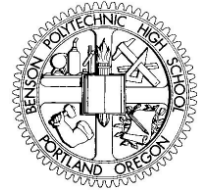


BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT



The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association
April 2010—Tech Show Edition

Alumni Seek Continued Integration of Technical and Academic Education

The Benson Alumni Association urges that the School Board and the Superintendent to remember what made Benson's Career Technical Education (CTE) program a success for decades. The key element contributing to Benson's high graduation rate, while preparing its graduates for high paying jobs and further success in technical training in college, is its proven integration of academic courses with hands-on technical training. It works. In recent years, Benson has had a graduation rate of about 95% (one of PPS's goals) with 65% of its students coming from homes below the poverty level and an enrollment of 75% minority students. Last year Benson also issued 1639 college credits through CTE classes.

Across the nation CTE programs are moving towards increased integration of technical learning with the academic classes --- instead of separating them among physical locations. The combination provides students with specific training -- for demanding and high-paying careers immediately upon graduation or after further education -- in the context of language arts, communication skills, mathematical reasoning and understanding of scientific methodologies. Employers in Portland and the nation -- as well as post-secondary schools -- are "begging" for graduates with that education.

PPS Plans New Direction for Benson

On Monday April 26th Superintendent Carol Smith recommended that Benson be changed from a 4 year comprehensive high school based on an integrated program of technical and academic classes to a technical learning center that *juniors and seniors* from Portland's *other high schools* might attend *part-time*. Its enrollment would be capped at 800 students and there would be no athletics or extra-curricular programs. By 2014 Benson would cease graduating its own students.

The recommendation follows a 2-year comprehensive high school design project examining all of Portland's 10 high schools. Concerning Portland's nine neighborhood schools she recommended closing Marshall, creating essentially equal learning opportunities at the remaining eight comprehensive schools,

When a full-day, integrated program -- whether it is for 2-years or 4-years -- is taught by a single set of teachers "under one roof", it allows those teachers to effectively interact and fine tune classes to reinforce one another as well as allowing those teachers to follow the progress of students through the school year. Such a model contributes to student engagement and graduation success. Success also comes from the commitment of students to a full-day engagement with one set of teachers and programs leading to a HS degree reflecting CTE proficiency.

The Alumni Association understands the need for flexibility and creativity to solve PPS's dilemma of smaller student enrollments and tight budgets, but believes that neither Portland's students desiring a CTE high school education, PPS's long term success, nor Portland's economy will be well served by a radical experiment in changing Benson to a part-time technical training facility. The Association is seeking the opportunity to work with the District and Benson's teachers to devise a better solution. For more information about the Association's ideas and/or how to help go to BensonTechAlumni.org.

instituting a very limited transfer policy between the community/neighborhood, and redrawing boundaries between the remaining schools. Details of the entire "High School Action Plan" is available at Portland Public School's website.

During the next few weeks the District will have community meetings and public hearings before the elected School Board members vote on June 21st to adopt or amend the Superintendent's recommendations. Information about opportunities to input ideas are available at www.pps.k12.or.us or by calling 503-916-2801. The hotline number operating between the District's usual business hours will also provide answers to any questions concerning the recommendations.

Reasons to Join the Alumni Association

Since becoming the Chairperson of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association I have been asked by many Benson graduates, “What do I get for my dues if I should join the Association?”

For the \$12.00 per year – that is \$1.00/month – you will receive a number of things. You will be providing morale and financial support for your alma mater. You will be supporting a volunteer group that is connecting all of Benson’s former students through a variety of activities. Let me elaborate.

The Association since its founding in August 2008 has been recognized by Benson’s principal and teachers –as well as the School District – as a valuable “spokesperson” for Benson’s graduates and their long time concern and interest in Benson’s future. The school’s staff was delighted that finally the alumni was ready to step up for their alma mater --- especially when the teachers and staff felt under attack by the District through budget cuts.

The School District also has acknowledged the Association as representing the thousands of Benson graduates many of whom live, work and vote in the District. As the School District proceeded with its “High School Design” project in the past year the Association was the group of graduates that participated in every step of the process with letters, prepared statements, and participation in public meetings. In addition to the public efforts, several members of the Association had in-depth discussion of the value of Benson to Portland and its economy as well as suggesting ways to further support Benson through partnerships with businesses and

New Board of Directors Needed

The Alumni Association will be electing [###] new members for its Board of Directors at its annual meeting held in conjunction with the August (date) annual picnic. The new members will all serve 3 year terms. Association members may “nominate” themselves or be nominated” (with their consent) by another member at the Picnic or in advance to the Association’s Secretary by email or regular mail.

The 15 member Board of Directors are responsible for the on-going business of the Association including the annual Picnic, an alumni room at Tech Show, a Scholarship program for graduates, other activities supporting Benson, a website, and long term development planning for a greater Benson. The Board

colleges. To support this involvement, the Association developed a “New Benson Vision” that was refined through meetings with the alumni, Benson’s staff, business leaders, and local college officials. The “Vision” would re-invigorate Benson with more industrial partners and an increased focus on “green technology”.

At the same time as the foregoing, the Association has developed a website (BensonTechAlumni.org) that provides information about the Association’s activities, events and activities at Benson, and links to other websites relevant to Benson. We have published quarterly Newsletters online and in paper copy with current news about the school and Association. We have hosted an “alumni room” at Tech Show and sponsor an annual all-class picnic each summer as well as occasional social meetings. In addition the Association has sponsored a couple of Benson cleanup days and continues a scholarship program that has awarded dozens of scholarships to graduating Benson seniors.

We are an organization driven by the interests and energy of our members and their selected officials. As such the members determine our future focus. So, let me conclude by saying, when you decide to join the Benson Alumni Association – for only a “cup of coffee per month – you become part of a bigger effort energizing and connecting Benson’s graduates *and this effort will continue regardless of the outcome of PPS’s current High School Action Plan.* [Dale Bajema, Chairperson, BPHSSA]

typically meets four to nine times per year for 2 hour meetings that are usually held at Benson HS. The Board members also participate in one or more of the Board’s committees and their activities. Typically the foregoing will require 3-10 hours of time for most Directors in an average month.

Pursuant to the Association’s By-Laws, to vote and/or to be elected a Director one must be a (paid) member of the Association. Former Benson graduates and students, current and former Benson teacher and Benson supporters can join on-line at the Association’s website or even at the Picnic.

Awards Keep Coming For Benson Robotics

Now in its fourth year, the Benson Robotics Club is the quintessential Benson club. This fifteen member group is comprised of students whose majors span the full spectrum of Benson's offerings, from Manufacturing and Electronics to Communications and Health OC. Meeting twice a week from 3-5pm, Benson Robotics fields three teams in the annual FIRST competitions.

Two of these teams compete in the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC), a competition where teams design, build and program custom robots that are meant to compete against other robots in a sports-style competition. For the past four years, each team has completed an award-winning season, including three First Place Awards for Innovation. This past February, both teams advanced from the local tournament to the FTC State Tournament for Oregon.

The third team competes in the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC). While somewhat similar to the FTC, the FRC raises the bar. First, an emphasis is placed on design and problem solving as each team is forced to design and build their robots from a standardized set of parts. There is also a marketing component where each team is required to create a team brand to help "sell" their design.

During the FTC & FRC off-season, the Benson Robotics Club works on prototype projects such as sumo robots, a walking robot and a bristle-bot (a miniature robot built on the head of a toothbrush). They also close the loop on their design process by analyzing and improving their past designs.



Benson Robotics is sponsored by NASA, Tektronix, the M. J. Murdock Trust, the Electronics Manufacturers Association and the Independent Electrical Contractors of Oregon. While these great sponsorships have helped get the Benson Robotics Club up and running some of their need for next year is unmet. The club is in need of a battery powered drill, drill bits, wrench set, nut drivers, aluminum stock, plywood, and acrylic sheet material. They are also in need to monetary donations for materials and to defray travel costs to the various local and state competitions. Donations can be sent to:

Benson Polytechnic High School
Debbie Corning, Benson Bookkeeper
546 NE 12th Ave.
Portland, OR 97232

Benson Students Win Big at SkillsUSA Oregon Championships

Students from Benson took top honors at the annual SkillsUSA Oregon Championships held on April 9-10. Benson sent a total of 50 students with 33 winning awards in 19 events, including 13 gold medals which qualifies them to compete at the National Championship in Kansas City in June.

In order to cover the costs of travel, hotel rooms and food, the Benson chapter relies on donations from private parties and local companies. If you would like to make a donation, contact Mary Ganoie or Bill Cooper (Class of '72) at Benson High School.

A complete list of winners can be found at the BPHSAA website.

Gold Medal Winners:

- Radio/Audio Production
- Related Technical Math
- Residential Wiring
- Automotive Service Technology
- Cabinetmaking
- Television Video Production
- Web Design
- Automated Manufacturing Technology



4th Annual Benson Alumni Reunion Picnic & Car Show

Where: *Blue Lake Regional Park, Area 17*

When: *Saturday, August 21st
11:00 am to 4:00pm*

- ◆ Park fee is \$5.00 per vehicle.
- ◆ Bring your own food and beverages, however alcohol is not allowed at this event.

4th Annual All Alumni Picnic Scheduled

The 4th Annual All Class Reunion Picnic will be held on Saturday, August 21st from 11AM to 4PM at Blue Lake Regional Park. Anyone who ever attended Benson is invited as well as all current and past teachers and staff.

In conjunction with the picnic, the alumni association is hosting a car show. If you would like to participate in the show, please contact the alumni association.

The BPHSAA will be conducting their annual meeting during the picnic which includes the election of board members to fill vacant and expiring members' positions.

At previous picnics everyone brought their own food. This year you have the option of bringing whatever food you want for yourself or participating in our communal table; just bring an appetizer, salad, main dish or dessert for 2-4 people. You are still responsible for your own beverages. Alcohol is not permitted at our park site.

Volunteers to help with the picnic planning, set-up and conduct are always needed. It can be a fun way to build additional contacts amongst Benson's alumni and supporters. If you are interested and we hope you are, please contact Tammy Hite at info@bensontechalumni.org.

Contacting the BPHSAA

BPHSAA c/o Benson High School
546 NE 12th Ave. Portland, OR 97232

Website: www.BensonTechAlumni.org
Email: Info@BensonTechAlumni.org

Comcast Cares Day at Benson

At 9 AM last Saturday morning, somewhere around a hundred local Comcast employees, including one of the VPs from Boston (?), local dignitaries and about a half-dozen alums wearing their newly-minted alum T-shirts gathered in the Benson auditorium to be assigned to groups for work inside and outside the building. The effort was organized by Hands-On Greater Portland in cooperation with Comcast, and they generously donated the tools and materials.

Everyone worked eagerly, and with high energy. Even some children who accompanied their parents stayed at their tasks with admirable dedication. With time out for greetings from local dignitaries, and concluding with a KFC lunch, alums had many opportunities to converse with Benson's benefactors and express our appreciation for their efforts.

From freshly painted interior woodwork to fresh coats of blue and brick red on external railings, the accustomed eye will see many evidences of refurbishment efforts. No visitors who view the orange walls and frames in the new gym will doubt who's house they're in!

A truck load of bark dust was distributed over freshly cultivated front flower beds as a 20 yard dumpster filled with plant clippings, grass and weeds, leaving the advertisement for Tech Show, "90 and Still Cruisin'", clearly visible overlooking a fresh, welcoming school entrance.



Alumni Calendar of Events

June 26.....Class of 1980 Reunion
 Aug 07.....Class of 2000 Reunion
 Aug 21.....All Alum Reunion Picnic
 08/28 & 08/29.....Class of 1960 Reunion
 October 2010.....Homecoming