–2027 academic year will be abolished. Instead, the grade point average achieved during high school will serve as the admission criterion—with a guaranteed spot in higher education for all applicants. The majority of the current university semester is scheduled to be completed in the first half of July; individual internships, research projects, and thesis defenses may extend beyond that.

The [austerity measures announced in February 2026](#) have led to massive restrictions for Cuban students. While there are no restrictions for children in special education schools, and kindergartens and elementary schools remain open as a priority—though in some cases with reduced hours—the cuts are much more noticeable for older students, for whom classes have been switched to a hybrid model.

The Minister of Education concluded her remarks with an emotional expression of gratitude to the teachers: “We owe you our eternal gratitude and appeal to you to bring the school year to a close—as you are accustomed to doing—with precisely the care and depth that such exceptionally difficult conditions require.” ([Cubaheute](#))