

Grade Configuration Research Summary

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While there is much research and debate on grade configurations and grade spans, I was not able to find any research showing the benefits or negative implications of a 6 grade only configuration versus a 5-6 grade configuration. Below is a summary of some general findings regarding grade the topic:

American Association of School Administrators (www.aasa.org):

- Much research regarding the size of elementary campuses (keeping them as small as possible) but little regarding the benefits of keeping 5th graders in the building
- Much research regarding the pros and cons of having 6th grade be a part of middle school campuses but nothing regarding a separate campus just for 6th grade
- Research does identify many benefits of having 5-6 campus (but not necessarily compared to just a 6th grade campus): small learning community, grade-level teams of teachers, positive climate

Source: AASA: *The School Administrator* Mar 2002 & 2005 Editions

PASA Demographic Study – Optimum Grade Groupings (www.pasademographics.com) :

This report gives several grade configuration options and the research to support the benefits of each. They used over 50 sources (books, research studies, periodicals, articles, etc.) to validate their findings.

- Schools should be organized into “Age Appropriate Schools” – schools that groups students together according to developmental stages
- Increased level of achievement, parental involvement and positive school climate is noted when students remain in a school for more than 2 years – Showing that longevity is beneficial
- Mentions that students mature faster now than previously – a current 5th grade student is more like a 6th grade student was 40 years ago
- Ultimately, the quality of school programming is more important than grade level configuration
- No specific research regarding the benefits of pulling 6th grade students out all on their own or putting them with 5th grade students. Most studies address whether or not to put 6th grade students in the middle school or keep in the elementary

Source: PASA Demographic Study: *Optimum Grade Groupings* 201

There are many other periodicals, books, and case studies that can be found online regarding grade configuration – but I was unable to find any that specifically addressed the 5-6 versus 6 only grade configurations.