

Research Articles Involving Grade Bands, K-8 Configurations and Junior/Senior High Schools
As Well as other Salient Research on What Works Best In Schools

Topic	Links	Notes or Quotes from Articles
7-12 Schools	Research Supporting a 7-12 School Configuration	<p>“Specifically of the high school configurations studied (7-12, 9-12, and 10-12), the lowest high school dropout rates were seen in high schools where students transitioned in at grade 7.”</p> <p>“The reduction of school-to-school transitions was a significant predictor of student achievement.”</p> <p>“As some educators and researchers explain: Effective programs and practices, not grade configuration, determine the quality of schools.”</p>
K-8 Schools	Article: What Research Says About K-8 Versus Middle School Grade Configurations	<p>“No empirical, large-scale studies have examined the relationship between grade configuration and student achievement as measured by standardized scores.”</p> <p>“Results of the studies should be interpreted with caution as they are very few in number, can’t necessarily be generalized across schools, and don’t control for possible variables.”</p>
K-8 Schools	Article: Attending a Middle vs. a K-8 School Matters for Student Outcomes	<p>Article points out that middle school students had lower perception of their reading skills. It also points out that there was no difference in students’ test scores.</p> <p>Article also says, “Research also shows mixed results on the academic impact of middle grade schools versus K-8 schools, with some studies showing benefits for K-8 schools.”</p>
7-12 Schools	High school secrets to success: a closely connected middle school	<p>“In schools where middle and high schools share space and their administrative teams work closely together, several things happen that contribute to students’ postsecondary success. Students get familiar with a school’s culture and expectations earlier, which is especially helpful when the school has high expectations for postsecondary success; students have the opportunity to build longer-lasting relationships with teachers; and staff can identify and intervene with at-risk students earlier. Implementing more 6-12 and 7-12 systems may not be an easy solution for every district, but</p>

		all schools can learn from these benefits.”
School Consolidation	Coming Together: the Pros and Cons of School Consolidation	Conclusion: Consolidation may not be the answer for every situation. Each potential consolidation must be examined as its own case. Demographic, geographic, social, and economic factors should all be considered and evaluated before a decision is made. As in most things, open communication among all parties involved is necessary for school consolidation to succeed. School business officials and others must concentrate on what is best for students and what is the best possible plan to ensure student success.
	Advantages and Disadvantages of Various Grade-Level Organizations	<p>“For school districts seeking a definitive answer on the best grade-level organization, no definitive answer exists.”</p> <p>“Researchers tend to agree that a school program’s quality is far more important than its grade-level organization.”</p> <p>“Both the research and the practical experiences of local school districts indicate that no one grade level organization can meet all the needs, circumstances and situations of all students and all school districts. Each pattern has its advantages and disadvantages. Local school districts, well aware of their own needs, must weigh the pros and cons of each structure and decide which one is best for their purposes.”</p>
<p>Reflection on the Research about School Configuration: There appear to be pros and cons to all school configurations, but there is no definitive comprehensive research that suggests one configuration or another will predict student outcomes. The research does seem to indicate that one negative factor to be considered in school reconfiguration is the number of transitions between schools. School transition can have a negative impact on student outcomes, however, there are ways to mitigate these effects: have fewer transitions overall in k-12, reduce the changes in social groups during transitions (this will not be an issue in Ojai Unified if we choose the grade span model given that this model would maintain the same cohort of students through the transitions.) Align instruction, curriculum, school rules and overall school expectations so there are few changes in those areas during transitions.</p>		
<p>Academic Outcomes of California Schools</p>		
Ventura Unified K-8 vs. Middle Schools	<p>VUSD Middle Schools: Anacapa Middle -ELA 37% Math</p>	<p>VUSD k-8 Schools: Homestead K-8 - ELA 46% Math 24% 6th ELA 32% Math 18% 7th ELA 50% Math 30%</p>

<p>Percent Low Socioeconomic Status and Percent Met or Exceeded the Standards</p>	<p>22% 69% Low SES</p> <p>Balboa Middle - ELA 49% Math 32% 48% Low SES</p> <p>Cabrillo Middle - ELA 57% Math 40% 41% Low SES</p> <p>De Anza Middle - ELA 42% Math 25% 77% Low SES</p>	<p>8th ELA 46% Math 8% 51% Low SES</p> <p>Lemon Grove K-8 ELA 29% Math 28% 6th ELA 19% Math 19% 7th No Data 8th No Data 71% Low SES</p> <p>Sunset Elementary K-8 ELA 47% Math 32% 6th ELA 24% Math 21% 7th ELA 61% Math 39% 8th ELA 81% Math 62% (*No special education students in the test score data. This is an important variable that could skew the test score data.) 66% Low SES</p>
<p>Junior Senior High Schools</p>	<p>Quincy Junior Senior High Plumas County (Enrollment 360) 7th ELA 48% Math 25% 8th ELA 45% Math 26% 41% Low SES</p> <p>Portola Junior Senior High Plumas County 7th ELA 33% Math 33% 8th ELA 28% Math 11% 57% Low SES</p> <p>Malibu Middle Shares Campus with Malibu High (Enrollment 267) (Malibu High Enrollment 412) 6th ELA 77% Math 54% 7th ELA 76% Math 49% 8th ELA 80% Math 51% 16% Low SES</p>	
<p>Grade Span</p>	<p>Local: Monica Ros</p>	

<p>Schools</p>	<p>Private School TK-3rd (No state data)</p> <p>Hermosa Beach District Low SES 9%</p> <p>Hermosa View Elementary k-2nd ELA 85% Math 86%</p> <p>Hermosa Valley Elementary 4th-8th ELA 81% Math 61%</p> <p>Fowler Unified School District</p> <p>Marshall Elementary K-2nd Low SES 62%</p> <p>Fremont Elementary 3rd - 5th Low SES 71% ELA 36% Math 29%</p>	
<p>Reflection on Data for Current School Configurations in California: As one can see from current data, school configuration is not a good predictor of student academic outcomes. As is typical, the demographics of each school are a more predictable driver of student outcomes which indicates that school configuration in and of itself does not have a major impact.</p>		
<p>Salient Research</p>	<p>John Hattie - https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-size-learning-achievement/ Effect Sizes Article</p>	<p>Information from book: <i>Visible Learning for Teachers</i></p> <p>“The remarkable feature of the evidence is that the greatest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching and when students become their own teachers.” pg. 18</p> <p>“That is the main message in this current book: become evaluators of your effect.” pg. 15</p>
	<p>Professional Learning Communities (PLC)</p>	<p>Information from book: <i>Learning by Doing A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work</i></p>

		PLC is “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators.” pg.10
	Robert Marzano - <i>What Works in Schools</i>	Collegiality and Professionalism - Best practices include “openly sharing failures and mistakes” and “constructively analyzing and criticizing practices and procedures”
<p>Reflection on Salient Educational Research: While it remains inconclusive whether school configuration is a key factor in educational outcomes, it is very clear that key actions taken by teachers have the most significant positive effects. These include: identifying clear teaching targets or in other words a “guaranteed and viable” curriculum as indicated in PLC and other salient research; engaging in action research where teachers work together analyzing student outcomes through shared formative assessments and then sharing best practices based on those results; and giving authentic student feedback.</p>		

We miss the point when we are only looking at the grade band, K-8, middle school and junior senior high comparisons. When we get in the weeds with those comparisons (which are inconclusive as far as the research indicates) we miss the salient research which is done by John Hattie, The DuFours with the work on PLCs and Robert Marzano. These researchers are considered to be some of the most prolific in education. As you can see in [Hattie's work on influences](#) that have the most effect on outcomes, school configuration is either not mentioned at all or if it is mentioned (in the case of charter schools, religious schools, open vs. traditional classrooms), they all fall under the .4 effect size. This means it doesn't really contribute significantly to better student outcomes. I think it is important to consider that K-8, Grade Bands and Junior Senior Highs do not fall on the list of his 252 influences. Given the strength of his metaanalysis, if there was significant research to indicate that these had a strong positive effect, they would be included.

Ultimately neither Hattie, the DuFours or Marzano advocate for any one specific configuration. What they all ultimately advocate for is teachers working collaboratively and on a regular basis to clearly identify the learning targets and to do action research to intervene immediately using regular formative assessments. It's my contention that it can be done best when you have more than one (and hopefully 3 or 4) teachers working at the same grade-level at the same site. I believe the research is clear that this is likely to have the greatest impact overall regardless of configuration. However, with Ojai Unified being as small as it is, the grade span model that has been proposed would allow for the best possible configuration to allow the necessary effective teacher collaboration at each grade level.