



BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), August 2014 Edition

New Benson Boosters Club being formed

A new Benson Tech Boosters Club is being formed to encourage and support Benson's athletics and other extracurricular clubs after a five- to six-year hiatus, during which the school has not had such a group.

During this past spring, PPS has raised questions about the viability of Benson Tech's athletic program, and especially the lack of support from the students and the Benson Tech community. The new Boosters Club is a direct response to PPS' concerns and will raise money for Benson Tech's various athletic teams as well as provide volunteers for events. These efforts will show support for the athletics program, as well its viability.

Since June, bylaws for the Boosters Club have been developed, opportunities for fall fund-raising efforts have been explored, and a webpage is being developed. A general meeting for anyone interested in participating in the Boosters Club is being planned for early September 2014 — look for the date on either the Benson Tech or the BPHSAA websites. At that meeting, Club officers will be selected and the first fundraisers discussed.

It is not too early to get in on ground floor of this very important effort to support Benson's athletic teams and other Club efforts in the coming year and to assure the future of a thriving athletics program at Benson Tech.

Are you interested or willing to help out with the Benson Tech Boosters Club? Contact either Lisa White at lafmedics@comcast.net or Dale Bajema at dalebajema@comcast.net.



Benson Tech students prepare to march to in protest of PPS' proposed plan to discontinue the school's 2014 football program and several other sports. The public outcry in March 2014 saved the school's sports for the 2014–2015 school year and the Benson Tech community is working to ensure the full program is extended for ensuing school years.

Future of Benson Tech athletics program still on the line

Though a radical change in Benson Tech's athletic program was averted last spring, its future beyond the 2014-15 school year is still uncertain. A March 2014 outcry from the Benson community halted Portland Public Schools' (PPS) plans to discontinue Benson Tech's 2014 football program and several other sports. Yielding to pressure, PPS reinstated a full schedule of men and women sports for only one year — 2014–15. The future will depend on what happens this coming school year.

The March 2104 protest included a march of students and supporters, led by Benson Tech alum and coach John Slaughter, to a School Board meeting, subsequent public testimony, and efforts of the BPHSAA and the Benson Site Council. PPS' response was to drop its immediate plans to discontinue football, soccer, baseball and several other sports, but to keep up in the air what would happen in 2015–16 and beyond. In the ensuing spring public meetings and discussions, PPS officials said they were concerned about the robustness of Benson Tech's athletic program, citing the small turnout of players and their success in several sports and minimal fan support.

Benson Tech's principal, Curtis Wilson, has responded by hiring a new full-time athletic director, Sanjay Bedi, and new coaches for the 2014–15

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Letter to Benson Tech Alumni

Dear Benson Tech Alumni,

We hope this newsletter finds you excited for the future and thoughtful of the education that Benson Tech provided to you in your life's endeavors. There is a core group of steadfast alumni who have worked diligently with an ever-changing Portland Public Schools' (PPS) landscape to help keep Benson Tech at the forefront of the minds of our school leaders.



Over the past year and a half, I have gone to major employers in the Portland area, including Greenbrier, Vigor, IBEW 49, Blount International, PGE, Esco, Precision Castparts and the Portland Business Alliance to ask them to appeal to PPS Superintendent Carole Smith to lift the "cap on enrollment," which is currently set at 875 students, a decision that was made in 2010. This past January, the PPS School Board allowed for a small increase in enrollment — a step in the right direction, but clearly not enough to meet the ongoing demand for a Benson Tech education.

Over the past three years, more than 500 Portland kids have been denied the opportunity to attend Benson Tech. Perhaps the greatest disadvantage the school has now is the enrollment cap and that PPS has labeled it a "Focus Option" school. As such, the athletic program is now at substantial risk of cuts beginning in Fall 2015. The BPHSAA and Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) have joined to reinvigorate the efforts of a Boosters Club (see front cover article). We are confident that with increased awareness and more students and parents involved, we can quickly enhance the success and vibrancy of the current sports programs in order to have a more effective argument against the looming cuts proposed by PPS.

We need your involvement! We need champions and advocates to sit on advisory boards in your sports interest, we need alumni to join the Booster Club, and we need your advocacy for increasing the viability and currency of a trades and technical education as PPS continues to seek graduation rate improvements and plans for the next set of school renovations. All of these activities need the direct, in-person involvement of YOU, THE ALUMNI.

Please either call me at 503-314-0041 or email me of your interest and I will get you connected to the right folks to advance the cause!

-Rob Johns, Chair, BPHSAA Board of Directors (Class of 1977)

Benson Tech Foundation formed

In the Fall 2012, the alumni voted to pursue filing for a 501(c)(3) IRS-approved foundation. We now have IRS approval for the Benson Tech Foundation, dedicated to directly funding/supporting Career Technical Education (CTE) needs in the form of equipment, monies and seeking grants for Benson Tech.

The first of its kind at Benson, the Foundation is a step in the path toward long-term improvements for Benson Tech students. Representing the interests of the school and its students, the Foundation can secure funding and in-kind donations directly from individuals and business partners. Not only can these funds be used to replace aged equipment and fund specific projects and competitive programs like robotics, but it can allow for greater flexibility in programming, allowing for the school to respond to the changing needs of the business community.

If you are interested in board membership or assistance, please contact Dale Bajema at dalebajema@comcast.net.



Benson Tech geotech students built a shelter for the homeless as project for the 2013–2013 school year.

Benson Tech Wins Coveted ODE CTE/STEM Grant

Starting in the summer of 2013, BPHSAA members met with PPS management to write a competitive grant to seek part of the State of Oregon Career Technical Education Revitalization Funds. The first grant filing did not win in December 2013, but through the perseverance of the alumni and PPS CTE support, a second grant application won \$225,000 in March 2014. With these funds, we hope to see the architectural/design/drawing program back with state-of-the-art equipment and teacher, Tammy Hite. In addition, in July 2014, Benson Tech Principal Curtis Wilson wrote a successful grant application for the Geotech program to build a roof covering, which will help perpetuate this new and excellent math program that combines construction and math for teaching geometry.

2014 Benson Tech student-built house construction starts moving indoors

Work is nearing completion on the exterior of the current student house-building project at Benson Tech and next year's class will be focusing on interior finishes, trim and cabinets. The project continues to be a great learning experience for the students as they get to deal with a real construction project. Rich Weber, Luke Hotchkiss and numerous other Benson Tech teachers have made this project possible along with many industry partners.

Individuals and companies that have contributed to the house include:

ABC Supply	Siding
J.B. Insulation	Insulation
Kelly Dobbs/ Neil Kelly	Interior design
Lakeside Lumber	Trim boards for soffits
Malarkey Roofing	Roofing
Paar Lumber	Misc. materials
Pat's Pound and Pour	Concrete
Raybourn's Plumbing	Plumbing
Southgate Wallboard	Sheetrock
The Heat Exchange	Radiant heating
Tuff Stuff	Concrete floor polishing
W.E. Givens	Painting
West Side Electric	Electrical



This is a wonderful team effort that we can all be proud of.

The house will be a great addition to the neighborhood when it's finished.

- Richard K. Spies, AIA (Class of 1964)

Design Center Advisory Group builds new vision for Benson Tech

Beginning early in 2014, a diverse group of design-oriented individuals has been working hard to define a vision for a Design Center at Benson Tech. Under the leadership of Architect Richard K. Spies, AIA (Class of 1964), this group has been meeting monthly to build momentum for a new curriculum that would eventually offer a diverse array of design-oriented areas of study to Benson Tech Students.

It would build on the fast-growing architecture program that is currently being rebuilt from scratch. It would

extend the design study into areas of urban design, engineering, interiors, sustainability, product design and even fashion design. The ultimate goal would be to create a world-class Design Center at Benson Tech that would draw students to the school from the entire city and beyond. The advisory group has even talked about making the program a sixth- through 12th-grade program by incorporating a middle school program at Benson Tech.

The advisory group will be working hard this fall to develop a more concise description of this idea and with the hope that this work can

be used by PPS District officials as they prepare plans for Benson Tech's future. It is anticipated that by late fall or early next year, PPS will begin preplanning a comprehensive vision for Benson Tech that would be used to define what the school could become in the future. There is a very real possibility that Benson Tech will be on a second bond measure that will go in front of the voters in November of 2016. If passed, Benson Tech could be modernized as soon as 2018.

The future of Benson Tech is looking very bright indeed.

Drafting major returns to Benson Tech

After a four-year absence, a drafting major is returning to Benson Tech. With the aid of Benson staff and alumni, along with several community and industry supporters, the school was able to obtain a grant from the Oregon Department of Education to help bring back the architecture major. After being completely eliminated from the curriculum in 2010, drafting classes have slowly been making a comeback with the “Introduction to Drafting Basics” for freshmen in 2012 and a 2013 AutoCAD course as an elective.

The junior/senior major will not only focus on architectural design, but will contain curriculum related to the various engineering fields that architects frequently work with, including structural, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and civil engineering. Landscape and interior design is also included. Students will explore the design process and give presentations of their work. They will have

opportunities to visit architectural offices and construction sites.

Students also will be introduced to the latest computer software used in numerous architectural and engineering firms around the world including AutoCAD, Revit (a Building Information Modeling program) and Sketch-up (a 3D imaging program). Despite all of the latest technology, one of the best ways to quickly explore early design alternatives is still with a piece of paper and a pencil so students will learn hand drafting, sketching and rendering techniques. Mathematics, science and literacy are very much integrated into the lessons, along with learning about good work ethics, teamwork and communication skills.

Currently there are no formal plans to reinstate the mechanical engineering major that was cut in 2007, but it is the hope of the Benson staff to bring it back within the next few years.

To teach the reinstated drafting program, Tammy Hite, a former Benson drafting teacher and alumnae from the Class of 1991, was hired. She is a graduate of the University of Oregon’s School of Architecture program and previously taught the architectural drafting major at Benson Tech from 2003 to 2007. For the past seven years, she has worked in architectural firms in Portland and Bend, and has been part of the design team for several schools around Oregon.

“Architecture has been a passion of mine for most of my life and I am very excited to be a part of its return to Benson Tech,” Ms. Hite said.

Drafting is a class that everyone can benefit from — one reason it has been a part of Benson’s history from the beginning. Be sure to come by the new drafting labs in “C” Wing during Tech Show in February to see what the next generation of architects and engineers are doing.



New outdoor space for geo-con class could get a new canopy

The successful geo-con program, which combines geometry and construction training curriculum, has been looking for new space. One area that would work beautifully for the program is the alley space between the radio station and “E” Wing. There is an area that is about 20 feet wide and 65 feet long — which if covered in a way that protected students and their projects from the elements — would provide a great short-term solution.

Benson Tech Principal Curtis Wilson was instrumental in putting together a successful grant request that will provide \$25,000 for this project. The critical components are the canopy itself and resolving the fire code implications to existing buildings and openings. A prefab steel canopy system has been selected that could be removed in the future and reused at another PPS facility if Benson’s needs changed. This system could also be installed by the students as a part of their construction curriculum.

Hopefully, the code ramifications of this project can be resolved and work can move ahead quickly. The photo at left shows an example of the canopy system that is anticipated.

- Richard K. Spies, AIA (Class of 1964)



Benson Tech students visit an OIT campus in 2014 to learn more about what the school offers. Benson Tech and OIT established a formal partnering agreement in 2013 to provide Benson Tech students with a post-secondary education partner.

Benson Tech partners with OIT

Established formally in February 2013, the agreement between the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) and Benson Tech has provided Benson Tech with a closer post-secondary education partner for its students.

In addition to its Klamath Falls campus (which is like a Benson Tech on steroids), OIT has a well-established presence in Wilsonville, OR, with a new campus. As OIT provides a robust set of technically focused degree programs, this is a very good stepping stone for Benson Tech students. In addition, OIT offers college credit to students at a rate of \$25 per credit that can be taken concurrently while attending high school.

OIT has a specific local partner representative who works with the Benson Tech counselors to increase student awareness of OIT offerings. This past year, 30 students have visited the Wilsonville campus and a small group of students traveled to the Klamath Falls campus in a trip funded by the Benson Tech alumni to help encourage more site visits in the future.

BPHSAA working to help improve Benson Tech's transportation technical education

This last spring, the Benson Tech Design Committee asked BPHSAA Board Member Donald Wear (Class of 1976) to interview the Career Technical Education (CTE) instructors for what they would need to improve their CTE programs. Most needed new text books, computers, and repair of equipment. But Brett Anderson, the lead automotive instructor, had the greatest need of all by far.



Rudolph Diesel's original engine, built 1897 and currently on display at the Deutsches Museum in Munich. Photo by Chris Thomas, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

During the interview it became clear that what Mr. Anderson wants to do is transform the automotive wing into a Transportation Technical Education Center. His vision is to turn the old body and paint shop into a Diesel CTE Center, with the paint shop turned into an ultra clean room, which is needed for assembly of diesel engine components and can also be used by the Construction CTE classes for their work. He wanted a new freight single-axle tractor, new advanced diesel engines, and the special tools needed for diesel tractors and heavy equipment.

Mr. Anderson expressed the need to modernize the aviation area and took Mr. Wear on an extended tour of all the classrooms and shop describing what he and the other CTE instructors wanted for the Transportation Technical Education Center.

Mr. Wear took Mr. Anderson's wish list for the Diesel CTE instruction to meetings with Daimler and Caterpillar. Conversations between all parties resulted in a new truck and diesel engines for the Benson program..

The BPHSAA is also working on helping the Transportation Technical Education Center get the equipment for the motorcycle service education, as well as equipment needed by the auto shop.

If you have any of the following items taking up space in your garage, Benson Tech's students could sure use them: multimeters, jack stands, large hydraulic floor jacks, a shop rolling battery jump cart and charger with an air compressor. Donations (in-kind or monetary) may be directed to the Benson Foundation for tax credit, with attention to Mr. Donald Wear. If you are interested in participating on the Transportation Technical Education Committee, Mr. Wear can be reached at donaldwear@yahoo.com

Future of Benson Tech athletics, continued from front cover

school years. They have been instructed to focus on team building as much as simple coaching during practices and games. Other efforts to strengthen the athletics program include the formation of a new Benson Booster Club and special plans for the Football Homecoming Game on Oct. 3, 2014, to be played at Benson Tech on Buckman Field.

It is hoped that these "boot-strap efforts" by Benson Tech staff, students and supporters will encourage PPS to take a second look and extend a full athletic program at Benson Tech in 2015-16 and into the future. Of course, you can help by turning out for a game or two — the schedule of games is available on the Benson Tech, BPHSAA and PPS web pages.

Bringing an apprenticeship program to Benson Tech

Benson students will tell you that they are different than their peers in other Portland high schools. Miranda Ryan, the Benson Tech Career Center coordinator, learned this early in her interactions with the students. Alumni say that one of the factors that distinguished a Benson Tech education was this: as students, we were apprentices. Every day was filled with opportunities for hands-on experience unrivaled by other Portland schools, no matter which discipline we chose — technical trades or health sciences.

There has never been a time with more discussion about a college versus technical education. Nearly two-thirds of Benson Tech graduates go on to college, with the remainder going to work in trades and the military. Regardless of what path a student chooses, the hands-on experience at Benson Tech better prepares them for what lies ahead. But even though apprenticeship training is one of the keys to Benson Tech's success in providing a clear career pathway, discussions with Ms. Ryan and multiple instructors have illuminated the need for a more structured approach.

These conversations have resulted in a vision: a proposed apprenticeship training program to be established at Benson Tech, including both basic and advanced apprenticeship supplemented by an apprenticeship library and apprentice mentoring by elders of the trades.

Intrigued? You should be.

Most people think apprenticeships are adult union jobs, and that will definitely be part of program. But union workforce coordinators (like Bridget Quinn of Local



Photo by Eugen Nosko, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

48 NECA IBEW), articulated the need for basic work skills needed on the work site. Basic apprenticeship training offered at Benson Tech could include a “Workforce 101: work ethics” course, not only giving students the skills they need to secure apprenticeships and trade careers, but helping them be better students in high school and beyond.

Advanced apprenticeship training will help develop the skills needed for journeymen in a specific trade, e.g., manufacturing, transportation, electrical, construction to name a few. The BPHSAA will be working with the unions and industries to help students refine the skills they will need in the trade or trades they would like to pursue. Keep in mind that approximately two-thirds of undergraduates work while they attend college, so advanced apprenticeship training is not lost on students choosing to attend college.

The apprenticeship library, housed in the Benson Tech College and Career Center, will offer information packets describing each trade: a brief overview of the trade, including details like pay scale (a particular favorite question from many Benson Tech students), required skills and education. Much

of this information exists inside the industry and trade organizations, but has not been available to students in one location. Benson Tech will have the first comprehensive apprenticeship library for students. The idea could also be tailored to fit the needs of other high schools in the PPS system.

Apprentice mentors are a critical role in helping develop good academic skills, life skills, and apprentice skills.

Benson Tech already has access to apprenticeship programs approved by the Bureau of Labor & Industries, and the school has a long-standing relationship with the Portland Workforce Alliance to establish student apprenticeships. But this past year there were more than 40 candidates for eight available apprenticeships. We need to do more to help our students succeed.

To make our vision a reality, we need your help. You remember what Benson Tech did for you. Is it time to give back?

1) Can your business sponsor a Benson Tech apprenticeship? How about two apprenticeships?

2) Can you be a student mentor? Can you help a student learn what general skills are needed to secure and hold a job?

3) Can you help us organize the program, talk to teachers and tradespeople, solicit apprenticeships, or just volunteer an hour or two a month?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, please contact Rob Johns, BPHSAA Chair, robjohns@comcast.net. We can't wait to hear from you! Go Tech!