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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COALITION FOR ADEQUATE SCHOOL HOUSING

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South Tahoe High School

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South Tahoe High School: Less Standardization and More Flexibility

Lake Tahoe Unified School District

In these financially strapped times, people are getting creative with their finances. Lake Tahoe Unified School District has been doing the same – and getting incredible results for their students and community. After putting together a District Facilities Master Plan in December of 2007, they quickly prepared for a bond, and were on the ballot in June of 2008. While not passing the first go around, the bond was repositioned, and passed just four months later.

“The commitment and enthusiasm of the district and Community Facilities Advisory Committee inspired our team and helped increase local support for the program recommendations,” recounts educational planner Jim Kisel. “It was a very time sensitive process and these facilities have been constructed in record time.”

For a district with no new construction eligibility dollars, what did their leadership, gumption and creativity get them? Plenty.

The district received almost \$30 million in funds from Career Technical Education (CTE), Overcrowded Relief Grant (ORG), Joint-Use, and High

Performance building grants. Between these monies, and the bond that their community passed, the district was able to create five extraordinary learning facilities for their students.

First to be completed, was the \$12.5 million CTE “Green” Construction and Transportation Academy. Second, was a \$12 million ORG funded classroom building. To be finished in September, is the \$13 million Tahoe Arts and Design Academy. And lastly, a new Campus Commons Student Union and Sports Medicine Academy are to be up and running in 2012 and 2013, respectively. Each project is CHPS* designed and qualified for the High Performance Energy Grant beating Title 24 (California’s stringent energy code), by 20 percent.

The CTE Green Construction and Transportation Academy has been of particular interest. The academy exposes students to careers in green construction, auto mechanics and technology. The colors of the buildings are harmonious with the surrounding landscape while signage and graphics highlight attributes which make the project environmentally responsible. The space


offers labs for construction technologies, CAD drafting, and graphic design, along with a 10-bay auto shop modeled after a commercial auto dealership. Here, students learn green automotive and transportation technologies including how to work on and repair hybrid vehicles.

“Career Technical Education supports a different learning style,” says Dr. Jim Tarwater, Superintendent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District. “It’s about giving students pathways for careers ranging from arts, media, entertainment, and theater to construction, architectural design, and automotives ... These programs and their facilities work together at South Tahoe High School. We hope our students enjoy them, and learn a lot.”

What does this mean for the design of Tahoe’s CTE Green Academy? Less standardization and more flexibility. Students excel with areas for groups to collaborate, areas for individual learning, and areas that allow project-based activities rather than strictly lecture-based instruction. Learning Labs are clustered around a shared space, staff



work areas are easily accessible and visible to students, and outdoor learning is valued equally to indoor.

“All of these things change the shape of education and the architecture that supports it,” finishes architect Wendy Rogers. “It’s about sustainability, not just for the environment, but in terms of giving students the skills they need to be able to stay in their community and thrive.” 

**CHPS is the Collaborative for High Performance Schools. Its mission is to promote a national movement that facilitates the design, construction and operation of high performance schools.*



Project Team:

- District: Lake Tahoe Unified School District
- Program Manager: Premier Management Group (PMG)
- General Contractor: SMC Contracting
- Architect: LPA Inc.
- Structural: KPFF Engineers
- Civil: Warren Consulting Engineers
- MEP: LP Engineers
- Landscape: LPA Inc.