



**POLICY SECTION:**

**SUB-SECTION:**

**POLICY NAME:**

**POLICY NO: S.P. 03, 04, 06, 09, 10, 11 (TBC)**

<b>Date Approved:</b>	<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	<b>Dates of Amendments:</b>
<b>Cross References:</b> Education Act, 265 (g) Effective Educational Practices for Students with ASD, 2007 Growing Success, 2010 Growing Success - The Kindergarten Addendum, 2016 Learning For All, 2013 Ontario Schools K-12 Policy and Program Requirements, 2016 O.R. 181/98: Identification and Placement, Exceptional Pupils PPM 156: Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs, 2013 Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities, 2018 Special Education in Ontario K-12 Policy and Resource Guide, 2017 Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Resource Guide for Ontario Educators, Gr. 1-8		
<b>Appendix: TCDSB Operational Procedures – Acceleration and Retention</b>		

**Purpose:**

This policy and the appended operational procedures for acceleration and retention have been developed in accordance with the following:

- a) key regulations such as: the Education Act and PPM 156: Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs;
- b) key policy documents such as: the Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities, 2018; and
- c) other Ontario Ministry of Education resource documents that inform the principles of:
  - i) Differentiated Instruction (DI),
  - ii) Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and
  - iii) assessment, evaluation, and reporting for student success.





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**Scope and Responsibility:**

This policy applies to all TCDSB elementary and secondary schools. The Director of Education and the Superintendent of Special Services are responsible for the oversight and implementation of this policy.

**Alignment with MYSP:**

Living Our Catholic values  
Enhancing Public Confidence  
Fostering Student Achievement and Well-Being

**Policy:**

The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) is committed to the learning of all students and provides a range of differentiated placements, programs, and interventions to support student success. It is the policy of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, in accordance with its obligations pursuant to the *Education Act* and Ontario *Human Rights Code*, to provide individualized accommodations to students with abilities/disabilities to enable them to have meaningful access to education programs and services.

**Regulations:**

1. All accommodation requests pertaining to the grade-level acceleration or retention of students shall be directed to the Principal of the school where the student attends.
2. The operational procedures will outline consistent and transparent processes for the consideration of grade-level acceleration and retention requests, the communication of the approval or denial of the request to affected parties, the implementation of the grade-level acceleration or retention accommodation, the





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roles and responsibilities of the involved parties, and approaches to student academic and social-emotional development and well-being.

3. In circumstances where a parent requests to have the student grade-level accelerated or retained, each such request shall be reviewed individually by the TCDSB giving consideration to the student's dignity, integration, independence and disability-related learning abilities/needs, and other types of accommodations available to enable meaningful access to education.
4. A copy of this policy shall be available on the TCDSB's website and may be requested by a parent in a different language through the school attended by the student.
5. The Board shall retain data regarding the requests for grade-level acceleration or retention as outlined in the operational procedures.

### **Definitions:**

**Acceleration:** The term *acceleration* refers to a variety of practices that increase the rate or level of learning for students who learn more quickly or who have more advanced levels of understanding than those expected for students in their grade. Grade-level acceleration involves the placement of a pupil in the grade beyond an age-appropriate placement.

**Accommodations:** The term *accommodations* refers to the special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required by students with Special Education needs to enable them to learn and demonstrate learning. The provision of accommodations in no way alters the curriculum expectations for the grade-level or course.

**Assessment:** This refers to the process of gathering information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations in a subject or course. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. Assessment for the purpose of improving student learning is seen as both





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"assessment *for* learning" and "assessment *as* learning." Evaluation of student learning is based on "assessment *of* learning" that provides evidence of student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/course and often at the end of a period of learning.

**Differentiated Instruction:** refers to a promising practice of Ontario educators. It is considered to be an excellent means of educating students with a variety of needs and abilities in a shared setting. Differentiated instruction allows them to address students' specific skills and difficulties.

**Equity:** A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** A written plan describing the Special Education program and/or services required by a particular student, including a record of the particular accommodations needed to help the student achieve his/her learning expectations. An IEP must be developed for a student who has been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), and may also be developed for a student who has Special Education needs but has not been identified as exceptional. An IEP is working document that identifies learning expectations that may be modified from or alternative to the expectations given in the curriculum policy document for the appropriate grade and subject or course. It outlines the specific knowledge and skills to be assessed and evaluated for the purpose of reporting student achievement.

**Inquiry-Based Learning:** The inquiry process involves open-ended learning experiences that are inclusive of all students and offer students real choices and opportunities to develop their own voice. Educators design the inquiry process to respond closely and accurately to individual students' learning needs.

**Modifications:** The term *modifications* refers to changes made in the grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing





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the number and/or complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations.

**Parent:** A custodial parent of the student or a guardian pursuant to the Education Act.

**Promotion:** Students who have successfully completed Grade 8 will be promoted from elementary school and admitted to a secondary school.

**Readiness:** This does *not* refer to the student's general ability level, but to the current knowledge, understanding, and skill level a student has in relation to a particular sequence of learning. Some students may require remediation or modified expectations; others may need learning concept extensions or opportunities for independent study.

**Retention:** This refers to withholding the promotion of a pupil to an age-appropriate grade-level; the repeat of the current grade placement; or to the placement of a pupil in a grade below an age-appropriate placement.

**Tiered Approach:** The "tiered" approach to prevention and intervention is a systematic approach to providing high-quality, evidence-based assessment and instruction and appropriate interventions that respond to students' individual needs.

**Transfer:** A pupil is transferred to the next grade (1 through 8) though s/he has not met an average of Level 1 in the curriculum expectations for the various subjects; or has not achieved a Level 1 in any of the following core subjects: Language (English/French - Extended or Immersion), Mathematics, Science, Geography, or History.

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** UDL provides teachers with broad principles for planning instruction and designing learning environments for a diverse group of students. It is a teaching approach that focuses on using teaching strategies or pedagogical materials; and is designed to meet special needs to enhance learning for *all* students, regardless of age, skills, or situation.





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**Evaluation and Metrics:**

The effectiveness of the policy will be determined by measuring the following:

1. Data will be gathered annually regarding the number of requests for students to be grade-level accelerated or retained; as well as approvals, and denials.
2. This policy shall be reviewed on a regular basis (as needed), but no less than every five years.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION





## **TCDSB Operational Procedures: Acceleration and Retention**

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

TCDSB Special Services Department



### 1.0 Purpose

1.1 The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) is committed to the learning of all students and provides a range of differentiated placements, programs, and interventions to support student success. It is the policy of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, in accordance with its obligations pursuant to the *Education Act* and Ontario *Human Rights Code*, to provide individualized accommodations to students with abilities/disabilities to enable them to have meaningful access to education services.

1.2 These operational procedures identify the individualized process to be followed when a parent (on behalf of a student) applies to the TCDSB to have a student grade-level accelerated or retained.

1.3 These procedures and the attendant policy - Policy **S.P. 03, 04, 06, 09, 10, 11 (TBC)** Acceleration and Retention - will be posted on the TCDSB website in order to inform the school community about how parents can apply to have a pupil grade-level accelerated or retained.

1.4 The following are important considerations for the parent who may apply to the TCDSB to have a student grade-level accelerated or retained:

- a) The TCDSB utilizes a variety of placements, differentiated instruction, and evidence-based interventions and strategies to provide meaningful access to education for students who have ability- or disability-related needs that impact their learning;
- b) Any determination of whether grade-level acceleration or retention is an appropriate accommodation for a student while receiving education services is a decision of the TCDSB; and
- c) Notwithstanding any provision in the Policy and these Operational Procedures, the Board will consider each application for a student's grade-level acceleration or retention on a case-by-case basis (and will comply with its duty to accommodate under the *Education Act* and *Human Rights Code*).



### 2.0 Background

Until the creation of this DRAFT policy and attendant procedures, there was no TCDSB policy on grade-level acceleration or retention. However, notwithstanding the creation of this new policy and procedures the Board continues to uphold its current practice of endorsing an age-appropriate, grade-level placement for students. Within such placement, the appropriate accommodations would continue to be made either for students seeking enrichment or, otherwise, those who might require accommodations either to meet curriculum expectations or to meet those expectations outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

In the event that a parent requests consideration for grade-level acceleration or retention, a number of considerations need to be discussed with the Parent and other key stakeholders, and a decision is made in the best interests of the individual child. In most cases, a student's learning needs can be met within the age-appropriate, mainstream classroom. Accommodations to the mainstream (non-Special Education) classroom can include: enrichment activities, special peer groupings, or individualized attention.

### 3.0 Three Effective Approaches to Classroom Instruction

*(Learning for All, 2013, p.12-14)*

Instruction that both responds to the characteristics of a diverse group of students and that is precisely tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each student can be achieved using the principles and guidelines associated with three instructional approaches:

- a. Universal Design for Learning (UDL),
- b. Differentiated Instruction (DI), and
- c. Tiered approach to prevention and intervention.

Used in combination, UDL and DI enable educators to respond effectively to the strengths and needs of all students.

The two approaches overlap, sharing certain goals and strategies, such as providing a range of instructional strategies, resources, learning tasks, and assessment tools in order to meet the different strengths, needs, levels of readiness, and learning styles or preferences of the students in a class.



## Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

3.1 Universality, Equity, Flexibility, and Inclusiveness are four principles for establishing effective UDL classrooms.

Incorporating the principles of *universality* and *equity*, UDL is intended to ensure that teaching is tailored to draw on the strengths and meet the needs of *all* students.

The “universal” in UDL does not imply that there is one optimal solution for everyone; rather, it reflects awareness of the unique nature of each learner and the need to accommodate differences, creating learning experiences that suit individual learners and maximize their ability to progress (Rose & Meyer, 2002). This means planning learning opportunities that will extend the learning of all students, whatever their level of achievement, and help each one reach his/her potential.

Incorporating the principles of *flexibility* and *inclusiveness*, the planning of teaching and the time teachers allocate to students’ activities must be sufficiently flexible to provide real learning experiences for all students, regardless of their performance level. Students are accommodated through:

- a. a variety of teaching strategies and pedagogical materials that are relevant, engaging, and responsive to their learning needs; that make use of all the senses; and that vary in form, level of difficulty, and manner of presentation;
- b. a variety of technological media and tools;
- c. different types of assessment strategies, involving a range of media, formats, and response options (Note: During assessments, students have access to the same supports that they have during instruction unless those supports undermine the purpose of the assessment.); and
- d. various ways of using space.

## Common Classroom Strategies

3.2 Common classroom strategies support the principles of DI and UDL.

The best way to engage students is by offering them choice (*Karen Hume, 2008*). By providing Differentiated Instruction options, this can be made possible. Some key essentials of differentiated instruction are the following (*Ontario Ministry of Education Differentiated Instruction (DI) Brochure, October 2008*):



- i) Teachers having knowledge of students' readiness to work with concepts, their interests, and their learning preferences, and seeing all preferences as equally valid;
- ii) Teachers using a repertoire of instructional and assessment strategies to meet the needs of different learners;
- iii) Ensuring that all differentiated instruction activities are equally engaging and respectful and take approximately the same amount of time;
- iv) Unless students are on an IEP, all differentiated instruction is based on the same curriculum expectations and all students have opportunities to achieve the same high standards of performance;
- v) Students are assessed before, during, and after their learning. Assessments inform next steps for both teacher and student;
- vi) Even if students have choices in the ways that they demonstrate their learning, teachers are able to use a common assessment tool (e.g., a rubric) so that all student work is judged against the same assessment criteria; and
- vii) A defining characteristic of a differentiated classroom is flexibility. Students work in short-term, flexible learning groups and educators are flexible in creating and altering instructional plans in response to learners.

Differentiating instruction based on student readiness involves knowing where particular students are on the learning continuum, then planning program features and instructional strategies, resources, and supports to meet them where they are and move them along the continuum. Some students may require remediation or modified expectations; others may need extensions or opportunities for independent study. (*Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004b, p.4, in Learning for All, 2013, p.18*)

Differentiated Instruction includes (*Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004b, p.1*):

- Providing alternative instructional and assessment activities;
- Challenging students at an appropriate level;
- Using a variety of groupings to meet student needs.

Differentiated Instruction does not include:

- Doing something different for every student in the class;



- Disorderly or undisciplined student activity;
- Using groupings that never change or isolating struggling students within the class;
- Never engaging in whole-class activities with all students participating in the same endeavour.

Differentiation of Content, Process, and Product: A Checklist to Guide Classroom Practice (*Adapted from Differentiated Instruction Educator's Guide: Getting to the core of teaching and learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, in Learning for All, 2013, pp.20-21)*)

### Differentiate Content

- ✓ Vary content (e.g., provide content at different levels of difficulty; enable students to extend knowledge and skills) to suit student readiness, interests, motivational needs, and learning styles.
- ✓ Unpack the big ideas of the curriculum to create achievable learning goals.
- ✓ Introduce new learning and pose open questions as appropriate to the student's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

### Differentiate Process

- ✓ Use various assessment strategies to match students' strengths, learning style preferences, interests, and readiness.
- ✓ Use various types of learning activities and various grouping strategies to draw on students' strengths and provide support in areas that need improvement.
- ✓ Use a variety of instructional and management strategies that engage all modalities.
- ✓ Provide students with opportunities to choose from an array of activities and projects that involve differentiated processes.
- ✓ Monitor students' response to the differentiated strategies used, and assess their progress on a regular basis.
- ✓ Provide the accommodations and/or modifications that are specified in the IEPs of students who have special education needs.



### Differentiate Product

- ✓ Gather achievement data through various assessment tools.
- ✓ Engage students' interest by involving them in various different types of projects and problem-solving activities.
- ✓ Foster students' awareness of their strengths in learning, and their sense of ownership of their learning, by allowing them to choose the products they will create and the formats or modes of presentation they will use.

### The Tiered Approach (*Learning for All, 2013, p.24*)

3.3 The tiered approach is based on frequent monitoring of student progress and the use of assessment data, focusing on learning rate and level, to identify students who are facing challenges in learning and to plan specific assessment and instructional interventions of increasing intensity to address their needs effectively.

It can be used to address both academic and behavioural needs. The nature, intensity, and duration of interventions may be decided by teachers individual or in collaboration with a school team, always on the basis of evidence derived from monitoring student achievement.

The tiered approach can:

- a. Facilitate early identification of both students who may be at risk and students who may be in need of greater challenges;
- b. Ensure appropriate and timely intervention to address these students' needs and significantly reduce the likelihood that they will develop more intractable problems in the future.

(*Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003*).

## **4.0 Understanding Students' Social-Emotional Needs and Abilities**

4.1 Only in extraordinary circumstances should a student be grade-level accelerated. If an accommodated or exceptional student is to be considered for grade-level acceleration, it should be so only if the student has had opportunities to engage in differentiated learning opportunities in the mainstream classroom and all available Special Education programming supports ex. the Intensive Support Program environment, have been exhausted.



4.2 Considerations must be given to all aspects of academic achievement as well as social emotional development

4.3 There are some situations where great caution must be exercised in considering a request for advanced placement. Very young children have unique learning needs that must be addressed in a manner that acknowledges their need to be nurtured and respects their developmental level. Accelerated academic learning in early childhood may force the child to rely on lower level processes such as memorization instead of developing higher level cognitive strategies.

4.4 In young children the individual needs of each child must be addressed within an environment that is appropriate to the child's interests and abilities. Psychologists and educators have cautioned against the dangers of accelerating learning opportunities (Elkind, 1986) or "hothousing" young children (Siegal, 1987).<sup>i</sup>

4.5 Learning opportunities presented at age three through five play a significant role in forming a foundation for learning that builds on confidence and curiosity. Students who may eventually be identified as Gifted might be at a significant disadvantage if they are accelerated.

4.6 When programming for gifted students is offered on a withdrawal basis, a child who has been accelerated will be evaluated and admitted to the program based on age norms. However, the placement will be with other gifted students who are one year older. In this setting, the accelerated child will be comparing his/her reasoning abilities and products to those of older gifted students. This may impact negatively on the child's self-esteem and result in a discouraged student who does not attain his/her potential in academic areas.

## **5.0 Considerations for Acceleration**

5.1 There are competency-based and age-based programming acceleration options for gifted and talented learners. "Education programs and curricula can be differentiated in a variety of ways to provide Canada's most capable learners with opportunities to progress at a developmentally appropriate pace, to offer them opportunities to learn 'what they don't already know.' (Stanley, 2000, p. 216)."<sup>ii</sup>

5.2 Educators should consider engaging some form of acceleration when the three following considerations hold true:



- a) In all aspects of the provincial report card (numeric grade, learning skills, and anecdotal comments), a student consistently demonstrates levels of achievement that are beyond his/her grade-level peers.
- b) Achievement assessed includes assignments done independently at home as well as those done in the classroom.
- c) Social and emotional development is appropriate for the proposed grade level, and self-esteem is well developed.

5.3 Successful acceleration depends on comprehensive assessment, thoughtful decision-making involving all stakeholders, and flexible implementation that is carefully monitored. In these circumstances, educational acceleration appears to promote social development, reduces boredom, and enhances academic achievement and attitudes toward school. <sup>iii</sup>

5.4 **Categories and Forms of Acceleration** include the following that are either content-based or grade-based:

a) Content-based:

- (i) Advanced placement,
- (ii) concurrent enrolment,
- (iii) e-learning courses,
- (iv) credit by examination,
- (v) curriculum compacting,
- (vi) co-curricular programs,
- (vii) International Baccalaureate (IB) programs,
- (viii) mentoring,
- (ix) single-subject or subject-matter acceleration.

b) Grade-based:

- (i) Combined classes,
- (ii) continuous progress,
- (iii) early admission to K or Gr.1,
- (iv) early entrance to high school or post-secondary education,
- (v) early graduation from secondary school,
- (vi) grade-skipping (whole grade acceleration),
- (vii) self-paced instruction,
- (viii) telescoping curriculum.



(See **Appendix A** for a more detailed explanation of the above.)

5.5 Key questions to consider in order to determine if a student will benefit from grade-level acceleration according to the Ontario Psychological Association are the following:

- i) Is child able to master material at a rapid pace relative to age-mates?
- ii) Does child understand concepts at a deeper level than classmates?
- iii) Does a child demonstrate the emotional maturity to handle the demands of an advanced grade?
- iv) Does the child demonstrate the social skills required to handle the demands of an advanced grade?
- v) Are the parent, child, and teachers in agreement with an advanced grade placement?

It should be noted that only with a positive response to *all* of these questions should the child be considered for grade-level acceleration.

5.6 **Characteristics of Giftedness**<sup>iv</sup> are recognized by educators and have been typified as indicated in the four categories below. However, it should be noted that no student is outstanding in all characteristics. The list of characteristics seen below is neither prescriptive or exhaustive:

### Learning Characteristics

- Has unusually advanced vocabulary for age or grade level
- Has quick mastery and recall of factual information
- Reads a great deal on his or her own; usually prefers adult-level books; does not avoid difficult materials
- Reasons things out for him- or herself

### Motivational Characteristics

- Becomes easily absorbed with and truly involved in certain topics or problems
- Is easily bored with routine tasks
- Needs little external motivation to follow through in work that initially excited him or her



- Strives toward perfection; is self-critical; is not easily satisfied with his or her own speed and products
- Prefers to work independently; requires little direction from teachers
- Stubborn in his or her beliefs
- Concerned with right and wrong, good and bad

### Creativity Characteristics

- Constantly asking questions about anything and everything
- Often offers unusual, unique or clever responses
- Is uninhibited in expressions of opinion
- Is a high-risk taker; is adventurous and speculative
- Displays a keen sense of humor
- Shows emotional sensitivity
- Is nonconforming; accepts disorder; is not interested in details; is individualistic; does not fear being different
- Is unwilling to accept authoritarian pronouncements without critical examination

### Leadership Characteristics

- Carries responsibility well
- Is self-confident with children his or her own age as well as adults
- Can express him- or herself well
- Adapts readily to new situations
- Generally directs the activity in which he or she is involved

5.7 Reach Ahead Opportunities for Elementary School Students: In certain circumstances, consideration may be given for reach-ahead opportunities for Gr. 8 students seeking enrichment.

*“Under exceptional circumstances, an individual student in Gr. 8, with parental consent, may be given permission by the principal of a secondary school to ‘reach ahead’ to take secondary school courses, either during the school year or in the summer prior to entering Gr. 9. The principal of the elementary school and the principal of the secondary school will decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether ‘reaching ahead’ to take a secondary school course is in the best interests of the student. The principal of the secondary school will assume responsibility for evaluating the student’s achievement and for granting and recording the credit.” (Ontario Schools, K-12, p.32, 2.5.2.1)*



5.8 Individual Education Plan Accommodations and Modifications: An IEP will be prepared for all students with an identification of Giftedness. The Principal of the home school will ensure that an IEP is completed within 30 school days after placement in the program or start of a new school year/semester. A review of the identification and placement will be determined annually.

5.9 Academic and Psycho-educational Assessments: Students with psychological assessments must meet TCDSB criteria for an identification of Giftedness. The assessment must include a measure of intellectual ability that is accepted by TCDSB.

5.10 Identification and Placement in a (Gifted) Special Education Program:

Step 1: The OLSAT8 group screening test is administered to **all grade 4 students** as well as to students who are nominated in higher grades but have not previously completed the OLSAT8 test.

Step 2: Successful candidates who meet the TCDSB criteria will be referred to an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) for possible identification as an Exceptional student with Giftedness and placement in the Gifted Program. Parents are invited to attend this meeting and will obtain information as to the location of the program.

Gifted Programs: Elementary Gifted Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) take the form of *Withdrawal* or *Congregated* Settings.

Program Foci:

- ✓ To broaden the development of the intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, moral and spiritual potential of students
- ✓ To further develop creative thinking, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, research, organizational and independence skills
- ✓ To provide students with opportunities to explore multiple perspectives, novel ideas, and to probe topics more deeply
- ✓ To engage students in independent and leadership learning opportunities



- ✓ To provide students with the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded peers

A detailed listing of TCDSB Gifted Congregated and Withdrawal Programs can be found in **Appendix B**.

### Is Grade-Level Acceleration an Appropriate Response?

5.11 If a student is considered for acceleration, it would be only after all above options, included Gifted Intensive Support programming, have been considered, and it is deemed to be an essential response to promote a student's continued academic, social, and emotional growth.

In order to consider the grade-level acceleration of a student, it is recommended that the student have been placed in a TCDSB school for a minimum of one full school (reporting) year.

## **6.0 Considerations for Promotion (Grade 8 to Grade 9)**

*(Ontario Schools K-12 Policy and Program Requirements, 2016, p.31)*

6.1 Students without an IEP who have successfully completed the Gr. 8 curriculum expectations will be promoted from elementary school and placed in a secondary school.

6.2 Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP):

1. All students who have achieved the grade-level expectations will be promoted.

- a) students who require program accommodations and/or modifications will have an IEP. If a student is not successfully demonstrating achievement of goals/expectations outlined in his/her IEP, the goals/expectations might need to be updated.

- b) students with an IEP should not be considered to be at risk of promotion. If the learning expectations outlined in the IEP are appropriate for the student's level of instruction, the provincial report



card promotion status should indicate that the student is “*progressing well towards promotion.*”

c) Kindergarten students should not be considered for retention given their age and early educational development. Alternatively, kinders with Special Education needs should be given every opportunity to advance with their peers in order to support their academic achievement and social-emotional development.

2. Students with an IEP who are working on modified Gr. 8 expectations will be reviewed at the Gr. 8 Transition planning meeting and/or the IPRC Annual Review meeting (as appropriate). In consultation with the appropriate school-based and board-level staff and parent, a decision will be made regarding placement into an appropriate secondary school program.

### 6.3 English Language Learners (ELLs)

*(Ontario Schools K-12 Policy and Program Requirements, 2016, p.35-36)*

English Language Learners should be placed in an age-appropriate grade-level rather than a lower grade based on their level of language acquisition and/or academic functioning.

ELLs will require variable lengths of time and levels of support in ESL/ELD programs to acquire the English language skills necessary for integration into non-ESL/ELD programs.

Ongoing monitoring and assessment of student progress and a flexible approach are needed in order to ensure that ESL/ELD programming and/or monitoring continue to be appropriate for them.

## 7.0 Considerations for Retention

### Is Grade-Level Retention an Appropriate Response?

7.1 If a student is considered for grade-level retention, it would be only after all programming options, including Intensive Support Programs (ISP), have been considered, and it is deemed to be an essential response to enhance a student's continued academic, social, and emotional growth.



In order to consider the grade-level retention of a student, it is recommended that the student have been placed in a TCDSB school for a minimum of one full school (reporting) year.

### 8.0 Considerations for Transfer

A pupil is transferred to the next grade (1 through 8) though s/he has not met an average of Level 1 in the curriculum expectations for the various subjects; or has not achieved a Level 1 in any of the following core subjects: Language (English/French - Extended or Immersion), Mathematics, Science, Geography, or History.

### 9.0 Roles and Responsibilities

#### 1. Principal:

- ✓ Is responsible for the management of the school premises, curriculum leadership of staff providing educational programs, and the safety and well-being of all staff/students;
- ✓ Is responsible for the promotion, transfer, acceleration, or retention of students;
- ✓ Co-ordinates the Case Conference or SBSLT process with all school and/or board-level staff, parent, and student (as appropriate);
- ✓ Provides professional learning opportunities for all school staff regarding the abilities and needs of the spectrum of learners within the school community.

#### 2. Superintendent:

- ✓ Reviews with the principal any parental applications received for grade-level acceleration or retention;
- ✓ Collaborates with the principal and/or parent regarding unresolved recommendations for grade-level placement for the following school year;
- ✓ In consultation with the Superintendent of Special Services, collects and maintains yearly data pertaining to parent requests for student grade-level acceleration/retention, and students who have been accelerated or retained.

#### 3. Classroom Teacher:



- ✓ Engages UDL and DI instructional approaches that engage high-yield strategies, and promote inquiry-based learning and student engagement in the age-appropriate grade-level;
- ✓ Engages students in a collaborative teaching-learning process;
- ✓ Creates learning profiles for their class(es) as well as individual student profiles in order to identify a baseline of student achievement and to identify any students at risk or otherwise in need of increased challenges. (See *Learning for All, 2013, p. 39 – Process for Developing a Class Profile; and p. 48 – Process for Developing an Individual Student Profile.*);
- ✓ Consults with parents on an ongoing basis;
- ✓ Engages the Tiered Approach to the identification of and intervention for academic and social-emotional needs, informing the principal about any academic and/or social-emotional developmental concerns; and
- ✓ Consults with the school team as needed regarding student achievement.

#### 4. Special Education Teacher

- ✓ Creates in a timely manner an IEP as required for students who have been identified as exceptional by an IPRC;
- ✓ May create an IEP for students not identified as exceptional by an IPRC but who might have Special Education needs;
- ✓ Monitors the implementation and update of IEPs for students with Special Education needs and;
- ✓ Advocates for students with special education needs.

#### 5. Guidance Teacher

- ✓ Assists students with course selections (secondary) and pathways planning (elementary/secondary);
- ✓ Advocates for all students, but in particular students not otherwise supported by Special Education or English as a Second Language (ESL) resource teachers.

#### 6. Student:

- ✓ Accepts his/her responsibility for engaging with all aspects of the curriculum including active participation with in-class teaching/learning as well as independent completion of homework and assignments.
- ✓ Seeks assistance (as developmentally appropriate) when requiring remediation and/or deeper learning opportunities; and



- ✓ Actively participates in all aspects of pathways planning.

### 7. Parent:

- ✓ Works closely with their child/ren to promote their own interest and engagement with subjects being studied, and helps them self-advocate for their learning needs;
- ✓ Consults with teachers/administrators regarding their child's achievement; and
- ✓ Engages in the consultation process for the purpose of considering and implementing, if appropriate, their request for grade-level acceleration or retention.

### Receiving an Application for Grade-level Acceleration or Retention

9.2 On receipt of a parental application for grade-level acceleration or grade-level retention (**Appendix C**), the school principal shall proceed with the following steps:

- a) Review the application for completeness and request any additional information or clarification that is necessary to assess the request for these forms of accommodation.
- b) Inform and consult with the Superintendent of Schools and Superintendent of Special Services about the application.
- c) Organize a review of the application by the Case Conference Team or School Based Support Learning Team (SBSLT), as appropriate. Every effort will be made to review the documentation and schedule a meeting in a reasonable timeframe. A meeting with the Case Conference Team or SBSLT can include the parent along with the appropriate school/board interdisciplinary team members that may include: principal, Assessment and Programming Teacher (APT)/Programming and Assessment Teacher (PAT), current teacher(s) of the student, Psychology and/or Social Work and/or Speech-Language Pathologist;
- d) Consider the application on an individual basis giving consideration to all relevant factors (**Appendix D**);



- e) Communicate the Board's determination with respect to the application for grade-level acceleration or grade-level retention to the parent in writing in accordance with **Appendices E or F**;

9.3 Each application for grade-level acceleration or grade-level retention will be addressed on an individual basis giving consideration to all relevant factors, including but not limited to:

- a) the individual learning strengths and needs of the student, the student's IEP goals, safety plan, behaviour plan and/or student's medical Plan of Care (if any);
- b) supporting documents such as psychological assessments, occupational or physical therapy assessments, functional behaviour assessments, or other relevant supporting documents;
- c) evidence of how grade-level acceleration or retention might provide accommodation for a demonstrated ability/disability-related learning need;
- d) the impact of the accommodation on the student's dignity, integration, and independence;
- e) other accommodations available and whether one or more alternative accommodations can meet the needs of the student; and
- f) approval for grade-level acceleration or retention shall not occur more than once during elementary school.

9.4 The process of accommodation shall respect the student's right to privacy. The TCDSB will not provide information about a student's abilities, disability, diagnosis, or specific learning needs unless appropriate consent is obtained.

9.5 The school principal shall be responsible for communication with the parent with respect to the accommodation process, and where approved, the implementation and management of the accommodation.



### Implementing the Accommodation

9.6 Where the application is granted, the school principal, in consultation with the Case Conference Team or SBSLT, will do the following:

- a) consider any necessary change in routine and procedures, as well as any programming changes that might be required;
- b) forward the following letters as appropriate:
  - i) Decision Letter Approving Grade-Level Acceleration/Retention, or
  - ii) Decision Letter Declining Grade-Level Acceleration/Retention.
- c) make changes to the student's IEP goals to document the type of support the accommodation will provide for the student;
  - the accommodation may be provided on an interim trial basis, in which case the indicators of success or lack of success for this form of accommodation will be identified before the trial period begins.

9.7 TCDSB will make best efforts to implement the accommodation within a reasonable timeframe.

### Continuous Assessment

9.8 A review of the effectiveness of the grade-level retention or acceleration in supporting the student's learning goals shall be undertaken as part of each review of the student's IEP and as otherwise deemed necessary by the Principal.

9.9 Approval may be revoked at any time by the principal if:

- a) there are any concerns about academic performance or social-emotional well-being of the student;
- b) there has been a change to the student's circumstances or ability/disability-related needs, which had supported the original approval; and
- c) the TCDSB in its discretion determines that the accommodation is not effective for the student's demonstrated ability/disability-related learning needs.

9.10 In all cases, however, the TCDSB will comply with its duty to accommodate under the *Education Act* and the *Human Rights Code*.



### 10.0 Records

- 10.1 A copy of the application and the decision approving or declining the accommodation request, as well as any other relevant documents supporting the accommodation, shall be retained in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR).
- 10.2 The TCDSB shall be required to collect, use and disclose the personal information of the student in order to fulfill the accommodation process. Notice of the collection, use, and disclosure must be provided to the parent/adult student. Efforts should be made to limit the personal information to only that which is necessary.
- 10.3 The TCDSB will collect the following information regarding the implementation of the policy and procedure pertaining to grade-level acceleration and retention:
- a. Total number of requests for students to be grade-level accelerated or retained;
    - i. Whether requests are for elementary or secondary school students;
    - ii. The student's grade; and
  - b. The number of requests approved and denied;
    - i. If denied, the rationale for the decision, including a description of other supports and/or services provided to the student to support their access to the Ontario Curriculum.

### 11.0 Definitions

**Acceleration:** The term *acceleration* refers to a variety of practices that increase the rate or level of learning for students who learn more quickly or who have more advanced levels of understanding than those expected for students in their grade.<sup>v</sup> Grade-level acceleration involves the placement of a pupil in the grade beyond an age-appropriate placement.

**Accommodations:** The term *accommodations* refers to the special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required by



students with Special Education needs to enable them to learn and demonstrate learning. The provision of accommodations in no way alters the curriculum expectations for the grade level or course (Ontario Ministry of Education).

**Assessment:** The process of gathering information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations in a subject or course. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. Assessment for the purpose of improving student learning is seen as both "assessment *for* learning" and "assessment *as* learning." Evaluation of student learning is based on "assessment *of* learning" that provides evidence of student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/course, often at the end of a period of learning. (*Learning for All*, 2013, p. 64.)

**Differentiated Instruction:** refers to a promising practice of Ontario educators. It is considered to be an excellent means of educating students with a variety of needs and abilities in a shared setting. Differentiated instruction allows them to address specific skills and difficulties (Raynal & Rieunier, 1998 in *Learning for All*, 2013, p.12)

**Equity:** A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. (*Learning for All*, 2013, p.64).

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** A written plan describing the Special Education program and/or services required by a particular student, including a record of the particular accommodations needed to help the student achieve his/her learning expectations. An IEP must be developed for a student who has been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), and may also be developed for a student who has Special Education needs but has not been identified as exceptional. An IEP is working document that identifies learning expectations that may be modified from or alternative to the expectations given in the curriculum policy document for the appropriate grade and subject or course. It outlines the specific knowledge and skills to be assessed and evaluated for the purpose of reporting student achievement. (*Learning for All*, 2013, p.64-65).

**Inquiry-Based Learning:** The inquiry process involves open-ended learning experiences that are inclusive of all students and offer students real choices and opportunities to develop their own voice. Educators design the inquiry process to



respond closely and accurately to individual students' learning needs. (*Learning for All*, 2013, p.21).

It involves transforming wonder into knowledge. "Inquiry involves more than simply answering questions or getting the right answer. It espouses investigation, exploration, search, quest, research, pursuit, and study. It is enhanced by involvement with a community of learners, each learning from the other in social interaction." (Kuklthau, Maniotes & Caspari, 2007, p.2, found in *K-12 Capacity Building Series, Secretariat Special Edition #32.*)

**Modifications:** The term *modifications* refers to changes made in the grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing the number and/or complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations. (Ontario Ministry of Education).

**Parent:** A custodial parent of the student or a guardian pursuant to the Education Act.

**Promotion:** Students who have successfully completed Grade 8 will be promoted from elementary school and admitted to a secondary school. (*Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter E.2, Part II, subsection 41 (1)* [www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e02#BK46](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e02#BK46), in *Ontario Schools K-12 Policy and Program Requirements*, 2016, p. 31)

**Readiness:** Does not refer to the student's general ability level, but to the current knowledge, understanding, and skill level a student has in relation to a particular sequence of learning.

Differentiating instruction based on student readiness involves knowing where particular students are on the learning continuum, then planning program features and instructional strategies, resources, and supports to meet them where they are and move them along the continuum. Some students may require remediation or modified expectations; others may need extensions or opportunities for independent study. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 4, in *Learning for All*, 2013, p.18.)



**Retention:** Refers to withholding the promotion of a pupil to an age-appropriate grade-level; the repeat of the current grade placement; or to the placement of a pupil in a grade below an age-appropriate placement.

**Tiered Approach:** The “tiered” approach to prevention and intervention is a systematic approach to providing high-quality, evidence-based assessment and instruction and appropriate interventions that respond to students’ individual needs. (*Learning for All, 2013, p.24*)

**Transfer:** A pupil is transferred to the next grade (1 through 8) though has not met an average Level 1 in the curriculum expectations for the various subjects; or has not achieved a Level 1 in any of the following “core” subjects: Language (English/French (Extended or Immersion), Mathematics, Science, Geography, History.

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** UDL provides teachers with broad principles for planning instruction and designing learning environments for a diverse group of students. It is a teaching approach, that focuses on using teaching strategies or pedagogical materials, that is designed to meet special needs to enhance learning for *all* students, regardless of age, skills, or situation. (*Learning for All, 2013, p. 66.*)

## 11.0 Cross References:

Education Act, 265 (g)  
Effective Educational Practices for Students with ASD, 2007  
Growing Success, 2010  
Growing Success - The Kindergarten Addendum, 2016  
Learning For All, 2013  
Ontario Schools K-12 Policy and Program Requirements, 2016  
O.R. 181/98: Identification and Placement, Exceptional Pupils  
PPM 156: Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs, 2013  
Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities, 2018  
Special Education in Ontario K-12 Policy and Resource Guide, 2017  
Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Resource Guide for Ontario Educators, Gr. 1-8



### 12.0 Attachments:

- Appendix A:** Categories and Forms of Acceleration
- Appendix B:** TCDSB Gifted Congregated and Withdrawal Programs
- Appendix C:** Application for Grade-Level Acceleration/Retention
- Appendix D:** Principal's Checklist for Consideration of Grade-Level Acceleration or Retention
- Appendix E:** Sample Decision Letter Approving Grade-Level Acceleration or Retention
- Appendix F:** Sample Decision Letter Declining Grade-Level Acceleration or Retention

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### Endnotes:

<sup>i</sup> The Association of Chief Psychologists of Ontario School Boards, Learning Challenges: Grade Acceleration, p.2. <http://www.acposb.on.ca/grade-acceleration>

<sup>ii</sup> Kanevski, Lannie, *A Survey of Educational Acceleration Practices in Canada*, in Canadian Journal of Education, 34, 3 (2011), p.155.

<sup>iii</sup> Kanevsky, p.157

<sup>iv</sup> Adapted from: <http://www.us.mensa.org/learn/gifted-youth/insights-into-gifted-youth/gifted-characteristics/>

<sup>v</sup> Kanevsky, Lannie: *Accelerating Gifted Students in Canada* in Canadian Journal of Education, 36:3 (2013), ©2013 Canadian Society for the Study of Education, p.233.



## Accelerating Students in Canada

### Content Based

**Advanced Placement (AP):** The student takes a course (traditionally in high school) that results in postsecondary credit upon completion of a standardized AP examination with a score acceptable to the college or university.

**Concurrent or Dual Enrolment:** The student is enrolled in one level but takes a course or courses at a higher level. Examples include taking calculus at the university level and receiving university credit for it upon successful completion while still enrolled in high school, or taking a high school course in chemistry while still enrolled in junior high school.

**Correspondence Courses:** A student enrolls in advanced coursework outside of normal school instruction. Instruction may be delivered by mail, internet, television and/or other media.

**Credit by Examination:** The student is awarded advanced standing (e.g., high school or college) by successfully completing some form of mastery test or activity. This is also known as “course challenge” or “testing out.”

**Curriculum Compacting:** Based on high levels of mastery demonstrated on a pre-assessment, the amounts of introductory activities, drill, and practice are reduced for one or more students in a class. The time gained may be used for more advanced content instruction or to participate in enrichment activities. Curriculum compacting does not necessarily result in advanced grade placement.

**Extracurricular Programs:** A student enrolls in coursework after school, on weekends, or in summer programs that offer advanced instruction and/or credit.

**International Baccalaureate Programs:** Students complete advanced interdisciplinary curriculum prescribed by the International Baccalaureate organization. At the end of high school, students take an international examination and may receive advanced standing in their postsecondary studies.

**Mentoring:** A student is paired with a mentor or expert tutor who provides advanced or more rapidly paced instruction.

**Subject Matter, Single Subject, or Partial Acceleration:** A student is placed in classes with older peers for a part of the day or works with materials from higher



grade placements in one or more content areas. Subject-matter acceleration may also take place outside of the general instructional schedule (e.g., summer school or after school) or by using higher level instructional activities on a continuous progress basis without leaving the placement with chronological-age peers.

### **Grade Based**

**Combined classes:** Students in two or more consecutive grades are enrolled in one class (e.g., a fourth- and fifth-grade combined class). This is a form of acceleration when it is done intentionally to allow younger students to interact academically and socially with older peers. It may or may not result in an advanced grade placement later.

**Continuous progress:** A student is given content progressively as prior content is mastered. The practice is accelerative when the student's progress exceeds the performance of chronological peers in rate and level.

**Early entrance to Grade 1:** Students either skip kindergarten or accelerate from kindergarten into Grade 1 during what would be the student's first year of school.

**Early admission to kindergarten:** Students enter kindergarten prior to achieving the minimum age for school entry as set by the provincial ministry of education.

**Early entrance to middle school, high school, or college/university:** A student is advanced to the next level of a subject or schooling at least one year ahead of chronological-age peers at the end of elementary, middle, junior, or senior secondary school. This may involve dual enrolment and/or credit by examination.

**Early graduation from high school:** A student graduates from a 4-year high school program in 3½ years or less. Generally, this is accomplished by increasing the amount of coursework taken each year in high school, but it may also be accomplished through concurrent or dual enrolment in college or university, or through extracurricular or correspondence coursework.

**Grade skipping:** A student is considered to have skipped one or more grades if he or she is given a grade-level placement ahead of chronological-age peers at anytime during the year.

**Self-paced instruction:** The student has control over pacing decisions. Self-paced instruction is a subtype of continuous progress.



**Telescoped curriculum:** A student is provided instruction in less time than is normal (e.g., completing a one-year course in one semester, or three years of middle school in two). Telescoping differs from curriculum compacting in two ways: it is planned to fit a precise time schedule and it always results in advanced grade placement.

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1. Based on Southern & Jones (2004) and reprinted from Kanevsky, L. (2011a). *A survey of educational acceleration practices in Canada*, Canadian Journal of Education, 34(3), 179–180.





## Toronto Catholic District School Board Gifted Programs

Appendix B



### **Gifted Congregated (Full Time)**

Transfiguration of Our Lord (Grades 6-8)

St. Francis of Assisi (Grades 6-8)

St. Victor (Grades 6-7)

### **Gifted Congregated (Partial Integration)**

St. Bonaventure

- Grades 6-8
- Half day Gifted/half day Extended French

### **Gifted Withdrawal (1 Day/week)**

#### **North**

Blessed Trinity

St. Charles

St. Conrad

St. Monica

#### **West**

Our Lady of Sorrows

St. Angela

St. Clement

St. Eugene

St. Louis

#### **South**

St. Catherine

St. James

Holy Name

St. Bruno/St. Raymond

#### **East**

St. Ignatius of Loyola

St. Rose of Lima



**Application for a Grade-Level Acceleration or Retention**

Name of Student:	Date of Birth:
Address:	
School:	Grade:
Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s):	
Home Telephone:	Work Telephone:

I/We request that permission be granted for _____ to be grade-level accelerated/retained ( <i>circle appropriate</i> ).
Additional information is required to assist the Principal: (Yes ___/No ___). If yes, please indicate in an attached document.

**Disability-Related Needs to be Accommodated by Grade-Level Acceleration/Retention**  
(*circle appropriate*)

- Please attach a copy of the assessment report from a regulated health professional containing the student's diagnosis and describing in detail the ability or disability-related learning needs to be accommodated. This information will help to inform appropriate accommodation decisions.
- Where necessary, in the implementation and accommodation process, the TCDSB reserves the right to request additional information and/or documentation to ensure that the requested accommodation is a viable response to the stated learning abilities/needs of your child. Consideration will be given to alternative accommodations if it is deemed, through consultation with school/board staff, that the requested grade-level acceleration/retention of your child is not appropriate for meeting the academic and/or social-emotional needs of your child.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:	Date:
Signature of Principal:	Date:

cc: OSR  
Superintendent of Schools  
Superintendent of Special Services





## Principal's Checklist for Consideration of Grade-Level Acceleration/Retention

Name of Student:	Date of Birth:
Address:	
School:	Grade:
Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s):	
Home Telephone:	Work Telephone:

### Application Requirements for Grade-Level Acceleration/Retention

- ☐ Receive Application for grade-level acceleration or retention
- ☐ Assessment report with diagnosis that will inform the specific request for accommodation
- ☐ Supporting documents (IEP, psychological, occupational therapy, physical therapy, functional behaviour, and/or orientation and mobility assessments)
- ☐ Consult with Superintendent of Schools
- ☐ Convene a school Case Conference Team or School-Based Support Learning Team meeting (as appropriate)
- ☐ Consult with school staff regarding professional learning opportunities for Differentiated Instruction (DI), Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- ☐ Consult with school staff regarding opportunities already taken to engage the principles of DI and UDL in order to provide the student (subject of the application for grade-level acceleration/retention) either accelerated or remedial learning opportunities and/or environments (as appropriate)

### Implementation Requirements

- ☐ Accommodation plan outlining either accelerated or remedial learning opportunities and/or environments (as appropriate)
- ☐ Timetable adjustments to incorporate possible accelerated or remedial learning opportunities and/or environments
- ☐ Training for staff member acting as Handler (if required)
- ☐ Identification of benchmarks for assessment of effectiveness (to be reviewed with IEP and updated annually in accordance with IEP regulations)





## Principal's Checklist for Consideration of Grade-Level Acceleration/Retention



**Additional Comments:**

Signature of Principal:	Date:
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## Sample Decision Letter Approving Parental Request for Student Grade-Level Acceleration or Retention

(Date)

Dear Parent

I am writing to communicate the decision regarding your request that your child be grade-level accelerated/retained (*circle appropriate*) to provide accommodation for ability/disability-related (*circle appropriate*) learning needs.

I wish to confirm approval of your request.

As we have discussed, the assessment of benchmarks established for evaluating the effectiveness of the requested accommodation for your child's learning abilities/needs (*circle appropriate*) will take place on a regular basis.

If concerns arise regarding the requested accommodation, a meeting will be scheduled to review your child's current academic and/or social-emotional progress and placement. In such a case, alternative options for accommodation will be reviewed.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc:   OSR  
      Superintendent of Schools  
      Superintendent of Special Services





## Sample Decision Letter Declining Parental Request for Student Grade-Level Acceleration or Retention

(Date)

Dear Parent

I am writing to communicate the decision regarding your request that your child be grade-level accelerated/retained (*circle appropriate*) to provide accommodation for ability/disability-related (*circle appropriate*) learning needs.

I wish to communicate that your request is being denied.

As we have discussed, it has been deemed, in consultation with the school team, Field Superintendent, and Superintendent of Special Services, that the requested accommodation of grade-level acceleration/retention (*circle appropriate*) is not a viable response to the stated learning abilities/needs of your child. Furthermore, the school is able to provide reasonable alternative accommodations that respect your child's dignity, encourage independence, and facilitate integration that will address your child's learning needs and enable him/her to have meaningful access to educational programs/services.

This decision is not subject to appeal. However, if you wish to discuss the alternative accommodation measures available to support your child while at school, please contact me to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc:   OSR  
      Superintendent of Schools  
      Superintendent of Special Services