

RECALIBRATED SHS PROGRAM 2025–2026: WHAT CHANGED AND WHY?

by:

ROGELIO M. OLEGARIO

Teacher II, Mariveles Senior High School – Sitio Mabuhay

The upcoming Strengthened Senior High School (SHS) Curriculum, set for pilot implementation for Grade 11 in School Year 2025–2026 as per DepEd Memorandum No. 048, s. 2025, represents a significant recalibration driven by years of stakeholder feedback and performance reviews. The core objective of this overhaul is to resolve the widely acknowledged issues of curriculum overload and the SHS program's failure to consistently deliver on its promise of job readiness. Studies, including one cited by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), have highlighted that SHS graduates often do not possess a statistically significant employment advantage over Grade 10 completers, leading to public dissatisfaction, as shown in previous Pulse Asia surveys. These concerns stem from the original 15 core subjects creating congestion and the four existing tracks (Academic, Tech-Voc-Livelihood, Sports, and Arts & Design) being too rigid, often leading to a misalignment between a student's chosen path and their ultimate career or college goal. The Department of Education's "MATATAG" agenda, which frames this reform, seeks to create a more relevant, flexible, and quality basic education system.

The structural changes are substantial and aim to simplify the student experience while enhancing flexibility and depth. The curriculum is being dramatically streamlined, reducing the number of core subjects from 15 to a more manageable five interdisciplinary subjects – such as Effective Communication and General Science – which will be taught across the entire academic year (two semesters), as confirmed in DepEd consultations. Furthermore, the four tracks are being condensed into just two primary pathways: the

Academic Track and the Technical-Professional (TechPro) Track, with Arts & Design and Sports integrated as elective clusters under the Academic track. This change is complemented by the introduction of a "doorway option," which allows students a measure of cross-track elective selection based on their interests and career plans, moving away from the restrictive "strand" model. This flexibility directly addresses the criticism that the old curriculum boxed students into choices too early, irrespective of available school resources or their evolving aspirations.

Crucially, the recalibration focuses heavily on improving workforce readiness and higher education alignment. A key change in this direction is the significant increase in Work Immersion hours, which are proposed to be extended from the current 80–320 hours to a range of 320–640 hours, providing learners with far more substantive, real-world experience. Additionally, the revised core subjects were developed in close coordination with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to ensure that the content is foundational and aligned with general education subjects in college, aiming to eliminate the need for costly and redundant "bridging subjects" that SHS graduates were sometimes required to take. These practical and academic revisions, outlined in policy documents like the Strengthened SHS Shaping Paper, reflect a concerted effort by the DepEd to ensure that the two years of Senior High School fulfill their original purpose: to equip every Filipino graduate with demonstrably valuable skills for all four exit pathways—higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, or middle-level skills development.

References:

DepEd Memorandum DM_s2024_001 (Mentioned in No Learner Left Behind.docx in relation to the "Catch-up Fridays" initiative).

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) (Cited in both Recalibrated SHS Program 2025.docx and From Classroom to Career.docx for studies on SHS graduate employment).

Philippine Business for Education (PBE) (Cited in From Classroom to Career.docx regarding industry perception of SHS graduates).

Strengthened SHS Shaping Paper (Mentioned in Recalibrated SHS Program 2025.docx as the policy document outlining the revisions).

DepEd's "MATATAG" agenda (The overarching framework for the DepEd's education reform, mentioned in Recalibrated SHS Program 2025.docx).