

Greetings Lava Bears!

I hope you and your family are having a wonderful summer. It's hard to believe that in just three weeks students will be back in our classrooms and hallways. This school year will be amazing, and we are excited to welcome everyone to the next chapter in the storied history of Bend Senior High School.

Campus will look quite a bit different when the school year begins in September. Our four-year construction project is well underway, with demolition work completed and site work happening now for Phase 1. Over the next two years we will see our new classroom building, main entry, offices and commons rise. It's exciting to reach this stage of the bond program, and we will keep you informed about everything you and students need to know to navigate this transition to an amazing new home for all Lava Bears.

Another big change – one we did not anticipate – is the loss of our beloved auditorium built in the 1950s. As we let you know in July, we discovered that the auditorium had become structurally compromised over the summer. We brought in engineers to evaluate the structure, and they found fractures in the trusses supporting the auditorium roof. Repairs were not an option, and we proceeded with an emergency demolition, which is nearing completion. Debris is being hauled away, and the site will be cleared and safe before school begins. The sudden loss of our auditorium raises questions about the process of replacing it and, until then, how we manage without an auditorium.

The next few years may try our patience and test our resolve, but my years as your principal have taught me that we know how to work together as a caring and resilient community to do what's right. We are Lava Bear tough and Lava Bear kind, and together we will push through the next four years and leave a legacy of excellence that will benefit generations of families. We celebrate our school history and traditions by paying tribute to the "Long Blue Line" of 116 graduating classes, and this sentiment is captured in design elements for our new building.

Following are updates on both the bond project and auditorium replacement:

### **CONSTRUCTION UPDATE**

Following a fun groundbreaking ceremony the last week of school, a demolition crew began to dismantle older classroom wings to make way for new construction. The area has been cleared, including our baseball field, which is being relocated as part of this project. Kirby Nagelhout Construction, our general contractor, is now preparing the site for construction, and we will start to see walls rise in a few months. When this phase is completed, 90 percent of classes will be located in the new classroom building.

**Our first priority throughout the entire project is safety of students, staff and visitors.** Our school and district safety teams are working closely with project contractors and Bend Fire & Rescue to emphasize safety in every stage of this work. Barriers are in place to separate all construction activity from students, staff and visitors. Contractors will not be in areas where students are present without authorization. As much as possible we will keep construction from encroaching on school and extracurricular activities. Construction work entails noise, but we will work to minimize disruptions and provide for a conducive learning environment. We will provide safety briefings for all students the first week of school.

We have space for every class and activity, without sacrificing any programs. We will continue to offer all curricular and extracurricular activities this year. Will it be tight? Yes! We will certainly experience some pinch points as our 1,350 students navigate the corridors, and as we encounter issues, we will make adjustments. We are determined to make the best of this short-term inconvenience. It will all be worth it when we move into our beautiful new addition in 2026.

You also may wonder how parking and traffic flow on campus might be affected during construction. I'm happy to share that throughout Phase 1, there will be no significant change in parking for students, staff and visitors. Phase 1 includes construction of a new parking lot and main entrance on the east side of our school. This is why it was necessary to remove our baseball field along 9th Street. For the next two years, our baseball program will use Vince Genna Stadium. A new Lava Bear baseball field will be constructed at our nearby 15th Street site, next to Bear Creek Elementary School.

Finally, as construction begins on Phase 1, we are embarking on design work for Phases 2 and 3, scheduled for construction in 2026-28. This will be when we tear down our old gyms and build a new main gym and mini gym, wrestling room, weight room, two health classrooms, locker rooms, restrooms, concessions, athletics entrance and Lava Bear athletic hall of fame. We already are working with BBT Architects Inc. on this piece of the project and will provide updates as we move along.

## **AUDITORIUM UPDATE**

The emergency demolition is moving along quickly. The compromised roof and some walls are down, and debris is being removed for waste disposal. We aim to complete demolition and cleanup of the auditorium site this month, before most school staff report back for the start of their work year.

While this matter certainly complicates what the next few years will look like, we are prepared to pivot and make the best of a challenging situation. First, the auditorium loss is a separate issue from the bond work, and it is not hampering the progress we are making on the construction project. Second, we are working diligently to adjust for this loss of space and find appropriate alternatives for where students in performing arts will learn, rehearse and perform. We will begin the new school year with a plan for our band, orchestra, choir and drama students. This likely will include a combination of spaces in our building, such as the commons; our neighbor across 9th Street, First Presbyterian Church of Bend; and other schools in our district. We are proud of our arts programs and will do all we can to accommodate their needs until a new auditorium opens.

You might be wondering when we'll have a new auditorium done. It's too early to have a firm timeline, but we know that a project of this scope likely will take several years. This includes determining insurance coverage, the design phase, site preparation, construction, and equipping and furnishing the new auditorium. Rest assured that we will keep you and our community updated on this work, and provide you opportunities to help us envision what our new auditorium should be. In the end, our campus will shine with modern, safe, functional and inviting spaces for learning and showcasing our students' accomplishments.

## **LEARN MORE**

All families are invited to attend an open house on Monday, **September 16**, at 6 p.m. in our main gym. This is your opportunity to learn how we will operate through the next two years of construction and what your students will experience. You are invited to walk around, meet our teaching staff, and ask questions. I look forward to seeing you there.

For our new families – freshmen and other new students – we invite you to a high school orientation meeting on Wednesday, **September 4**. This is an opportunity to find your way around and see how we are managing in a smaller footprint for the next couple of years. More information will follow in an invitation to our new students and their families.

As I mentioned earlier, we also will meet with students in each grade level the first week of school to go over safety measures and other expectations for this year.

As the school year gets underway, we will provide timely construction updates through our regular school communications. This will include details to help students and family members understand what's happening and why, and assist you in navigating all the changes this project will bring.

Throughout it all, please let me know if you have questions. We will do our best to explain what's going on, what's coming up, and what you need to know to ensure your students have the best possible experience in their time at Bend Senior High School.

In conclusion, I want to express my deep gratitude for your partnership in our educational mission. The words that continue to circulate in my mind, as we embark on this journey, are these: patience, grace, kindness, flexibility, and determination and expect to "pivot".

GO BEARS!

Christopher Reese  
Principal