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Sammamish High School Named Washington State Innovative School

One of only 22 schools statewide to receive designation

A bold, creative and innovative approach to educating students has earned Sammamish High School in the Bellevue School District the designation as a Washington State Innovative School. The state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) announced Friday, November 18 that Sammamish is one of only 22 schools statewide to receive the recognition. The Innovative Schools selection was made by a panel of educators.

The Innovative Schools program celebrates the state's most inventive and exciting public school models. Schools that receive the special designation provide students with diverse educational opportunities, promote parent and community involvement and serve as "laboratories for educational experimentation and innovation."

A key element of Sammamish High School's innovative approach to education is its implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) across all curricular areas. Sammamish is in the process of creating PBL courses that will engage students in deep, authentic learning. These types of classes, including both Advanced Placement and non-Advanced Placement courses, encourage students to become engaged in their learning and require them to use open-ended problem solving. PBL courses also address students' different learning styles. For example, students who learn best by "doing" can take skill-building classes in graphic arts and take advantage of the school's fully functioning print shop; or earn a nursing assistant certification through the health science career courses.

"I feel the innovations at Sammamish will prepare all our students to be ready to succeed in post-secondary education and compete in the 21st century job market," says teacher Kim Herzog, who helped craft the Innovative Schools application submitted by the school. "Through PBL, students will gain the skills needed by the work force of the future."

Sammamish teachers and administrators play a critical role in student success. Teachers use assessment scores to inform their teaching practices and work in collaborative professional learning communities to develop strategies to help all students reach a higher level of learning. Support from an Investing in Innovation grant received last year from the U.S. Department of Education provides Sammamish teachers with paid release time to redesign their courses to align with the PBL model.

Using the District common curriculum, the innovations at Sammamish will be scaled to curriculum development at the four other high schools in Bellevue. The work is also being shared with regional and national audiences through partnerships with organizations such as the University of Washington Institute of Science and Mathematics Education, which is helping research and develop the new PBL curricula. Sammamish has also partnered with the George Lucas Educational Foundation, which will be creating a documentary about the innovative work at Sammamish, as well as Washington STEM, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

Sammamish received special recognition as an Innovative School at today's Washington State School Directors' Association conference. The school will receive a special banner for its building and will be featured on a new Innovative Schools website. [Click here to visit the site.](#)