



**BENSON TECH**

# ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), April 2024 Edition



**Above:** View southeast, exterior of Building H auto shops. Note the concrete driveway aprons were being placed this day. The auto shop doors are orange with glass panes. (Photo courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

## Benson Tech Modernization status update for Spring 2024

*By Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977)*

Greetings everyone - my site visit was made on February 23, 2024, I had a very extensive and informative tour of the school with Mark Kline, the PPS-Turner & Townsend-Heery construction manager on site. The progress on the project has been amazing and with only four months to go from April 2024, the site is bustling with very coordinated activities to reach the finish line. Interesting to note, on any given day, there are as many as 200

to 250 contractor employees on site. Finish work is ongoing with new furniture and school equipment deliveries in progress and coordinated among the numerous construction activities. The project is on track and occupancy will begin in August 2024. The job site continues to be extremely organized and all work activities are performed safely. The concrete floors throughout the buildings have been receiving finish grinding, polishing and sealer.

*(story continues on Page 4)*



### SAVE THE DATE!

Join the BPHSAA on September 14th for the Grand Opening (dedication, tours, and Benson Community Picnic) of the newly modernized Benson Tech Campus. Connect with other alumni and Tech supporters, tour the school, attend the dedication ceremony and/or class reunion, and otherwise celebrate the return to our updated and expanded school. Special arrangements will be made for classes wishing to have reunions there ([info@bensontech-alumni.org](mailto:info@bensontech-alumni.org)). Visit [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org) in the coming months for details and updates.

**Recent BPHSAA elections update**

At the BPHSAA's annual meeting on November 13, 2023, Jeff Strachan was elected to fill vacant Director Position #1 and Bob Walker Position #5. There was no one else at the meeting interested in filling the other vacant director positions.

During the Board of Directors December 11, 2023 meeting, Anthony Reimer was elected to fill Position #11. Rob Johns was reelected as Chairperson, Max Baker as Secretary, and Bob Trimble as Treasurer.

During the January 8, 2024 Board of Directors' meeting, Josh Piper, Dale Bajema, and Rob Johns were elected to fill vacant Director positions #2, #3, and #4 respectively. Rachael Lizio Katzen Kuryunny was elected as Vice Chairperson.

**Old yearbooks now being digitized**

All of Benson Tech's 100-plus yearbooks are being digitized as part of the modernization project. After some contractor delays, it is now expected the project will be completed this summer. Eventually they will reside on the BPHSAA's website. Details on how to access them will be announced as soon as the procedure is set.

**New time for Benson Community Picnic**

The popular Benson Community Picnic usually held in August will be held on September 14th this year from noon to 3:00 pm to follow a formal dedication of the newly modernized school on NE 12th Avenue. This will allow for tours of the three-year project to update and expand the school for the 21st century. As before, the picnic will provide a chance to meet other alumni and Tech supporters, buy some Tech gear featuring the new Astros mascot, and enjoy some food that will be on sale. Several classes reunions are planning to have an event there as well. Go to [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org) for more information over the next few months.

**2024-2025 freshman enrollment to be up slightly**

Benson Tech is being allowed a small increase in its freshman enrollment -325 to be exact – as it moves into its modernized school this fall. While Benson Tech was located on the Marshall Campus these last three years, the non-central location made it difficult to fill the previously allotted 300 freshman openings. With the move back to the modernized building this fall in sight, 500+ eighth graders applied during the November-December application period. Of the first selected 325 applicants, most have already registered for fall classes. For those who have failed to register, their slots will be given to those on a "wait list" — ensuring a full 325 freshmen will enter the modernized school in August. (Twenty-five sophomores from Portland's neighborhood high schools have been given a chance to transfer to Benson Tech this fall.)

**Benson Tech and PPS facing 2024-2025 budget cuts**

While Benson Tech is receiving a small increase in the number of incoming freshman allowed – 325 up from 300 last year – Benson Tech with the rest of Portland Public Schools (PPS) will be coping with budget cuts. This is the result of a reduction in State of Oregon funds for education. PPS' funds are down \$10 million for the 2024-25 school year with further cuts in the years to come. Though Benson Tech will be able to add one CTE instructor to handle the increase in freshmen, its overall staffing will be decreased by the equivalent of four positions.

**Benson Tech's 2024 Rose Festival Princess selected**

Laedyn Romero has been selected as Benson Tech's 2024 Rose Festival Princess. Laedyn is a Health Occupations student and has been on Benson Tech's soccer and track teams. Congratulations from the BPHSAA, Laedyn!



**Image of Benson Tech's Astros being developed**

Though the Astros were selected in the spring of 2023 to be Benson Tech's mascot when it moves into the modernized building this August, an image was not selected. Benson Tech staff and students have been working with a design company to do just that in recent months. It is expected that a design will be selected soon so that Benson Tech uniforms, "gear" and other items will be available at the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

Find more news and information at [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org)

**ALUMNI TEXT CREDITS**

**Co-Editors: Dale Bajema and Roger Edwards**

We would like to thank Rachael Lizio Katzen Kuryunny, Gerry Ochs, Kevin Clark, Thomas Smith, and Kelly Janes for their articles as well as Irynne Padua, Dan Malone, Brian Corey and Bob Walker for their information and assistance in creating this newsletter. And as always the diligent timely efforts of Connie Mar, our designer.

## Help the BPHSAA improve the Tech Pep archive!

In the months leading up to the move back to NE 12th and Irving, the BPHSAA has been at work thinking of ways to maximize their usefulness in the renovated buildings. Throughout this time, there has been news snippets of how the electronic scanning of the yearbooks is progressing. Copying historic texts into an electronic file eliminates the wear and tear of handling and with the feature of optical text retrieval, the whole file becomes searchable.

When newspapers are printed, the issues have a finite lifespan. Careful handling can extend this period, but can't block deterioration. Tech Pep issues were saved and bound as they accumulated and an ever-increasing number of issues are now over 100 years old. And because new issues were distributed regularly, they contain a detailed account of school news. Scanning this archive would preserve them, simplify researching them,

and make them available to the Benson Tech community. Doing so however comes with a cost. The cost does not exceed the benefits, in BPHSAA's thinking, but it is greater than our budget.

An inventory of the archive showed there are both bound and loose copies, and lots of duplication. Many of the loose copies are very fragile. The continuous bound copies range from September 1920 to May 1960 and the 1967-1968 school year issues are also bound. This volume contains a hand written note saying, "The bound copies of Tech Peps were thrown away after being stored in a locked closet during the library remodel circa 1990. We have recovered some of the years from alumni donations. Rob Melton, Tech Pep Advisor, 1995-2010." Among the recovered copies there is an issue from September 19, 1980, quite a few in the mid to late 1990s, and scattered copies

from the 2000's. The last saved issue is from May 2010. If there are still guardians of large or small Tech Pep collections, the BPHSAA would welcome receiving any copies with issue dates from September 1960 and later.

The bound volume for the 1920-1921 school year has been scanned, at the cost of \$241.50. This scan will be displayed at the Tech Show in April along with its archived originals. Viewers will find this comparison notable and will also discover the appreciation BPHS students of 1920 had of the training they were receiving. This appreciation is still found today as new graduates move into their future and later may be inclined to support an active alumni association. Scanning the archive will continue but at a rate that can be accelerated by alumni choosing to contribute to this project by becoming members of the BPHSAA.

## Benson Tech's future health professionals compete in state HOSA meet

This year, the Oregon Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) conference was held in Portland on April 1-3. Four Benson Tech students competed: Emile Anderson (Human Growth and Development, Cultural Diversities and Disparities in Health Care, and Extemporaneous Writing – Health Policy), Eleanor Briscoe (Medical Terminology, Medical Math, and Pharmacology), Genevieve Hilger (Medical Terminology, Medical Law and Ethics, and Human Growth and Development), and Safie Richley (Medical Law and Ethics and Dental Terminology).

Emile placed 3rd in Extemporaneous Writing and Eleanor placed 3rd in Medical Terminology, 4th/5th in Medical Math, and 4th/5th in Pharmacology). Emile will be going to the International Conference to be held in Houston this June to compete in Extemporaneous Writing in Health Policy.

Benson Tech's HOSA Future Health Professionals chapter's history stretches back into the 1980s and the early years of the organization. HOSA was created in the 1970s to provide health occupation students with a unique program of leadership and skills development beyond the classroom through annual conferences and competition at the state and international level.

Benson Tech's student-led chapter has 15 members for its members to specifically hone their skills (e.g. CPR/first aid, medical spelling, nutrition) for competition during the State of Oregon's annual HOSA conference. Those

students who place among the top five receive certificates, medals, and advance to the International Conference and competition. The chapter additionally has guest speakers, learn CPR as well as sponsoring a blood drive that was held on the Marshall Campus on March 31st

In past years, a number of Benson Tech students have advanced to the International Conferences' competition, including Jackelyn Mercado and Kayla Le in 2023. In 2022, Jackelyn Mercado, Violet Meyers, and Clío Tzetos went to Nashville, where Violet and Clío advanced to the second round. In 2020 when the International was virtual, Tiana Pham made it to the second round in Dental Terminology.

Whether winning or not, Benson Tech HOSA members have said attending the State and International Conference's leadership and educational workshops exhibits, tours of nearby health care facilities, and networking was a very valuable part of preparing for a career.

The chapter is advised and coached by two teachers who are former graduates of Benson Tech and HOSA members: Irynne Padua (Class of 2005) and Leslie Keith (Class of 1991). As a junior, Irynne placed 4th in Nutrition at the State Conference. As a senior, she placed in Nutrition and in CPR/first aid at the Oregon Conference and made it to the second round in CPR/first aid at the national meet

*[Note: The Benson Tech Foundation is a supporter of Benson Tech's HOSA Chapter]*



# MODERNIZATION CONSTRUCTION SPOTLIGHT



**Photo 1:** View southwest in the Grand Open Common Space inside Building F. Progress continues with the glass curtain wall in place, Sheetrock and duct work are ongoing. **Photo 2:** Solar panels installed above the outdoor observation deck on the south side of Building H and overlooking Buckman Field. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

## Benson Tech Modernization, continued from front cover

**Building A – Auditorium.** Progress continues in all areas of restoration and upgrade. Painting throughout the facility and restoration of original plaster vent and speaker panels is ongoing. The new alumni room, located on the second floor at the west end, has continued to progress but is not complete yet and the set-up and layout of memorabilia in the room is being guided by a committee from the BPHSAA Board. All HVAC components, located in the mechanical room, are in place and a few portions of the duct work continue to be installed. The “Black Box,” which is a practice room in the basement area below the stage, is near completion. There is a dressing room, complete with makeup stalls, mirrors and lighting being installed. The makeup/dressing room has 10 stalls for individual performers to apply makeup for their productions. The auditorium will be publicly available through PPS for outside use of the facility as well as Benson Tech student body activities.

**Building B – Library, Band Room, Counselors Offices and Class Rooms.** Progress in Building B has continued, interior walls are done with the utilities, doors and hardware going in place. Progress continues on the library, located on the first level with installation of acoustic and ceiling panels.

**Building C - Chemistry, Manufacturing, Construction and Class Rooms.** Building C is in the final stages with hallway wood paneling in place and much

progress on the installation of doors and hardware. The installation of the finish wood paneling and painting in the hallways is near completion. Hallway lockers are being installed as well. The chemistry rooms have work stations, cabinets and vent hoods in place. Utilities and related components continue in process throughout the building. The construction shop on the first floor has a dedicated dust control system. The dust collector has been delivered and is being installed in the upper section of Building F in a dust collector bay in the northeast corner of the building.

**Building D - Foundry, Pattern Shop, Senior Manufacturing and Senior Electrical Shop.** Improvements to the foundry, Building D, continues with all seismic upgrades complete. Progress on the interior has continued with walls, sheetrock and painting in various stages. Crews are busy installing utility conduits and duct work throughout. The original “Sand Mix Mueller Machine” is still in the building, has been relocated and awaiting final hookup.

**Building E - Main School Administration Offices, Classrooms, Health Center.** Restoration of the original wooden staircase banisters and wood trim is almost complete. Crews continue restoring the original trim and casing woodwork in the main school entrance foyer. Installation of the new entrance security system and glass panels are in place. Finish work continues and is nearing

*(story continues on next page)*



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**Photo 3:** Inside the Building C shop area with decorative blue sound dampening board along upper wall section and wood paneling wall covering.  
**Photo 4:** View from Building F looking northwest into the atrium area, which is between the original Building E on the left and the juncture with new Building B at the right of the image. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

completion throughout the office spaces, classrooms, and restrooms. Construction of new concrete steps below the main entrance are complete and final grading of handicap access ramps into the building has started but not complete due to other activities in the area.

**Building F - Grand Gathering Space Commons, Cafeteria and Kitchen Facilities.** The second floor walkway, overseeing the Grand Space below, has an extensive stainless steel handrail system around the perimeter. Painting, hardware and remaining duct work installation are near completion as well. The new kitchen/cafeteria facility has equipment being installed along with fire suppression systems. The original wooden gymnasium flooring is undergoing surface restoration on site and will eventually be set on top of the concrete learning stairs to cap the concrete. Progress on the learning stairs is delayed as a scaffolding system is presently in place on top of them for items being installed from the ceiling. Building F will also house the dust collector for the wood shop located in the adjacent Building C.

**Building G1 - Old Gym and Classroom Space.** Painting, duct work, doors and hardware are in final stages throughout the building. The upper deck running track has a skim coat of concrete in place with the final surface finish to follow. The banked wooden sections, located in each of the four corners of the track, will not be replaced due to safety reasons.

**Building G2 - New Gym.** The building exterior upgrades are complete and progress in the interior has progressed with plumbing, duct work and utilities in final stages. The designated seasonal team locker room and the men's and women's locker rooms are painted with appur-

tenances to be installed. As with all buildings, the doors, hardware and hallway finishes are being installed.

**Building H - Automotive Shops, Classrooms, Hydronic Heating Boiler and Chilling Equipment Building.** All sections of the building have progressed. Classrooms and auto shops are almost ready for finish work. The chiller room houses three chiller units; they are all installed, complete with piping and mechanical elements for operation. The boiler room has all five boilers installed with piping and mechanical elements in place. Installation of the backup generator in the south courtyard is complete. Progress has continued on the main electrical room for the campus, which is in Building H. Breakers and transformers are in place, with electricians landing the wire terminations to complete the installation. The radio tower is receiving seismic upgrades to the structural bracing system. The tower structure has been ground smooth to bare metal at the various locations for welding additional bracing onto the Tower Structure.

**Building I** – The radio station building has been cleared out for renovation improvements, with some walls and insulation stripped out for replacement. The general floor plan layout of this building will not change. All of the PPS management team and site contractors have relocated out of the radio building and into the new Building C for the remainder of the project.

Installation of the four new elevators continues, the elevator servicing the auditorium and the G1-Gym are in place and nearing completion.

My thanks to Mark Kline for my site tour on February 23, 2024.

# Benson Tech football faces big test

PPS has given Benson Tech an almost impossible test to bring football back: *gather 23 or more incoming freshman who do not know each other, form them into a team, get them in shape, teach them skills and some plays while giving them a football experience that is fun and memorable in less than three weeks.*

If there are 23+ players in condition and ready to play before school starts, a schedule will be drawn up and Benson Tech will have football. If not, the test is over and the school's dream of having a football team is dead.

Benson Tech has hired an experienced dedicated coach, Brian Corey, who believes he can pass the test! He met a number of incoming freshman students wanting to play football when they came in March to register for fall classes. He intends to stay in touch with them individually through the spring and

early summer before football practices begin on August 5.

To make Benson Tech football a first-class experience for the players, Brian plans to have a BBQ following the first practice session on August 5 and intends to mix in some non-football bonding events after some August practices.

Brian strongly believes that developing a sense of being a valuable teammate and having pride in Benson Tech football is as important as winning games. If this can be accomplished during the August workout and the football season, the 2024 experience will snowball into making Benson Tech a destination school for aspiring football players throughout Portland.



For that to happen, Brian could really use some help in the next five months from alumni in terms of:

- Money for food, "cool player gear", and team building events such as bowling.
- Help at the August 5 BBQ, fund raising events, and other team building events
- Alumni coming out for some of the August workouts and later games during the season
- Support from former players at the non-football team building events as well as August workouts and games.

*Willing to help? For donations in any amount: Use the QR code above or go to <https://pps.schoolpay.com/pay/for/Benson--FOOTBALL/S6fox0>. To offer time and support: Email Brian Corey at [bcorey@pps.net](mailto:bcorey@pps.net) and/or Bob Walker at [wyndyridge@msn.com](mailto:wyndyridge@msn.com).*

## Benson TechBoosters update

*By Kelly Janes, Benson TechBoosters President*

Benson TechBoosters have some exciting initiatives in the pipeline. We are dedicated to supporting the vibrant Benson Tech community and providing resources for student athletes and clubs, as well as showing teacher appreciation. Here's what's coming up:

**Celebrating 50 Years of Women at Benson Tech:** To honor this milestone, we are working closely with alumni to create a plaque to present to some of the first women to attend Benson Tech at the first spirit assembly of the 2024-2025 school year. We hope this will inspire current Benson Tech students and give them a sense of the strength and longevity of the Benson Tech community. The plaque will serve as a symbol of appreciation and recognition for the girls' groundbreaking experiences.

**Engaging with Local Representatives:** It's essential for us to have a voice in our community and advocate for Benson

Tech. That's why Oregon House Rep. Rob Nosse will be joining us at our May 16th TechBoosters meeting. We encourage everyone to join us. Meeting details can be found on our website.

**Recruitment and Spirit Gear Sales at the Tech Show:** We are gearing up to showcase Benson TechBoosters at the upcoming Tech Show. We invite alumni and potential volunteers to stop by our table, say hello, and explore opportunities to get involved. In addition to recruiting new members, we will be selling Benson Tech Spirit gear to further support our endeavors.

**Concessions and Spirit Gear Sales at Sporting Events:** Our concessions stand continues to be a hub of activity, providing snacks and drinks at various sporting events. Big thanks to alum Jeff Strachan (Class of 1977) for spearheading this amazing fundraising opportunity for athletic teams and student groups. Visit us during the PIL JV Classic on 4/6/2024 and the Benson Tech Invitational on 4/20/24. Your support directly

contributes to our efforts to enhance the school experience for students and staff alike. In addition to concessions, we'll be selling spirit gear at the 4/20 track meet.

**Teacher Appreciation Week Fundraising:** As we approach Teacher Appreciation Week in May, we are gearing up for a final fundraising push to show our gratitude to the dedicated teachers at Benson Tech. Stay tuned to our social media accounts\* for more details on how you can contribute and participate.

**Fundraising for Frosh Football:** We are also laying the groundwork for fundraising efforts to support Frosh Football. We're excited to see football return to Benson Tech!

**Burgerville Fundraiser:** We have a fundraiser planned at Burgerville in May. Keep an eye on our social media\* for updates on dates, times, and location

\* Find us on Facebook at: [Benson Polytechnic High School Students, Alumni & Community](#) on Instagram at [Benson TechBoosters](#).





## REUNION INFORMATION

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### CLASS OF 1974 - 50th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 14, 2024

**WHAT:** Reunion in conjunction with Benson Tech Grand Opening events, ~11:00 am-3:00 pm

**WHERE:** BPHS Campus (1546 NE 12th, Portland, OR 97232)

**WHAT:** Sunday afternoon all-ages picnic, 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Blue Lake Park (1224 NE Blue Lake Road, Fairview, OR 97024)

**CONTACT:** Questions? Join the Benson Polytechnic High School Class of 1974 Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BensonHighSchoolClassOf1974>), or contact David Ness at [DavidN@mtrx.com](mailto:DavidN@mtrx.com).

### CLASS OF 1984 - 40th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 7, 2024

**WHAT:** Casual evening gathering, time TBD.

**WHERE:** Kenton Station (8303 N Denver, Portland 97217)

**CONTACT:** For more information, email Doran Lower at [doran1966@gmail.com](mailto:doran1966@gmail.com), or visit the Benson Polytechnic High School Class of 1984 Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/84techman>)

### CLASS OF 1989 - 35th Reunion

**WHEN:** Friday and Saturday, September 27 and 28, 2024

**WHAT:** Friday evening alumni-only gathering, 6:00 pm-close

**WHERE:** Stadium's Sports Bar (16065 SE McLoughlin Blvd., Milwaukie 97267)

**WHAT:** Saturday golf and spa day, details TBD

**WHERE:** McMenamins Edgefield (2126 SW Halsey Street, Troutdale, OR 97060)

**CONTACT:** For updates, Join the [Benson Tech Class of '89 Facebook group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/BensonTech89/) at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BensonTech89/> or contact Scott Allen Tice at [scotttice@mac.com](mailto:scotttice@mac.com).

### CLASS OF 1994 - 30th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 14, 2024

**WHAT:** Reunion in conjunction with Benson Tech Grand Opening events, ~11:00 am-3:00 pm.

**WHERE:** BPHS Campus (546 NE 12th, Portland, OR 97232)

**WHAT:** Casual, adults-only reunion, time TBD

**WHERE:** Kenton Station (8303 N Denver, Portland, OR 97217).

**TICKETS:** Price and purchasing info TBD

**CONTACT:** Visit the [BHS Class of 1994 Facebook Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/361891933834534) (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/361891933834534>) for updates and details, and email Jayesh Palshikar at [jayesh.palshikar@gmail.com](mailto:jayesh.palshikar@gmail.com) with questions

### CLASS of 2004 - 20th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 14, 2024

**WHAT:** Family-friendly gathering in conjunction with the Benson Tech Grand Opening celebration, ~11:00 am-3:00 pm

**WHERE:** BPHS Campus (546 NE 12th, Portland, OR 97232)

**WHAT:** Adults-only reunion, 6:00 pm onward

**WHERE:** TBD

**TICKETS:** ~\$50 each (estimated), purchasing info to come

**CONTACT:** Visit the Benson High School Class of 2004 Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Benson2004>) for updates and details, and reach out to the planning committee at [bensohhs2004@gmail.com](mailto:bensohhs2004@gmail.com) with questions or if you'd like to assist with the reunion

### CLASS of 2014 - 10th Reunion

Please contact the BPHSAA at [info@bensontechalumni.org](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.org) if you are aware of any plans that are in the works for a Class of 2014 reunion.

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## Is your class planning a reunion?

Does your class end in a "5" or a "0"? Are you considering, or perhaps already in the process of planning a reunion in 2025? The BPHSAA can help to spread the word, and connect you with graduates from your class!

Simply send an email with the following information to [info@bensontechalumni.org](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.org), and we'll share the details of your reunion on our webpage, social media accounts, and in our newsletters.

- **When** (dates and times)
- **What** (the nature of the events — adults-only or families welcome, catered or potluck, or BYO food and drink, etc.)
- **Where**
- **Cost and how to purchase tickets**
- **Event website or Facebook page** (if applicable)
- **Contact information** for the organizer(s)

# Still making the grade of excellence at Benson Tech

By Kevin B. Clark, Ph.D. (Class of 1984)

Newest Portland Public Schools (PPS) findings from Academic Year 2022-2023 once again show that Benson Tech students make the grade of excellence with a 92% graduation rate, a value over 10% greater than the mean percentage of high schoolers on-time to graduate in four years in Oregon. Benson Tech also prepares students to earn high school diplomas at a significantly high 97% completion rate within five years of enrolling at the school. A decade trend of increasing high school graduation rates asymptoted for public school districts in recent years across Oregon following the start of COVID-19 pandemic. The mean rate declined just one percentage point since the statewide record high of almost 83% set in Academic Year 2019-2020. PPS, Oregon's biggest pre-K-12 public school district, tends to outperform state educational means and continues to sustain its numbers since 2018-2019 with 81% of district seniors receiving their diplomas in 2022-2023 (see Benson Tech Alumni Text, April 2020 Edition, Page 7, <https://bensontech-alumni.org/about/newsletters/>), although the PPS rate is down four percentage points from last year. The four top achieving PPS high schools in lower to higher rank order – Benson Tech, Lincoln High School, Grant High School, and Cleveland High School – overwhelmingly best that mark for the 2022-2023 Academic Year with graduation rates tightly clustered within a 92% to 94% interval.

Benson Tech, which ranks 54 and 62 in the state on graduation rates and on a combination of performance indices, nonetheless educates a student body very different from the usual affluent students of European descent attending rival in-state high schools. The Oregon Department of Education (<https://www.ode.state.or.us/data/ReportCard/Reports/Index?id=906>) and US News and World Report [Best High Schools Rankings](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/oregon/districts/portland-public-schools/benson-poly-technic-high-school-16602) (<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/oregon/districts/portland-public-schools/benson-poly-technic-high-school-16602>) report that Benson Tech has one of Oregon's most diverse underserved student populations with 56% and 23% of respective students being racial or ethnic minorities and differentially abled. Yet, Benson Tech confers diplomas at much higher rates than state and district means in all major student demographic rubrics for race, ethnicity, gender, sex, economic status, and educational support needs. These figures are valid, if imprecise, predictors of later postsecondary scholastic, career, and life attainment and help validate the effectiveness of Benson Tech's innovative comprehensive Career



**Above:** Class of 2023 graduation ceremony at Providence Park.

Technical Education (CTE) focus option model, reinforcing why Benson Tech remains an appealing enrollment choice for Portland-area students wanting to better ready themselves to compete in a tech-permeated world.

Benson Tech administrators, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders perfect educational success with their commitment to our school's standards-setting immersive CTE-pathways instruction and learning. An 88% retention rate for teachers over the past three-year period helps keep educational continuity at Benson Tech and elevates student participation and performance, especially with the school's good student-to-teacher ratio of 22:1. At Benson Tech, 95% of freshman track toward graduation and 59% of all students attend school at least 90% of the academic year, as disclosed by the district's published 2022-2023 statistics. Attendance numbers have dropped by nearly 20 percentage points since pre-pandemic Academic Year 2018-2019. The difficulty for some north- and westside Portland students to travel to and from the Marshall High School campus during the Benson Tech modernization relocation accounts for possible attendance disruption. These problems worsen because of the economic disparity experienced by Benson Tech families, as measured by over 95% of the student body qualifying for the federal free and reduced price meal program.

Benson Tech's Level 2 and lower accountability for state-planned Every Student Succeeds Act proficiencies in English Language Arts and Mathematics reflects student disadvantages, necessitating better state and district spending, resources, and programming to reach Oregon's long-term Level 5 benchmark of 80% for high school student academic achievement in each discipline. However, Benson Tech's proficiencies in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Sciences compare well to PPS aggregate mean scores. Benson Tech students excel in the

*(story continues on next page)*



## Still making the grade, continued from previous page

face of adversity due to their access to both highest quality career-oriented project-based education and transformative community engagement aided with superior school climate and wrap-around services, such as that offered by Benson Tech's small, consummate counseling staff and OHSU-partnered Wellness Center. Benson Tech CTE teachers, some of whom are Benson Tech alumni, also mold cutting-edge curricula and extracurricula that empower students with technical job experiences and civic stewardship to become more capable workforce members as well as industry and societal leaders (see Benson Tech Alumni Text, April 2020 Edition, Page 7, <https://bensontechalumni.org/about/newsletters/>). This type of advanced training blending hard and soft workplace skills exposes and prepares students for the future complex challenges that their generations must overcome. In addition, enduring positive student outcomes are driven by community involvement, such as those addressing sustainable human development through hands-on projects shaped by newsworthy industry, academia, and community partners and enriching student internships, (pre)apprenticeships, and additional occupational interactions.

Among the recent exciting examples of community-linked student achievement growth is the elevation in 9th Grade on-track to graduation rates for Benson Tech African American and Hispanic/Latino students in Academic Year 2022-2023. At least 92% and 95% of

students from the respective cohorts now meet graduation progress, an approximate 14% and 8% jump from the prior academic year. Student activities involving school clubs, the burgeoning Center for Black Student Excellence, and the Latino Network's Portland Escalera college preparation program make such outcomes possible. They instill Benson Tech students with life purpose and abilities that promote accomplishments in prestigious national scholastic competitions, such as SkillsUSA and HOSA, outstanding rates for high school graduation, and strong placements in postsecondary school and job preferences. Moreover, they give occasions for students to create and enjoy meaningful identity affirmation, equity, and restorative justice in their lives and the lives of others. Despite these successes, the Benson Tech community needs to work over the coming years to modernize the school's curricula to meet 21st century demands. Ongoing multi-million dollar district operational budget cuts will interfere with that objective after returning to our rebuilt Alma mater in another few months. Alumni may be nevertheless confident that educational perfection at Benson Tech will still involve nurturing future graduates into thoughtful productive influencers of local to global consequence.

*For more information about Benson Tech scholastic success, please email BPHSAA leadership at [info@bensontechalumni.org](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.org) and/or Bob Walker at [wyndyridge@msn.com](mailto:wyndyridge@msn.com).*



### Thank you to the generous donors who contributed to the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund in 2023:

- Audio Tango
- Bakke Properties LLC
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- Jerald V Parker
- Peter Simpson, in memory of James F. Simpson, Class of 1954
- Jeffery Spathas
- Charles A. Tujo, in honor of the Class of 1986
- Robert Leonard Walker

To learn more about the Scholarship Fund, or to make a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible donation, visit: <https://bensontechalumni.org/sections/scholarship/>

## BPHSAA gets an address

The BPHSAA was very pleased to learn that room had been provided for them in the renovated buildings of the school. It will be on the second floor, along the entire west end of the auditorium. It is an odd-shaped room, measuring 78 x 16 feet, but well suited for display cases to be placed between the windows of the exterior wall. The construction shop has made benches from salvaged beams, formerly in the construction classroom in the E Wing, that will go under the windows there. Tables and chairs will be stackable and adaptable to multiple purposes. A row of chairs from the auditorium will go on the interior wall between the two entry doors. The hallway between the doors will have another display case.

The BPHSAA has been tasked with selecting archived items for display. A glance at the inventory list of the items saved for the move to the former Marshall campus shows there is quite a variety of things

to choose from. Lots of photos and plaques, molds from past foundry pours, a set of yearbooks, the Tech Pep archive, an assortment of historically significant books, outdated shop equipment, and such. The end walls will be capable of screening presentations, which will include zoom meetings, and there will be internet access. The BPHSAA Board of Directors is looking forward to moving the association's holdings, conveniences, merchandise, and the like from their homes and garages to the room.

It is uncertain what the role of the room will be at future Tech Shows. The BPHSAA would be pleased to show it off but setting up in the old gymnasium is certainly more convenient for alumni visitors. The room and the auditorium balcony will share an elevator. Having an established location in the school will increase awareness of the BPHSAA now to benefit future alumni.

## Benson Tech alumni obituaries now posted online

Do you know where your great-grandmother was born? If not, there is a library in Portland where her birth place could be discovered. This library was founded by volunteers in 1946 and has flourished ever since. It is still run by volunteers whose donated duties support the many functions of the Genealogy Forum of Oregon, or the GFO as they like to call it. The GFO is a private library open to non-members for a token fee, located in the basement of the Ford Building, at SE 11th and Division.

The library has over 60,000 holdings on its shelves and has recently begun scanning books and periodicals to make more room. Browsers will find indexed census listings, birth and marriage records, cemetery directories, and other relevant materials for each U.S. state and most other countries on the shelves. Each of these collections is likely to include rare volumes like "Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion" or "Divorces of Clay County, Kentucky." There is an extensive collection of micro-filmed resources and even more posted on their webpage. Computers are available for users and library subscriptions gives them access to pertinent commercial compilations. Assistants are there to help with research and groups with

special interests schedule regular meetings at the library. There is a shelf there with a nearly complete collection of Benson Tech yearbooks.

Obituaries are a key feature of genealogy research so when the obituaries of the Benson Tech collection was offered to the GFO, an idle flat sheet scanner was quickly made available. This agreement gave the GFO an addition to their already substantial obituary listings and may attract new people to their membership. The on-line posting allows Benson alumni to look up the life summary of a past friend and classmate whenever the thought occurs to them. To access this posting, navigate to [www.gfo.org](http://www.gfo.org) and go to Resources> Indexes> All indexes> Benson High School Newspaper Clippings

This index is alphabetical by surname, rather than the BPHSAA index that is alphabetical by year of birth. The GFO index is hyperlinked to the specific obituary through a surname registration number. Both indices can be accessed directly from the "In Memoriam page" option on the BPHSAA website, [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org).

## Unlocking alumni engagement: The impact of QR codes

Did you know that there is a website designed to provide the latest news and information about Benson Tech High School for alumni and anyone interested in school news? The BPHSAA website ([www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org)) is a great way to stay informed, and it is updated regularly with news and events that are relevant to the alumni community.

**Effortless Access.** Rather than typing in a lengthy URL, scanning the QR code with a smartphone greatly streamlines the process of reaching the website – plus there is no danger of mistyping the URL address. However, for those who don't have access to a smartphone, the website can still be easily accessed via web browser.



**Efficient Membership Management.** The QR code makes it easy to join or renew your membership to the BPHSAA.

Simply open your smartphone's camera app and point the camera at the QR code, then click the website prompt when it appears on your screen. This will take you directly to the BPHSAA homepage. From there, select "Join Us!" at the top of the page, scroll down and click on "2024 Membership" and follow the resulting prompts. Prefer to pay via check? Contact [info@bensontechalumni.org](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.org).

**Connectivity Anywhere, Anytime.** We want all alumni and community members to remain connected and up to date with the latest and greatest Benson Tech news. This QR code makes it much easier to do that. Please give it a try and stay engaged!

## BPHSAA TRiViA QUIZ

Alumni with some memory about the Tech Pep should do well in this quiz.

- **Question 1:** What were the circumstances that brought a print shop to Benson Tech?
- **Question 2:** How quickly did the newly acquired presses start producing a weekly paper?
- **Question 3:** How was the Tech Pep chosen for the name of the paper?
- **Question 4:** Was the paper self-supporting?
- **Question 5:** When did the paper cease publication?

- 
- **Answer 1:** Like most businesses, the Portland School District #1 had need for forms, flyers, and formal statements so it made sense to have a printing capability, and especially so when labor costs could be side-stepped by offering on-the-job training to high school students. This program was well established at Jefferson HS when the military vacated their Benson training center in 1919. The Chair of the District's Board of Directors was himself in the printing business and he championed the idea of moving the presses to Benson. This transfer was done during August of 1920.
  - **Answer 2:** The equipment received from Jefferson included a cylinder and two platen presses, 150 cases of type, paper, and related accessories. All of these fixtures were sorted out well enough to publish and distribute the Volume 1, Number 1 issue of The Tech Pep on September 21, 1920.
  - **Answer 3:** The idea for a weekly school paper came from Mr. O. W. Athey, who may also have been part of the print shop moved from Jefferson. The School Board welcomed the idea and without fanfare, the banner of the new newspaper bore the name the Tech Pep.
  - **Answer 4:** A Tech Pep article published on October 19, 1920, encouraging Benson families to support the Tech Pep advertisers, states that advertising fees cover the cost of the paper.

Ads appeared in the very first issue and were more abundant in subsequent ones. The paper's staff included a position for a business manager, whose job was to sell ads. Free distribution of the paper was limited to only the students who paid 50 cents each term for a student body card, but those funds went to a different account.

- **Answer 5:** The paper suffered a lingering death. From September 1920 to May 1960 the issues were systematically saved, bound, and archived. By 1960 the weekly papers had become biweekly and this schedule became every 3rd week by the end of the 1960's before faltering further in the 1970's. In 1977, there were 14 issues planned but only 12 were printed, according to the 1977 Blueprint. Two Apple IIe computers arrived in 1985 and soon after desktop publishing cut into the role of the print shop. A weekly series of issues has survived for September of 1997 to June of 1998, but these issues were just the front and back of a single 8.5 x 11" sheet, and distinguished with the name Tech Pep extra. The 2008 Blueprint has a photo of an unused press. The last issue to appear in the archive was from May 2010, Volume 90, Number 6. The 2011 Blueprint is the last to include a photo of the Tech Pep staff.





## Benson Tech girls basketball team places second at 2024 OSAA championships

Bolstered by the renewed vigor that has characterized the team and their play this past season, Benson Tech's girls basketball team placed second in the OSAA 6A Girls Basketball State Championships held March 7-9 at the University of Portland Chiles Center. South Medford won the title game.

Team members and coaches pictured above are listed below (left to right):

- Vivienne McDonald
- Precious Alex (Coach)
- Londyn Dyton (23)
- Olivia Hinck (10)
- Major Jimmerson (Coach)
- Mauriana Hashemian-Orr (3)
- Jaiden Young (0)
- Makaila Garcia-Taylor (11)
- ReShawn Brown (Coach)
- Eric Knox (Head Coach)
- Taliya McKelvey (5)
- Samarah Massey (45)
- Dexteur LeSueur (Coach)

- Mahogany Chandler-Roberts (33)
- Trinity Alex (20)
- Kalyan Johnson (21)
- Eboni Clay (1)
- Ken Cook (Coach)
- Da-Anyel McKelvey (coach)

Mahogany Chandler-Roberts was named PIL Defensive Player of the year as well as PIL Player of the year. Mahogany and Eboni Clay also were named to PIL's First Team while Mauriana Hashemian-Orr and Samarah Massey were named to the PIL Second Team.

Mahogany will be attending University of Central Florida on a full basketball scholarship and Mauriana will attend St. Mary's College (in Moraga, CA), also on a full basketball scholarship.

In the semifinals, Benson Tech defeated Clackamas High School which had not lost to a team from Oregon in two years.

*Congratulations to the team from the BPHSAA!*