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Private school opens new campus on Bainbridge Island

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A/E Editor

Students in grades 9-12 at the Hyla School, a private school on Bainbridge Island, are currently taking classes at a new, atypical campus. Back in July, the school finalized the purchase of the Ericksen Avenue Office Park, at 355 Ericksen Ave., to be the new home for its upper school. Students began classes there this August.

The former office park consists of four two-story, 3,500-square-foot buildings. The first of these has been renovated and now serves as a learning space for students. Renovations are set to begin on the second building this fall. In a press release, the school said it will continue to lease the remaining buildings on the property with plans to renovate and occupy them over the next three to five years.



Photos by Kelvin Hughes Photography [\[enlarge\]](#)

A mezzanine level was added at the center of an existing building to create more learning space.

Indigo Architecture & Interiors and Wenzlau Architects have designed the campus renovations, which the school says “have a modern and urban feel, with exposed steel, raw wood, and an open flow through flexible-use spaces.” Wenzlau designed the interior tenant improvements and Indigo Architecture & Interiors the exterior improvements.

Clark Construction is the general contractor and completed the renovation of the first building, which incidentally happened to be the firm's former office, this summer. The renovations and remodel included the addition of a new third mezzanine level to create additional space. Flexible learning spaces are located on each level. There is a lounge-style area and library space on the second level and a large open room on the newly created top level. The second building will be built-out in a similar fashion and will have new exterior siding to match the first.

Hyla School is known for its unconventional learning environments (the middle school is located on a 13-acre historic homestead). In a press release, head of school, Suzanne Messinger, celebrated the new campus and how the renovated building departs from traditional expectations. “There are many interconnected and light-filled zones for collaborative groupings and different types of learning,” Messinger said, “like the upper mezzanine that feels like a treehouse and is ideal for Socratic seminars.” She also emphasized that the renovation included a new HVAC system with air filtration.

Hyla School was founded in 1993 and describes itself as providing Bainbridge Island families “with a progressive educational option for school.” The school consists of a middle and upper school. The upper school was launched in 2020 and was previously located at IslandWood, an island environmental education nonprofit.

Approximately 100 students are currently enrolled in the middle school (grades six, seven, and eight).

When fully enrolled, the upper school will be capped at 45 students per grade level. The school's curriculum blends classroom and active hands-on learning and follows a "deeper learning" education model. In the press release, school board president, Karen Rice, shared how the location of the new campus will aid the school's hands-on, in-the-community learning style since the Ericksen Avenue property provides easy access to the ferry, local transportation and Bainbridge's downtown core to facilitate this work. "Hyla's program is all about giving students structured access to the world around them so they can learn from it and positively contribute to it," she said.

[\[enlarge\]](#)

The open-plan learning area on level two.

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