



## BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT

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



### *Benson Polytechnic High School Centennial (1917-2017)*

**A**s Benson Polytechnic High School (BPHS) celebrates its Centennial in the 2016-17 school year, this is an appropriate time to look forward while acknowledging the past as well as today's successes. This special edition of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) newsletter commemorates this milestone.

We've pulled from the archives a bit of history and old pictures from the Tech Pep and Blueprint. We've

included a few articles and numbers about the school's recent history as a technical-focus option school and the good things that are happening now. And finally, we have a look forward with Portland Public Schools' (PPS') plans to modernize Benson Tech for the 21st century.

It is also a good time to once again acknowledge, with gratitude, that without Simon Benson's generous gift of \$100,000 in 1915, there would never have been a Benson Polytechnic School. In the decades since its

founding, Benson Tech has been further enriched and supported by many additional gifts of equipment, materials, technical know-how, and time from businesses and individual supporters, without which Benson Tech would not be the great technical school that it is today. As we look forward, we are confident that Benson graduates and its supporters will continue to enrich and strengthen Benson Tech through their generosity.

Cheers for 100 years of excellence, and we look forward to the next 100!

# What is the BPHSAA?



The Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) has two major purposes: to provide social activities for friends, faculty and alumni of Benson Tech, and to promote and support the school.

Since its formation in 2008, the BPHSAA has hosted an annual August Picnic and the alumni welcome center at Tech Show; facilitated reunions of specific classes; funded a variety of student activities; and repeatedly petitioned the PPS on Benson Tech’s behalf for more students, greater funding, and modernization. The BPHSAA is also the trustee for a scholarship fund that gives several scholarships to Benson graduates each year (see article on Page 19). The BPHSAA publicizes its activities — as well as many school

activities — on its website, [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org) and in two or more newsletters each year.

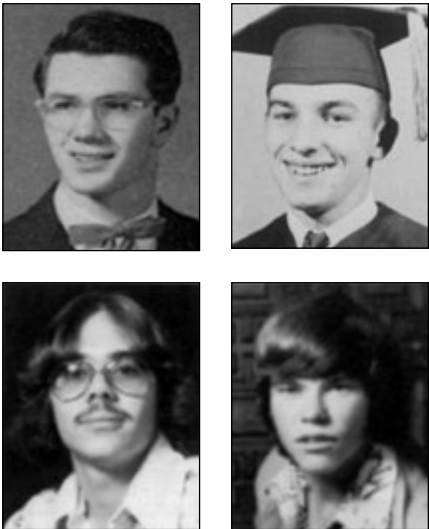
The BPHSAA is guided by a set of bylaws and a board of 15 directors. Five directors are elected to three-year terms each year at the BPHSAA’s Annual Meeting. The board elects from the 15 directors a group of four officers (pictured below). The board typically meets (in open meetings) on the second Monday of each month throughout the year (see the website for times and location of the Annual Meeting and monthly meetings, as well as the bylaws).

The BPHSAA is financed through annual membership dues that can be securely paid on the website as well as occasional donations. (Dues are currently \$20/year with a portion going to support the school.) As a paid member, you can vote at the Annual Meeting, be a director or committee chairperson, and/or serve on a committee.

There are many opportunities to participate in the BPHSAA and help support Benson Tech: first and foremost, becoming a member; simply attending a monthly board meeting; serving on standing or ad hoc committees; becoming an elected director; helping out at the Annual August Community Picnic or at Tech Show; or joining one of the BPHSAA’s advocacy efforts for Benson Tech.

To join the BPHSAA or for news about activities, please visit the website. For additional information, suggestions and/or comment, email the BPHSAA and its officers (pictured below) at [info@bensontechalumni.org](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.org).

## BPHSAA OFFICERS



*Clockwise from top left: Dale Bajema, chair (Class of 1954); Ken Bakke, vice chair (Class of 1956); Rob Johns, secretary (Class of 1977); and Mike Landstrom, treasurer (Class of 1977).*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The BPHSAA wishes to thank the numerous groups and individuals who have lent their time, dedication and talents to support the school in the last year with the efforts to pass the PPS 2017 Bond and mark Benson Tech’s 100-year anniversary with the All-Class Grand Reunion. We would especially like to acknowledge the following businesses, groups and individuals for their contributions to the Grand Reunion and this special newsletter:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dale Bajema (Class of 1954)</li><li>• Bassetti Architects</li><li>• Kevin Clark (Class of 1984)</li><li>• Colwood Golf Center</li><li>• Denise Dowless and ColTabs, Inc./Revolution Printing</li><li>• Roger Edwards (Class of 1963) and his wife Carol LaBrie</li><li>• Melanie Grasle, BPHS</li><li>• Tammy Hite (Class of 1991), Drafting Instructor</li><li>• Luke Hotchkiss (Class of 2000), Construction Instructor</li><li>• IBEW Local 48</li><li>• Rob Johns (Class of 1977)</li><li>• Rachael L.K. Kuryanny (Class of 1997)</li><li>• Connie Mar (Class of 1990)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Richard Martin, PPS, Communications Manager - CIPA</li><li>• McMenamins Kennedy School</li><li>• Oregon Historical Society</li><li>• Josh Piper (Class of 1995)</li><li>• Portland Spirit Cruises</li><li>• PGE Foundation</li><li>• Bill Ranta (Class of 1965)</li><li>• Rose City Creative Events &amp; Catering</li><li>• Dick Spies (Class of 1964)</li><li>• Stand for Children</li><li>• Art Valoria, BPHS</li><li>• Rich Weber (Class of 1975), Construction Instructor</li><li>• Todd Williams, BPHS, Digital Media Instructor</li><li>• Curtis Wilson, BPHS, Principal</li></ul>
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*Photos used in this newsletter courtesy of BPHSAA and PPS.*



**Honoring the past.** Our story begins in April 1915, when Portland Public Schools received a gift of \$100,000 from noted civic leader and philanthropist Simon Benson...



Simon Benson’s donation was made to “expand” the existing Portland School of Trades (opened in 1908 in the Atkinson Building at 11th Avenue and Davis Street in NW Portland) into a high school that would also provide a program of practical technical training. Construction of the new high school that would be named after Benson began in May 1916 at NE 12th and Hoyt, and opened to students in September 1917. The first class to graduate included former Portland School of Trades students of both genders, and occurred in January 1918

Benson, a prominent entrepreneur who made his money in timber, later contributed further funds to the school, as well as number of other Portland civic projects, including the iconic bronze “Benson Bubbler” fountains located around Portland and in front of Benson Tech.

Benson Tech had just begun operations when the U.S. Army took over the school during the end of WWI from June 1918 to January 1919 to train adults to support the

war effort. During that time, Benson Tech students took their regular academic classes in portable class rooms located at what was then Washington High School near SE 14th and Stark. (During WWII, the U.S. Army again used a portion of the Benson Tech building, though students were not relocated.)

The original gym was built in 1926; school auditorium was added in 1930-31; the current library and health occupations wing in 1992; and the new gym in 1996. The initial technical programs offered at Benson Tech in 1917 were significantly expanded and changed in the following decades as technology and skills needed in the workplace changed, and the configuration of the school building has evolved with those changes.

Now about 100 years later, PPS has plans to modernize/rebuild Benson Polytechnic High School for the next century (see article on Page 18) to serve new generations of Portland students.

Evolution of BPHS’ technical programs

It should be no surprise that Benson Tech’s shops, labs, equipment, and technical programs have changed over the past 100 years. Preparing graduates to enter the ever-evolving workplace directly after graduation or after further education has always been a primary objective.

When Benson Tech opened in 1917, its technical offerings for boys were electrical, plumbing, machine, wood-working, blacksmith, and mechanical and architectural drawing. For its first several years, Benson Tech also had female students, previously students at the Portland School of Trades, and they majored in programs like dressmaking, millinery, and domestic science. After only a few years, it became solely a boys’ school.

During the 1920s, building construction, gas engine, foundry, pattern making, sheet metal and printing were added — and later, aviation and radio, and still later, welding and photography. For a while, leatherworks was a program when machines were powered by overhead motors and whirling leather belts. As the years passed, new technical programs were added; former ones merged; and some programs dropped due to evolving technology, workplace skill needs, the school’s enrollment and students’ interest, and teachers’ and administrators’ vision.

Starting in the mid-1950s, the school’s programs increasingly prepared graduates for further technical training in col-

lege, as well as being immediately skilled for the workplace. Engineering and electronics were added, and plastics, fluid power and industrial arts also became focus areas.

In 1980, with girls again attending, the Health Occupations program was transferred from Washington High School to Benson Tech. In the succeeding years, Health Occupations has offered a variety of programs in the medical and dental field — in 2017, it is Benson Tech’s largest “major” by enrollment.

As technology and the workplace changed at the end of the 20th century, Computer science became a major. Benson Tech’s long-existing programs in printing, photography and graphic arts were fused into the communications program, and foundry, sheet metal and machine into manufacturing.

After being “lost” for a few years after 2000 as a result of funding and enrollment issues, architecture “re-turned” in 2014, computer science in 2016, and engineering in the 2017-18 school year. As a result, technical programs for the coming school year are automotive, manufacturing, electric,

building construction, architecture, digital media production, radio broadcasting, health sciences, computer engineering, and engineering. In virtually all of Benson Tech’s technical programs (now referred to as Career Technical Education or CTE), new technology is being introduced into the curriculum as it occurs and resources permit.



Top: Benson Tech print shop in 1925. Bottom: Printing as part of the Communications program in 2017.

Benson Tech's leadership through the years



Charles E. Cleveland 1913-1946 Rein E. Jackson 1947-1952 Leon P. Minear 1953-1960 Marvin R. Rasmussen 1961 and 1963-1971 Kenneth A. Erickson 1962 Harold Anderson 1972-1978 David Weinecke 1979-1984



Paul H. Benninghoff 1985-1986 Thomas Parr 1987-1993 Robert O'Neill 1994-1999 John Vingelen 2000-2004 Christie Plinski 2005-2009 Steve Olczak 2010-2011 Carol Campbell 2012-2013 Curtis Wilson 2014-Present



A legacy of BPHS student-built houses

Benson Tech and its students have left many impressions on Portland, but few are as indelible as the Benson Tech student-built houses scattered about the city. For decades now, students have built full-scale houses while majoring in building construction during their junior and senior years. Upon their completion, the houses are sold and the proceeds go back into the program, making it self-sustaining

Just this May, the most recently built house, which was started in 2012, went on the market listed at more than \$600,000. The 2,024-square-foot, three-bedroom, 2.5 bath house is located on NE Skidmore Street. It features radiant floor heat with an open vaulted living room and kitchen. Benson Tech students completed most of the framing, roofing, siding, interior trim work and cabinets. The electrical, plumbing, heating, landscaping, and other more specialized work was done by licensed professionals. A considerable amount of the construction materials were donated by generous Benson Tech supporters and business partners. The previous student-built house was constructed between 2008 and 2012 on an adjacent lot facing NE Mallory Ave. It was a similar-sized house and sold in 2012 for more than \$300,000.

Construction of the next house will begin this fall on N. Haight Street. It will be slightly smaller at 1,400 square feet, but will also have an detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU), an increasingly popular feature in Portland. This house will also be increasingly energy-efficient and sustainable. Current Benson Tech students majoring in architecture will have had a major hand in the design. As with the two previously built houses, the construction plans were donated by former Benson Tech architectural students. Previous to that, plans for each student-built house were developed by Benson Tech students in collaboration with an architecture teacher.

Unfortunately, there is minimal record of when Benson Tech students first began building full-scale houses on site, or where they are all located. It is believed that the program started in the 1970s, and between 15 and 20 have been built since then. Before that, students framed modular sections of houses at Benson Tech that were then trucked to sites and assembled. To help complete the history of this unique part of the school’s history, we would appreciate hearing from any alumni about their construction or design experience, especially years and location. Contact either, Rich Weber at rweber@pps.net, Tammy Hite at thite@pps.net or Roger Edwards via the BPHSAA website.



Clockwise from top left: Group shot during construction of the most recently completed Benson Tech student-built house at NE Skidmore Street; Building construction students in 1976; On-site building in 1979; Putting in some finishing touches in 2014; On-site building on the Skidmore house in 2016.



*Counter-clockwise from top right: Benson Tech baseball team from 1959; Swim team diving into action, also from 1959; Girls' basketball in 1989; Varsity football in 2011; and Girls 'volleyball team from 1984.*



# Athletics at Benson Tech

From its earliest years, Benson Tech began fielding athletic teams, starting with football, baseball and track and soon adding basketball. Over the following decades other sports were added including soccer, wrestling, and golf — and dropped, including ice hockey, bowling, gymnastics and water polo. Beginning in the 1920s, Benson Tech teams began to win city championships. Later, with girls attending Benson Tech, girls' sports were added in the 1980 with team championships soon occurring.

Benson Tech won its first Portland Interscholastic League (PIL) championships in baseball and basketball in 1923. Its first state champion came in 1928 in track and field. All told, Benson Tech boys' teams have won 85 PIL championships: baseball (6), basketball (17), bowling (4), cross country (7), football (13), ice hockey (2), swimming (3), tennis (3), track and field (10), volleyball (7), and wrestling (13). At the state level, it has won the titles in baseball (1), basketball (5), football (1), swimming (1), track and field (6), and wrestling (2).

The school became co-ed in 1973, and in 1982, a full schedule of girls' sports was started, including basketball, softball, swimming and volleyball with others added later. In the years since, Benson Tech girls' teams have won PIL championships in basketball (5), softball (2), and track and field (10), and state championships in track and field in 1991 and 1999 through 2004.

During the 2016 –17 school year, Benson Tech had 17 teams: boys' teams in baseball, basketball, cross-country, football, soccer, track and field, and wrestling, plus girls' teams in basketball, cheer, dance, cross-country, soccer, softball, tennis, track and field and volleyball. This past spring, the girls' volleyball team advanced to the first round of the State Tournament.

Over the years, a number of Benson Tech athletes have gone on to notable collegiate athletic careers, professional careers and coaching at ever level. In 2000, a Benson Tech "Hall of Fame" was created under the guidance of **Bill Ranta** (Class of 1965) to recognize and honor the school's most notable athletes, coaches and teams. Since then, 76 student athletes, 10 coaches and 14 teams have been inducted into the Hall. (Further information about the Hall of Fame can be obtained from **Leon McKenzie** c/o Benson Polytechnic High School.)

# All we needed to know in life we learned from BPHS (aka, The proudest accomplishments we owe the school)

**Tami Assenberg, Class of 2016:** "I already have a job as a dental assistant. I wouldn't have been able to do this without Benson Tech's health occupations program."

Maybe go into radio (I've been told I have a voice/face for radio. LOL). Thank you, Benson Tech, for prepping me for the real world as best as you could."

**Maj Britt Baker (Johnson), Class of 1990:** "I loved that at Benson Tech, all kids do CTE classes together. It broke down cliques and gave us all common ground ... Aside from that, the CTE classes gave me a huge respect for professionalism and work ethics. I will never forget Mr. John Conway, aka 'sir,' Mr. James Harrison, and those teachers who treated us like human beings instead of 'kids.' I can't count the ways that choosing Benson Tech has helped me over the years."

**Don Hogan, Class of 1979:** "As a graduate of Mr. Murtaugh's architectural drafting class, I have put many of the things I learned into drawings that have been used on various ships. Some of the ship's communication spaces were modified from drawings that I provided."

**Flo Beers-Wiggins, Class of 1999:** "Don Levine taught a first responder class and I found my passion. I was a paramedic for 13 years in the local area."



**Myrna Jensen, Class of 1991:** "While sitting in Mr. Pittman's public health class, I could not for the life of me understand what its purpose was ... flash forward 20+ years and I now work for Oregon Food Bank, where I talk about public health almost daily. Also a shout out to KBPS where my love of broadcasting was nurtured and led me to my first career — television news. Class of 1991: dental major (Hahaha!)"

**Michelle Benavides de Dominguez, Class of 1997:** "I've been in the medical field since my days at Benson. I was a combat medic and LVN my first six years in U.S. Army, and my last six years, I was a surgical technologist serving as the Non Commissioned Officer in charge of the O.R. I still am a ST and have been for almost 15 years now. I believe a lot of my success in the medical community is due to my studies and training at Benson. The value that Benson's education brings to each individual is phenomenal! I'm so proud and honored to say that I graduated from Benson..."

**Jonathan Long, Class of 1996:** "I majored in graphic communications, and developed a love for photography. Twenty years later (after majoring in it in college) I do it for various companies, people and events. Shooting on film really gave me the perspective I needed and how to understand the balance of light. It opened doors I am really thankful for."

**Jim Cross, Class of 1977:** "There are bold pilots and old pilots, but there are very few old, bold pilots.' Mr. William Nichols (the Chief), Aviation Department Instructor Benson Tech from 1938 to 1975. His light-hearted, no BS, finish-what-you-start, can-do style has been the guide of my life. I have been, by his example, of service to my country, my family and my friends. My proudest accomplishment, is to have taught these things to my children and to see them grow to be better people than I."

plan fundraisers for a great cause! Killing two birds with one stone, I'd say. I am forever grateful for all of the teachers, staff, and coaches that believed in me and contributed to my growth."

**Nate Davey, Class of 1989:** "Majored in Electronics with Mr. Irgens, now work at Sandia National Labs."

**Luawanna Nigra, Class of 1977:** "Going to Benson Tech taught me to have courage... be brave... try lots of new things, which has helped me have a full life. I also picked up my passion for photography there!"

**Nathan Han, Class of 1990:** "I was in the health occupations program and advanced math program with some of the finest teachers ever ... That excellent preparation in HS helped me better succeed in college. And while I thought 'circle' wasn't much of a big deal at the time, it's helped me tremendously with small group communication in business meetings and with spiritual formation. Many of my classmates have gone on into successful careers in medicine and other fields."

**Ryan Opp, Class of 1992:** "I ... graduated!!!! Hell of an accomplishment at the time. I've been in education now almost 20 years and work with students like my former self. A few teachers at Benson Tech made sure I didn't get lost in the shuffle."

**Jason Hawke, Class of 1990:** "I was one of the few (or many) who was admitted not because of my awesome grades, but because my middle school counselor didn't want me to get lost. I went to Benson Tech to take the electrical/ electrician program, and unfortunately, I fell in love with the automotive program. I was not a good student academically. I now wish I would have been a better student ... but I did get through it and graduated with my fellow classmates. I am a mechanic by trade to this day. It puts a roof over our heads and feeds my family of five. There are times that I wish I could go back and make some changes (like stay out of the auto shop).

**Yashica Palshikar, Class of 1996:** "Automotive major. I can troubleshoot a copy machine like nobody's business. Taught my daughter how to safely jack up a car, change a tire, pump it up, change the oil, jump a dead battery, clean a battery, change the air filter, etc."

**Jon Peterson, Class of 1977:** "Majored in architecture, went on to build many homes and the knowledge of how to draw and read blueprints was and still is invaluable."

**Nikki Walker, Class of 1997:** "Before graduating from the HOSA program ... I was hired as a dental assistant and a lab tech for a dental office in SE. Few years down the road I became an optician. So grateful to have been a part of such an incredible program."

## A technical-focus school, 2010 – 2017: Or, recent history...

After being designated as PPS technical-focus option high school in 2010, Benson Polytechnic High School has gradually restored several lost technical programs, increased its graduation rate, improved teacher and student morale, and increased its enrollment and staff.

In 2009-10, Benson Tech's future was on the line as PPS conducted a high school design study on how best to restore "equity" among its public high schools. While closure was not an option (despite the many rumors), conversion to a two-year "skill center" was. The BPH-SAA and Benson Tech teachers vigorously pointed to the school's historic technical and academic successes with a four-year combination of shops and core academic classes. A march on PPS offices by Benson Tech students and supporters certainly contributed to the study's ultimate recommendations. The study recommended that future Benson Tech freshman classes be limited to 250 students (overall enrollment was targeted at 850) as part of redistributing the district's high school resources to approximate "equity" among Portland's neighborhood schools.

Within a year, applications to attend Benson Tech exceeded the "capped" number of 250 freshmen and the limited openings had to be allocated via a lottery system. Similar numbers of applicants that exceeded the 250 slots occurred in the following years. With more than 150 applicants being turned away annually, parent protests, diligent Benson Tech staff efforts, and BPHSAA lobbying, the freshman cap was increased first to 275 in 2015 – 2016 and then to 300 in 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018. (In about 2015 – 2016, Benson Tech also began admitting about 25 sophomores each year.) With more incoming students each year and a better retention rate, total enrollment grew to slightly more than 1,000 in the 2016-17 school year with the district's acquiescence.

Part of the flood of better-qualified applicants resulted from Benson Tech staff refining its process of reaching out to prospective students within the city, so that eighth-graders could make better choices in coming to Benson Tech. Specified days for eighth-graders and/or their parents to visit the school were set up, and they were encouraged to visit Tech Show. As a result, fewer students have transferred to a neighborhood school after a short time at Benson Tech and the graduation rate gradually climbed. With more students, faculty has grown to about 60 people, with new hires that increasingly match Benson Tech's diverse student population.

The other thing the high school design study did was to affirm Benson Tech's proven success as a four-year high

school with an integrated academic-technical curriculum. (National studies have shown technical and hands-on learning tends to lead to higher graduation rates not only in high school, but later in college.) With the affirmation, Benson Tech's teachers and administrators began work in 2011 to strengthen its programs and bring back several lost programs. Freshman drafting once again became a required class. Architecture became a major in 2014 with



*Above: Benson Tech students prepare to march on PPS offices in 2009 to protest the school's potential conversion to a two-year skill center.*

the help of an early grant. Computer science was brought back in 2016 as a major. Engineering is a recent new elective—as resources become available it will be expanded into a major. New equipment and the study of newer technology has occurred in all of the majors as resources have permitted. Several Benson Tech teachers have developed classes that have imaginatively merged math and technical programs to simultaneously teach both classes— geo-tech and algebra tech.

Benson Tech's designation within PPS as a technical-focus option high school has created problems in restoring its celebrated marching band and other music programs. An arts program has been recently developed with connections to the technical programs.

Since 2010 partnerships with local businesses have increased and deepened including developing a number of student apprenticeships in collaboration with the State of Oregon. More ties have been developed to Portland Community College, Portland State University, Oregon State University, and the Oregon Institute of Technology, including providing opportunities for Benson Tech students to earn dual credits.

In the past two years, Benson Tech's fortunes have been increased by PPS' decision to modernize the school campus and facilities.

**C**elebrating the present. Over the last 100 years, Benson Tech has seen its share of ups and downs, but today, the school, its programs, and its students are thriving on many levels...



Benson Tech in 2017 is one of Portland and Oregon's most successful high schools. From attracting more applicants than there are available openings, to the many awards for its technical teams, to one of Oregon's better graduation rates, its success is manifesting on many levels.

### **Tech students and faculty**

The school now has a faculty and staff of 60 people. Increasingly, it mirrors the students' diversity which has indirectly contributed to the students' school connection and success. (It should also be noted that 11 of the current teachers are also Benson Tech graduates.)

This past year, Benson Tech's current population of 1,021 was drawn from across Portland, with 60% male and 40% female students. The ethnic breakdown was 32% white, 26% Hispanic, 20% African American, 13% Asian and 10% identifying as other, thus making Benson Tech one of the most diverse high schools in Portland and Oregon, and possibly the nation. As in the past, many

students have fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles and grandparents who were Benson graduates.

### **Academics, CTE programs, and school activities**

Benson Tech's students take all of the State-required core academic classes, while as juniors and seniors, they also major in one of nine technical areas. Currently, the school has nine CTE programs. Health sciences is now the largest major by student count (27.1%), followed by automotive (16.4%), digital media production (12.6%), manufacturing (11.3%), electric (9.4%), radio (8.7%), building construction (5.8%), architecture (3.9%). Efforts are underway to bring back a full program in engineering as well as to continually incorporate the study of newer technology in its majors, including robotics and 3D printing.

In addition to its classrooms and technical study areas, Benson now has a fully functioning Health and Wellness

*(continued on Page 12)*

# A BENSON TECH TIMELINE



• 1910 • • • • 1920 • • • • 1930 • • • • 1940 • • • • 1950 • • • • 1960 • • • • 1970 • • • • 1980 • • • • 1990 • • • • 2000 • • • • 2010 • • • • 2020 •

**1908:** Portland School of Trades established in the Atkinson Building.

**1913:** Charles Cleveland named principal. **(1)**

**1915:** Simon Benson gifts \$100,000 to PPS fund for a better trade school; Portland School of Trades renamed Benson School of Trades. **(2)**

**1916:** First volume of the Poly Tech, the school's yearbook. **(3)**

**1917:** Classes begin at new Benson Polytechnic High School in the fall.

**1918:** Military occupies school for WWI training. **(4)**

**1919:** First Tech Show held on May 16th. (1954 version pictured - **5**)

**1920:** South Shop Wing in place; print shop moved from Jefferson High School to BPHS; first Tech Pep published.

**1921:** Benson orchestra organized **(6)**; Urie McCleary, Class of 1923 architectural drawing major designs BPHS seal. But see 1958. **(7)**

**1923:** Station KYG radio equipment purchased by student body fund.

**1926:** The "Old Gym" opens as the "New Gym"; Call letters KFIV given to the BPHS radio station.

**1926:** 8th Annual Tech Show draws 11,803.

**1928:** Elite singing choir, The Troubadours, organized from BPHS Glee Club; 1,000,000-volt Tesla coil astounds Tech Show visitors. (1959 and 1976 versions pictured - **8**)

**1929:** Shop hazards justifies first aid class at BPHS.

**1930:** BPHS radio becomes KBPS and begins regular broadcasting.

**1931:** First BPHS graduation in newly completed auditorium. **(9)**

**1932:** D Wing shops in place between North and South shop wings

**1935:** Astronomy Club builds 8-inch reflecting telescope.

**1937:** Kimball pipe organ purchased by student body and dedicated on April 3.

**1941:** KBPS gains independence from KXL and begins broadcasting at 1450 AM.

**1944:** Library receives another specific donation from Simon Benson.

**1950:** 200-foot-tall radio tower erected on campus. **(10)**

**1955:** Yearbook title changed to Blueprint; **(11)** First recognition of auditorium staff as BATS.

**1956:** BPHS logo changed from Mechanics to Engineers.

**1958:** The BPHS seal grows teeth and becomes a cog! **(7 )**

**1959:** The Troubadours become The Ambassadors. **(12)**

**1961:** 41st Annual Tech Show draws >13,000 attendees.

**1966:** Construction of second "new gym" completed.

**1970:** Golden Anniversary Tech Show; Aardvarks organize to explore and encourage the use of computers. **(13)**

**1973:** Electric shop designs an electric car and continues refining it during next few years **(14)**; KBPS Golden Anniversary; BPHS opened for girls and six join Class of '77. **(15)**

**1976:** BPHS fabricates Benson Bubblers for Portland Water Bureau. **(16)**

**1980:** Health occupation classes moved to BPHS from Washington High School. **(17)**

**1984:** BPHS enrolls in the Vocational & Industrial Club of American, the forerunner of Skills, USA.

**1985:** Apple IIe computers installed.

**1988:** Andrea Lindberg chosen as first Rose Festival Princess from BPHS. **(18)**

**1991:** Arson fire damages the front hall.

**1992:** BPHS enrolls in Health Occupation Specialties of America; School gets new library and extended science space for HOSA; New building for KBPS.

**1994:** Pipe organ moved to Cleveland High School. **(19)**

**1996:** Wacker Siltronic contributes to a functional "clean room" for BPHS curriculum.

**2010:** Alliance HS given space in North Shop wing.

**2010:** Enrollment capped at BPHS.

**2014:** Annual BPHSAA summer picnic moved to BPHS front lawn.

**2016:** Health clinic opens. **(20)**

**2017:** Benson Tech celebrates its Centennial and passage of PPS 2017 Health, Safety, & Modernization Bond.



*Clockwise from top left: ; Eighth-graders and their parents participate in a Benson Tech Info night in 2013; Interactive activities at the annual Tech Show (2016 pictured here) engage and inform perspective future BPHS students; Two automotive students demonstrate engine work at 2016 Tech Show; Digital media production students show off the studio at the 2017 Tech Show.*

**Celebrating the present, continued from Page 9**

Center supported by Oregon Health Science University (OHSU) that opened in the winter of 2015 and a newly remodeled career and counseling center. Virtually every week the latter posts information about job openings, career opportunities, and college info and visits.

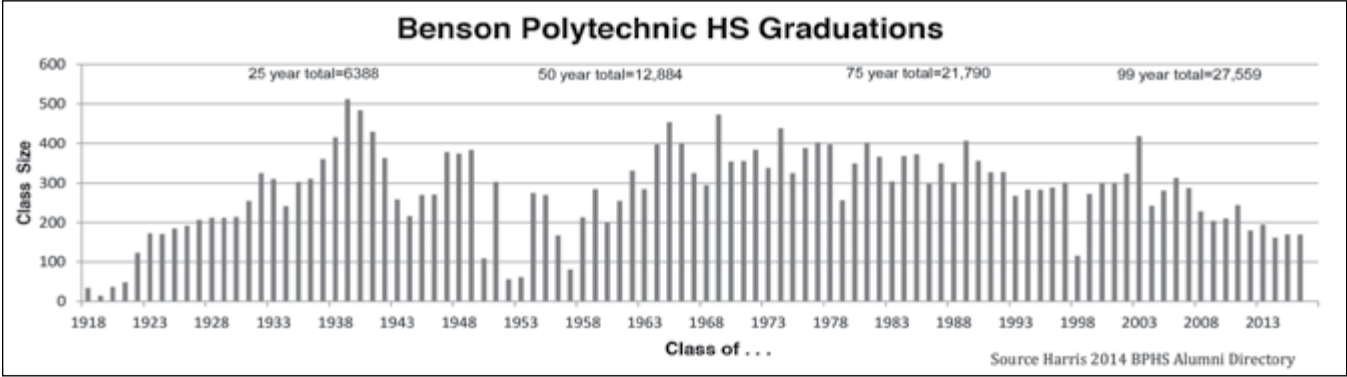
Compared to Benson Tech of “yesterday,” the school has increased its day-to-day support of its diverse student body in the form of tutoring opportunities, focused mentoring efforts, Saturday school, summer orientation for freshmen, Freshmen Academy, and Evening Scholars and Summer Scholars opportunities. (As a side note, Benson Tech shares the building with a separate PPS alternative education program, as well as with an Evening Scholars Program, a Summer Scholars Program, each with their own administrators and teachers.)

On the extra-curricular side of things, while Benson may no longer have a marching band or a music program it has a varied set of 20 organized clubs and programs. Its Robotics Club, Skills USA and HOSA have been strong local, state and beyond competitors. Benson Tech athletes competed in 17 sports.

**Student awards and achievement**

With the technical skills from Benson’s classes and shops, Benson students continue to be very competitive in a number of interscholastic events: Benson’s Skills USA team won four gold medals, five silver, and two bronze at the April 20-21 State Tournament. The gold medal winners are eligible to go to the National meet in Louisville, KY, on June 19-23. (Skills USA is a program partnering students, teachers and industry people to enhance students knowledge and skills through study and competition to be world-class workers.) Benson Tech’s HOSA team recently scored 13 first places, seven second places, 11 third places, seven fourth places and 11 fifth places among 22 competitive events at the State Tournament. (HOSA-Future Health Professionals is a student organization promoting careers in health care.) Two of Benson’ Tech’s Robotics Club teams advanced to the Oregon State Championships that the club hosted at Benson Tech in 2016 and two of it teams made it to the Super Qualifying round in the past school year.

*(continued on next page)*



**Celebrating the present, continued from previous page**

**Graduation rates and post-high school**

According to the last official graduation numbers that are available, for the 2015 – 2016 school year, 89.3% of Benson Tech seniors graduated in four years, making it the third best among PPS schools, where the average was 75%. Oregon’s average for 2015 – 2016 year was also 75%. The unofficial numbers for the 2016– 2017 school year are generally even better. On a national level, Benson Tech’s number also bests the high school graduation rate of 83.9% from the latest available national data (2014 – 2015 school year).

Overall graduation numbers for the Class of 2016 are solid among its ethnic/racial subgroups, where 92% of African-American, 92% of Hispanics and 84% of Asian students graduated on time — well above the numbers in those categories for other Portland schools and statewide. The unofficial numbers this year are generally even better. A majority of Benson Tech’s recent graduates go on to college or further technical study while many of the rest take on technical jobs in the region.

Another indication of Benson Tech’s students’ successes can be found in the number of scholarships and awards granted at each year’s senior award assembly. In 2016, \$700,000 was awarded, and this May 12, nearly \$1 million was awarded (including three funded by the BPH-SAA Scholarship Fund). Noteworthy among past scholarships were two prestigious Gates Scholarship awarded in 2013 to Kevin Truong and Sabrina Mohammed.

This year, 185 Benson Tech seniors, the “Centennial Class,” will participate in the Commencement Ceremony to be held June 5 at the Memorial Coliseum.

**Looking toward the next generation**

In the last few years, Benson Tech has stepped up its outreach efforts to prospective students to help them make more informed decisions about whether Benson Tech is the right school for them. In addition to encouraging eighth-graders to attend the Annual Tech Show, “open houses” for the students and their parents were also implemented to provided more opportunities to learn

about the school. Undoubtedly fueled by their previews of Benson Tech’s solid technical and academic record, the number of eighth-graders from across Portland applying to Benson Tech (450) continues to exceed the 300 freshman openings that are available. Armed with better information and understanding of expectations, once at Benson Tech and engaged in a challenging curriculum, fewer and fewer students subsequently decide to transfer to another school.

The passage of the PPS 2017 Health, Safety and Modernization Bond signals new changes and new opportunities for Benson Tech and its students (see article on Page 19). With an updated building planned for a capacity of 1,700 students, the student successes of today are poised to grow into even bigger successes in the upcoming years at Benson Tech.

*“A special meeting of the Portland School District #1 was convened on July 31, 1915 for Board members to hear a proposal from Simon Benson, wealthy lumberman, good roads enthusiast, high-minded philanthropist and ‘first citizen of the State of Oregon,’ who has added one more altruistic act to his already lengthy list of public contributions. In making the donation, Mr. Benson said that he had not had the advantage either of a classical or trade education when he was a boy and he was making the gift ‘for the boys and girls of Portland and not for the taxpayers.’*

*‘I herewith offer to donate to your district \$100,000 for the purpose of building the first unit of trade school buildings on the site recently purchased by you, construction to begin immediately and the cost of same to be advanced by me from time to time on request of your board as needed for said purpose, on 30 days notice, in amounts of \$25,000, until the entire \$100,000 is expended.*

*‘This donation is upon the express condition that your district will contract to expend at least \$100,000 during 1916 for the construction of the second unit of the trade school.’*

*The offer came as a complete surprise to members of the board and they enthusiastically attached their signatures to the official acceptance.”*

-Excerpted from The Oregonian, August 1, 1915, Page 14

Soon-to-be BPHS graduates think back on the last four years

by Anna Nguyen, Senior Class President, Class of 2017 & Teresa Tran, ASB Executive President, Class of 2017

Entering high school was a frightening experience. The night before the first day of school is known for its adrenaline rush. We lay in our beds questioning if our outfits were cute enough, if we were cool enough to make friends, and if we had any clue what we wanted to study for the next four years.

The stories from our friends and families about upperclassmen and their notorious pranks on freshmen played through our heads as we walked up the stairs of Benson Tech High School. The honest question of our freshman year: were we going to survive? Looking back at it now, the memory is equal parts irrational and hilarious. Frankly, we think we turned out quite fine.

Benson Tech was welcoming to us, encouraging growth and success within ourselves, and among the student body. Through sports and clubs, specifically tennis and Key Club in our case, we were able to kindle meaningful friendships destined to last a lifetime. Teach-

ers and staff motivated us to accomplish great things and to stay curious. Benson Tech's CTE offerings have not only taught us craft skills, but many life values as well. As health science majors, we were given the opportunity to prepare ourselves for selfless careers, developing the right skills to help others in times of need. The combination of it all inspired optimism and leadership, leading us to happily hold positions as Associated Student Body executive president and senior class president, as well as the position of captain for our individual sports of track and tennis.

As the Class of 2017 prepares to be Benson Tech alumni, we realized we have benefited from the positive legacy of our predecessors. They were leading examples in all of Benson Tech's majors and incredible championships of competitions. The success stories we grew up hearing challenged us to fearlessly work for our own. Now, we hope to be the future generation's inspiration. As we prepare to step beyond the sheltered doors of high school, we look back at our time at Benson with gratitude. May the next 100 years be even greater, even brighter. Go Tech!



A rose by any other name... is Krishay!

Benson Tech named senior **Krishay Hayes-Motley** (photo at left, top) its 2017 Rose Festival Court princess during a ceremony held on Thursday, March 23. Krishay joins the ranks of a select group of young women, beginning with Andrea Lindberg in 1988 (photo at left, bottom), who have represented the school at the annual Portland event.

A native Portlander, Krishay is a health occupations major and is planning to attend a four-year university to become a nurse practitioner. She is also on the volleyball team and received the PIL Volleyball Award-2nd Team All League.

Building the future. Backed by 100 years of student and school achievement, community support, and new funding, Benson Tech is ready to launch a new century of excellence...



# Solid construction begins with a strong foundation

The Benson Tech Foundation EIN 45-5601961 is an IRS qualified 501(c)(3) Public Charity. Its stated purpose is to support the CTE and Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) programs for Benson Polytechnic High School. The original idea of creating the Foundation was to allow a direct contribution to the school for current equipment, maintenance, support student CTE-related programs, as PPS had not been investing for years in the school and there was a recognized need. The foundation has been primarily supported by Benson Tech alumni and advocates. As such our goal has been to reach out to this group to let them know that they have a tax-deductible way to support their old majors or programs of current interest.

There has been significant interest in the manufacturing major by father-and-son alumni, Mike and Andrew Kern, who have made contributions consistently the past two years to help maintain the machinery and provide the school with funds that can be used to support student programs such as Skills USA and Health Occupations Society of America (HOSA). Local businesses such as



## How you can support the Benson Tech Foundation

- *Make a tax-deductible donation via personal giving, employer-match or United Way*
- *Arrange an in-kind donation of equipment or materials*
- *Help build a business/academic partnership*
- *Volunteer at a Foundation event*

Ziba Design have donated monies from a Design Day all-industry dinner it sponsors and designated donations through United Way from alumni.

In this past year, the Foundation has taken the position to heighten awareness by co-sponsoring the Grand Reunion Gala Dinner to be held at the Oregon Historical Society in downtown Portland on June 10. Sig Unander, the great-grandson of Simon Benson, will speak at the event. Unander is an author, filmmaker and public speaker and has a fascinating evening of the life and accomplishments of Simon Benson to share with attendees. The Foundation has worked with Industrial Arts Instructor **Joe Rozewski** to create a food-safe mold and manufacture chocolates in the shape of the Benson Tech cog specifically for the Grand Reunion Dinner.

In the last 90 days, the Foundation took a serious look at the support needed for the Renovation needs surrounding the planned bond-supported renovation for the School itself (see article on Page 18).

Foundation members have met with the PPS Modernization team. All classrooms will need to “swing” on-site and as such, the moving of the CTE programs to make way for construction over two years will need considerate planning. While that can be left to the PPS Renovation team entirely, every dollar spent to avoid larger costs of transportation off-site and avoid disruption for the CTE classes will go a long way to allow for the dollars saved be put back to a better and higher use into the school.

Consider the packed nature of 344,000 square feet and how the school consumes the footprint it is on. The Foundation is looking at the concept of how nearby properties could possibly be donated or converted for use as “tech flex space” to allow the CTE programs to continue close to 12th Avenue, and is including other education partners in that discussion. Benson Tech sits at the edge of what is called the Innovation Quadrant, with partners of Portland Development Commission, Portland Com-

(continued on next page)



## Solid construction, continued from previous page

munity College (PCC), Portland State University (PSU), Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) and OMSI. As such, there are opportunities to participate in this discussion. The PPS Renovation team appreciates the Foundation's early interest as this would be a 24- to 36-month planning process before construction would begin.

Partnerships with business and complementary academic institutions are important and the Foundation looks to forge new ones and strengthen old ones. Foundation officers and key advocates conduct tours of the school to create a heightened awareness and open the discussion for partnerships, and plan to continue doing these as we look at the current and future needs of the school and its programs. If you would like to participate on a tour or forge a potential partnership to support the major CTE programs, please contact Rob Johns (contact info at the end of this article).

Equipment needs must be evaluated as well. You may be aware of the aged, albeit functional, equipment currently in place at the school. Once that equipment is moved from its “grandfathered” location, all current OSHA and equipment safety guidelines will need to be evaluated and adhered to at any temporary location. While there is money planned for new equipment in the bond measure passed in May (see article on Page 19), there are a number of issues to contend with to bring in newer, state-of-the-art equipment to bring the school up to 21st century standards.

The Benson Tech Foundation will need the support of alumni and community advocates in the future reconstructed Benson Tech, and there will be continued annual giving needs to support the current CTE and STEM competitions that come up every year. Giving through your United Way contributions, employer match and personal giving is the best way to form a continuous

stream of funds. There will be many opportunities to contribute before the renovation, during the renovation and for many years after, as we all look forward to the next 100 years of supporting this venerable institution that has made an impact on the lives of each student that has passed through its doors.

Tax deductible donations can be made directly to “Benson Tech Foundation,” 546 NE 12th Ave. Portland, OR 97232. If you are interested in making “in kind” donations, please contact Rob Johns, Benson Tech Foundation President, at robjohns@comcast.net or call 503-314-0041.

## BPHS Alumni Scholarship Fund

As we reflect on the accomplishments of prior alumni, we encourage you to take the time to consider what a positive impact a financial contribution to future alumni can be. The Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund was started in 1990, by the Class of 1950, using the leftover funds from its 40th class reunion. In 2007, the scholarship fund came under the purview of the BPHSAA. Donations are handled by the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF), which invests, administers and distributes the funds. Students are automatically considered for the BPHS Alumni scholarship and many others once they have completed the Oregon Student Access Commission's (OSAC) combined scholarship application.

A tax-deductible donation can be made payable to “The Oregon Community Foundation” with the memo line stating “Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund” and mailed to their address: 1221 SW Yamhill St, Suite 100, Portland, OR 97205. Alternatively, donate online at the BPHSAA website at [www.bensontechalumni.org/Scholarship](http://www.bensontechalumni.org/Scholarship). This past May, three scholarships were awarded to Benson Tech graduates in the amount of \$1,611 each, in areas of automotive, health occupations and manufacturing. All three students are now headed to Portland Community College to pursue their dreams, armed with a running start from Benson alumni.

You might also consider contributing to this worthwhile cause in the long-term with estate planning, also administered by the Oregon Community Foundation for future generations of Benson Tech graduates.

# The modern Benson Tech: A predictive deconstructed history of future vitality



**Above:** Benson Tech under construction in late May 1917, from BPHSAA digital archive. Portland voters approved the May 2017 PPS school improvement bond measure that will fund Benson Tech’s infrastructural and curricular revitalization.

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

Tradition. Excellence. Diligence. Innovation. Since 1917, Benson Tech has pioneered the highest quality public secondary education in project-based STEAM/CTE learning available anywhere in the United States. Benson Tech has been and is a sustaining maker of Portland history, culture, and economy. Its alumni become strong influencers of national and global tech-dominated public and private sectors. Now, with passage of the May 2017 PPS Health, Safety, and Modernization Bond (see article on Page 19), that rich history predicts another 100 years of peerless student scholastic achievement, university/college and career readiness, and positive societal impact for our alma mater.

As part of the \$790 million USD district-wide school improvement bond, Benson Tech will receive essential comprehensive infrastructural and curricular modernization based on eight guiding principles largely sensitive to the school’s history and culture, stakeholder relationships, academic rigor and relevance, student engagement and diversity, and adaptive learning environments. Preliminary focus option diligence by PPS Office of School Modernization, Bassetti Architects, industry consultants, and Benson Tech’s administrators, teachers, students, and Master Planning Committee/Predesign Advisory Group supports a three-year phased remodeling plan costing a

total of \$202 to \$227 million USD. About \$122 million USD will be dedicated to rebuilding efforts that increase the school’s existing total assignable square footage of 285K to approximately 368K. Final recommended remodeling cost and square-foot estimates may vary from these and other PPS-disclosed values. Nonetheless, Benson Tech academic/CTE-use areas will gain greatest expansion of the school’s area programs. Benson Tech moreover needs significant improvements to comply with ten major health and safety categories. Some of the most urgent compliance concerns to be addressed during modernization involve seismic upgrades to school-wide unreinforced masonry and new fixture/system installations for superior drinking water and air quality. Construction is anticipated to be completed no later than academic year 2022-2023.

Present master plan concepts emphasize progressive vertical architectural designs that respect the school’s oldest historic exterior and interior elements, while optimizing educational functionality and climate for a capacity enrollment of 1,700 students. Landmark-protected west and north locations of campus built between 1916 and 1930 will undergo full or partial restoration. Whereas light refurbishing of much newer school spaces dating from 1964 to 1992 will limit hard costs as well as budget escalation, on-site logistical and safety demands, and learning disruption incurred from construction

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## Bond measure passage paves way for improved future

On May 14, Portland voters approved the PPS 2017 Health, Safety and Modernization Bond, a \$790 million construction bond that funds improvements to mitigate or eliminate safety hazards in nearly every PPS school. PPS oversees buildings averaging 77 years old at 90 sites for 48,500 students. The esteem held by the education provided at these schools can be measured by the 66% approval rate of taxpayers who voted to increase

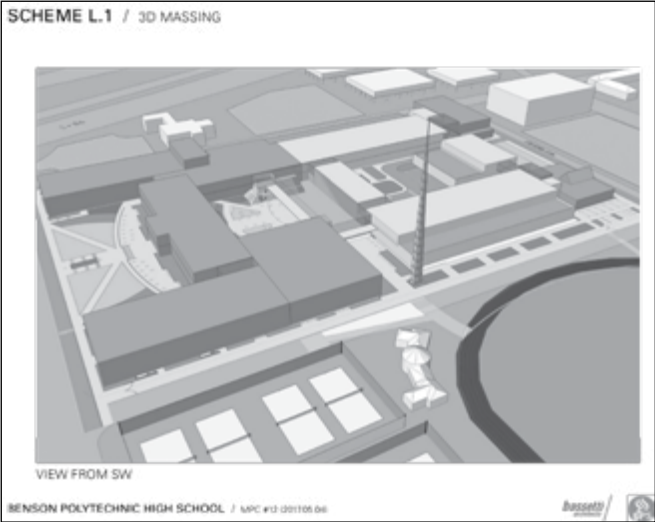
their property taxes by an average of \$0.68 per \$1,000 of assessed value for 30 years.

The bond also allows PPS to modernize four specific schools, including Benson Tech. BPHS’ portion will be \$202 million, which will be used to implement extensive required health and safety upgrades at the school, including seismic upgrades.

The Benson Tech Master Plan Committee has been working with the Benson Tech community and the public,

and has met nine times over the last few years to develop a design, and will continue to meet through August 2017 as part of the effort to effectively meet the needs of integrating CTE and academic programs, and propel Benson Tech into the 21st century as a model for career learning educational institutions. Remodel elements will include restoring the historic and existing classroom and CTE buildings, as well as provide new student spaces to enhance both academic and recreational uses.

## The modern Benson Tech, continued from previous page



**Above:** Concept illustration of a design series being considered for Benson Tech modernization, prepared by Bassetti Architects. School modernization is expected to be finished no later than academic year 2022-2023.

phasing. Project specifications also aim to enrich student experiences and enhance scholastic performance with classrooms, extended-learning areas, and makerspaces that favor innovative next-generation instruction/learning styles for academic and major programs, such as evolving core competencies in engineering, materials sciences, robotics, manned/unmanned vehicular systems, medical/dental science and practice, and other concentrations. These new and medium-to-heavy remodeled envelopes and spaces, mainly situated near the campus’ east and south boundaries, will employ flexibility, proximity, and transparency to form educational clusters known to encourage creativity,

enthusiasm, and collaboration among students. Curricula development through acquisition of industry-standard and state-of-art resources will further complement current school-inventoried technologies and forward-thinking training/entrepreneurial programs, facilitating unmatched student entry, retention, and advancement in higher education and/or employment choices.

Remodeled core academic and CTE spaces will be accentuated by a new multipurpose Student Commons that integrates Benson Tech student and community activities. Being a center of student life, the Commons will connect informal study, personal recreation, cafeteria dining, and school-sponsored services and extramural events via improved access to relaunched fine and performing arts facilities, sporting venues, wrap-around service providers, educational support, and a reconfigured central social courtyard and east workyard with freight delivery and removal easement. Upper-floor terrace seats, walks, and viewing will aid Commons enjoyment and permit pedestrian traffic to rooftop green spaces, outdoor science laboratories, and additional school sites.

More details concerning Benson Tech modernization, including PPS/Bassetti Architects Executive Summaries, Focus Option Educational Specifications, and Pre-design Diligence Report, may be found at [www.pps.net/Page/1838](http://www.pps.net/Page/1838). Please remember to contribute to Benson Tech and its community to help promote the school’s legacy and future as a national leader in STEAM/CTE education and a driver of Portland, Pacific Northwest, and U.S. market competitiveness.

A previous version of this article was published in the February 2017 edition of the BPHSAA Alumni Text newsletter.



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