



BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), December 2018 Edition

Late 2018 Update

Benson Modernization Master Plan Approved

After months of diplomacy and debate and discussion along with community statements of support the detailed plan for the modernization of Benson took a big step forward on December 19 when the Portland Public Schools Board of Education voted to approve a phased construction schedule slated to officially begin in summer of 2021.

"This is cause for celebration," stated PPS Board Chair Rita Moore following the much anticipated vote as Benson students, staff, alumni and supporters who attended the meeting applauded and cheered.

In 2019 PPS will identify location options for other schools and programs that are currently situated on the Benson campus. Those include Alliance High School; Reconnection Services; Evening, Summer and Virtual Scholars; PISA; Clinton DART; Pioneer; and Teen Parent Program. Options for each of the schools and programs include continuing to locate at Benson, locating at a different PPS facility, or locating at a new facility.

Complete details along with downloadable documents can be found at the PPS website (www.pps.net) along with Benson Modernization Plan updates and time sensitive announcements.

Benson Tech is our future. Don't leave it behind

(Authored by Maj Britt (Maxine) Baker, 1990 graduate and BPHSAA secretary, submitted as guest columnist, published July 14 2018, Oregonlive.com)



Simon Benson 1851-1942. Photo courtesy Oregon Encyclopedia.

I care about all Portland Public Schools being properly rebuilt. I also care that Benson Tech, which offers a unique education sorely needed in this country, doesn't get sacrificed because it is the last in the rebuild schedule and more expensive because of its unique requirements.

I ask that my fellow citizens demand that an equitable solution be found to address the school bond shortage, without sacrificing Benson Tech. We need an investigation into when the shortage was known and by whom. We need to hear the reasons it was hidden for so long.

Is it really possible that all the board members were in the dark because staff members did not tell them?

My worry is the same as it has been for several years now. Portland Public

Schools isn't recognizing the imperative of a newer, better Benson Tech with expanded programs to fill the needs of our local, national and even international industrial business partners. That's especially necessary at a time when we need more schools to take on bigger and better career technical education programs in order to fill the ever-widening gap of the current labor shortage.

Hands on career and technical education not only trains replacements for a disappearing and aging workforce, it also gives kids from a variety of backgrounds exposure to -- and appreciation of -- their skills. Here's some of what I learned:

- Self-help home improvement; not scary.
- Learning technical skills has nothing to do with gender.
- Bored in school? Make something.

I also learned that you don't fool around or get distracted when you are dealing with electricity or heavy equipment. That teaches students to respect teachers and classmates and come prepared to work. Benson shows how you can encourage diversity and understanding by having different groups of kids take CTE classes together.

An integrated learning environment means you can tie academic learning directly to making stuff. What I just did in math class I also use in sheet metal or architecture class to figure out dimensions for my project.

Benson Tech works well for all types of students. In 2016, the graduation rate for Benson Tech was 87 percent - 64 percent for non-white students. Within the Benson student body, 52.4 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch and 26 percent speak English as a second language.

When I went to college, Benson Polytechnic's reputation was so well known that the first technical business I called about a part-time job said they would hire me on the spot with a full-time, family-supporting wage. Because I had graduated from Benson Tech.

Please don't let Portland Public Schools limit the future of our students. We need students ready to go into the workforce. We need to keep kids in school. We need kids to build drones, create robots and design artificial intelligence to solve healthcare issues. We need doctors and nurses and med techs. We need electricians and machine shop and construction workers.

We need Benson Polytechnic High School to be rebuilt to the standards that the advisory committee recommended.

Plan To Attend 2019 Tech Show March 14 & 15

Mark your calendars for the 99th Annual Tech Show to be held Thursday March 14 and Friday March 15 from 6pm to 9pm each night. Invite your family and friends and interested business associates to a celebratory night of career technical education programs in action along with building tours, demonstration projects, experiments and fun.

Get involved to support Benson Tech today

Our advocacy efforts for Benson Tech are more important now than they ever have been.

First and foremost, the BPHSAA has two major objectives: to provide social activities for alumni, faculty and friends of Benson Tech, and to promote and support the school. All alumni are invited to become a member, attend a monthly board meeting, help out at the annual Tech Show or the annual August Community Picnic, or participate in one of several advocacy efforts.

Annual membership dues are currently \$20/year, with a portion going to support the school. Paid members can vote at the Annual Meeting, serve on a committee, or be a director of committee chairperson. Connections via social media can follow as many alumni seek out new business contacts or simply to keep or create social ties. The BPHSAA Board of Directors meets the second Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the library at Benson Polytechnic High School, 546 NE 12th Avenue.

To join the BPHSAA or for news about activities, visit www.bensontechalumni.org or email at info@bensontechalumni.org.

For the latest information about Benson Tech's athletic schedule, visit the Portland Interscholastic League website (www.pilathletics.com) and click in the "Schedules" section.

BPHSAA Chairperson's Message

As part of its support of Benson Tech, the BPHSAA plans to increase its Scholarship fund over the next few years to award additional scholarships. This multi-year effort strengthens Benson Tech even while modernization of the building progresses.

As you probably are aware, Benson Tech does not have a PTA or Boosters Club, or a huge foundation. You, Benson Tech's alumni, and the BPHSAA are the principal advocates, champions and sources of outside support for the school.

There are numerous opportunities to add your voice and time and financial resources, however large or small, to making and keeping Benson Tech the greatest high school in Portland and Oregon.

As always, the BPHSAA and its directors welcome your suggestions and feedback on its efforts.

- Dale Bajema '54

Wilson Brings Benson Tech Spirit To Capitol Hill



Oregon High School Principal of the Year Curtis Wilson Jr. proudly represented Oregon and Benson Tech on Capitol Hill as an honored attendee to a National Association of Secondary School Principals gathering in Washington D.C. in September. Wilson met personally with Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to advocate for and discuss career technical education, college affordability, health and wellness issues and to reaffirm federal support for students. Both Wyden and Merkley were invited to attend the 2019 Benson Tech show.

Community Care Day

On August 18 an energetic group of approximately 90 Benson supporters spent the better half of a weekend day pulling weeds, raking leaves, trimming shrubs and trees, spreading bark dust, picking up trash, and improving the look of the front lawn for the first day of school. BHSAA members brought work gloves and yard tools and joined with staff and teachers and neighborhood volunteers to beautify and clean. Hot dogs and hamburgers "hot off the grill" along with snacks and beverages were provided by BHSAA.



Design Advisory Group Meetings Underway

With a rigorous 2018/2019 meeting schedule the goal of the Benson Design Advisory Group (DAG) is to assist with the development of a comprehensive, equitable, integrated and visionary high school campus plan.

Benson is one of three schools being modernized or rebuilt with financing obtained via a voter approved May 2017 bond measure. At 368,000 square feet, Benson is the only high school that is a designated Portland Historic Landmark, with the oldest buildings constructed in 1916-1917.

The construction project is currently scheduled to begin in the summer of 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in three phases in the years 2022, 2023 and 2024. A comprehensive focus-option high school with enhanced CTE programming is proposed with a 1700 student capacity.

DAG members include PPS Director Paul Anthony and Benson Principal Curtis Wilson Jr., thirteen current students, staff and teachers (Roi San Anderson, Brian Gerber, Amy Henry, Tammy Hite, Luke Hotchkiss, Dave Ketah, Bryan Smith, Amy Sutton, Christina Thompson, Todd Williams) and alumni (plus parents, site council, partners, postsecondary education, industry professionals,



neighborhood association, business association, volunteers) including Dale Bajema, Rachel Browning, Janice Choy-Weber, Kevin Clark, Brent Dahl, Angel Dawson, Jeanette DeCastro, Wendy Farber, Marlene Gillis, Reuben Gilmore, Susan Hargrave, Rob Johns, Peter Koonce, Heather Leek, Elizabeth O'Malley, Tanja Page, Glen Pak, Matt Pellico, Richard (Dick) Spies, and Brian Unflat.