

**The Alternative Paper to School Based  
Assessment (SBA):  
Importance of Sustaining and Expanding the  
CXC Innovation**

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# Introduction



After decades of offering the Alternative Paper to the SBA there are now rumblings about whether this Paper should be retained!

- All but a few of CXC's end of secondary school examinations require an SBA component.
- The completion of the SBA component presents particular challenges for out-of-school or private candidates.
- Given the equivalence of the certification provided to both in-school and out-of-school candidates, the Alternative Paper was designed to assess and certify competencies associated with the SBA component .

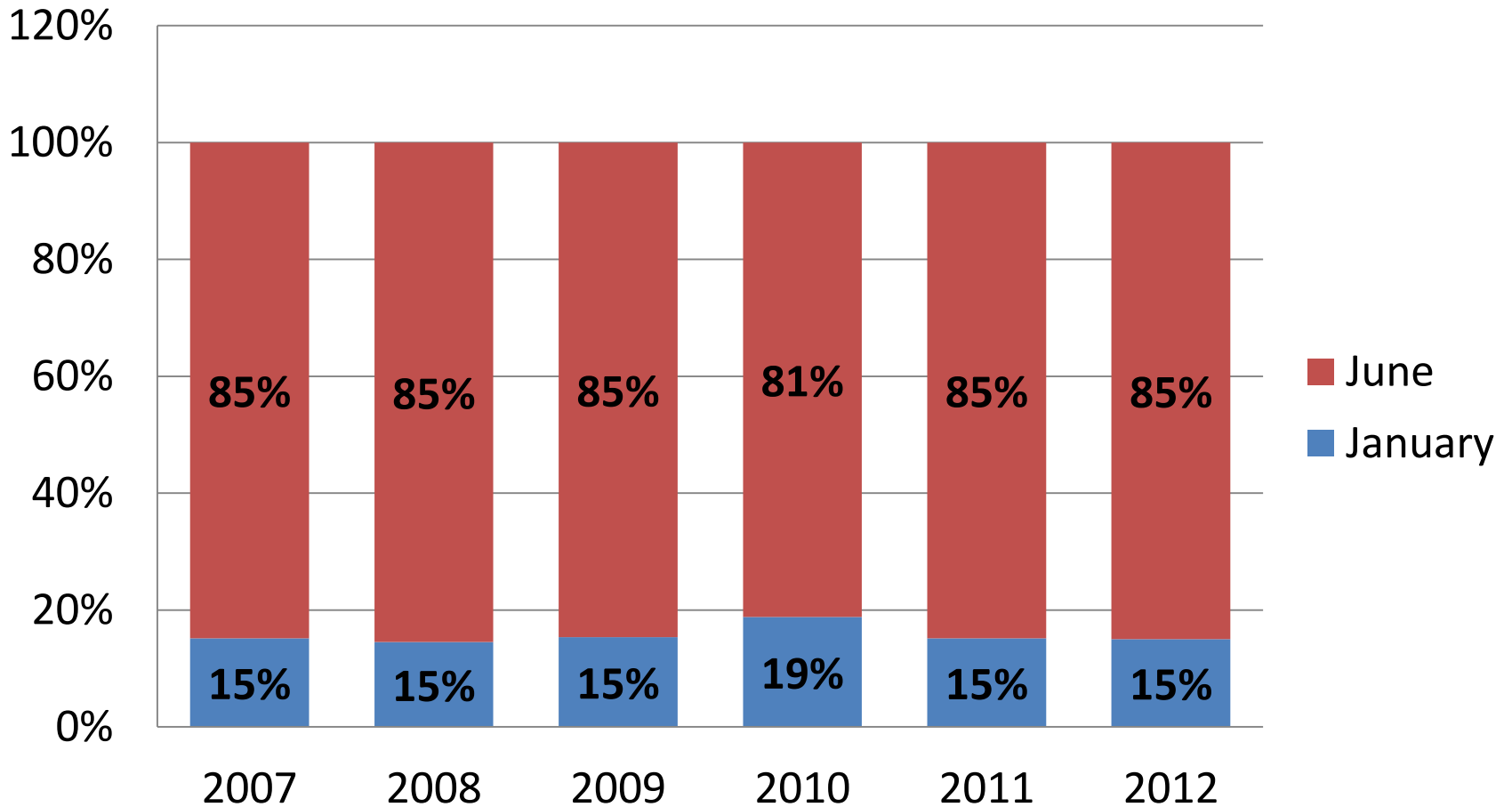
# The Need to Sustain the Alternative Paper



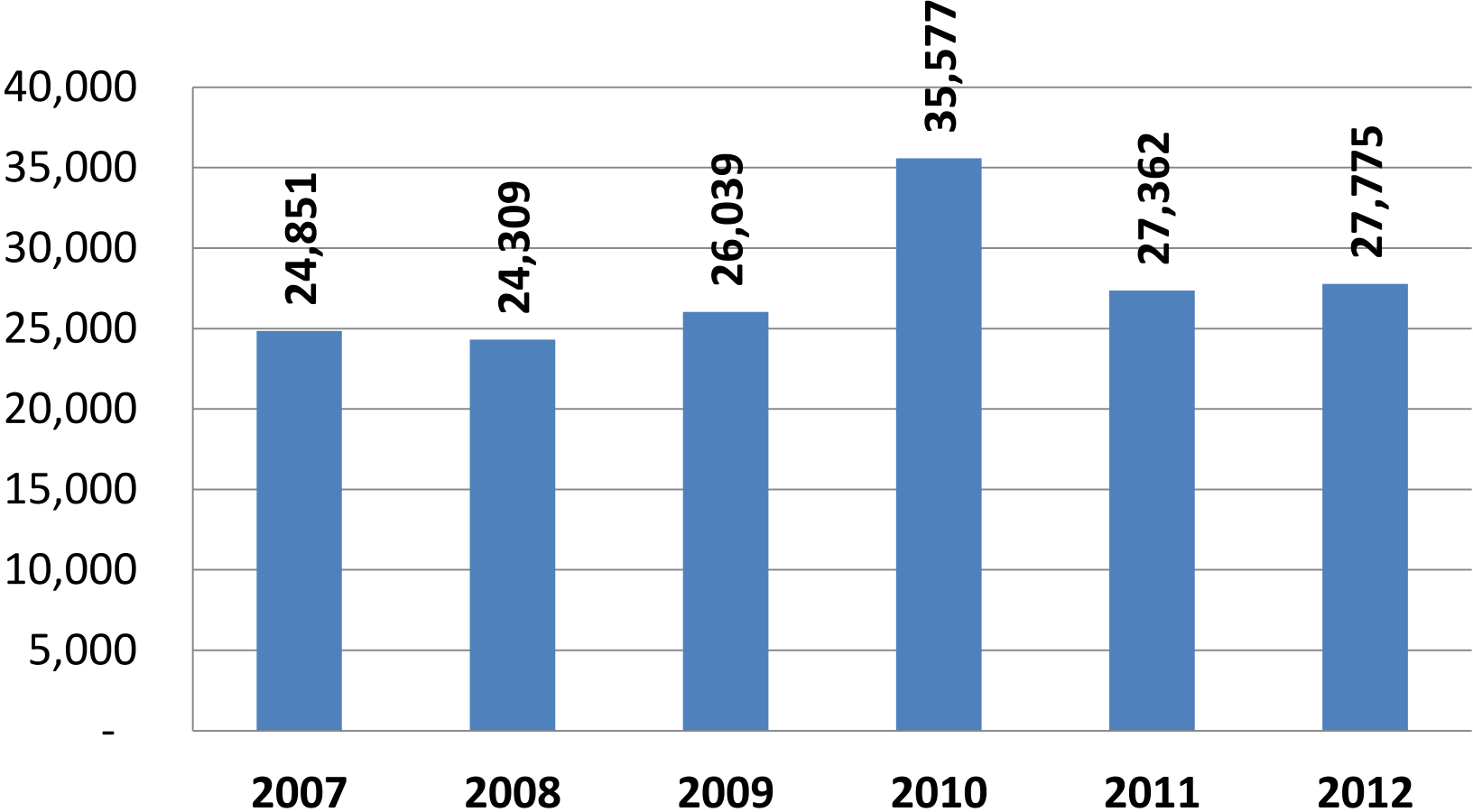
- CXC has taken a number of bold initiatives to assist the Region in providing quality education for all.
- A critical consideration in providing broader access to secondary education is the broadening of access to the out-of-school population.

- The Alternative Paper is central to accomplishing this goal.
- Failure to sustain the Alternative Paper is likely to compromise CXC's goal of providing broader access to secondary education.
- Consider the impact on the Caribbean population who now utilise the CSEC January sitting, with its Alternative Paper, as a means of improving their levels of certification and their opportunities for an improved quality of life.

# Percentage of CSEC Candidate Entries for the 2007 to 2012 January and May/June Examinations



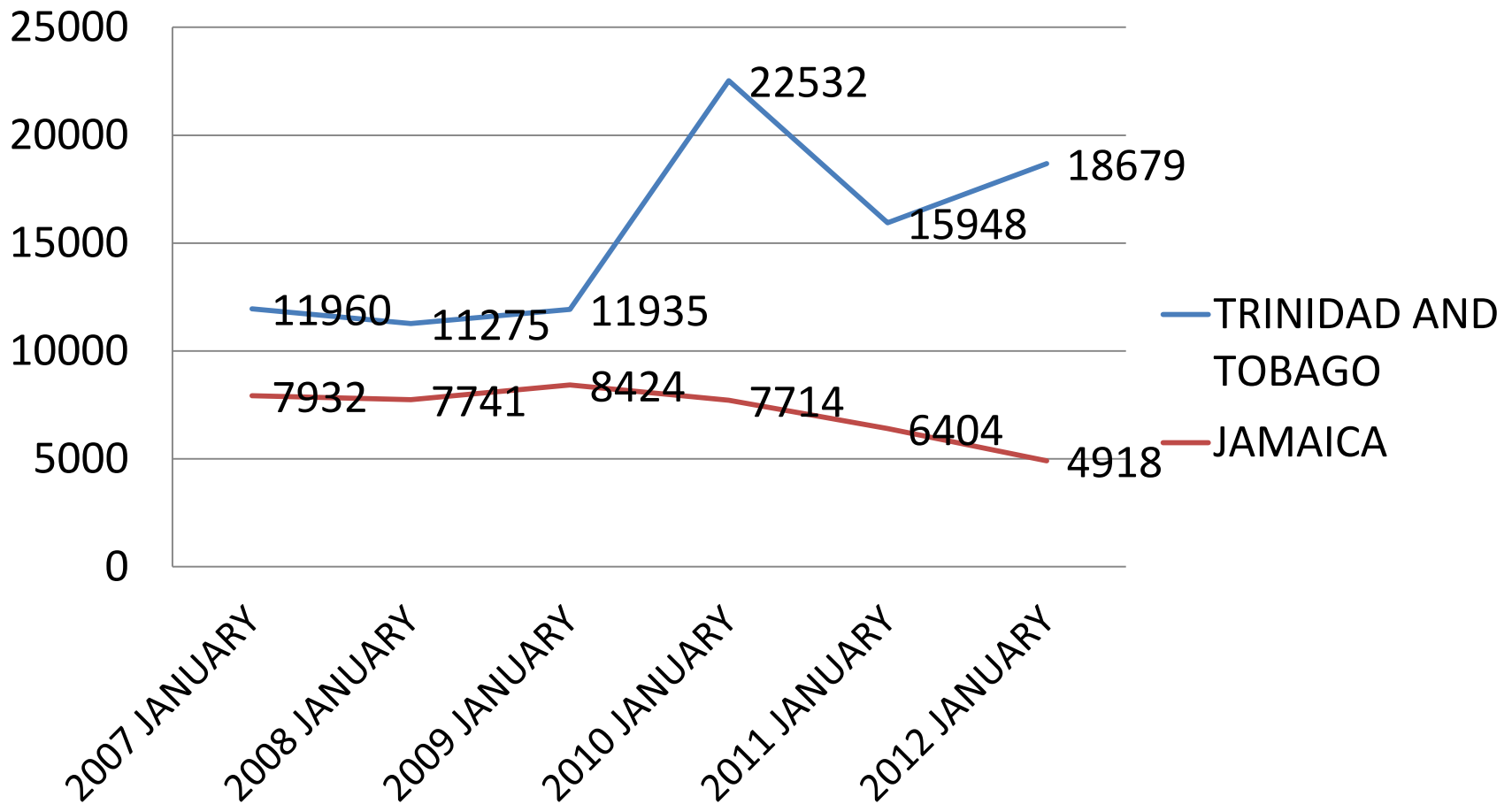
# Absolute No. of Candidate Entries for the January CSEC Examinations between 2007 and 2012



- By far, the largest numbers of candidates for the January examinations were drawn from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.
- Together they accounted for 67 percent of the population who took the January examination over those six years.
- The numbers for Trinidad and Tobago were, in fact, well ahead of Jamaica's.



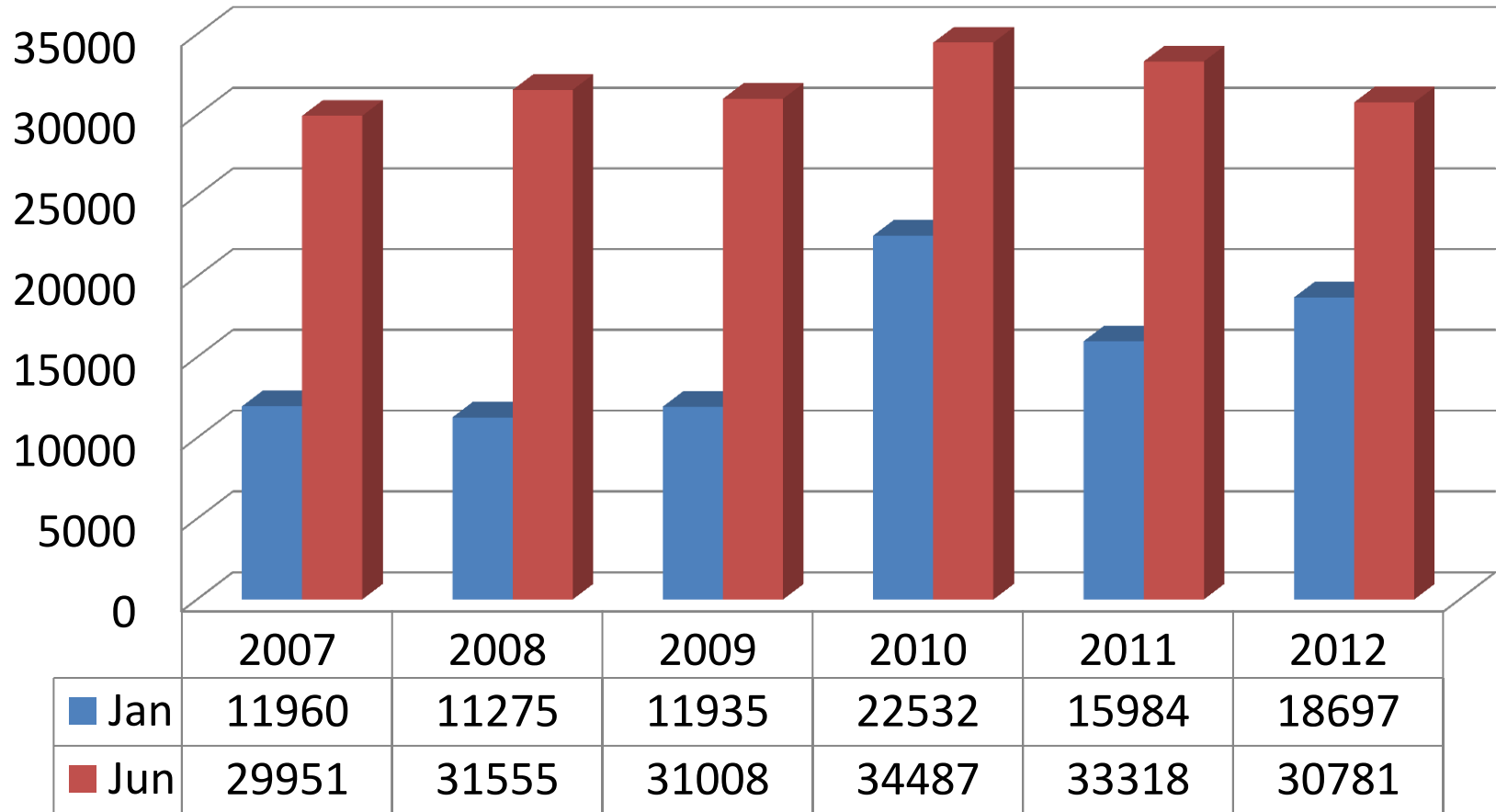
# CSEC January Candidates for Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago Over the Period 2007 to 2012



- The numbers for Trinidad and Tobago also show a steady increase with a spike in 2010 attributable to certain Government policies.
- However, the numbers for Jamaica showed a decline over the five year period, and in particular from 2009.
- Countries like Trinidad and Tobago with large proportions of CSEC candidates accessing the January examinations as a means of improving their secondary school qualifications should be particularly concerned about sustaining the Alternative Paper.

- Over the last six years (2007-2012), the CSEC candidates in Trinidad and Tobago who entered for the January examinations ranged from 36% to 61% of the number who entered for the May/June sitting.
- This calculated ratio is approximately 1:2 over the five year period for January sittings compared with the June sittings.

# January and June 2007 to 2012 CSEC Candidate Entries for Trinidad and Tobago



- Any threat to sustaining the Alternative Paper in the CSEC examinations is likely to impact significantly on the efforts of the out-of-school population of this country to access opportunities for improving their secondary education qualifications.

# Responding to the Challenges

After decades of CXC's offer of the Alternative Paper in helping to fulfil its mission to broaden access to secondary education, there is now the drumbeat of discussion about whether this Paper adequately captures the competencies developed and assessed by the SBA.



Does the Alternative Paper really measure the same competencies developed and assessed in the SBA?

Professor Stafford A. Griffith

- CXC has taken certain steps aimed at ensuring that the Alternative Paper measures the same competencies as those developed and assessed in the SBA and that the inferences drawn from the scores on the Alternative Paper are valid.
- This is well illustrated in the CSEC Social Studies Syllabus where the requirements outlined for the Alternative Paper clearly parallels those outlined for the SBA.
- Also, the syllabus provides guidance to help private candidates preparing for the Alternative Paper develop the same competencies expected of the in-school candidates doing the SBA.

- Perhaps it is empirical evidence that is needed to secure the gains made so far in developing the Alternative Paper.
- Apart from action research for continual refinement of the Alternative Paper, a comprehensive validation research is needed to assess and demonstrate the validity of the scores obtained from the Alternative Paper as measures of the same competencies developed and assessed in the SBA.
- Not much research has been done in this area.



- Additionally, with the available technology, the out-of-school candidate preparing for the Alternative Paper should be able to benefit, increasingly, from simulated learning experiences.
- The laboratory and workshop experiences which may be required by some CSEC subject examinations can be simulated to provide candidates with virtual experiences similar to those which the in-school candidate engages in the SBA component of these examinations.



This is an area of research and innovation for the Alternative Paper which is well worth pursuing, taking into account the likely increase in the importance of virtual experiences in the education of Generation Z.

# Reflection and Conclusion

- In considering the future of the Alternative Paper, it is worth reflecting on the fact that this Paper has a number of advantages which may render it more desirable than the SBA.
  - It is more reliable than SBA.
  - It fits the public examinations model better than SBA.
  - It is a more economical option.
- These strengths, coupled with the points already made, suggest that what should really be under consideration is not whether the Alternative Paper should be sustained but how soon we can give a free choice to schools between the SBA and the Alternative Paper.

- The Alternative Paper is worth preserving and developing as an important contribution of CXC to innovations in public examinations.
- Any removal of this component from CXC examinations will not only disenfranchise a large part of the Caribbean population and compromise the important CXC goal of expanding access to secondary education but will also compromise the opportunity, which CXC has, of making an invaluable international contribution to the advancement of public examinations.
- Any rethinking of the Alternative Paper must maintain a focus on how to improve and extend this invaluable CXC innovation.

