

Article: *Tulsa Public Schools: Research Supporting a 7-12 School Configuration, April 2011.*

- Transitions from one school to another negatively impact academic achievement. The fewer the transitions, the better chance a student has of completing high school; the more transitions, the higher the drop-out rate.
- Traditional middle schools are falling out of favor. In a recent study, sixth-grade students in both elementary and combination K-12 schools outperformed sixth graders in middle schools. The number of transitions has been determined to be a significant factor.
- The reduction of school-to-school transitions and longer grade spans within schools is correlated with improvements in student achievement in a 2003 study of 232 Michigan schools.
- Schools with more grade levels per building have demonstrated not only higher academic achievement, but better attendance rates, self-esteem and attitudes toward school. They have also resulted in fewer suspensions and behavior problems, regardless of socioeconomic status.
- For transitioning into a new school for high school instruction, 7<sup>th</sup> grade appears to be the ideal time as it shows the lowest drop-out rate; the higher the grade at the time of transition, the higher the drop-out rate, most significantly for boys. Researchers believe that making a change in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade gives students more time to acclimate to new surroundings.
- More opportunities exist for cross-age activities such as tutoring and older role model programs in schools with a broad span of grade levels.
- Longer grade spans also allow for more collaboration among teachers across grade levels and better alignment of curriculum across grades.
- A significant number of districts across the nation are transitioning away from the use of middle schools.
- Researchers have found that students who attended middle school in sixth grade were twice as likely to be disciplined relative to their counterparts in elementary school.
- Longer grade spans have been linked with better behavior. Sixth grade boys, in particular, experienced more suspensions in middle schools than in elementary schools, possibly related to the effects of transition, the school organization, or the school size.

Article: *Study Links Academic Setbacks to Middle School Transition, Education Week, November 28, 2011.*

- Students moving from grade 5 into middle school show a “sharp drop” in math and language arts achievement in the transition year that plagues them as far out as 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Students who make a school transition in 6<sup>th</sup> grade are absent more often than those who remain in one school through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and they are more likely to drop out by 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
- The transition from middle to high school is much less traumatic for students than the one from elementary to middle.

Article: *Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative: Grade Configuration in K-12 Schools, 2002.*

- Research shows a significant achievement loss during each transition year. Some students regain what is lost in the following year, but students who make fewer transitions need fewer years to make up for achievement losses caused by transitions.
- Another study finds that each time students switched schools, their feelings of anonymity increased.
- Other research finds that girls in early adolescence suffered from a drop in self-esteem, extracurricular participation, and leadership behaviors when they made the transition into middle school, but not if they remained in an elementary setting. This study found that the effects of this transition lingered throughout the school years.
- For boys, the research showed similar negative effects in extracurricular participation and grades, but not in self-esteem.
- The authors concluded that the relatively protected elementary school setting made the transition into adolescence less stressful for both boys and girls. The students who had not had the stress of the earlier transition seemed to cope better with the transition into high school than did other students.
- Another study found that sixth-grade boys experienced more suspensions in middle schools than in elementary schools, possibly related to the effects of the transition, the school organization, or school size.

Article: *The Middle School Plunge, Education Next, Spring 2012.*

- Research shows that transitioning from one school to another adversely affects student performance. The size and persistence of the effect of entering a middle school, however, suggests that such transitions are particularly damaging for adolescent students.
- Achievement in both reading and math falls dramatically in 6<sup>th</sup> grade for students who enter middle school in that grade.
- Research shows that middle school aged students in a K-8 setting outperform those in a grade 6-8 school.

Article: *Should Sixth Grade be in Elementary School or Middle School? Public School Review.*

Arguments in favor of sixth grade in elementary school:

- Sixth graders in elementary school have fewer behavioral problems than their peers in middle school. Studies show that disciplinary problems correspond with low academic achievement.
  - Through March 7, 2016, SWIS data at TCMS showed the following:
    - 61% of referrals were from 6<sup>th</sup> grade students
    - 16% of referrals were from 7<sup>th</sup> grade students
    - 23% of referrals were from 8<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Sixth graders in elementary school test higher than those in middle school.
- Sixth graders have more leadership opportunities in the elementary schools.

- Sixth graders in middle school are exposed to older teens which may have a negative influence on them. Children in the sixth grade are at a point in their lives when they are easily influenced by their peers. Keeping sixth graders in elementary school gives them another year to mature before they are exposed to older adolescents.
- Middle schools grade numbers are usually larger than those in elementary schools. Many parents and teachers believe that sixth graders do better in a smaller, more nurturing setting where there are fewer classmates and more one-on-one contact with the teacher.
- Middle schools tend to be located further away from home than elementary schools which could contribute to less parent involvement.

Factors in favor of sixth grade in Middle School:

- Sixth graders in middle school have greater access to extracurricular activities such as art, band, music, and athletics.
- Placing sixth grade in middle school allows sixth graders more independence.
- Middle schools may offer innovative programs in which sixth graders may be eager to participate.