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New state-of-the-art Bonsall High School focuses on student engagement

By Newsroom on September 2, 2016



Hundreds of community supporters attended the Grand Opening of the new Bonsall High School building designed by Sprotte+Watson Architecture and Planning and constructed by local builder Erickson Hall Construction. Larissa Scors Anderson photos

BONSALL – Hundreds of enthusiastic community supporters attended the official grand opening of Bonsall High School's (BHS) new 18,000 square foot facility on West Lilac Road on Aug. 23. Bonsall Unified School District superintendent Dr. Justin Cunningham, BHS principal Lee Fleming and lead BHS teacher Daniel Costa gave remarks and invited the public to tour the newly completed building after the official celebration.

Tom Stinson, field representative of Assemblymember Marie Waldron, presented a State Resolution to mark the occasion. Current BHS ASB president Antonia Gregorio, an 11th grader, read an original poem about BHS titled, "The Journey," and cut the ceremonial blue grand opening ribbon.

BHS, which opened in the 2014-15 school year with 64 ninth grade students, is now home to 235 ninth, 10th, and 11th grade students and a faculty of 16 teachers. BHS is part of the nationwide New Tech Network and holds a personalized, small-school feel while focusing on a rigorous and individualized project-based learning educational philosophy.

The new two-story facility hosts the majority of current classes, including some partnered Palomar courses designed specifically for BHS. The professional-level chemistry “Solutions Lab” located upstairs, and the “Forum,” a student common area with couches and seating located downstairs, are just two of the building’s highlights.

Numerous windows offer natural lighting throughout, a view of the Pacific Ocean is available from the southern stairwell, and the second floor overlooks the lower soccer field. The ergonomic furniture on wheels with white-board writing surfaces facilitate collaboration.

“The new building represents a coming together of so many people in the community who wanted to create a special learning place for our students,” said Fleming. “Instead of always talking about a professional environment, we get to show it to our students every day.”

The new facilities will allow Bonsall High to grow its community partner program. Last year, more than 30 business partners engaged in hands-on projects with the students. Notably, Hewlett Packard (HP) created a video spot for a bleeding-edge technology called Sprout found in BHS classrooms. In the process, an international expert team of developers, videographers and interviewers worked with BHS students using high quality production tools and techniques.

Bonsall High also provided a simulation experience for Ecolife, a non-profit helping with indoor air quality in Uganda. The BHS students’ workshop was featured in Education Week, the premier educational news source in the United States.

The new BHS environment helps redefine student engagement. As an educator passionate about small school environments, Fleming compares the reality of education to portrayals of the high school experience on the big screen. “Movies that depict the anonymity and disengagement of students in large high school environments inspire me to personalize the learning at Bonsall High School, to ensure that every last student gets a chance to pursue their own passions and interests to actually enjoy the classroom,” said Fleming. “Engagement is about more than attending activities. It is about having the opportunity to participate meaningfully in creating a path for your own future.”

The San Diego-based architectural firm Sprotte+Watson designed the craftsman structure located on the shared campus of Bonsall High School and Sullivan Middle School at 7350 West Lilac Road in Bonsall with input by the BHS students themselves, who collaborated on palettes and materials.

Escondido-based Erickson-Hall Construction built the facility, beginning in August of 2015. Unisource furnished the ergonomic, collaborative furniture.

In the future, Bonsall High School will be permanently located to the designated 50 acre site on the southern section of Gird Road, near the Golf Club of California. The costs to build the permanent high school will be included in the \$58 million General Obligation Bond that will be on the Nov. 8 ballot for district-wide school improvements such as security and safety.

When the high school moves, the current high school facility will transfer to Sullivan Middle School, which will use the space for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) labs and classrooms.

BHS student parent and education advocate Jenny Leung said, “The idea of a Bonsall High School had been talked about for decades, but only became a reality when the community rallied and voted for Prop BB in 2012. Finally the day is here that our teenagers walk down the halls of a building they can call their own to learn and grow in together. This is only the beginning as we rally again as a community to build the permanent high school on Gird Road.”

Next year, the school will host grades 9-12 for the first time, with the first Bonsall High School class graduating in 2018. To learn more about Bonsall High School and project-based learning, visit the bonsallhs.com or call (760) 631-5209 to schedule a tour.



Tenth graders Phoebe Anderson, left, and Cheyenne Laurance refer to the Bonsall High School core values, which are prominently displayed throughout the building. “BHS Learners are empathetic and responsive to the needs of others, continually drafting and revising work to create a high quality product, respectful of the norms of the workspace, collaborating with others to accomplish meaningful work, finding joy and pleasure in pursuit of personal interests and passions.”



Newly-hired chemistry teacher Jennifer Quach talks with the community in the professional chemistry lab, one of the many highlights of the Bonsall High School facility.



Bonsall High School lead teacher Daniel Costa shakes the hands of a parent during Open House.



Bonsall Unified School District welcomed the public to tour the new Bonsall High School building and meet the teachers and staff during an open house after the official ribbon cutting celebration.



Current Bonsall HS ASB president Antonia Gregorio cuts the ribbon to officially open the new facility. Gregorio, who is interested in attending UCLA, shared that “this new building is an extension of our growing BHS family.”



Dr. Justin Cunningham, superintendent of Bonsall Unified School District, right, proudly accepts a State Resolution to commemorate the occasion from Tom Stinson, field representative of Assemblymember Marie Waldron, AD-75.



Sporting Bonsall Blue spirit and smiles, BHS students, from left, Taylor Gomez-Douglas, Heather Holdo, and Sara Barclay anticipate the ribbon cutting for the new building.



Bonsall High School principal Lee Fleming remarks on the new Bonsall High School Building, "Instead of always talking about a professional environment, we get to show it to our students every day."



Dominic Svatos, First Lieutenant, USMC, ret. and newly hired advanced math teacher at Bonsall High School welcomes students, parents, staff and guests to the BHS Grand Opening, from left, Svatos, BHS principal Lee Fleming, BHS lead teacher Daniel Costa, and BUSD superintendent Justin Cunningham.



Distinguished community guests at the BHS ribbon cutting include, from left, sitting, Bonsall chamber manager Lori Gaye, Fallbrook Healthcare District officials Pamela Knox and Bobbi Palmer.