



## BENSON TECH

# ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), February 2017 Edition

### Chairman's Message

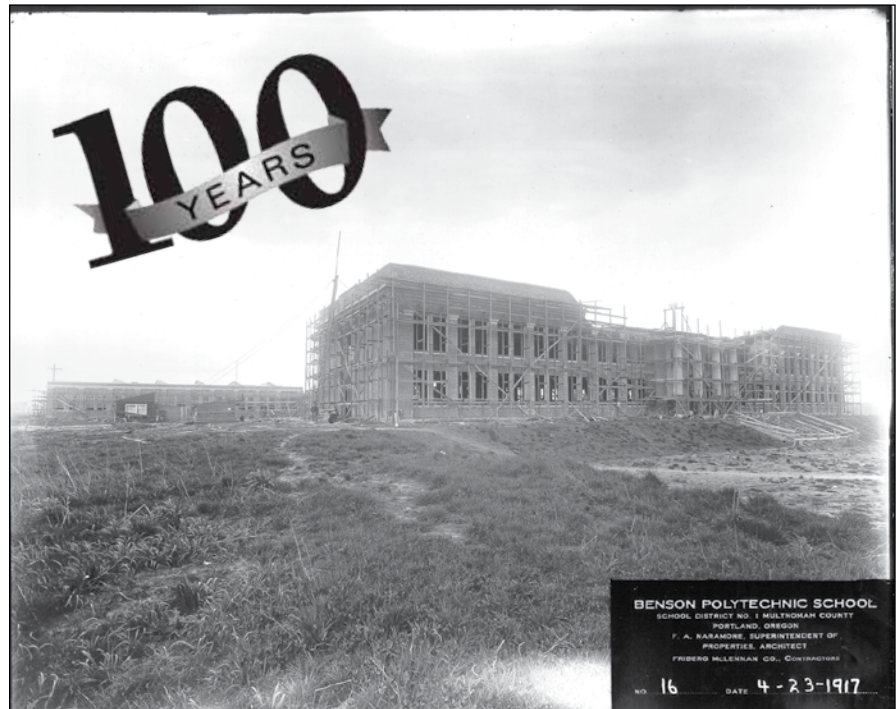
By Rob Johns, chairman,  
BPHSAA Board of Directors  
(Class of 1977)

With another year comes another set of challenges and successes for Benson Tech, and the BPHSAA has continued to do its part in supporting the school, the students, and the faculty and staff in meeting those challenges and celebrating those successes.

A small group of dedicated alumni from many generations have been the key to keeping and growing the school with their public work, media work, and constant vigilance at Portland Public Schools Board meetings. For all Benson Tech alumni: I invite each of you to find a way to get involved in the BPHSAA, whether it be for a one-time event or a more long-term effort. If you're not able to contribute your time, I ask you to provide financial support — give to the Benson Tech Foundation or the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund (more information about the fund at [www.bensontechalumni.org/sections/scholarship](http://www.bensontechalumni.org/sections/scholarship)).

There are many excellent programs (some outlined in this newsletter) that serve the diverse needs of the current Benson Tech student population. You can be proud to know that as this issue of the newsletter goes to press, plans are underway for an upcoming school bond measure to fund a renovation for Benson

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## Benson Tech Grand Reunion in June: Come One, Come All!

Join your classmates and Benson Tech alumni from all years to celebrate Benson Tech's Centennial!

A three-day, multiple-event reunion of all Benson Tech graduates is scheduled for the weekend of June 9-11, 2017. See "Calendar of Events" below for a list of the planned events. Spouses, significant others, and dates are welcome at all events — and we are hoping for a significant turn-out of current and former Benson teachers who were a key part of our Benson experience. (Raffles, as fundraisers, will be held at several of the events to support Benson's activities.)

Pick and choose depending on your interests from among the following events. Please note that advance tickets and/or reservations can be arranged via the Grand Reunion section of the BPHSAA website at [www.bensontechalumni.org/GrandReunion](http://www.bensontechalumni.org/GrandReunion).

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS - BENSON TECH GRAND REUNION**  
**Meet and Greet, June 9, Friday, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m., \$10/person,**  
**McMenamins Kennedy School (5736 NE 33rd Ave., Portland OR):** A "meet and greet" will be held in the Parsons Room at McMenamins Kennedy School and is designed as an opportunity to meet up with other alumni

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## Benson Tech Foundation update

The Benson Tech Foundation is now in its 3rd full year as a qualified 501(c) (3). We are a small foundation supported primarily by alumni who want to give back to their majors financially and support the Career Technical Education (CTE) programs and STEM programs that make the school unique.

Over the past three years, the Foundation has supported travel for SkillsUSA competitions, a trip for Benson Tech students to Oregon State University for the Austin School of Entrepreneurship, teacher appreciation meetings, tools for the award-winning GeoTech program, and significant contributions to supporting the many maintenance needs of the Manufacturing program. Giving in the 2015-2016 fiscal year exceeded \$17,000.

This year for the Grand Reunion Centennial Celebration, the Foundation will sponsor a dinner at the Oregon Historical Society on June 10. Seating will be limited to 115 to 125 people. This event will be a capstone event to further contributions to the Foundation for its continued mission to support the CTE and STEM exclusively at Benson Tech.

If you would like to contribute, checks can be mailed to: Benson Tech Foundation, 546 NE 12th Ave., Portland, OR 97526. We will send you a confirming receipt for tax deduction purposes. You can also designate your United Way Contribution or employer match programs to increase contributions to the Benson Tech Foundation. Please feel free to email [robjohns@comcast.net](mailto:robjohns@comcast.net) or call 503-314-0041 to discuss how you can support the Foundation.

## Benson Tech PASS Team Meeting

*By Curtis Wilson, principal, Benson Tech*

The Benson PASS team is a small support group of teachers, parents and parents of color working in conjunction with PPS to look at supporting our students of color and our parents of color here at Benson Tech. PASS stands for (Partnership for Academically Successful Students) and through shared collaborative development with Portland Public Schools the Benson PASS team will engage and empower families and communities of color here at Benson Tech assuring that all children — especially underserved black and brown children can reach their fullest potential.

The PASS model will bring together educators, Benson Tech administration, parents, and supporters of students and parents of color from the Benson Tech community in order to engage in a different kind of conversation that recognizes and values the diverse experiences of our students and parents of color while remaining focused on the shared values for a racially equitable and diverse school. The second Benson Tech PASS meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 27 starting at 5:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. with dinner in the Band Room (Room 125). The PASS Team Development/Discussion concept of the meeting will go from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00p.m. Dinner, childcare and Spanish interpretation needs will be provided at this meeting. I hope to see you at the meeting on Monday evening February 27.

## Benson Site Council Team

What is the role of the Benson Site Council Team? The Site Council team plays an important role in decision-making at Benson Tech. The Site Council is a group of teachers, parents, classified employees, alumni and students that work with the principal and his/her administration to develop, review and evaluate school improvement programs, safety protocols, parent engagement opportunities and discuss the overall goals of the school for the current school year and beyond. The Site Council also looks at how to best serve the whole school and how to best move policy and guidelines along that affect the school holistically in collaboration with the school principal. Please consider becoming part of Benson's Site Council Team.

### **Benson's enrollment to be scaled back?!**

Below are comments from PPS School Board Member Paul Anthony, which he shared with a number of Benson Tech supporters (and allowed us to share with all alumni). Benson has been operating under an artificial enrollment cap for nearly a decade or more. Many people have been working tirelessly over that time help the district see their error and increase or remove this cap. Last year, PPS finally committed to increasing Benson's freshman enrollment to 365 students, but as you'll read below, that commitment is beginning to waver.

"Thank you for all your ongoing support for Benson Tech and Portland Public Schools' students. PPS staff is asking the Superintendent to go back on the Board's previous commitment to increase Benson Tech's next incoming class to 365; instead, they want it scaled back to 300. I believe the reasons they cite are spurious:

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## Benson Tech Grand Reunion in June, continued from front cover

and teachers to catch up with each other and Benson Tech news. The event fee will cover light fare. An additional variety of drinks and other food may be purchased at the Kennedy School's varied bars and restaurant. Tickets will be available at the door or in advance as noted above. So call some classmates and meet there ... or simply come and meet some new friends.

***Benson Tech Picnic and School Tours, Saturday, June 10, Noon - 3:00 p.m., \$5/person for packaged picnic lunch, Benson Tech 546 NE 12th Ave, Portland, OR:*** The Saturday picnic and school tours (one at noon and a second at 2:00 p.m.) will be a chance to connect with other alumni, hear about current activities at Benson Tech and future plans, and share some cake and punch. You may purchase a lunch ticket and make a tour reservation (optional) in advance on the BPHSAA website.

***All-Alumni Dinner, Saturday, June 10, beginning at 5:30 p.m., \$40/person - purchase by May 31, Oregon Historical Society (OHS), 1200 SW Park Ave., Portland, OR:*** The Benson Tech Foundation is sponsoring a dinner for all alumni, current and former Benson teachers, and supporters, at the OHS. It should be another great opportunity to mingle with Benson Tech alums, envision Benson's future, and to view some of OHS' Simon Benson material as well as its upcoming exhibit, "High Hopes: Journey of John F. Kennedy." This will be a perfect time to reflect on Simon Benson's generosity, which led to the creation of Benson Tech and to learn how we can continue that spirit. *For this event, please purchase your tickets in advance via the BPHSAA website by May 31 — seating is limited.*

***Golf Event and Classic Car Cruise-in, Sunday, June 11, 10:00 a.m., \$25/slot for golfing (optional), Colwood Golf Center, 7313 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland:*** Play some golf or soccer-golf or simply enjoy a Classic Car Cruise-in. There will be a nine-hole executive course golf scramble at 10:00 a.m., soccer-golf at 11:45 a.m., and the cars begin arriving at about 11:00 a.m. Food will be available for purchase at the event. Register to play (\$25 and slots are limited) at the BPHSAA website, and then bring "your favorite wheels" (after registering at the BPHSAA website).

***Champagne Brunch Cruise, Sunday, June 11, 11:30 a.m. departure, \$46/person, Portland Spirit Cruise Ship, Salmon Street Spring Fountain, 1000 SW Naito Parkway, Portland, OR:*** There will be a two-hour Champagne Brunch Cruise on a Portland Spirit ship with special seating and pricing for Benson Tech alumni and teachers, providing another chance enjoy Benson memories while eating, drinking and sightseeing. *Reservations should be made directly with Portland Spirit Cruises at 503-943-9115.* Identify yourself as being with Benson Polytechnic High School for special pricing of \$46 per person (including the gratuity and other fees), and then board the ship on June 11 at the Portland Spirit Dock at the Salmon Street Springs Fountain in Tom McCall Waterfront Park by 11:30 a.m.

General information about the Benson Tech Grand Reunion weekend and all of the events listed here is also available at the BPHSAA website: [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org). You can also contact Dale at 360-576-4872 or email [dalebajema@comcast.net](mailto:dalebajema@comcast.net), or Rachael at 503-998-2923 or email [rachaellkk@gmail.com](mailto:rachaellkk@gmail.com) for more information.

## Chairman's Message, continued from front cover

Polytechnic High School (see article on Page 7 for details).

We have an exciting time in June planned for three days of events to celebrate the Centennial of Benson Tech. Be sure to put June 9-11 on your calendars. If you live outside Portland, come for the Rose Festival and stay for the Grand Reunion! This event is open to all alumni of all classes. We think there will be something for everyone to enjoy (see "Benson Tech Grand Reunion" article starting on the front cover) to celebrate this special time for a grand institution that each of us can be proud of.

The school itself, under the remarkable leadership of Principal Curtis Wilson, graduated at 89% this past June 2016 graduation class. The school enrollment has now turned up to nearly 1,000 students after much hard work to negotiate, and at times, publicly embarrass the Portland Public Schools Board and leadership, which had invoked a cap at 825 students. This "battle of wills" over enrollment continues, but we are hopeful with the bond measure, the focus will turn to the planning for the renovation and the incredible possibilities that will bring.



## Benson Tech House construction almost complete

By Luke Hotchkiss, teacher,  
Construction

The current house project for Benson Tech students is located at 130 NE Skidmore, just two blocks east of MLK Blvd. It is nearly complete, lacking only countertops, appliances, upstairs carpet, and final cleaning before sale.

Due to the enrollment cap and changes in the schedule it has taken a little over four years to complete this house, but it should sell for a lot more than anything Benson students have completed before. Students framed, roofed, installed windows and siding, did an immense amount of CVG fir interior trim work, built and installed cabinets, and much more to complete this house. We are quite proud of what they have accomplished, and will have an open house at the



house around spring break to celebrate completion.

Our next house project will be on N Haight Ave, just south of the Humboldt Elementary site. We have encountered some permitting hurdles to unlink this and the two adjacent future home sites from the Conditional Use Permit of the school, so construction on the next home will not begin until next fall.

We currently have 12 seniors and 18 juniors in the Building Construction major, and 90 total Sophomores in the Construction rotation this year. In addition to building end-grain cutting boards for the Tech Show, students this year are working through a curriculum in partnership with PNCCI where they can earn pre-apprenticeship certifications as well as credits at PCC.

### KBPS Summer Sound 2017



By Kevin Flink, KBPS operations  
manager

For the 45th year KBPS will broadcast Summer Sound this June, July and August. Summer Sound which began in 1971 hires high school students to work at a real radio station, playing music, announcing news and conducting interviews of people in the Portland area who are involved in activities of interest to teens. Former KBPS student Emily Walker will be the producer of the program for her third season.

The program will air weekdays throughout the summer from 8:30-12:30. Tune in to 1450 AM KBPS or streaming at [kbps.am](http://kbps.am) for Summer Sound and hear some of today's best young broadcasters demonstrate their on-the-job training.

### Benson alumni teach new generation of Techsters

A very interesting and exciting aspect of Benson Tech's history is the passing on of knowledge from one Benson alum to another through Teaching. Here we show the list of current teachers and their majors that they are working in. There has been a solid group from the Class of 1975, but now it's encouraging to see some of the more recent graduates coming back to the school to serve. If teaching is a calling for anyone reading this newsletter, there is a way to obtain the CTE Teaching Certificate within Portland Public Schools. Come to Tech Show and ask these teachers how they did it. Each one has a great story to tell!

- Tammy Hite, Architecture
- Lesley Kieth, Health Occupations\*\*
- Irynne Padua, Health Occupations\*\*
- Nicole Kennedy, Health Occupations
- JaNae Jamison, Health Occupations
- Luke Hotchkiss, Construction
- Richard Weber, Construction
- Tim Hryciw, Tech Geometry and Tech Algebra
- Steve Naganuma, Radio
- Jorge Maceo, Electric\*\*
- Emily Peterson, Chemistry\*\*

\*\*New teachers to Benson this year.

### Mark your calendars: 6th Annual Poetry Slam

The date has been set for Benson's 6th Annual Poetry Slam. It will be held in the Benson Library on Thursday, April 13 during Flex/Tutorial (2:10-3:15 p.m.). The winners will compete in the Verselandia! Grand Slam to be held on April 27 in the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.



## Wellness Center caps off first year with award

*By Caroline Bleckmann, LCSW,  
Wellness Center*

After years of planning, the Benson Wellness Center opened its doors a year ago with a mission to keep students physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. Since then, we have been able to provide Benson Tech students with one-stop shopping for their healthcare needs. We are proud to announce that we recently won a “Partnership Award” from the Oregon School Based Health Centers Program Office!

Students can access primary care; mental health services; nursing and social work services throughout

the school day. Primary Care is provided by OHSU Family Medicine at Richmond Clinic. Mental health services are provided by the Multnomah County School-Based Mental Health Program. Multnomah County Education Service District provides our school nurse, and PPS provides the Social Work services. Together we provide truly integrated care for our students in a way that minimizes disruption to the school day.

The Wellness Center also sponsors a Stress Management Class and is getting ready to launch a series of Wellness Talks, which will be lunch-

time seminars on a variety of adolescent healthcare topics. Students can receive extra credit for participating in both. We are also putting together a Youth Action Council, which will serve as a kind of student board of directors for the clinic.

When students come in, we provide a warm and welcoming environment where they can feel comfortable sharing all questions and concerns. If Benson Tech alumni ever want to schedule a tour, feel free to email me at [cbleckmann@pps.net](mailto:cbleckmann@pps.net).

### Update from the Counseling Department

*By Amy Henry, counselor*

Despite the snow days, the Benson Tech counseling department has been busy in several areas:

**College and Career:** Dr. Sheree Thomas-Coleman joined our counseling staff as the College/AVID counselor and has already organized more than 25 college visits to our campus; scheduled campus visits for our AVID classrooms; and has held over 20 workshops for seniors around scholarships, FAFSA/ORSA, private school admission, etc.

All counselors were busy this fall meeting with seniors individually and holding workshops since the date for FAFSA moved from January 1 to Oct. 1. Our goal is to meet with every senior who is eligible for the Oregon Promise and make sure they fill out their FAFSA/ORSA and the Oregon Promise (a state grant program that covers some or all of the tuition at an Oregon community college) form to take advantage of this great program.

**Classroom Guidance:** The counselors met with all freshmen to help them with reading their transcripts, making the most of their high school years and to start planning for after high school. We have also been working with freshman in the new required freshman College and Career class. Our topic has been setting career goals, and taking classes and participating in extracurricular activities to support these career goals. Beginning in March, we will be working with all underclassmen to select classes for the 2017-18 school year. We had a change for non-health sciences sophomores: instead of four quarter rotations in a tech area, they now take two tech classes per semester. We are hoping this change will better assist sophomores in choosing a major for their junior year. Three years ago, the State of Oregon adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). In the 2017-18 school year, we will start rolling out these new standards by offering a new science class for freshman and our current science classes in a different rotation.

**Student Support:** Starting second semester, we are offering a mentoring/support group for African-American males through the Blueprint Foundation. We are also working with Latino Network to talk about expanding its program at Benson to include freshman and sophomores.

**Training/Staff Development:** Our counseling staff has been participating in several district trainings, such as Restorative Justice, Rapid Cycle of Inquiry, Check In and Check Out and Kognito, with the focus on relationship building with students. We are working with our teachers and other staff to develop a plan for professional development in this area for the next school year.

On a last note, we desperately need a large flat screen TV (larger than 48”) for our college and career center for guidance lessons and college/career visits to the center. If you have a large TV to donate or a contact for us to get a donation, please contact [amyhenry@pps.net](mailto:amyhenry@pps.net).

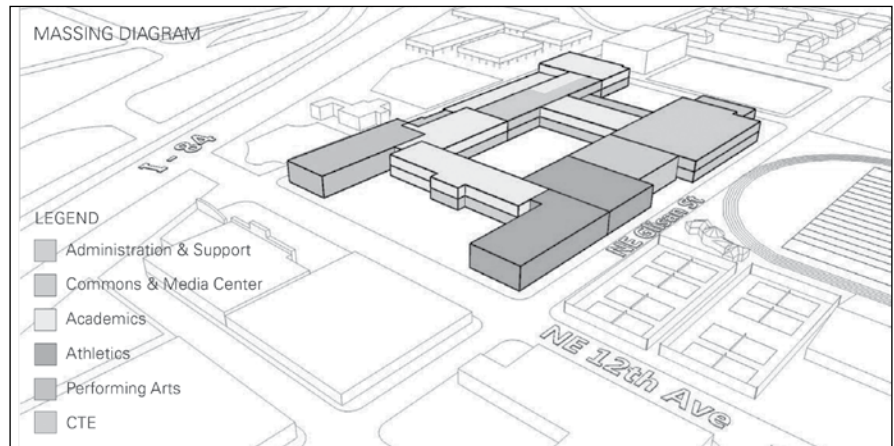
# Modernizing Benson Tech for the next 100 years of scholastic excellence

By Kevin B. Clark, Ph.D., *Ad hoc* Member, BPHSAA Board of Directors; Member, BPHS Master Planning Committee (Class of 1984)

Benson Tech's Centennial Anniversary year gives alumni certain cause to celebrate our alma mater's high-standard keystone traditions. The school most notably remains a state, regional and national leader in public STEAM/CTE secondary education and a prideful source of Portland-area history, culture, good works, and economic vigor. In this same year, we too may celebrate the emerging future of Benson Tech as a revitalized center for instilling university/ college and workforce readiness in students about to encounter the dynamic hyper-competitive tech-centered world.

Portland Public Schools (PPS) officials are now engaging teams of contracted architects and consultants, school administrators and staffs, and volunteer community stakeholders to ballot and pass a City of Portland May 2017 off-cycle election bond measure. The favorably polling bond, if approved by voters, will finance district school building improvements worth \$745 –\$790 million. As part of this effort, Benson Tech is scheduled to undergo essential comprehensive infrastructural and curricular modernization capable of advancing the school's scholastic excellence for the possible next 100 years.

Preliminary focus option diligence by the PPS Office of School Modernization, Bassetti Architects and Benson Tech's Master Planning Committee/Predesign Advisory Group supports a three-year phased remodeling plan costing \$202 million, with \$122 million dedicated to renovation and rebuilding expenditures that increase the school's exist-



Massing diagram of one of the site schemes being considered for the Benson Tech renovation, prepared by Bassetti Architects. Portland Public Schools officials are working to get a City of Portland May 2017 bond measure passed to fund school building improvements within the district worth \$745 - \$790 million.

ing total assignable square footage of 278K by approximately 132%. Final recommended remodeling cost and square-foot estimates may vary from these and other PPS-disclosed values. But Benson Tech academic/CTE-use areas will gain the greatest proposed expansion of the school's area programs.

Among bond-slated high schools, Benson Tech presents significant master-plan implementation challenges due to its constrained urban campus, high structural remediation priority and National Registry of Historic Places eligibility. Current master plan iterations emphasize progressive vertical architectural designs that respect the school's oldest historic exterior and interior spaces/surfaces, while optimizing educational functionality and climate for a capacity enrollment of 1,700 students. Landmark-protected west and north locations of campus, including the 1916 Main Classroom "A Wing," the 1927 Old Gymnasium, the 1930 Auditorium, and the 1916 Shop "C Wing" and Foundry Building, will be fully or partially restored. In contrast, light refurbishing of the much newer 1992 KBPS Radio

Station, 1991 Library/Digital Media Center, and 1964 New Gymnasium will limit hard costs as well as budget escalation, on-site logistical and safety demands, and learning disruption incurred from construction phasing. Benson Tech moreover needs substantial improvements to comply with 10 major health and safety categories. Some of the most urgent compliance concerns involve necessary seismic upgrades to school-wide unreinforced masonry, new fixture/system installations for superior drinking water and air quality, roof replacement, addition of ADA universal access, and integration of efficient electrical fixtures/systems and natural daylight in school rooms and corridors.

Proposed project specifications also aim to enrich student experiences and enhance scholastic performance with modern adaptive classrooms, extended-learning areas, and makerspaces that maintain innovative next-generation instruction/learning styles for academic and major programs. These new and medium-to-heavy remodeled envelopes and spaces, largely situated near the campus' east and south boundaries, will employ flexibility,

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## Modernizing Benson Tech, continued from previous page

proximity, and transparency to form educational clusters known to encourage rigor, relevance, creativity, enthusiasm, and collaboration in academic/CTE project-based learning. Minimal construction-budget provisions for new technologies will help ensure modernization is sustained through acquisition of industry-standard and state-of-art resources. Such acquisitions, in addition to other public/private capital and service agreements, will complement present school-inventoried technologies and forward-thinking training/ entrepreneurial programs, so that future students may secure unmatched advantages for entry, retention, and advancement in higher education and/or employment choices.

Remodeling plans for core academic and CTE spaces are accen-

tuated by a proposed new multi-purpose Student Commons area intended to integrate Benson Tech student and community activities. As a center of student life, the Commons will connect informal study, personal recreation, cafeteria dining and refreshments, and school-sponsored services and extramural events via improved access to the nearby West entry lawn, relaunched fine and performing arts facilities, gymnasias and Buckman field, wrap-around service providers, educational support, and a reconfigured central social courtyard with modest freight delivery and removal easement. Planned upper-floor terrace seating, walks, and viewing will facilitate Commons enjoyment and will permit pedestrian traffic to roof-top green spaces, outdoor science laboratories, and additional school sites.

Further details concerning the proposed Benson Tech project, including the January 2017 PPS Executive Summary, may be found at [www.pps.net/bond2017](http://www.pps.net/bond2017). Please remember to endorse Benson Tech modernization by casting your “Yes” vote for the May 2017 PPS Health, Safety, and Modernization Bond Measure. Through your action, the Benson Tech community can safeguard the school’s legacy from aging facilities and rapidly shifting educational and industry needs. We, together, will thereby protect Portland’s history and culture as well as drive the market competitiveness of Portland-area families and businesses toward a more vibrant future.

There are tentative design plans from Bassetti Architects available in the PPS Executive Summary located at <http://www.pps.net/bond2017>.

## Benson’s enrollment, continued from Page 2

1) We already know that the increased students can be accommodated by moving the District’s PISA program to two or three comprehensive high schools (where the students in the PISA program would be much better served);

2) DBRAC (the District-wide Boundary Review Advisory Committee) is not going to be considering Benson Tech or, indeed, any high schools in the coming year; and

3) Any move to reduce Benson Tech’s enrollment for construction is totally premature — not only has the bond not yet passed, but the Office of School Modernization still has no idea how many (or how few) students can be accommodated on-site during construction.

Given the District’s current timeline, construction on Benson Tech would not start until the incoming freshman class will have already gradu-

ated – plenty of time to make alternative arrangements before then.

I am afraid that we are again looking at an attempt to punish Benson Tech for being “too successful.” This last year Benson Tech graduated:

- 89% of its students on time (14 percentage points above the District average, tying with Grant and trailing only Wilson (90%) and Lincoln (94%);
- 86% of its African-American students on time (18 points above the District average);
- 94% of its Latino students on time (29 points above the average);
- 100% of its Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students on time (27 points above average); and
- 90% of its White students on time (10% points above the average).

The only grad rate in which Benson Tech trailed the District average was for Asian students, 84% on-time graduation compared to 85%.

Benson Tech opens doors for students who would not otherwise succeed in school or in the workplace. It provides opportunities that are unique in the District and in the state. It plays a vital role in our regional economy. I believe Benson Tech needs to be expanded, not limited without a coherent goal and plan.

If you could write the Board and Superintendent and let them know your opinion, that’s great. If you would like to email me at [panthony@pps.net](mailto:panthony@pps.net) with even one sentence in support of Benson Tech that I could put in front of the Superintendent or include in an op-ed, it would mean a great deal to me and to the kids.

Thank you for your support.  
Paul Anthony”





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