

The Ready Year: A Confident Curriculum Start

A back-to-school readiness guide for
school leaders and curriculum teams.

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The Before-Term Problem

This is a picture that schools often paint to us when we speak to them: Reports are due, last year's data is scattered across spreadsheets and shared drives, new teachers need onboarding before they have even found the staffroom, and the reporting cycle has to be configured before a single student walks through the door. The work that should happen calmly in advance instead piles up into the first weeks of term.



Whether your school year starts in August, September or January, the readiness window is the same, and the stakes keep rising. [ISC Research](#) confirms that exactly 14,833 K-12 international schools were operating globally as of January 2025, representing a steady 8% market expansion over a five-year period.

More of those schools are running more than one curriculum at once, and [36% now offer bilingual or multilingual pathways](#). The result is a teaching and learning operation more complex than it was even a few years ago, expected to start cleanly from day one.



What "Ready" Actually Looks Like

Despite the word choice, a “ready” curriculum start does not mean everything is finished. It just means everything is in place.

Common signs that a curriculum is "ready" include:

- Last year's curriculum carried forward cleanly, with units and assessments rolled over rather than rebuilt.
- Assessment structures and the reporting calendar confirmed before teaching starts, so no one is configuring report cards in week three.
- Course content clear enough that new staff can open the platform and see what they're meant to teach, instead of inheriting a course with no context.
- Communication sent home early, so parents hear from the school clearly rather than waiting and wondering.

One school we spoke to recently offers a vivid picture of the difference. A school that once had leaders at their desks at 1 AM proofing reports one by one finished its report reviews a full week ahead of the send date after moving to ManageBac+. As their Vice Principal put it:

“We don't even send reports until next week, and everything's essentially done. It's unheard of here.”



That is what ready looks like. The work moved earlier, so the deadline arrived - without the stress.

The Back-to-School Curriculum Readiness Checklist

Work through this before term starts. If you can tick every box, your curriculum operation is ready.

Rollover and Data

- ☐ Previous year's units and curriculum rolled forward
- ☐ Class lists imported and checked; timetable sync configured, if used
- ☐ Student and teacher accounts provisioned and tested
- ☐ Year rollover completed (year groups moved up correctly)

Assessment and Reporting

- ☐ Assessment structures and criteria confirmed across departments
- ☐ Report card templates built and tested before the first cycle
- ☐ Reporting calendar set and shared with staff
- ☐ Grade boundaries and any conversion scales agreed

Staff Readiness

- ☐ New-staff onboarding and training scheduled
- ☐ Unit planning expectations communicated
- ☐ A clear internal owner identified to support colleagues
- ☐ In-house training planned rather than left to self-service alone

Family Communication

- ☐ Parent and student access tested
- ☐ Communication channels and notification settings confirmed
- ☐ A plan for what is shared, when, and through which channel

☆ A Tip From the Field

When **CIST** set up its systems inside ManageBac+, IT Coordinator Jordy de Temmerman found the upfront configuration easier than expected because the structure was already there: **"All the fields have already been programmed. The customisation is quite easy to do."** The lesson for a ready start is to lean on templates and existing frameworks rather than building from scratch under time pressure. The setup is faster than most teams fear, but only if it is done before the term, not during it.

Where It Tends to Go Wrong

From our experience speaking with school leaders, most curriculum starts tend to fray at the edges, and the fraying costs time no one has once term begins.

Rushed Rollovers

When last year's curriculum is not carried forward cleanly, teachers rebuild work that already existed and new staff inherit nothing. One school leader describes the all-too-common starting point at schools that lack a central system: "All the grades were scattered across Google Drive, Word documents, and Google Docs." That scatter is what a good rollover prevents.

Inconsistent Assessment Setup

When departments configure assessment differently, reports tell an incoherent story and leadership cannot compare across the school. Dallas ISD's IB District Coordinator Jennifer Cunningham draws a hard line on what belongs where, keeping summative IB assessment aligned to criteria in one place so that, as she puts it, "only the summative assessments are assessed in MYP classes and displayed on the ManageBac+ reports." That consistency has to be decided before term, not negotiated during it.

Reporting Configured Too Late

Leaving report templates until the first cycle is the classic cause of the 1 AM night. The work is the same whenever it is done, so doing it early simply moves the pain out of the busiest weeks.

New Staff Left to Self-Teach

Teachers rarely adopt a system well from an email. For one of our customers, the experience was clear on this: "Teachers tend not to take information like this from strangers, from an email. So my colleague and I decided, as soon as we implemented ManageBac+, to do in-house training." Onboarding planned in advance is what turns a tool into a habit.

The common thread is preparation. Each of these is solved before term or paid for during it.

How ManageBac+ Makes It Easier

ManageBac+ was built to make a complex curriculum operation feel manageable, and the new year is where that shows most.



Year rollover copies your curriculum structures forward into the new academic year, giving schools a head start rather than a blank slate, with units, assessments and planning available to configure and carry forward as needed rather than rebuilt from scratch. Its assessment and reporting structures are native to the IB programmes and built to handle multiple curricula at once, which matters for the growing number of schools running frameworks in parallel. George Washington Academy in Casablanca, which runs the IB Diploma alongside an American Common Core curriculum for students from over 36 nationalities, relies on exactly that flexibility to manage two academic worlds under one roof.

The reporting is where the time comes back. Once templates are set, the bulk work that used to consume late nights happens in advance and runs in seconds. At CIST, the personal time saving for the leader who proofs every report is measured in days, and the knock-on effect reaches families: parent response rates rose by around 200% once communication ran through one structured channel rather than spreadsheets and scattered email.

The analytics layer also turns the new year's planning into something leaders can see. For one of our customers, they used ManageBac+'s curriculum analytics to walk into its IB five-year evaluation with data it could defend: "It was very easy to defend in front of IB all the data we had, the assignments, and the summatives," the Head of IT noted. For the school's Deputy, the same dashboard became the start of every working day, a live view of where each teacher was across unit plans and assessments that made conversations with staff concrete rather than vague.

The result is the calm start described earlier: curriculum carried forward, reporting ready, new staff supported, families informed, and leaders working from evidence rather than instinct.

Already using ManageBac+?

The new year is the moment to make sure you are using all of it. Three things worth checking before term:

1. Your rollover and cross-year data migration are complete and correct
2. Your assessment setup is consistent across departments rather than configured ad hoc
3. You are making use of the analytics layer to prepare for evaluations and guide teaching conversations.

As many of our ManageBac+ customers find, much of the value sits in features schools discover only once they look. It is also the natural point to connect the wider Faria ecosystem, with admissions data flowing in from OpenApply and the curriculum layer integrated with Atlas, so the whole student journey runs on one backbone. Back to school is the right time to close those gaps.

Ready for a Confident Curriculum Start?

The best time to get your curriculum, assessment and reporting ready is before term begins. If you would like to see how ManageBac+ could give your school the kind of calm, prepared start that our loyal customers (and advocates) have found, we would be glad to show you.

Book a demo with our team and we will walk you through how ManageBac+ works for a school like yours.

Schedule your demo of ManageBac+ today.

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