



REPORT TO

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL BEING, CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

POLICY S.24 – COMBINED GRADE CLASSES AND SEPTEMBER RE-ORGANIZATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

*Where two or three, in my name, there am I in the midst of them.
(Matthew 18:20)*

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
October 18, 2019	November 7, 2019	Click here to enter a date.

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INFORMATION REPORT

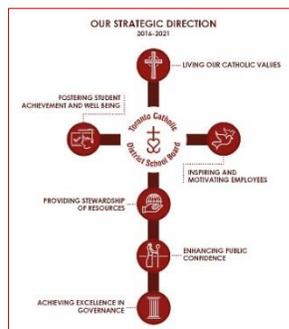
Vision:

At Toronto Catholic, we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Mission:

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.

We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.



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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The TCDSB guidelines regarding scheduling combined classes are consistent with the Ministry of Education document “Combined Grades – Strategies to Reach a Range of Learners (2007)”. This annual policy metric report summarizes considerations for combined grade classes in the Ontario context and recommended scheduling practices in the TCDSB.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 5 hours.

B. PURPOSE

This annual policy metric report provides a summary of key metrics relating to the status of combined elementary classes. It also identifies procedures for schools to follow when organizing combined grade classes, which inform the re-organization of school models in September.

C. BACKGROUND

1. In October 2013, the Board approved Policy S.24, which addressed the issue of combined grade classes for elementary schools.
2. The TCDSB continues to apply this policy to its annual scheduling/staffing processes. At the request of the Board of Trustees, Human Resources staff provide an annual policy metric update on the status of combined elementary classes.

D. EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH

1. In Ontario, the topic of combined grades is dealt with in the Education Act S. 265(1) (e) under the *Duties of principal (timetable)*. Although the duties in this section include “to assign classes and subjects to teachers,” there is no specific mention of combined grades. Additionally, in the Ministry Assessment and Evaluation document *Growing Success*, there is no reference to combined grades. The Ministry's direction on evaluation in combined grades is that the students must be evaluated on the expectations for their particular grade level.

Decisions regarding the organization of classes and assignments of students to classes at the TCDSB are locally determined based on

enrollment, student need(s), funding formulas and the school staffing model initially generated by Human Resources staff to ensure Ministry class size compliance.

2. The Ministry of Education published several documents on the topic of combined grades in 2007; these included a research monograph, a strategy document and a brochure. A key message from these documents includes the following:

“In all classrooms, no matter how they are organized, teachers need to provide for the individual needs of students. To achieve this, they use a variety of methods on a daily basis to assess the needs of each student and then adjust the focus of instruction for skill development accordingly. In all classrooms, there is a range of students, and a teacher’s goal to meet the needs of all learners remains the same regardless of the classroom organization”. (p. 3, Combined grades: Strategies to reach a range of learners in kindergarten to grade 6, 2007, Ministry of Education).

A curriculum pamphlet relating to combined grade classes is available on the TCDSB portal for Principals to distribute.

3. There are several considerations, in addition to student achievement and well-being, which impact how elementary classroom models are created. These include Ministry-mandated cap sizes for classrooms, Collective Agreement(s) parameters, and differing overall expectations related to across-grade curricula.

Ministry regulations to govern practices in schools around classroom allocation include:

- i) Primary Class Size (PCS) parameters (as of September 30) which mandate the following class sizes:
 - 100% of JK-Grade 3 classes have a maximum of 23 students
 - 90% of JK-Grade 3 classes to have a maximum of 20 students

- ii) Ontario Regulation 132/12 (2012) stipulates that the “*average size in each school year of a board’s mandatory kindergarten classes shall be 26*”.
- iii) For the 2019-2020 school year, the average size for Grade 4-8 classes shall not exceed 24.50 students. The overall average of 24.50 students also meets the contractual obligations with our teachers’ union. If a combined grade class includes one or more students enrolled in the primary division, the class shall have a maximum of 23 students.
- iv) Failure to meet Ministry compliance targets results in a penalty to the Board equal to 1% of the Board’s total budget.
- v) The requirements related to Ministry class sizes and contractual class sizes, along with the preference for single-grade classrooms, restrict the ability to have equal class loadings in a combined grade classroom.
- vi) The following tables display the distribution, by superintendency areas (1 through 8) and Trustee Ward, of schools that have combined grade classes for the 2019-2020 school year.

Area	Number of Combined Classes by Area
Area 01	103
Area 02	92
Area 03	63
Area 04	95
Area 05	99.50
Area 06	80
Area 07	95
Area 08	93
Total	720.50

Trustee Ward	Number of Combined Classes by Trustee Ward
Ward 01	48
Ward 02	64
Ward 03	32

Ward 04	67.5
Ward 05	60.5
Ward 06	50
Ward 07	51
Ward 08	99
Ward 09	51
Ward 10	37
Ward 11	100.5
Ward 12	60
Total	720.5

- vii) September re-organizations of Class Staffing Models are a direct result of actual September enrollment, contractual commitments, and Ministry mandated ratios.
- a. The aggregate distribution of schools re-organized during September 2019 by superintendency areas and Trustee Ward is found on the tables below:

Area	Number of Schools That Have Re-organized by Area
Area 01	10
Area 02	7
Area 03	10
Area 04	7
Area 05	10
Area 06	10
Area 07	11
Area 08	12
Total	77

Trustee Ward	Number of Schools That Have Re-organized by Trustee Ward
Ward 01	6
Ward 02	4
Ward 03	5
Ward 04	5
Ward 05	9
Ward 06	5
Ward 07	5
Ward 08	12

Ward 09	8
Ward 10	3
Ward 11	8
Ward 12	7
Total	77

- b. Re-organization during the September 2019 occurred during three distinct iterations:
- i. September 4, 2019 – these changes occurred due to a significantly increased enrolment variance from our projected versus our actual enrolment metrics. *No schools encountered this ‘day 2’ re-organization.*
 - ii. September 20, 2019 – as a response to the TCDSB’s requirement to meet Ministry Compliance targets for ELP class size, Primary Class Class, and Junior/Intermediate targets. *This impacted 68 schools.*
 - iii. September 26, 2019 – due to a further increase in enrolment, an additional infusion of Junior/Intermediate allocations was required in order for us to achieve our 24.50 aggregate total. *This impacted 9 schools.*

Combined grade classes are not new to TCDSB or any other district school board in the province. For the 2019-2020 school year, TCDSB has 720.5 combined grade classes representing 26.86% of all elementary classes. Regardless of school size, 166 elementary schools have at least some combined grade classes. A review of the data indicates that combined grade classes exist for all grade combinations. The table below represents a five-year summary of combined grade classes.

5-YEAR SUMMARY OF SYSTEM COMBINED GRADE SNAPSHOT	
SCHOOL YEAR	TOTAL SYSTEM NUMBER OF COMBINED GRADE CLASSES
2015 - 2016	791.00

2016 - 2017	748.00
2017 - 2018	764.50
2018 - 2019	734.50
2019-2020	720.50

Note: the residual amount of .50 from the 720.50 is a direct result of special programs at Cardinal Carter of the Arts (grade 7-8; The Arts), St. Bonaventure (grade 6-7; Extended French) and St. Vincent de Paul (grade 5-6; Extended French).

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Human Resources Department will monitor the implementation of Policy S.24 in order to ensure that the optimum number of combined grade classes are created as the Board honors its prescriptive Ministry of Education staffing requirements.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the consideration of the Board of Trustees.