



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

*"I SAW THE SPIRIT DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN LIKE A DOVE, AND IT REMAINED ON HIM."  
JOHN 1:32*

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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 7 hours.*

## **B. PURPOSE**

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

## **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, there is no reference to combined grades in the Ministry Assessment and Evaluation document Growing Success. The Ministry's direction on evaluation in combined grades is that the students must be evaluated on their particular grade-level expectations.

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 consists of 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 cross-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:
  - 10% 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 2021-2022 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 teacher federation. 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 and the preference for single-grade classrooms restrict the ability to have equal class loadings in a combined grade classroom.
- vi) Table 1 below displays the distribution, by area (1 through 8), of schools that have combined grade classes for the 2021-2022 school year.

<b>TABLE 1</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Number of Combined Classes by Area</b>
Area 01	98
Area 02	95
Area 03	81
Area 04	99
Area 05	111
Area 06	105
Area 07	101
Area 08	99
Area 12	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>794</b>

**Combined grade classes are not new to TCDSB or any other Board in the province. For the 2021-2022 school year, TCDSB has 794 combined grade classes representing 31.44% (794/2525) 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. Table 2 below represents a five-year summary of system combined grade classes.

<b>TABLE 2</b>	
<b>5-YEAR SUMMARY OF SYSTEM COMBINED GRADE CLASSES</b>	
<b>SCHOOL YEAR</b>	<b>TOTAL SYSTEM NUMBER OF COMBINED GRADE CLASSES</b>
<b>2017 - 2018</b>	<b>764.50</b>
<b>2018 - 2019</b>	<b>734.50</b>
<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>720.50</b>
<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>734.50</b>
<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>794.00</b>

## **E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Human Resources Department will monitor the implementation of Policy S.24 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 information of the Board of Trustees.