

STHS construction zone about to be teaching center

By Kathryn Reed

An excitement was in the air as more than a dozen people toured the Construction, Arts and Transportation Academy at South Tahoe High School. Between now and April 18 the final touches will be put on the building that will welcome students April 19.

Between the \$64.5 million bond approved by voters in November 2008 and the more than \$30 million Lake Tahoe Unified School District will receive from the state in matching grant dollars, the facilities in the district are being transformed. Most of the dramatic changes are occurring at the high school, though ever school will reap the benefits of the bond.



STHS Principal Ivone Larson, center, begins a tour of the CAT building. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Angela Swanson, former board member and now consultant for the architectural team, gave the committee an update on state dollars. With bond sales going well in March, \$4.3 million should be in LTUSD's coffers in June. Although the state has

approved \$30 million in matching funds for LTUSD, much of the money is not in hand.

On Wednesday it was the bond oversight committee's opportunity to tour one of the two buildings currently under construction at South Tahoe High. The other building is in the back of the campus called Stadium View because it overlooks the football field.

(Click here for more info on both buildings and some history.)

The committee is tasked with making sure the dollars are spent appropriately. Proposition 39 mandates the district do the projects outlined in the bond proposal. This means as board members change, pet projects cannot be introduced. What can change is an expansion of what's in the bond, which is how the sports medicine building can become a reality.

"This is a building like you've never seen in this district," STHS Principal Ivone Larson told the group as they entered the CAT building.

Joe Stewart of SMC Contracting was part of the tour.



Contractor Joe Stewart, center, speaks with Josh Mercow and Harold Singer on Wednesday.

“The complexity of the building was a challenge. But ultimately the complexity is the beauty of the building,” Stewart told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The CMU (concrete masonry unit) is structural, but it’s also part of the design.”

The concrete blocks will help with energy costs because of how they retain heat. Solar was looked at, but it didn’t pencil out.

Natural light filters in from the multitude of windows. Studies have been done that prove people learn better with natural light instead of under fluorescents.

“Smart lighting controls the system. It will sense occupancy and daylight harvesting,” LTUSD Facilities Director Steve Morales said. This will save on energy bills.



Views from the art room.

Instructors will be able to control the lighting as well. It’s possible to dim the lights over the students so the focus is on the teaching wall.

Smart boards may be the one item not installed when classes begin after spring break.

Even what the floors are made out of was given careful consideration. A rubber floor with resins that will eliminate the need for them to be refinished are in the construction area. The arts section has a concrete floor with a finish for durability and ease of cleaning.



Construction,
Arts and
Transportation
building at
STHS.

It doesn't look like your typical auto shop or construction learning area. The exterior blends with the environment. It's neither over-the-top Tahoe architecture, nor the typical institutional design.

The views from where the art students will study are stunning – or perhaps, inspiring, as Larson put it.

Committee member Amanda Adams asked whether the campus could be used as a demo-learning area for locals needing to put in BMPs, the erosion prevention measures.

Morales said part of the revegetation plan was designed by students and will be implemented by them as well.

By being three months ahead of schedule it means Stewart and his guys will be able to start demolition of the little theater the first week of May, with asbestos abatement beginning April 12.



LTUSD

Facilities

Director Steve

Morales

explains the intricacies of the building.

A special groundbreaking ceremony for the performing arts-media building will be May 21.

Replacement of the tennis courts should begin July 1, with players able to use them by Aug. 15.

The school board is having a special meeting April 6 to vote on contracts for projects that are in the pipeline.