

# STHS ushers in new era with opening of CAT building

By Kathryn Reed

Walking into the Construction, Arts and Transportation Academy students could be heard saying, “Wow!” – “It smells good.” – “It smells weird.”

It was all of the above and then some Monday on the first day of instruction in the new building on the campus of South Tahoe High School.

With only one class – small engines – being taught first period, it was rather quiet. But a certain amount of excitement was evident from this group of freshmen.



Nathan Wieburg is the first student in the new building at South Tahoe High on Monday.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

Nathan Wieburg was the first person through the door.

“It’s lots better. The shop was dirty, bolts were everywhere

and the desks were falling apart," Wieburg said as he descended the stairs to the auto shop.

With all the teachers who will call the CAT building their home bringing classes in for a tour prior to last week's spring break, the students knew where to go. The guys flew down the stairs – the first staircase in the district.

Security guard Troy Gregory was holding the door for each student.

The 17 students fill the stools before the four rows of tables. Some huddled by teacher Mike Patterson's desk to get a locker.

"They built this for you," he tells the students. "You need to help take care of it."

A little glitch is the wrong lockers arrived. For now students will share. When the correct ones arrive they'll each have one to store notebooks, safety glasses and coveralls.

Something new for Patterson is having a desk.



Teacher Mike Patterson, left, talks with students.

Adjacent to the classroom is the lab area for the small engine class. Behind the classroom is the mega-auto shop with mostly new devices. What could be saved from the old shop was. But next week Patterson is looking forward to being trained on the

state-of-the-art alignment rack.

It's not just engines the group of guys handles. (This is the first year in a while no girls have signed up for the class.) Patterson is having them put in the shelf for their workbenches by figuring out which drawer to remove, the need for a No. 3 Phillips screwdriver and an 11mm wrench.

"I think it's pretty cool. It's a lot newer and nicer. We'll be able to do more," said Kyle Rossi as he and Jason Elder worked on putting in the shelf.

Their tools fill the top two drawers. The bottom two and the cabinet are for engines and engine parts.



Kyle Rossi assesses what to do on his work station.

Patterson told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I think this sends a really important message that taking career technical education classes is important to the district. I think they sent the opposite message before."

Despite the significance of this being the first building to open with the \$64.5 million voter approved bond money, no district office personnel or school board members were there to witness the occasion.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District Director of Facilities Steve Morales had been at the school since 5:15am – but that

isn't unusual.

"We still have some loose ends," Morales said. But the smile on his face was similar to that of a new parent. Video distribution should be installed in the next few days and white boards will arrive in a few weeks.

With this building open three months ahead of schedule, it means the little theater is being demolished now. A sign warning about asbestos is on one door. The clanging of SMC Contracting workers can be heard on the other side of the chain link fence.

Lots of metal fencing will remain at the school. Those getting to the CAT building must go through the C Wing. In an emergency, all doors would be available to students in the CAT building.

Because ground will be broken in May on the media arts center, the school will remain a construction zone for quite a while. That structure will go directly in front of the CAT.