

## Small School Research

Kathleen Cotton has compiled research comparing small schools to large schools on a number of factors including, but not limited to academic achievement. While Cotton's research defined a small high school of having 500 or fewer students, one can see the advantages a smaller learning community the size of McFarland High School (670 to 690 students).

According to Kathleen Cotton's 1996 review of 31 studies which researched the relationship between small schools and academic achievement, students in small schools performed equal to or better than their larger schools counterparts.

"About **half the student achievement research finds no difference between the achievement levels of students in large and small schools**, including small alternative schools (Burke 1987; Caldas 1987; Edington and Gardner 1984; Fowler 1995; Gregory 1992; Haller, Monk, and Tien 1993; Howley 1996; Huang and Howley 1993; McGuire 1989; Melnick, et al. 1986; Smith and DeYoung 1988; Stockard and Mayberry 1992; Walberg 1992; Way 1985). **The other half finds student achievement in small schools to be superior to that in large schools** (Bates 1993; Eberts, Kehoe, and Stone 1982; Eichenstein 1994; Fowler and Walberg 1991; Kershaw and Blank 1993; Miller, Ellsworth, and Howell 1986; Robinson-Lewis 1991; Walberg 1992). **None of the research finds large schools superior to small schools in their achievement effects.** Consequently, we may safely say that student achievement in small schools is at least equal-and often superior-to student achievement in large schools. Achievement measures used in the research include school grades, test scores, honor roll membership, subject-area achievement, and assessment of higher-order thinking skills."

[Small Schools and Student Achievement: Significant Positive and No Negative Correlations \(An excerpt from, research presented on the Chicago Public Schools website, "Small Schools Get Results"\)](#).