



# SCHOOLS TO WATCH – TAKING CENTER STAGE

## MODEL SCHOOL – VISITOR’S GUIDE



### Toby Johnson Middle School



#### Designated 2006, Re-Designated 2009

Toby Johnson Middle School • Elk Grove Unified School District • Sacramento County • Dawnelle Maffei, Principal  
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<http://tjms.schoolloop.com/>

### 2009 School Statistics

(Sources: 2009 API Growth Report; 2009 AYP Report)

Community: Urban fringe of a large city  
Enrollment: 1,417  
Grade Levels: 7-8  
School Schedule: Modified 4 x 4 block; looping

#### Student Demographics

- 27% White
- 25% Asian
- 16% African American
- 18% Hispanic/Latino
- 10% Filipino
- 2% Pacific Islander
- 0% American Indian/Alaska Native
  
- 30% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 7% English Learners

2008 API Base: 843  
2009 API Growth: 833 (up 57 points since 2003-04)  
2009 AYP: Met 33 of 36 criteria

(Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ar/index.asp> to view this school's data for prior years.)

## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

- The middle school campus was designed in concert with the adjacent high school allowing many programs and resources to be shared.
- A community library between the two campuses serves students as well as the broader community.
- A synchronized 4 x 4 block schedule allows students over 3,000 additional minutes relative to other middle schools in the district.
- Literacy and mathematics classes are part of instruction every day; a bridge class ensures students receive math and language arts instruction when not enrolled in regular courses.
- Looping insures that the curriculum is sequenced and non-repetitive.
- A schoolwide professional development series is offered each year; over the past three years, professional development has been provided in the areas of classroom management, instructional strategies, high performance curricular design, and multiple intelligences.
- Students demonstrate their knowledge in many forms including humanities “stretch” projects (project-based assignments that include a research and writing component as well as an oral presentation) and a wide variety of hands-on activities.
- Teams offer numerous individual academic supports to all students.

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### **Developmental Responsiveness**

- Four full-time counselors and a school psychologist provide services to students.
- Looping enables students to establish relationships with teachers, counselors, and administrators.
- The school's advocacy program pairs each student with a core teacher who advises, monitors, and encourages social and academic progress. Most students remain with one teacher for two years.
- The school offers students 20 electives to choose from; this allows students to take eight semester electives or four year-long electives over a two-year period.
- The school is divided into seven schools-within-a-school teams resulting in strong collaboration and interdisciplinary connections through common lesson planning.
- Through its Jump Start program, the school conducts outreach to sixth graders in feeder schools to promote a seamless transition to seventh grade.
- Each team has a team leader that handles the academic side and a team activity coordinator responsible for team field trips, spirit days, and award ceremonies.

### **Social Equity**

- There are no bottom tracks at the school; all students receive the same rigorous core curriculum; the school's Honors Program is offered to all students.
- Technology is actively used to help students reach standards.
- Student recognition covers a wide range of areas such as citizenship, community service, academics, and fitness.
- The heart of the school's humanities program is the study of diverse cultures throughout the world; many novels assigned reflect the diversity of the school's student population.
- Students needing additional support are continuously identified and served within each team.
- The Foundations program provides the neediest students with the academic support they need to remain in grade-level, standards-based courses.

### **Organizational Support**

- Built in 2002, the school campus was designed under the guidance of a leadership team (principal and teachers) to ensure a developmentally appropriate environment.
- In addition to a well designed campus, the leadership team developed a highly sophisticated, research-based middle grades program incorporating a strong spirit of innovation.
- The vertical teaming with the seven feeder elementary schools and the high school provides an articulated program for grades five through twelve.
- The school and district have a solid record of using data to guide instruction.
- The broader community was intimately involved in determining the direction of the school from original design to the school vision.
- Parent communication is enhanced and ongoing due to regular communication about students within teams through the School Loop system.