
This article examines school size in relationship to adolescent participation in school and volunteering. The results show limited support for smaller schools.

- “School size has an influence on the number of opportunities and the likelihood of a young person participating in activities within his or her school” (2)
- Adolescent participation in school activities is important (2)
  - Article details some support for this (3)
- For much of the 20th century it was believed that large schools were beneficial as resources could be combined (3)
  - Schools could offer specialized services and more extracurricular activities
- Critics of large schools argue that they sacrifice interpersonal relationships and contribute to a loss of community (4)
  - For instance only the more academically talented students will avail themselves of increased opportunities
- “Large schools may have more offerings, but they do not translate into a greater proportion of students becoming involved.” – Barker and Gump
- More recent studies (96) have shown that student participation is proportionately higher in smaller schools (5)
- What is the ideal size? (6) Some believe there is no ideal size
  - Some argue that achievement and equity are both best when high schools have about 600–900 students, but also state that ideal size may depend, in part, on the dependent variable of interest.
  - Others contend this range is too large, and that high schools should have no more than 300 or 400 students (Meier, 1995).
- Negative effects of school size may be more prominent for impoverished contexts, where well-off students tend to do better in larger schools
- In large schools “core” offerings may decline in favor of more specialized or advance course – this impacts low-achieving students more (6)
- Results: larger schools offer more opportunities to participate (9), but students in smaller schools are proportionally more likely to participate in activities (10)
- “The relationship is not clearly linear, as participation does not decline in each larger increment of school size; however, the overall results support the idea that smaller schools encourage more students to participate in school activities.” (10)
- Poorer students in larger schools are slightly less likely to participate in activities, found no differences between white, black or Hispanic students in this same variable (14)
• “In other words, I was able to find no good reason for widespread school downsizing. “ (21)


This article presents an argument for separating 6th graders from older adolescents. This study found 6th grade students attending middle school are more likely to be cited for disciplinary problems than those attending elementary school.

• At the mid-century “junior high” schools came popular and was intended to create a transitional period (1)
• In the 1999–2000 school year, more than 90 percent of the state’s 379 middle schools served grades 6-8 (1)
• Grade span reconfiguration was intended to focus on the unique challenges faced by young teens (2)
• There is evidence that students who do 6th grade in elementary school perform better academically and on standardized test (3)
• Describes several ways that elementary and middle school are different (3)
• The multiple transitions that occur at age 10-14 may make the move from elementary school to middle school more difficult

Results

o The infractions for middle school students was about one infraction for every two students – but very concentrated as only 16.5% of the students appear in the database (9)
  o Incidence rate was higher for 6th graders in middle school – “The overall incidence was three times as high for middle school students, and the prevalence rate twice as high.”

• “The odds of having at least one infraction in sixth grade are increased by a factor of 2.2 if in middle school; the odds of a violent infraction are increased by a factor of 2.1, and the odds of a drug infraction by a factor of 3.8.” (10)
• Also can consider that middle schools may be more likely to report infractions as compared to elementary schools due to structure (13)
• This study also suggests that an early move to middle school may lead to academic problems (15)


This article looks at middle level education reform, and argues that more success has been achieved when reform focuses school organization as opposed to attempts to make developmentally responsive curriculum and instruction. Provides a historical discussion on the development of junior highs in the U.S. Also includes a discussion of relevant developmental transitions for adolescence.
The initial attempts at middle schools was to address major problems that existed in the current school structure, as opposed to creating a new organization (3)

The six functions of junior high reported in a 1947 report are listed (4)

By the late 1950’s some of the reasons that were given for the need for junior highs – departmentalization, teacher specialization and ability grouping – were now challenged as inappropriate for junior high students (5)

Socio-psychological model was developed by Eichhorn to focus on the developmental needs of adolescents (6)

Three scholars made major contributions to the renewed efforts to gain a better understanding of middle level schools and adolescent development (6)

Steinberg identified three developmental processes that interact and influence development (7)
  - Primary changes (biological) (7)
  - Secondary changes (psychosocial) (8)
  - Contexts or settings (9)

“Peer association is part of the normal development of early adolescence, and participation in activities is a vehicle to social acceptance” (8)
  - The continuity of social relationships is interrupted by the transition to a new school

Six main issues of psychosocial development are outlined by Hill (8)

Characteristics are “true” middle level schools as defined in a 1982 report are outlined (9)

As the 1980’s ended there was consensus that the purpose of middle level schools was developmental responsiveness (10)
  - But many middle level schools seem to not be living up to the rhetoric

Four suggestive to make middle level education more developmentally responsive include (11):
  - Building a knowledge base
  - Assuring structures function as intended
  - Advocating the needs of early adolescents
  - Involving middle level education in curriculum reform

Suggest that middle level school reform need to move away from a narrow focus on organizational structures and place a greater emphasis on relationships, classroom instruction and curriculum (12)


This article explores No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and proposes specific amendments to address areas where this legislation is not succeeding as desired.

- “The broad goals of NCLB are to raise the achievement levels of all students, especially underperforming groups, and to close the achievement gap that parallels the impact of race and class on student achievement. “ (1)
- In urban areas dropout rates from large comprehensive high school are often 50% or higher (2)
- Gives research that supports smaller schools
• Smaller more personalized units within the schools may serve students well, especially underachieving students (3)
• Well-qualified teachers, personalization, common core curriculum, and support for struggling students are common factors of high performing high schools (4)
• Restructuring to personalize education and develop collaborative learning structures has been demonstrated to improve academic performance and engagement (5)
• “teacher quality - supported by high school designs that permit collaborative planning and learning - is one of the key elements of successful, restructured high schools” (6)
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This article explores how to best configure student populations to maximize all aspects of the educational setting while simultaneously maximizing student achievement. They “found no relationship between grade span configuration and academic achievement as measured by the Arkansas Benchmark Examination for sixth-grade students.” (3)

• “Decisions about campus configurations include other factors such as projected enrollments, transportation costs, size of schools, school goals, fiscal constraints, political tensions, geographic realities, and financial accountability.”
  o Focus financial resources on other means of improving academic achievement
• While Arkansas school students tended to perform at acceptable levels in elementary school, during the middle-level years they started to fall behind (5)
  o This trend of a decline in academic scores is seen across middle-level students from across the country (6)
• The rise and fall of the junior high was perhaps the largest change regarding grade span configuration in the 20th century (7)
• Some research has demonstrated improved student performance in the K-8 configuration (8)
• Transitions between campuses may have an effect on academic achievement
  o Limited research does suggest that negative achievement occurs during transitions (9)
  o The later the transitions occur the higher the dropout rate
• One study looked at student perspective – had current 6th graders write letters to incoming 6th graders (10)
  o Revolved around changing classes, study habits, and managing friendships
“Although meager, the research is consistent in suggesting that achievement of students in middle grades is higher when they attended schools with a wide grade span configuration, such as K-8” (11)

Results revealed that there was no statically significant difference on test scores by grade span configuration (20) (contradicts other studies)

The results suggest that whole grade span configuration wasn’t a significant factor – there are other factors that affect achievement (21)

Coladacci, T., & Hancock, J. (2002). The (limited) evidence regarding effects of grade-span configurations on academic achievement: What rural educators should know. *Eric Clearinghouse on Rural Education, ED467714, 1*-9. Provides basic information on grade span or grade configuration, and focuses on the relationship with this and academic achievement.

- The sixth grade, most often is found in a P/K-6 school (41.49%), although the 6-8 configuration is not uncommon (25.34%).
- Roughly half of eighth-grade schools are configured either 6-8 (35.23%) or P/K-8 (19.12%), with a sizable number evenly divided between 7-12 (11.67%) and 7-8 (11.66) configurations.
- Finally, a 12th grade typically is situated in a 9-12 school (66.48%), with 7-12 (16.46%) and P/K-12 (7.82%) accounting for the remaining schools having a 12th grade. (2)
- Research exploring the relationship between grade span and academic achievement is limited
- Research that has taken statistical considerations is even more limited (3)
  - “In his study of 18 schools in New York City, Moore (1984) found that both seventh- and eighth-grade reading achievement was higher for students in K-8 schools than in schools having a 6-8 configuration.”
  - Better attendance, more positive attitudes toward school, and higher self-esteem also were reported for seventh and eighth graders in K-8 schools.
  - sixth and seventh graders in K-6, K-7, and K-12 schools performed significantly higher on the state achievement test than students in 6-8 and 7-9 schools
  - For 10th grade - reported a slight but statistically significant advantage for K-12 schools when compared to all other configurations containing the 10th grade
  - Wihry et al. found that eighth-grade total achievement was significantly higher in K-8, K-9, and 3-8 schools than in schools configured around the middle grades (4-8, 5-8, 6-8) or those having a junior/senior high school configuration (6-12, 7-12, 8-12).
- Achievement in the middle grades is higher in schools having an elementary-wide configuration than a middle-grades configuration.
  - Transitions effects may be negative (4)
- The segregation of adolescents in middle-grade schools does not necessarily translate into higher achievement (5)
The position of the National Middle School Association: "Effective programs and practices, not grade configuration, determine the quality schools"

Steps should be taken to lessen the negative effect of transitions


This article looks at the potential mismatch between the classroom environment in traditional middle schools and adolescent development.

- Author doesn't support the idea of middle schools (3) and argues that they may not provide the appropriate educational environments for early adolescences
- There may be declines in motivation that occur with development – partly influenced by declines in self confidence and efficacy (3)
- Simmons and colleagues did show that there are negative effects of transitions – for students who transitioned from 6th to 7th grade, they fared worse (4)
  - Girls may be at increased risk for negative consequences
- The concern may come from the fact that adolescents' are facing pubertal changes and school changes simultaneously (5)
  - Girls may be more at risk during 6th/7th grade changes
- Transitions at lower grades may be more difficult
- Higher teacher effectiveness improves students motivation (6)
- Problems in early adolescence transitions may be more of a reflection of the type of school environment changes as opposed to a developmental aspect (6)
- Stage environment fit theory – fit between the developmental needs of the adolescent and the educational environment is crucial (7)
  - Therefore transition to facilitative and developmentally appropriate environment should have positive effects for students
- Middle schools, as compared to elementary schools, are typically less personal, more formal, larger, and have a greater emphasis on teacher control (7)
- Instruction and evaluation also become more formal, and more serious (8)
- Suggestions made to improve middle schools includes: creating smaller communities for learning within middle schools, eliminating tracking, empowering teachers and administrators to have more responsibility over their own schools' programs, using teaming and cooperative learning, and others. (18)
- Authors also recommend improving student-teacher relationships
- Focus on changes in the school and classroom structure and organization more so than things like what grades are served in middle schools
This study looks at school size, and suggests that smaller school districts and smaller schools, regardless of socioeconomic status and grade level, may be more efficient at enhancing educational outcomes.

- Kiesling’s study of elementary schools was one of the initial studies to demonstrated a negative relationship between math achievement and school size (2)
- Other studies have demonstrated no relationship between student/pupil ratio and achievement
- Yet other studies have found that SES background of the students determines achievement level (3)
- High level of teacher experience had a positive effect upon high achievers and a negative effect upon low achievers
- Large school sizes may have negative effects of student participation, school satisfaction, attendance, school climate (4)
- More effective schools had active parent councils, parents participation, and parent help with homework
- When school sizes increase or the number of schools in a district increase, supervisory services were being financed at the expense of students’ instructional services
- In addition to economics of scale arguments, large schools have also been believed to have the benefit of offering a comprehensive curriculum (12)
  - But this may not compare with the apparent schooling outcomes achieved in smaller schools (13)
- This study showed a lack of consistent relationship between schooling outcomes and expenditure per pupil, teachers’ salaries.... (13)

This article is a case study about the closure of a comprehensive high school.

- Small schools may improve aspects if teaching and learning – but this seems to be only an indirect effect (6)
  - Cant leave existing structural problems in place
- Reconstitution goes beyond just moving adults from a school building and starting over
  - May require participation or support from other people
- “The district has shifted its policy to extend accountability beyond the school to the district level, recognizing its reciprocal role in providing support and building capacity at the school level” (7)
- Efforts like academies that go beyond just freshman year to sophomore year help increase personalization (8)
- A “fresh start” claim in many reconstituted schools is an illusion
• Some of the concerns with new starts revolved around the fact that there was little opportunity for critical discussions on the direction of change – did not have educator-initiated policies and practices (9)
• Have to consider the outside factors that may influence a school during periods of transition (24)


This study looked at the relationship between structure and support in the high school climate and suspension rates. Schools low on characteristics if authoritative techniques had the highest rates of suspension for black and white students.

• The black-white achievement gap has been consistently noted, yet the discrepancies in suspension rates is less talked about - Black students are 2 to 3 times as likely to be suspended as White students (4)
• It is important to explore suspensions rates due to the negative outcomes associated with it
• When looking at achievement rates the gap between racial groups in each state was not simply a function of overall school achievement levels but varied widely by state (4)
• A combination of high teacher connection and high teacher regulation predicted the greatest achievement gains for low-income adolescents.
• Academic press – reflects one dimension of school structure in which administrators and teachers hold high expectations for student learning and performance (6)
  o A school culture characterized by both academic press and sense of community was associated with higher gains
• There have been inconsistent reports of the effect of school size on suspension rates (8)
  o “Total student enrollment had no significant effect on suspension rates, others reported that larger schools experience more student misbehavior and violence than smaller schools”
• “After taking into account school demographic characteristics, schools with low levels of both support and academic press had the highest suspension rates for Black (M = 28%) and White (M = 13%) students. These schools also had the highest gap between Black and White students (M = 15%).” (17)
• Indifferent schools – those with low structure and low support – were negatively associated with suspension outcomes (20)
• Teachers’ expectations of their students is linked to the development of students’ academic self concept and achievement over time
• Black students tend to be suspended more than white students (21)
  o In this study about 1 in 4 black students was suspended, compared to 1 in 10 for white students (comparable to national averages)
Black and white students have divergent experiences of the disciplinary system

If schools had high rates of suspension they tended to suspend both black and white students at high rates (21)


This study focuses on the conversion of traditionally large high schools into small autonomous ones.

There have been several studies that show small elementary and secondary schools are associated with improved student achievement, more equitable access to academically demanding courses, more equitable gains in achievement and lower drop out rates (4)

Not all research supports the positive impact of smaller schools
  - One study noted while there was an increase in positive school climate, this did not translate into student achievement
  - Other studies found no improvements, or poorer performance for math in smaller schools
  - Smaller learning communities also didn’t find better academic results

Lee and Smith found that optimal school size fell between 600 and 900 students

Research supporting the enthusiasm around small schools is actually limited

Educational change generally takes 3 to 5 years to fully implement (16)

This study found support for smaller schools facilitating trust and collective responsibility (17)

This personalized support seems to prompt a pathway to improved attendance

Strong evidence that small schools promote academically and socially supportive environments and plausible evidence that small schools foster improved attendance and graduation rates (18)

“We see no compelling evidence that small schools are fostering a pathway toward curricular change, instructional improvement, or improved academic outcomes.” (18)
  - Not finding a difference in instruction between small schools and larger schools, it is not surprising that there would also be no difference in test scores

“As a result, absent strong instructional leadership from the principal, teachers were more likely to discuss an idiosyncratic problem or a deadline-dependent task than they were to focus in a sustained and fundamental way on altering their instructional practices.” (19)

The role that principles play (or not) is key

Fostering instructional improvement requires more than creating small school of committed teachers
This and other studies indicate that the provision of more personal and supportive settings may make a meaningful difference when it comes to preventing dropouts for high school students (20)
  - Small schools may foster this, but it is not the only way to do so

“All that changing high school instruction requires an infusion of expertise; leadership that focuses attention on the necessity of instructional reform; and time for teachers to plan, learn, and reflect” (20)

This study looks at the relationship between school size and bullying and victimization. In larger schools, teachers and students reported that they perceived more bullying and teasing taking place, but student self-reports of being a victim of bullying were not associated with school size.

- Although many researchers assert that the conditions in larger schools are fertile grounds for peer victimization, there is no agreed mechanisms that explains this relationship (2)
  - The most common theoretical perspective is that larger schools have a greater degree of social disorganization that leads to disorder and a less supportive environment
- There are two contrasting perspectives concerning school size, one claiming the efficiency of larger schools and the other emphasizing the supportiveness of smaller schools
- There has been support that larger schools (enrollment of 2000 plus students) produce higher SAT and state test scores (3)
- Smaller schools may have increased parental involvement and increased social support
- Small school experiments have not been as successful as expected and the emphasis should be shifted to quality teachers and classroom instruction
- Studies have shown a number of positive outcomes are related to smaller schools
- “Larger schools are often located in urban settings where they serve a disproportionately low-income and minority population” (4)
- While there may be a perception that larger schools have more bullying and teasing than small schools – in this study self-reported rates of bully victimization were not correlated with school enrollment size (9)
- Rates of school discipline data of bullying, threats and fights were not higher in large schools

This study looks at the relationship between high school size and student learning. An important finding from the study is that the influence of school size on learning
is different in schools that enroll students of varying SES and in schools with differing proportions of minorities.

- The optimal school size debate often has conflicting goals of maximizing performance and efficient functioning (3)
- Economy of scale argument
  - Increasing the number of students can maximize the efficient delivery of a particular service and physical resources are more economically obtained
- How school size influences organizational properties
  - Research on tracking suggests that extensive differentiation in curricular offerings and students academic experiences has debilitating consequences (4)
- Conclusions from the two streams go in opposite directions: The efficiency argument suggests benefits from increased size, whereas the organizational argument favors smaller schools. (3)
- Evidence that size and academic outcomes are related is weak (4)
- Four conclusions are presented (13)
  - There is evidence of a learning advantage for students attending moderate size schools – learning is more equitable in small spaces
  - Recommend an ideal enrollment size of 600 to 900
  - Moderate school size is also good for low and high SES schools and with low and high minority concentrations
  - Size is most important for the most disadvantaged students – learning falls sharply for these students as the school size becomes larger or smaller


This meta-analysis examined school size effects on a variety of student outcomes. The weight of evidence provided by this research clearly favors smaller schools. Students who traditionally struggle at school and students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds are the major benefactors of smaller schools.

Academic achievement
- Elementary schools – some evidence that smaller schools equal better achievement
- For secondary schools – the results are inconsistent (6) but seems to favor small to midsize schools
  - It may not be school size per se that contributes to positive achievement but the availability of capable staff

Equitable Distribution of learning
- All of these studies associate better outcomes for disadvantaged/low-SES students with smaller schools and most find no negative effects for advantaged/high-SES students. (8)
- More equitable distribution of achievement in very small schools (9)
Attendance or Truancy

- A majority of the studies support small to midsize schools
- The studies that found non-significant relationships found alternate explanations for drop out rates (11)
- For secondary schools there is support that student attendance and retention rates are better in smaller than larger schools (12)
  - Medium level schools may be the most defensible

Connection with school

- The results indicate significantly stronger student engagement in smaller schools as compared with larger schools (12)

Course taking patterns

- This student outcome is unique to the high grades where students typically have some choice in the courses they take
- “The positive relationship between size and number of courses was stronger for nonurban than for urban schools, nonunionized versus unionized schools, and for vocational versus academic offerings.” (13)
  - If this should be viewed as educational positive is less clear
  - One study noted that more within-school variability in course taking was negatively related to all their measured student outcomes (14)
- Schools with as few as 400 students were able to offer a curriculum comparable in scope and specialization

Extracurricular Activities

- Students who attend large schools or have problematic school climates are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities (15)
- All four studies indicate that extracurricular participation decreases as secondary school size increases. (15)

Other Student Outcomes

- School size had no effect on self-esteem (17)
- No firm conclusions can be drawn about school size and social behavior from two studies

Costs efficiency

- The results of school level cost information are inconsistent - two of these studies report results favoring large schools, two favoring small schools and one favoring midsize schools. (18)
  - No clear direction about the most cost effective size of secondary schools (19)

Additional outcomes

- Teacher turnover – midsize elementary schools may be optimal in retaining teachers (20)
- Teacher attitudes – principle applicants seem to prefer schools over 200 students but less than 800 students (20), teachers seemed to be more satisfied with small school climates (21)
- Overall conclusions are outlined (22)
• School size should be limited to 300 in elementary school, to 600 in secondary schools when the student populations are largely diverse and/or disadvantaged (23)

This article focuses on educational equity and school organization.
  • Research on tracking suggests that extensive differentiation in student’s academic experiences has negative consequences on student learning (3)
  • Sociological theory suggest that human interactions and ties become more formal as organizations grow
    o Generally social relations are more positive in smaller schools
    o However this closeness was not always seen as a benefit (6)
  • While the research is limited what does exists on schools-within-schools suggests that secondary schools that engage in this reform improve their social environments, however there is an indication that this reform may increase stratification inside high schools (21)

This article discusses one individuals experience with different grade span configurations.
  • The lower school needs a lot more structure. The upper grades can be departmentalized.
  • Even the research on the effectiveness of grade-level configuration is sketchy. Not a great deal of money has been set aside to study the benefits of middle school, Mizell says.
  • "As advocates for this age group, we should focus our attention on middle-grades students and their learning," Kasak says. "Rather than simply reshuffling students and schools, we must support our educators and school leaders so they can implement proven practices to advance the learning of middle-grades students, regardless of a school’s grade configuration."

The article explores the relationship between school size and equity, and notes that as schools get larger, average achievement among schools enrolling larger proportions of low socioeconomic-status students suffers.
  • In general, the present analysis finds that restricting the grade span of a school increases costs. That is, given a level of school performance, the school with a broader grade span will provide that level of performance at lower cost (all else equal). (13)
    o But secondary students cost more to educate, so this can be
misleading

This paper examines grade span configurations and their importance in community school systems.

- One study that looked at 8th graders in elementary settings outperformed 8th graders in other grade configurations. But don’t know why.
- Another study found that students suffer achievement loss during transition years, and those who go to high school in 7th grade suffered less.
- Most reports on grade span configuration are anecdotal or descriptive.
- About 2/3 of schools are configured to transition into either middle school or high school after the 6th grade.
- Three central issues of grade span (4)
  - Appropriateness of certain grades together
  - The number of grades included in a school and the number of classrooms within each grade
  - The number of school transitions a student will be required to make.
- Schools with narrow grade span experience frequent turnover, which can influence the schools identity.
- The key is to focus on developing the positive potential within any given grade span configuration (5).
- One study that looked at 8th graders found that those that were in elementary settings (K-8, K-9 and 3-8) performed the best and students in junior/senior school environments performed the worse (6-12, 7-12, and 8-12).
  - Why this was the case for the Maine students remains unanswered.
- In a Connecticut study it was found that 6th graders students in a K-6 or 7-8 were better than 6th graders in a K-5 and 6-8 setting (6).
  - This may be because Type I schools didn’t have the incentive or materials to prepare 6th grade students.
  - These authors note.
- Students suffer achievement loss during each transition year and they typically gain back the loss in the following year.
- In one study it was found that students who transitioned to high school at grade 7 (7-12) dropped out significantly less often than those who transitioned at 9th or 10th grade (7).
  - Dropout rates were highest for those who transitioned at 10th grade.

There is little research on how grade span affects achievement. This article examines how grade spans and the school transitions that students make between fourth and eighth grade shape student performance in eighth grade. They find that
students moving from K–4 to 5–8 schools or in K–8 schools outperform students on other paths.

- Students have some difficulties when they move to schools serving higher grades and moving from self-contained classrooms (4)
- Longer grade span and shorter grade span both have their own strengths (5)
  - Longer – may allow for greater coordination, more cohesive curriculum but there is also greater diversity in behavioral concerns
  - Shorter – may allow specialization in addressing unique needs of students and specific ages
- Limited research has focused on middle school and suggest that students may due better when 6th grade is housed in an elementary school setting
- This study’s results found for math scores, that students on a K-5/6-8 path have the lowest either grade performance gains (12)
- When looking at reading score – students in the K-8 path have significantly larger test score gains
- For students who are on a K-8 path score .16 and .18 SD higher in math and reading
- There seems to be a negative effect of moving schools, and this increases in magnitude with each move (14)
- Students in k-4/5-8 and K-8 have the largest gains between 3rd and 8th grade
- Moving in 5th grade seems to be less disruptive (16)
- K-4/5-8 or a single K-8 school provides strong positive effects in both math and reading
- Changing schools frequently is related to lower student performance
- However caution is still warranted
  - Conversion of schools to this configuration may take time to show gains


This article looked at the difference between students during the transition from elementary school to junior high.

- Regardless of the student’s performance, teachers’ perceptions of student motivation and expectations about achievement can be influenced by social class and racial/ethnic or gender stereotypes (3)
- Minority students are at significantly greater risk than Anglo students of school failure and dropping out (4)
- Results of this study looked at racial and gender differences (12)
- Black students showed little change at the end of the 7th grade year, Anglo students had a decline but had a slight rebound at the end of 7th grade, Hispanic students had the sharpest decline and rebound
  - Anglo students were intermediate between the Hispanic students who had a steep decline and partial recovery in grades and Black students who had little decline in grades and, accordingly, little recovery
- Boys and girls had similar trajectories over time HOWEVER boys grades were significantly lower than those of girls (16)
- The flat trajectory of black students may suggest that they were able to handle the stresses of the shift to junior high with fewer problems, Hispanic students followed a downward trajectory that took them almost a letter grade lower than their average in 6th grade
  - May reflect a variation of degree and severity of stressor pileups
- Even though Hispanic students are able to rebound from lower grades at the end of 7th grade, they are still well below their starting point (17)
- Minority children start lower (intercept) and either do not change much (Black, linear slope and quadratic element) or drop markedly and show some recovery (Hispanic, quadratic element). (18)

This paper explores characteristics that contribute to the achievement gap. Race gaps are negatively correlated with school size—implying small schools may be helpful. In addition, the trade-off between the size and experience of the teaching staff in urban schools may carry unintended consequences for within-school race gaps.
- One study found that 75% of the drop in test score gaps can be attributed to changes in tracking policies, enrollment in advanced and remedial classes, teacher attitudes and/or discrimination (4)
- Among 5th graders, whites, Hispanics, and blacks students do worse in schools with larger enrollments HOWEVER among 8th graders black students appear hurt by larger enrollments while other students are unaffected (15)
- Much of these test score gaps are explained by racial and ethnic differences in poverty rates and differences in limitations in English proficiency, at least for the Hispanic-white gap. (20)
  - This is largely influenced by past performance
  - Much of the race gap this year is explained by the race gap last year
- It may be that teachers have systematically different expectations of minority and white students (21)

This article looks at the 9th grade transition, and finds that for both academic and nonacademic outcomes, the presence of a transition from 8th grade to 9th grade makes no difference for students’ 9th grade outcomes relative to those of students who do not change schools between those grades.
- There has been a tension in trying to address the needs of emerging adolescents but also buffering against the negative effects of transitions
  - The middle school is an example of that tension (4)
• There has been research that found that students who attend k-8 and k-12 schools in the middle grades have better psychological outcomes than their peers in middle schools (5)
• The research on school transitions has offered more theory and conjecture than rigorous evidence (5)