

# Highlands Middle School

## Narrative

### **Introduction:**

At Highlands Middle School, we are dedicated to giving our students the opportunity to a welcoming environment incorporating project-based learning with immersion experience in their community. One way we provide state-of-the art teaching is our Commerce Lounge. This dome building features many stands and kiosks where students can set up their own businesses using skills they have learned in the classroom, and also buy things using the school currency. Having this will teach students important life lessons and skills, such as negotiating and entrepreneurship.

Highlands Middle school will be located in Issaquah, WA on Cougar Mountain overlooking Lake Sammamish. Although this is a great area featuring nearby parks, forests, and neighborhoods, there is an unfair advantage for wealthier people because in Issaquah the median household income is almost double that of the national average. So, Highlands plans to have carpools going around the Seattle Metropolitan area to pick up kids from all around the city.

### **Planning Process:**

We went through a vigorous planning process to design our school. First, we focused on UX design. This is one of the most vital steps, as one cannot design a building to meet the needs of another if they do not understand their user. There were many things that we had to do in order to complete this step, like taking a virtual tour of our school. By doing this, we were able to clearly see what should be removed, added, or kept.

Our next step was to think about the learner of the future and who that student was. We imagined what resources, technology, and global issues would be relevant and how each might be amplified for this student. We also wrote a short story, “A Day In the Life of . . . .,” to help us understand a different perspective, on a deeper level, to see how they would interact with a regular day. With all of this new understanding and knowledge, we set about designing our new school of the future!

### **Community Environment:**

We strove to include the Highlands Middle School in our community environment. One of the main things we wanted to do at Highlands MS is to partner with local food businesses. This is a great way that we can support our local restaurants and help us get good food for the students. We will seek donations and/or buy materials for items from local businesses that students will use for their work in the Commerce Lounge.

Another way we can extend our community connections is through our trails and community park. These are open to anyone who wants to use it outside of school hours.

### **Learning Environment:**

The learning environment at Highlands Middle School provides unique experiences. Our school has many learning environments. The Commerce Lounge is one of the most important experiences and settings in our school. This is something that will help our students practice and use creativity and real-world skills to sell goods and services that will prepare them for a successful future.

The Highlands outdoor environment will be used for learning experiences. Our students will experience nature through their regular classes, taking class outside to be surrounded by the sounds, sights, and smells of nature, or collecting specimens for science classes. Not only will the park and trails be used for classes but also allowed for families to use outside of school hours to play and have quiet time or meditate.

Our project-based curriculum will allow students to experiment, create and use what they have learned to make projects that will benefit the school community, local community, and even the world.

Another amazing thing that we have that's different from other schools is the VR building. The VR building is a place where students can have fun but also learn. In addition to the lessons, students can also use the VR lab for entertainment purposes by using the school currency.

### **Physical Environment:**

To support students' education and well-being, we made a cleverly designed school campus. To get ideas for a place that could nurture our students' wants and needs, we took inspiration from the internet. Taking many trips to the worldwide web, we found pictures of innovative schools and buildings and took inspiration from the best features to craft the design of our school.

Unlike any other school, Highlands encourages students to think and do activities to support their learning and health without them even knowing. Examples of this are through exposed structure, color-coded pipes, and see-through walls that allow students to make connections to the real world with what they are learning in their classes.

In addition to this, the school incorporates and encourages mental health, something not many other places do. We do this by having separate buildings allowing students to get outside in between classes or having designated places to relax such as covered areas in nature or the school sleeping pods.

### **Conclusion:**

Highlands Middle School is an innovative place with a caring environment and community. We use new ways of teaching and learning to give students the experiences and resources they need to reach their full potential in life!