

Frequently Asked Questions:

Moving our 6th graders from the elementary schools to Lincoln Middle School in the Clarkston School District

A Note to Families:

We understand that moving 6th grade to Lincoln Middle School may feel like a big change. Our priority is ensuring that students feel safe, supported, and known. We will intentionally plan opportunities to help students build confidence before the school year begins.

Our goal is not simply to move a grade level, it is to place students in a learning environment specifically designed for their age, development, and future success. We are committed to making this transition thoughtful, supportive, and focused on what is best for children.

1. Why move to a 6–8 structure?

A 6–8 model strengthens academic alignment across three critical years. Instead of separating 6th grade from 7–8, we create intentional vertical alignment in curriculum, grading practices, and intervention systems. This supports stronger math pathways (including pre-Algebra readiness), coordinated interventions, earlier exposure to content-area teachers, and shared expectations for rigor.

2. Is a 6–8 model developmentally appropriate?

Yes. National practice increasingly supports the 6–8 structure for early adolescents. Students ages 11–14 benefit from team-based models, advisory systems, and exploratory electives. Elementary schools are typically designed for K–5 developmental needs, and 6th graders often fall between two systems. A middle school model better matches their academic and social development.

3. How would opportunities expand for students?

Lincoln Middle School offers:

- Access to specialized staff (counselors, interventionists, PE specialists)
- Competitive athletics

- Clubs and leadership opportunities
- Advanced math or honors pathways

This expands access and opportunity equity across the district.

4. How does this support students socially and emotionally?

Lincoln Middle School can intentionally design grade-level teams, advisory programs, structured transitions, and unified behavioral expectations.

Rather than being the oldest students in an elementary setting, 6th graders become part of a system designed specifically to support early adolescents.

5. Does this improve operational efficiency?

From a district perspective, a 6–8 model can:

- Consolidate specialized staffing
- Reduce duplication of services
- Stabilize class sizes at elementary schools
- Create more flexible scheduling
- Better respond to enrollment shifts
- Generate additional funding when offering 6th graders CTE options

If upper elementary enrollment is declining, this structure can right-size buildings while preserving core programs.

6. Are Lincoln Middle School facilities better suited for 6th graders?

Yes. Our middle school is equipped with science labs, locker rooms, performance spaces, and larger collaborative areas. These facilities better support 6th grade science, physical education, and exploratory learning experiences.

7. How does this better prepare students for Clarkston High School?

A 6–8 system introduces departmentalized instruction earlier, scaffolds study skills over three years, and builds consistent academic expectations. This creates a smoother transition from 8th to 9th grade and strengthens readiness for rigorous high school coursework.

8. Is Lincoln Middle School ready to support 6th grade students?

Yes. Lincoln Middle School is well-positioned to support 6th graders both academically and socially. The staff has strong experience working with early adolescents, and systems such as grade-level teams, advisory structures, and coordinated student supports are designed specifically for this age group.

9. How does this compare to other schools in our area?

Currently, we are the only district in our immediate region that has not transitioned to a true 6–8 middle school model. Most Washington State school districts (81%) have already adopted this structure because it aligns with research and best practices for early adolescent learning.

Lincoln Middle School had long served our 6th graders, configured as a 6-8 school, before Heights Elementary was built in 1992.

Moving to a 6–8 model ensures our students have access to the same developmental supports, academic alignment, and expanded opportunities as their regional peers. This transition positions our students within a learning environment designed intentionally for middle school success and high school readiness.