NATIONAL PROMOTION POLICY GUIDE
FOR JUNIOR AND SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PHASES

March 2017

For implementation:
Junior Secondary Phase: Grade 8 in 2017 and Grade 9 in 2018
Senior Secondary Phase: Grade 10 in 2019, Grade 11 in 2020 and Grade 12 in 2021
FOREWORD

The National Promotion Policy Guide for the secondary school phases was developed as per the Cabinet directives, which were based on the outcomes of the 2011 National Conference on Education. The then Ministry of Education was directed to review the National Promotion Policy in order to address the "automatic promotion" of learners who did not achieve the minimum level of competencies required to continue to the next grade.

This Policy Guide replaces all previous circulars issued on the promotion of learners in the secondary school phases. The Policy Guide is to be implemented together with the revised curriculum for the secondary phases. The Junior Secondary Phase will be implemented in phases: Grade 8 in 2017, and Grade 9 in 2018, and the Senior Secondary Phase will be implemented over three years: Grade 10 in 2019, Grade 11 in 2020, and Grade 12 in 2021.

The Promotion Policy Guide provides a framework for uniformity in learner promotion and holding back learners, as well as in the reporting on the progress of learners in the secondary school phases in Namibia. It states the aims of the promotion policy, and describes policy principles, key features of the policy, rules, regulations, learner performance levels, promotion requirements; requirements for reporting learner achievement, roles and responsibilities of key education stakeholders in the progress of learners, guidelines for identification of learners at risk and referral procedures.

School principals and heads of departments should monitor the quality of assessment tasks and the implementation of the promotion policy principles and procedures in order to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently. The school must keep parents informed about policy rules and regulations, requirements for reporting learner achievement and progress, guidelines for the identification of learners at risk and referral procedures, so that parents can monitor the progress of their children and support their learning.

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MINISTER
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<td>DNEA</td>
<td>Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment</td>
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<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan</td>
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<td>JS</td>
<td>Junior Secondary</td>
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<td>MoEAC</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture</td>
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<td>NCBE</td>
<td>National Curriculum for Basic Education</td>
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<td>NEACB</td>
<td>National Examinations, Assessment and Certification Board</td>
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<td>NIED</td>
<td>National Institute for Educational Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSSC</td>
<td>National Senior Secondary Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSSCH</td>
<td>National Senior Secondary Certificate Higher Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSSCO</td>
<td>National Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Senior Secondary</td>
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</table>
1. INTRODUCTION

Before the Namibian independence in 1990, schools had been implementing a policy of grade repetition for many years. However, there were high dropout rates, high repetition rates and low achievement rates in schools. The policy of grade repetition was replaced by a policy of semi-automatic promotion in 1996. Semi-automatic promotion was viewed as a compromise between grade repetition and social promotion. The policy of semi-automatic promotion has been implemented with limited success in schools. A research study on the evaluation of learner achievement conducted in 2011 revealed that:

- the promotion practices in schools were not effective in reducing repetition and dropout rates in the Namibian education system;
- the number of repeaters in schools increased, and most of the transferred learners failed the Junior Secondary Certificate examination;
- the learners who were held back or transferred to the next grade did not receive adequate learning support; and
- promotion requirements and grading were not applied consistently.

Educational research has shown that neither automatic promotion nor grade repetition addresses the problems of low achievers satisfactorily; the potential solutions lie in providing learners with better learning opportunities. As part of the resolutions of the 2011 National Conference on Education, Cabinet directed the Ministry of Education to ensure that each learner master the minimum level of expected competencies in one grade before being promoted to the next grade. The Ministry was further directed to:

- urgently review automatic promotion practices and provide clear guidelines that leave no opportunity for different interpretations and implementation practices;
- provide support to repeaters and learners who have not acquired the necessary skills and competencies; and
- make special provision for learners with hearing and visual impairments and other disabilities to enable them to be assessed fairly.

Take note that this policy applies to the revised curriculum and will be implemented according to the curriculum implementation schedule. Grade 9 learners will sit for a semi-external examination, while Grades 11 and 12 learners will write national external examinations.

2. AIMS OF THE POLICY

The policy guide aims to provide a framework for uniform practices in promoting and holding back learners and reporting learners’ progress in schools. It aims to minimise inconsistency in the use of grade ranges, grade descriptors and promotion requirements across school phases. The guidelines contained in this policy replace all previous circulars on promotion requirements and guidelines used in Namibian schools.
This Policy Guide supports the implementation of the major educational goals of access, equity, quality and efficiency.

3. **POLICY PRINCIPLES**

3.1 Learner-centred education presupposes that all children can learn and develop given the right circumstances, and recognises that this ability varies from person to person.

3.2 Learners will progress through the school phases in as near to normal time as possible. Some learners will achieve very highly, most will achieve adequately, and some will have limited achievements.

3.3 Learners benefit most by remaining with their own age group. Gifted learners in mainstream/inclusive schools may lack some emotional and social skills to be promoted above their age group on the basis of academic excellence alone. Hence, in collaboration with the learning support team, effective intervention, individual/differentiated tasks and support should be provided so that gifted learners are sufficiently challenged. Similarly, learners with learning difficulties who are held back repeatedly may be more harmed than helped in their development. Preferably, no learner should be more than three years older than the appropriate age for a certain grade.

3.4 Gifted learners will receive enrichment programmes.

3.5 Grade repetition appears to be beneficial to learners for whom exposure to a year of teaching in their current grade was not enough to enable them to master the minimum level of necessary competencies and skills to continue to the next grade.

3.6 Learners will be assessed using both formative and summative methods to determine the extent to which they have mastered subject competencies in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

3.7 Assessment is an on-going component of the curriculum, designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction and to keep track of continuous progress in the learning process. Schools will monitor slow learners' participation in lessons and assignments.

3.8 As soon as it is determined that a learner is not capable of achieving certain specified subject competencies and skills, the teacher will clearly identify the learning difficulties and draw up a plan of action (a support programme) to assist the learner in overcoming his/her learning difficulties.

3.9 Principals and heads of departments will monitor the work done by teachers and learners in support programmes and ensure that continual individual feedback is provided to both the learners and the parents.

3.10 In cases where the Promotion Committee is absolutely convinced that a learner would
definitely not benefit from progressing to the next grade, a learner will repeat a grade.

3.11 Parents/guardians will be kept fully informed of why it is necessary for their child to repeat a grade, what will be done by the school to ensure that learner masters the necessary competencies, and what support can be provided to the learner at home by the parent/s/guardian/s.

3.12 Learners who do not progress to the next grade will receive counselling to help them understand their situation and learning support focussed on the competencies which they have not yet mastered. Learning support forms part of everyday teaching and must also be portrayed in lesson plans.

3.13 Schools will form partnerships with parents/guardians by maintaining close communication with them, inviting them to visit the classroom, and providing them with instructional materials to use in tutoring their children at home. Parents/guardians will be informed of and updated regularly on the performance and progress of their children at school. Parents/guardians should be involved in order to support their children throughout their school education and not only when they repeat a grade.

3.14 All repeating and struggling learners will receive learning support. The learning support team will plan and compile suitably structured individualised programmes for learning support, particularly when learning support takes place outside normal teaching time.

3.15 Learning support will be given by the class or subject teacher. The teacher will also involve other resource persons to provide support. These include the learner’s peers, older learners, community volunteers, retired teachers, etc. Home support or support provided in the school by any of these resource persons will be carefully guided and monitored by the teacher.

3.16 Procedures for special education referral and placement are in place.

3.17 Referral will be done as early as possible in order to develop the learners’ individual skills, aptitude and talents. Learners who cannot benefit from their current school setting should, in consultation with parents and guardians, be referred to another school setting that caters for their needs. A learner will be considered for admission to resource schools or learning support classes through referral by the multi-disciplinary learning support team.

3.18 Principals and heads of departments and teachers will receive training to enable them to understand and meet special needs and assessment practices, and will have access to resource persons with expertise in remedial work and specialised education in an inclusive setting.

3.19 Learners who are hard of hearing will attend regular schools right from the onset of their education in order to make the most of and encourage residual speech, particularly when the learner does not need Namibian Sign Language. In the same way, learners with limited vision will attend regular schools with the necessary support services, such
as providing written material in enlarged text and with appropriate formatting.

4. FEATURES OF THE POLICY

4.1 Early identification

Learners who might be at risk of being held back are identified through continuous assessment methods and the recommendation of the teachers and/or the principal, and parents or guardians are informed of their children’s status.

4.2 Provision of high-quality learning support

Learners who have been identified as in need of learning support receive additional instructional support at school, as well as other intervention services targeting specific learning areas of difficulty. In addition to receiving instructional support at school, schools may offer a variety of out-of-school support services.

4.3 Restrictions to the number of times a given learner can be held back

In the interest of keeping learners close to their peer group and avoiding the potential negative psychosocial effects of repeatedly holding them back, restrictions are placed on the number of times any given learner may repeat a grade in a phase.

Learners who do not master the minimum level of competencies required for promotion in a particular grade must repeat that grade. A learner must only repeat once in the junior secondary phase and once in grade 10. A learner repeating a grade must be given learning support by the subject teacher.

If a learner is repeating a grade and it is clear that the learner will again not pass and therefore will have to be transferred to the next grade, such learner must be referred to the multi-disciplinary learning support team.

4.4 Building capacity of schools and teachers

Adequate professional support is provided to schools and teachers dealing with learners with learning difficulties. Regional Directorates of Education, Arts and Culture will provide additional support to schools.

4.5 Building and sustaining stakeholder support

Schools build and sustain parental and community involvement and support.
4.6 On-going monitoring

Learner progress is monitored by the learning support team using information from formative assessments. Learners who are at risk of repeating a grade must be provided with additional learning opportunities.

5. RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PROMOTION

5.1 The promotion requirements are applicable to all government and private schools that are registered with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and offer the Namibian school curriculum.

5.2 In Grades 8 to 10 the decision to advance or repeat a grade should be made in the best interest of the learner by the teachers, school principal and inspector of education.

5.3 A promotion committee of the school should discuss borderline cases. The subject teachers should participate in decisions about repetition or promotion.

5.4 Special conditions or extenuating circumstances the learner experienced during the year or examination should be considered.

6. LEARNER PERFORMANCE LEVELS

6.1 Grades 8 and 9

The learner’s level of achievement in relation to the competencies in the subject syllabuses are shown in letter grades/symbols. When letter grades are awarded, it is essential that they reflect the learner’s actual level of achievement in relation to the competencies in the subject syllabuses. The relation between the grades awarded and competencies are shown below. Achievement for all learners in Grades 8 and 9 should be shown in letter grades/symbols A – E, where A is the highest and E is the lowest grade. Learners who fail to obtain the minimum level of competencies of grade E will be ungraded which will be represented by U grade.
Reporting to parents or guardians will be done in letter grades/symbols and percentages for all grades.

| Grade | % Range  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gr. 8-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>80%+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>40-49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>0-39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learners who did not turn up for tests/examinations or did not make any attempt to fulfil assessment requirements will not be awarded any mark in that particular subject. For such a learner, if valid reasons with documentary proof are provided for his/her failure to turn up or make an attempt to fulfil the assessment requirements, an average will be calculated of marks obtained throughout the year.

### 6.2 Grades 10 to 11 and Grade 12

Grade descriptions for each grade are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by learners who were awarded that particular grade. In practice, the grade awarded will depend upon the overall extent to which the learner has met the assessment objectives, and might conceal a weakness in one aspect of the examination because of above average performance in other aspects. Learners will be graded on a scale of A-E for Grade 10, 11 and 12. Grade A, is the highest and E, the lowest. Learners who fail obtain a minimum level of competencies for Grade E, will be ungraded which will be represented by a U grade.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>% Range (Gr10-12)</th>
<th>Grade Descriptors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>80%+</td>
<td><strong>Achieved specific objectives exceptionally well.</strong> The learner is outstanding in all areas of competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td><strong>Achieved specific objectives very well.</strong> The learner is highly proficient in most areas of competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td><strong>Achieved specific objectives well.</strong> The learner has mastered the competencies and can apply them in new situations and contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-59%</td>
<td><strong>Achieved specific objectives satisfactorily.</strong> The learner’s achievement corresponds to average requirements. The learner may be in need of learning support in some areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>40-49%</td>
<td><strong>Achieved a sufficient level of specific objectives.</strong> The learner may not have mastered all the competencies, but the learner’s achievement is sufficient to have attained, and in some areas exceeded, the minimum level of competencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>30-39%</td>
<td><strong>Did not achieve the minimum level of competence.</strong> The learner has not been able to reach a minimum level of competencies even with extensive help from the teacher. The learner is seriously in need of learning support. The learner needs learning support.</td>
</tr>
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7. PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS

A learner shall not pass a subject if he/she has not mastered the minimum level of competencies required, as described in the subject syllabus, and shall not be promoted to the next grade if he/she does not meet the minimum requirements for promotion as described in this policy guide.

The promotion subjects are specified in the National Curriculum for Basic Education. The support subjects (in which learners do not write examinations) must be taught as prescribed in the curriculum and assessment grades must appear on the learners’ progress reports. All assessment must be done according to the prescriptions of the National Curriculum and related subject syllabuses. The standard of recorded continuous assessment tasks should relate to the assessment requirements specified in subject syllabuses.

7.1 Grades 8 and 9

Out of 9 subjects, a learner in Grades 8 and 9 should be promoted to the next grade if he/she has obtained:

a. an E-grade or better in 7 out of the 9 promotional subjects;
b. an E-grade or better in English;
c. an overall average of an E (40%)

Note: Mathematics is compulsory in grades 10 and 11.

In Grade 9, learners will write a semi-external examination. The Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) will be responsible for the setting and distribution of question papers to the schools. The DNEA will also be responsible for the drafting of the examination timetable in consultation with the Directorates of Education, Arts and Culture before implementation.

7.2 Grades 10 and 11

A learner in Grade 10 should be promoted to Grade 11 if he/she has obtained:

a. an E-grade or better in 5 out of the 6 subjects;
b. an E grade in English;
c. an overall average of an E (40%)

Learners will write an external examination that will lead to the Namibian Senior Secondary Ordinary Level Certificate at the end of Grade 11. The criteria for entry to Grade 12 will be determined by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.

7.3 Grade 12

Learners will write an external examination that will lead to the Namibian Senior Secondary Higher Level Certificate at the end of Grade 12.
Promotion committee
In each school there should be a promotion committee comprising of the school principal, heads of departments and class/subject teachers. The committee has the overall responsibility for promotions, and thus for, amongst others, ensuring that there is consistency in dealing with borderline cases. All recommendations by the committee should be considered for endorsement by the Directors of Education, Arts and Culture.

Borderline cases
These are learners in grades 8 to 10, although they failed, attained a percentage close to the minimum requirement necessary to pass, i.e. their achievement is close to the promotion percentage. Borderline cases involve the following:

- learners who failed only one subject with less than 2% of the actual required promotional threshold of 40%.
- learners who failed a grade with less than 2% of the actual required promotional threshold of an overall average of 40% (provided they failed only one subject).

Although these learners did not meet the prescribed, expected or average standards, they should, after consultation by the promotion committee, the multi-disciplinary team and the learning support team, be promoted to the next grade. They must then receive learning support based on an individualised education plan in the subject/s in which they could not master the required competencies.

8. REPORTING LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS

The Education Act, No. 16 of 2001 (being reviewed), stipulates that the principal of a government school must ensure that the parent of each learner is provided with regular reports in writing on the academic progress and general behaviour of the learner.

Progress reports for each learner from Pre-primary to Grade 12 must include:

- a level of mastery of prescribed competencies in learning or developmental areas
- a letter grade or percentage (Grades 8-12) indicating the learner’s level of progress in the prescribed competencies of each subject
- written reporting comments that clearly describe, with regard to the competencies:
  - what the learner is able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge and skills
  - areas in which the learner requires further attention or development
  - ways of supporting the learner in his or her learning
- written comments that provide information on attitudes, work habits and effort

9. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Regional directors should make sure that the inspectors of education, senior education officers, principals and parents understand this policy guide. Measures should be taken to ensure that the document is deliberated on by all of them. Inspectors of education and the senior education officers must take full responsibility to facilitate and monitor the implementation of this Policy.
Guide, and must report any unfavourable situation or irregularity regarding the implementation to the regional director. Principals are responsible and accountable for the successful implementation of this policy guide. They should ensure that teachers, parents and learners understand the guidelines.

9.1 Roles and responsibilities

The regional offices, school boards, school principals and teachers have different and yet complementary roles and responsibilities regarding the implementation of this policy.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (Head Office Directorates) to:
- make this policy available to schools and parents;
- provide schools with the relevant syllabuses that define the expected competencies for each subject and grade;
- provide opportunities for professional development of teachers in assessment, learning support and special education;
- provide resources to assist schools in the implementation of the policy; and
- take full responsibility and be accountable for assisting principals and teachers in the implementation of this policy.

It is the responsibility of Regional Education Offices to:
- ensure that the policy is implemented in schools;
- offer each school assistance in implementing this policy; and
- monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy and address deficiencies.

It is the responsibility of school principals to:
- ensure that teachers adhere to the guidelines in this policy;
- provide additional learning opportunities;
- monitor work done by learners in support programmes;
- adjust school programmes to ensure more intense learning and the provision of learning support;
- assist teachers with the interpretation of the policy
- monitor regular communication between the school and parents; and
- maintain complete and accurate records of learner achievement.

It is the responsibility of teachers to:
- adhere to the guidelines in this policy;
- identify learners with learning difficulties and draw up a support programme for each of them to provide learning support;
- monitor the learning progress of all learners;
- provide parents with complete and accurate evaluations of their children’s performance;
- indicate with regard to the subject competencies what each learner is able to do, areas in which a learner requires further attention or development, and ways of supporting a learner in his or her learning; and

provide a description of each learner's behaviour, including information on attitudes, work habits and effort.

10. IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK LEARNERS

At-risk learners are learners who are most likely to be educationally marginalised. These learners may include children of farm workers, children in remote areas, street children, children in squatter camps, resettlement camps or refugee camps, children with disabilities and impairments, children who are considered “too old for school” in the current education policies (whether they are within or outside the system), children of families in extreme poverty, children who head households, child labourers, children with learning difficulties, orphans and vulnerable children, the girl-child, the learner-parent, children with extreme health conditions or chronic illnesses, and children with emotional or behavioural challenges.

The identification of at-risk learners should be based on the barriers that inhibit their learning, focusing on the learners’ individual needs, their progress and the outcome of their learning. The central goal of identifying at-risk learners is to provide effective learning support to meet the unique educational needs of each of these learners. The identification is done in consultation with the learning support team, the class teacher and the parents/guardians.

11. REFERRAL PROCEDURES

Referral involves identifying learners’ specific weaknesses and strengths with regard to learning, as well as the appropriate service through which the learning difficulties could be addressed and remedied. Referral takes place after critically analysing the outcomes of assessment. Referral is done in collaboration with the learning support team in order to assess the learner’s needs and draw up an appropriate Individual Education Plan (IEP). The outcome of the intervention based on the IEP should be attached to the cumulative record card and passed on to the next teacher or school.

The procedures for referral in this policy should be followed when a learner persistently experiences learning difficulties despite early detection and intervention. The referral should be supported by systematic learning support, differentiated teaching and alternative assessment. Timely referral is crucial and will prevent unnecessary repetition of grades and ensure that the learner’s individual skills, aptitude and talents are developed. Learners who are unable to benefit from mainstream schools should be referred to a school setting that caters for their needs, such as a resource class or learning support class.

A learner will be considered for admission to resource schools or learning support classes if referred by the multi-disciplinary learning support team. This team should include the regional school counsellor, social worker or a medical professional. Referral can be done on the basis of a diagnostic assessment of the following:
- specific learning impairments
- intellectual impairment

- hearing impairment
- visual impairment
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- any combination of the above
12. ANNEXE: DEFINITION OF TERMS

To help implementers understand this policy guide, key terms are defined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative assessment</td>
<td>An assessment approach that assesses other potential and talents that learners display apart from academic potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment grades</td>
<td>Standardised measurements of varying levels of comprehension within a subject area. Grades can be assigned in letters (for example, A, B, C), as descriptors (excellent, great, satisfactory, needs improvement), or in percentages. Grades, mark ranges and descriptors are determined by criterion assessment benchmarks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borderline cases</td>
<td>Cases where learners failed one subject or failed to meet the average percentage (but failing only one subject) with a limited margin of less than 2%.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differentiated assessment</td>
<td>An assessment approach offered to learners who experience difficulties in learning in various academic subject areas. It deviates from the traditional assessment approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade repetition/holding back a learner</td>
<td>The practice of making learners who have not fully mastered the curriculum and thus did not reach certain academic standards repeat the year, while their peers are promoted to the next year of study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning support</td>
<td>This is the physical, social, emotional and intellectual support given to learners who experience barriers to learning. The purpose of learning support is to enhance a learner’s capabilities in learning, and might include differentiation, adaptation of teaching and learning methods and materials, assisting aids, special arrangements in examinations, counselling, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learner promotion</td>
<td>The practice of promoting learners who have met the minimum level of competencies to the next grade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning support team/group</td>
<td>A team of teachers that ensures that the subject/class teacher offers learning support where needed, and with whom the subject/class teacher consults and collaborates when offering learning support to learners.</td>
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<td>Grade/Phase repetition</td>
<td>The practice of learners not repeating more than once in the junior secondary phase and once in grade 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral</td>
<td>A system of referring learners who are repeating a grade or phase to a schooling system that suits their needs after they have been assessed and demonstrated other talents and skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary support team</td>
<td>The multi-disciplinary support team may include the regional school counsellor, a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist, a social worker, a psychologist, a learning support coordinator, the Life Skills teacher, other medical and paramedical personnel, parents/guardians and member(s) of the learning support team. The composition of the members of the multi-disciplinary support team will vary from learner to learner. Parents play a vital role in the education of their children and are an integral part of all...</td>
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</table>
decisions. Communication channels for obtaining and providing information about learners should be established between the school and the multi-disciplinary support team as appropriate. The specialists of the multi-disciplinary support team are responsible for the co-ordination of assessment, placement and periodic evaluation of the learner’s progress at specified intervals, based on stipulated competencies in the IEP.

| Promotion committee | A committee that oversees the overall promotion issues at a school. This committee consists of the school principal, heads of departments and teachers. |