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“ Educated society serves as a foundation of every successful and powerful nation. The main priority of the State policy is to provide quality education and, respectively, invest in future generation.”

DIMITRI SHASHKINI  
*Minister of Education and Science of Georgia*

Educated society serves as a foundation of every successful and powerful nation. The main priority of the State policy is to provide quality education and, respectively, invest in future generation. In this regard, the Georgian Government has taken a number of important steps and carried out numerous initiatives. Among them is introduction of Unified National Examinations that is acknowledged as one of the important accomplishments within Georgian educational space. It is already the fifth year students enter higher educational institutions only on the basis of their knowledge without any corruption. This examination system enjoys great support of the civil society. At the same time, a process of school infrastructure development is being accelerated. Schools were equipped with heating and electricity facilities. Providing schools with computers is still underway. Social conditions of school teachers have been significantly improved within the framework of the educational reform: their salaries were raised; they got involved in a state health insurance program. Through creating school boards, the society got actively involved in the school management and decision making process.

The above mentioned achievements provided us with a possibility to move to the second phase of general education reform. As a result, we will have a comprehensive general education system by 2015.

Today, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MES) faces a number of challenges. To address them, implementation of the following reforms has been started:



## INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

There are many cases when high school students, especially at the third level of general education, do not attend classes as they take private lessons in four subjects. This practice is no more acceptable. High school students should receive general education at schools. In this regard, MES attaches particular importance to high school diplomas (certificates) to be issued after students overcome the minimum competency barrier in the compulsory subjects. Upon completing studies, students automatically receive school graduation diplomas. This makes them eligible to continue studies in the vocational educational institutions or begin work. Nevertheless, if students intend to obtain diplomas and pursue their studies at higher educational institutions, they must take exams in the examinations centers to overcome the minimum competency barrier in the following subjects: Georgian Language and Literature, Mathematics, Foreign Language, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History and Geography.

Through ensuring this, students will return to schools, on the one hand, and the quality of their general education will be improved, on the other hand.

If students fail to overcome the minimum competency barrier, they have a right to retake these exams in the coming years. This new rule will be applied to those students who graduate from schools in 2011 and afterwards.



## NEW NATIONAL CURRICULUM

New National Curriculum will be finalized by September 2010. It will be introduced at schools from 2011 and will remain unchanged for five subsequent years. It is the first time in the Georgian history when a new national curriculum is comprised of 60% compulsory component that will ensure stable and sustainable learning process. Teachers will have an opportunity to display their capabilities to develop remaining 40% of the curriculum on their own.

New National Curriculum will be implemented gradually to better serve the interests of both teachers and students.

After introduction of new National Curriculum, learning of English language from the first grade will become compulsory for all public schools.

The curriculum will incorporate new subjects: Information Technologies (basic IT skills), Civil Defense and Safety. Topics from the World Culture History will also be integrated in the relevant subjects.





Physical culture classes will be replaced by sport classes. Schools will develop one type of sports, taking into account school capacity and regional infrastructure. School leagues will be set up for different types of sports. Various sport competitions will be held which will have a positive effect on physical development of students.

From 15 April 2010, piloting of new training courses began in 50 public schools. By 2010-2011, new subjects mentioned above will be introduced in all public schools.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATION CRITERIA

From 2010-2011 academic year, students evaluation components will be further refined and developed. This will help teachers assess students' knowledge and make the evaluation process more transparent for students.

From 2010-2011 academic year, a new system of knowledge evaluation will be introduced in general educational public schools. It will be comprised of three compulsory components and be defined by MES. In its turn, students' attendance at classes will have an effect on their trimester grades.



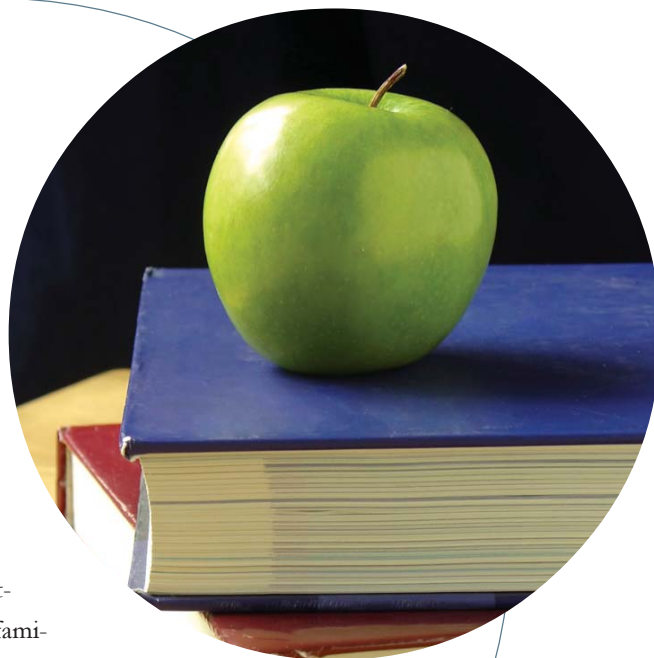
## SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

Considering students' interests as well as recommendations of psychologists and doctors, MES adopted common technical standards for textbooks (size, weight, font, etc.) and made textbook approval rules stricter. To ensure implementation of these rules and prevent use of non-approved textbooks, MES will carry out monitoring of schools on a regular basis.

From a new academic year, the State will provide textbooks for every schoolchild from socially vulnerable families.

It will be ensured that a new national curriculum and textbooks remain unchanged for five subsequent years. The second-hand books stores will be created. This will enable all schoolchildren coming from socially vulnerable families to use these books and get general education without any obstacles.

From next academic year, a new supplementary history textbook – “200 Years of Russian Occupation” – will be introduced at schools. This will help students to study the history of Georgia better.





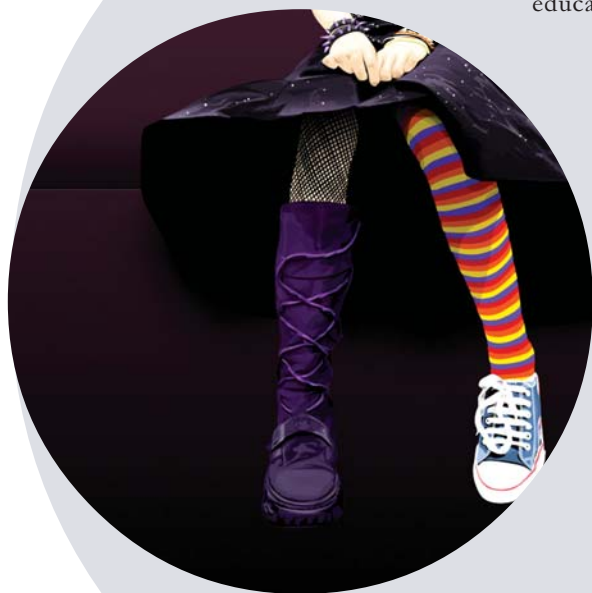
## LEARNING COMPUTER SCIENCES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE FROM THE FIRST GRADE

From September 2010, MES will start piloting a new project in all schools of Batumi, Zugdidi and Tserovani schools and three schools of Tbilisi and Kutaisi to enhance the learning of English language and integrate the innovative IT technologies in the learning process. Together with the textbooks, all first-grade students of these schools will be provided with net books. The special learning programs together with electronic textbooks will be installed in these net books and schoolchildren will start to actively use these programs. Through introduction of innovative technologies, the learning process will become more engaging. At the same time, from 2011 learning English language from the first grade will become compulsory in all public schools.



## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Based on voluntary registration, a special electronic database will be created for children with special educational needs. Through developing special infrastructure, elaborating special learning programs and training of teachers these children will be integrated into a common educational space.



Society will be informed about the inclusive education through various means of communication that will support to social integration of these children.

Special multidisciplinary teams will evaluate students' needs and support teachers in the process of inclusive education.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR NON-GEORGIAN SCHOOLCHILDREN

All citizens of Georgia, irrespective of their ethnic background, should be full members of the society. In this regards, special attention is devoted to the programs of learning of Georgian language for non- Georgian students.

To promote learning of Georgian language, Georgian Language Houses were opened throughout Georgia.

From June 2010, renovated Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration in Kutaisi started functioning. The school will support social integration of ethnic minorities into the society.

It is the first time when representatives of ethnic minorities living in Georgia will have special quotas while admitting to higher educational institutions. This will promote their motivation to study the Georgian language that, in its turn, will contribute to their full integration into the society.

The Government of Georgia will further support translating textbooks of the Georgian history and geography into the languages of ethnic minorities and ensure their free of charge distribution.



## INVOLVING SUNDAY SCHOOLS ABROAD WITHIN A UNIFIED EDUCATIONAL SPACE OF GEORGIA

A unified curriculum will be created and developed for Georgian children living abroad. This curriculum will be in full compliance with Georgian schools. MES will allocate funds for textbooks for children living abroad in order to help them integrate into Georgian educational space upon their return.

Through developing a unified curriculum for Sunday schools functioning abroad, the Georgian children will be able to preserve their native language and self-determination.



### **CREATING STUDENTS SELF-GOVERNANCE BODIES AND TEACHING POLITICAL CULTURE AT SCHOOLS**

Students' self-governance bodies will be created at schools in order to support their involvement in the educational process as well as promote their civil awareness. Students will have an opportunity to elect class and school presidents. The elected presidents will voice the initiatives and opinions of students about educational process to school administration and school boards. This, in its turn, will encourage students to raising awareness of their civil responsibilities.



### **SUPPORTING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIADS**

National Olympiads will be held in different subjects in order to ensure high quality of general education. At the same time, students will have an opportunity to take part in international competitions and Olympiads.

International Olympiads will also be held in Georgia in order to promote them in the country.

## ENHANCEMENT OF GOLDEN AND SILVER MEDAL PROGRAMS

MES will promote high academic achievements at schools by awarding golden and silver medals to the best students upon completion of school (12<sup>th</sup> grade) with honors.

## STRENGTHENING PATRIOTISM AT SCHOOLS

MES will actively promote patriotic awareness at schools. In this regard special attention will be paid to teaching the recent history of Georgia. Different study programs will be implemented and competitions on the topic of patriotism will be held.

At the same time, MES will support the Ministry of Defense of Georgia in establishment and development of the cadet corps.



## ORGANIZING SCHOOL COMPETITIONS

In order to promote diversity of study process, encourage students and increase their motivation, different competitions on various topics will be regularly held at schools. It is important that school participation and students involvement in the competitions will become as one of the defining criteria in the school branding process.



## JOINT PROGRAMS OF SCHOOLS AND MUSEUMS

To get better familiarized with the cultural heritage and the history of Georgia, schools and museums will implement joint programs. Students will have an opportunity to visit museums on a regular basis. The thematic lessons will be held as a part of the educational process. These programs will be of particular importance in order to integrate topics of the world cultural history in the appropriate subjects.



## **ENCOURAGING STUDENTS EDUCATION ABROAD**

MES supports the engagement of students in various exchange programs. This facilitates establishing relations between Georgian, American and European students. In order to lead this process transparently and affectively, information on all educational programs abroad is uploaded on the MES web-site.

## **DEVELOPING “ABITURI” PROGRAM FOR THE 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS**

Students who are at the 12<sup>th</sup> grades at schools, like the schoolchildren of European schools, will have an opportunity to take a so called “Abituri” course. In fact, the course will prepare them once again to receive school diplomas.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT “BOOK BUDDIES”**

To promote reading books among high school students, public reading of literature and other events will be carried out at schools by the successful people (scientists, writers, politicians and other famous people).



## INCREASING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL LEVEL AND CERTIFICATION

In order to support strengthening teachers' capacity and raising their qualification, teachers' voluntary certification will begin from July 2010. The certification process will be completed until 2014. According to the Georgian legislation, all teachers working at schools will be obliged to be certified from 2014.

2400 teachers participated in the pretest that was held in February 2010. The pretest revealed the necessity of certification process once again and demonstrated teachers' readiness to participate in it.

MES provides two types of 160 GEL vouchers to teachers (one for professional skills and another for specific subject) to pass the special training course at the provider they select on their own as well as at the MES training centers.

In order to support the certification process and encourage teachers, salaries of all certified teachers will be increased.

## MENTOR-TEACHERS

The institute of mentor-teachers will start functioning from September 2010, in order to prepare a new generation of teachers. The project envisages training of future teachers (interns) by the experienced teachers that will serve as a mechanism of additional financial stimulus. At the same time the successful implementation of this process will contribute to increase of proficiency level of the future staff.

## TEACHERS' CODE OF ETHICS

The teachers' professional code of ethics was adopted in June, 2010. The code regulates relations between students and teachers, on the one hand, and between school administrations and teachers, on the other hand.





### ESTABLISHING TEACHERS TRAINING CENTERS

Teachers training centers will be opened in Kutaisi, Batumi and Tbilisi from 2011. Teachers will get familiarized with modern teaching methodologies, increase their subject-specific knowledge and develop professional skills in these centers.

### RAISING SALARIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

The Government of Georgia pays particular attention to the improvement of teachers' financial conditions. As it is planned, salaries of certified teachers will increase.

The mentor-teachers will receive bonuses in the amount of 160 GEL. The principals' minimal salary amounted to 300 GEL from April 2010.

## 1,000 NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER TEACHERS

The goal of the project “Teach and Learn with Georgia” is to recruit 1,000 native English speakers who will be willing to help Georgian students learn the English language. The volunteers will teach students English along with Georgian colleagues. This, in its turn, will contribute to professional development and capacity building of the Georgian teachers. Different ways exist to study English using the modern technologies. We strive towards establishing these technologies. At the same time we consider that human interaction and people-to-people communication are irreplaceable. Creating the educational environment in the above mentioned ways is more effective, than any other ways of communication.

Through exchanging information, experiences and culture Georgia will establish not only important ties with different countries but will deepen relations between teachers and students and provide them more opportunities of studying abroad.

The volunteer teachers together with their Georgian colleagues will create the English language learning environment for high school students.



## SCHOOL AUTHORIZATION AND ACCREDITATION

All schools countrywide will be authorized before 2015. Authorization implies that all private and public schools in Georgia should meet high standards. For that purpose an agreement will be concluded between MES and schools. According to the agreement, both parties will ensure implementation of authorization standards in accordance to five-year strategic development plans. As a result, in 2015 all schools will be in compliance with modern standards.

MES will recognize diplomas of accredited high schools without taking any minimum competence exams.



## IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE



Special attention will be paid to refurbishing school libraries and providing them with modern textbooks and other learning materials.

Food services at schools will be outsourced to big private companies in accordance with Georgian legislation. They will create adequate infrastructure in full compliance with standards developed by experts invited by MES. Food standards will be strictly controlled by MES. High school students will use credit cards at school cafeterias. The program was piloted in several schools in Tbilisi in May 2010.

School laboratories will be improved and adequately equipped. In order to learn subjects in natural science better, teachers will be able to use virtual labs. This program is already being implemented since April 2010.



Sports indoor and outdoor playgrounds will be refurbished with modern equipments by engaging local municipalities in the process.

Small schools will be provided with target vouchers. They can use these vouchers to cover electricity and heating (gas, fuel, wood, etc.) costs. This mechanism will ensure to solve existing problems and improve learning conditions at schools.



## ESTABLISHING SPECIAL PROFILE SCHOOLS

Specialized schools will be created with intensified courses on specific subjects. Such schools will assist children with special talent to deepen their knowledge. Particular attention will be given to intensified courses in natural sciences and foreign languages.

## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF SCHOOL DIPLOMAS

By 2011, all public and private school diplomas will be recognized internationally.







### DEVELOPING AND INTRODUCING SAFE SCHOOL CONCEPT

Before 2010-2011 academic year, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia will develop a Safe School concept paper and its implementation action plan. These conceptual documents will cover such issues as: introduction of resource officers, creation of so called “safe zones”, prohibiting of cash flow and introduction of credit card system at schools. Piloting of this program has already started in seven different schools of Tbilisi. The resource officers will be trained in accordance with special curricula.

In order to raise awareness on human rights and other legal issues, regular meetings with representatives of Police, Prosecutor’s Office and Legal Aid Service will be organized.

## HEALTHY SCHOOL CONCEPT

Within the framework of Healthy School Concept psychologists' institution will be strengthened and further developed at schools. This program will support to establish healthy way of life among high school students. Psychologists will render psychological assistance to students when necessary.

Together with the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Security and other stakeholders, special programs will be established in order to strengthen healthy lifestyle program.



### **CREATING COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT AMONG SCHOOLS – “SCHOOL BRANDING”**

According to criteria developed by MES, schools will be “branded” according to ten-star system. Schools have to meet certain criteria to get the stars. Schools’ involvement in different programs and Olympiads as well as number of successful students, certified teachers, mentor teachers and other quality-oriented components will be given due consideration when developing branding criteria.



## ALUMNI PROGRAM

Alumni program is successfully implemented both in the developed countries of Western Europe and the United States of America. The core of this program is to involve society actively in the school education process.

The program gives an opportunity to all interested people to express their attitude toward schools and contribute to their development and success.

It should be noted that a lot of public officials positively reacted to the initiative of the President and got actively involved in. A large number of society members actively responded to this idea that is to be regarded as a prerequisite for its future success.

## IN 2011 ALL SCHOOLS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO INTERNET

By 2011 all public schools of Georgia will have access to internet and will be connected to a unified system. On the one hand, this will facilitate communication between MES, educational resource centers and schools, and, on the other hand, it will support improvement of quality of general education. This opportunity will enable students to search for additional information on different issues. Alongside, teachers will be able to apply modern technologies during the learning process.



## EXTERN EXAMS AT SCHOOLS

Starting from 2010, extern exams will be held by schools and educational resource centers instead of examination centers under the strict supervision of MES.

## ESTABLISHING MONITORY COMMISSIONS

School monitoring commissions have been created and become operational since April 1, 2010. Representatives of MES Administration as well as Economic and Law Departments are included in the composition of these commissions.

Commissions shall control:

- Students attendance;
- Teachers presence;
- Attendance at classes;
- Management of school registers;
- Records management at schools;
- Logistics;
- Discipline and other related issues.



## DATA BASE

MES electronic database with the appropriate software will be created within the framework of Educational Management Information System (EMIS) until August 2010. The database will keep following information:

- Basic information about students (with their ID numbers connected to the Civil Register Database);
- Electronic directories of schools, school principals and deputy principals, educational resource centers and school boards.

Before 2012, special software on students' information system will be created within the framework of EMIS which will include:

- Detailed information about all students (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades), also the personal data on students (movement within the school, extern studies) will be uploaded on a card;

- Electronic directories of students attendance, credits and other achievements;
- Electronic journals.

After school graduation, students' cards will be automatically forwarded to the National Examination Center, thus avoiding a need for additional registration.

## ENSURING GENERAL EDUCATION IN PENITENTIARY ESTABLISHMENTS

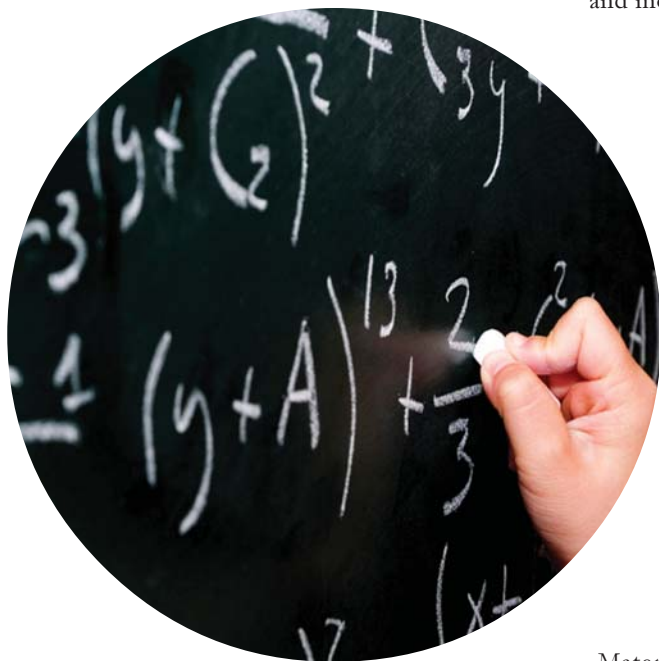
MES will continue providing general education at penitentiary establishments for juvenile convicts. The study process at classrooms of Juvenile Correctional Establishment as well as in Prison #5 for Women and Juveniles will be led by 20 teachers of School #123. It is noteworthy that after finishing the school, the juvenile prisoners will receive the same school diploma as all other students.

## PROMOTING PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND INCREASING CONTROL FROM MES

From 2011, all private schools shall leave the territory of public schools and move to separate facilities.

In order to support private schools, MES will mediate before respective agencies to take into consideration special benefits while transferring them land or facilities in accordance with national legislation.

At the same time, MES will ensure the compliance of private schools curricula with the National Curriculum.



## STRENGTHENING RESOURCE CENTERS

Material conditions of educational resource centers will be improved. A number of transportation vehicles will be increased in order to support better coordination between MES and resource centers as well as between resource centers and schools. All relevant staff will undergo special trainings.



## ORGANIZING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUMMER SCHOOLS

MES will promote English language summer schools on an annual basis. This will encourage students to learn English language better and facilitate professional development of participants. Implementing such program aims at increasing the competitiveness of Georgian school graduates and facilitating their integration within the international market.



## ELECTRONIC JOURNALS

From 2011 electronic journals will be created, thus providing opportunities for parents to monitor the attendance and academic achievements of their children at schools.

## SCHOOL TWINNING

Twinning programs are implemented successfully in many countries worldwide. It is very important to involve Georgia actively in this process as well. Georgian schools will have the possibility to establish contacts and share experiences with schools in other countries. It will facilitate creating of network between students and promote exchange programs.

## ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE BODIES IN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

MES will take measures together with local municipalities to further develop and improve school infrastructure in order to solve school problems in timely and effective manner at the regional level.

At the same time, local municipalities will become more actively involved in organizing different events and encouraging teachers.



## TRANSPARENCY AND INVOLVEMENT OF THE SOCIETY IN EDUCATION REFORM PROCESS

The Public Board established at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia provides opportunity to all persons interested in educational system to receive information about ongoing reforms and, what is more important, to put forth their initiatives, recommendations and remarks on the development of the system.

The Board of Advisors and NGOs Club were created with the same purpose.



## CREATING COMMUNICATION PORTALS

From April 1, 2010 the first communication portal was activated in Tbilisi. This portal allows any person to contact the MES through the online video. A special information-call centre was created at the MES in order to activate this service and to provide possibility to acquire necessary information without coming to the MES premises.

At first stage the communication portals will be activated in Kutaisi, Rustavi and Batumi.

## CREATING A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT (LEGAL ENTITY UNDER PUBLIC LAW)



The Centre will be entrusted with a task to carry out authorization and accreditation procedures of educational establishments (schools, professional and higher educational institutions) according to the defined criteria. In addition, the Centre will be in charge of legalization, apostille approval and verification of authenticity of educational credentials issued by educational establishments.

The Centre will also provide expertise in regard with accuracy of different documentation with the Georgian language.