

# *New school year begins in Cuba with the enrollment of two million students*

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Havana, September 3 (RHC)-- Some two million Cuban children, teens and young people are returning or arriving for the first time today in classrooms island wide for the beginning of the school year 2018-2019.

They will benefit from a free educational system that includes more than 10,000 schools and 22 universities.

The opening day was preceded by two months of intense work to get schools and universities ready. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel and Education Minister Ena Elsa Velazquez checked the activities in the weeks and days leading up to the beginning of the new school year.

The new year has among its challenges a deficit of teachers at the primary and secondary levels. According to Velazquez, only 93% of the necessary teachers is covered. The provinces with the highest shortages are Havana, Mayabeque and Matanzas, where the needs will be covered by retired teachers, pedagogical schools and university students.

A novelty of the new school year is the introduction of short term university studies cycle that will provide opportunities to students interested in highly prioritized economic and service sectors on the island.

The studies will mainly focus on pedagogical specialties, technological, healthcare and computing studies and will take from two to three years.

The official inauguration of the school year will take place at the school Rafael Maria de Mendive, in Old Havana. The school's renovated building used to house the Colegio San Pablo, founded by the prestigious educator Mendive, where Cuba's National Hero Jose Marti was his pupil some 150 years ago.

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