



REPORT TO

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

POLICY S.24 – COMBINED (SPLIT) GRADE CLASSES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
James 1:22*

Drafted

October 28, 2024

Meeting Date

November 7, 2024

Lynda Coulter, Executive Superintendent of Human Resources, Leadership, & Equity
Joe Genova, Coordinator of Human Resources, Academic Staffing

INFORMATION REPORT

Vision: *IN GOD'S IMAGE: Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope.*

Mission: *Nurturing the faith development and academic excellence of our Catholic learning community through the love of God, neighbour, and self.*



MULTI-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
2022 - 2025

IN GOD'S IMAGE: Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope



Brendan Browne
Director of Education

Adrian Della Mora
Associate Director of Academic Affairs & Chief Operating Officer

Derek Boyce
Associate Director of Corporate Services and Chief Commercial Officer

Ryan Putnam
Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The TCDSB guidelines regarding scheduling combined grade 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 summarizes critical metrics relating to the status of combined elementary classes. It also identifies procedures for schools to follow when organizing combined grade classes.

C. BACKGROUND

1. In October 2013, the Board approved Policy S.24, which addressed the issue of combined (split) grade classes for elementary schools.
2. The TCDSB continues to apply this policy to its annual staffing process. In addition, at the request of the Board of Trustees, Human Resources staff provide a yearly policy metric update on the status of combined grade elementary classrooms.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. In Ontario, the topic of combined grades is addressed 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 does however provide direction on evaluation in combined grades, specifically students must be evaluated on the expectations for their grade level.

Decisions regarding the organization of classes and assignments of students to classes at the TCDSB are locally determined based on enrollment, student needs, 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 combined grades in 2007; these included a research monograph, a strategy document, and a brochure. A key message from these documents contains 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 daily 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. When creating an elementary school's classroom model, principals must consider, in addition to student achievement and well-being, Ministry mandated average class size maximums, collective agreement requirements, as well as differing overall expectations for a cross-grade curricula.

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

- i) Primary Class Size (PCS) parameters (as of September 16):
 - 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 2024-2025 school year, the average size for Grade 4-8 classes shall not exceed 24.50 students. In addition, 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 average class size maximums, collective agreement class size maximums, and 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 trustee ward of schools with combined grade classes for the 2024-2025 school year.

Trustee Ward	Number of Combined Classes by Trustee Ward
Ward 01	57
Ward 02	57
Ward 03	39
Ward 04	88
Ward 05	78
Ward 06	45
Ward 07	54
Ward 08	101
Ward 09	69
Ward 10	30
Ward 11	106
Ward 12	71
Total	795

Combined grade classes are not new to TCDSB or any other district school board in the province.

For the 2024-2025 school year, TCDSB has seven hundred and ninety five combined grade classes, representing approximately 31.80% of all elementary classes. One hundred sixty-seven elementary schools have at least some combined grade classes regardless of school size. A data review indicates that combined grade classes exist for all grade combinations.

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 honours the Ministry's class size average regulation requirements.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for information to the Board of Trustees.