

TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY ON CHARGER LOOP

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Ten years ago, Oxford High School moved into a bigger and more updated building to support their already large and growing student body. When the high school moved out of their old building, it turned into the middle school building. Throughout the decade in the new building on Charger Loop, there have been many changes.

Teachers and students began classes in the new building in January of 2014. They moved in over Christmas break that year. Rebecca Mann was a math teacher at Oxford High School for 15 years and still works in the district today, and shared her experiences on the transition to the new building over the break.

"Since we moved over Christmas break, I can remember just throwing our things in boxes so maintenance could move us," Mann said. "There really wasn't much time to go through your things to determine what you actually needed to take with you."

The first few months in the new building were full of time adjusting to being in a new location and tweaking things to make sure everything was running smoothly.

"At first, the district was very adamant about teachers all using the same furniture that was set up in the classrooms," Mann said. "This caused a great deal of panic among the faculty because teachers liked their stuff and wanted more storage."

Teachers couldn't have extra shelving, cabinets, mini fridges and microwaves in their classrooms. There was also no eating allowed in classrooms to preserve

the cleanliness of the new building, so teachers had to eat lunch in the cafeteria or workrooms.

"These rules seem so crazy now, but as you can tell, we have completely shifted that mindset," Mann said. "As years went on, these rules became more relaxed and furniture and small appliances started trickling their way into more and more classrooms."

This is just one example of a small change that has occurred in the last ten years at Oxford High School. There was also a brief period of time where students and staff received an hour-long lunch break called "Power Hour."

"After moving into the building we saw several different administrators trying different things and many additions and changes were made as we worked to adjust to the new space," Mann said.

Oxford High School's current administrator, Dr. Dana Bullard has also seen changes in just the last two years that she has been head principal. When Bullard first began at OHS she noticed that students were leaving campus a lot and didn't seem invested in the culture at the high school.

"The parking lot would be full and then empty, people were coming back and forth," Bullard said. "It was like a commuter campus of a community college, where people just come and go."

Bullard sat down with teachers, administrators, and counselors to find a solution for this issue that she had observed. They all joined together to propose ideas on how to make this campus more meaningful to students so that students could have a real high school experience.

"We've tried to make a concerted effort to make sure that people are enjoying what we do specifically and the

bonds that we form instead of just looking forward to when they can leave campus," Bullard said. "I don't know if it's been successful or not, but it seems to me that there are more people staying on campus."

The number of early graduates in the years leading up to this year compared to the early graduates this year has been clear evidence of the success Bullard has had with this idea. In past years there has been an average of 50 or 60 students out of each class that graduate in Dec. because they are ready to finish high school. This year there were only 28 students who graduated in Dec..

"That's a huge sign to me that people have started to enjoy being at school and want to participate in their senior year," Bullard said. "It also makes the school more enjoyable for the underclassmen because when our seniors leave early, they take their leadership and their institutional knowledge with them. The seniors traditions and things like that make the school special."

While this emotional connection to school was a big change, there were smaller changes like the furniture in the commons, the umbrellas on the picnic tables and even naming the "Charger Yard" that helped form Oxford High School's own individual culture over the years.

"It's just logistics and sociology type stuff that I haven't used in a while, but it was fun to lead through this process to create a fun environment for students," Bullard said.

The last decade in the building has been full of constant improvement for current students and staff, but there has also been some thinking into the future involved as well. The Oxford School District grows at about 3 percent each year, so finding

spaces for teachers while also keeping the individuality of each teacher's room has been a bit of a struggle.

"Unlike in a college setting, high school teachers need a classroom that reflects his or her authenticity as a teacher, and their relationship to students," Bullard said. "They need a space with things on the wall that have something to do with their history, their aspirations, and their culture."

Last year, some classes were moved to the OECC and some special education classrooms were rearranged and shared for resource purposes. There was a bond passed that is allowing the high school to make more expansions so they can better prepare for the increase in future students.

"We are building a new building that will be done in the fall of 2025 that will help us with our space issue and we have plans to reconfigure where JROTC is as well," Bullard said.

The most recent renovation to the school was an intercom system that reaches every building on campus. This system was installed over spring break and makes communicating through the campus more efficient.

"The most important reason for the new intercom system is just safety," Bullard said. "Before the system, we would have to use walkie talkies to communicate with the buildings separated from the main building and they were very hit or miss."

The last ten years at OHS has been a trial and error process of trying to create a safe, enjoyable and opportunity filled campus.

"This district is already light years ahead of other districts where I've worked and seen," Bullard said. "So I think that this is a good start to the next ten years."

TEN YEARS OF GROWTH AT OHS

40.4% GROWTH
IN STUDENT ENROLLMENT

2013-14: **958** 2023-24: **1,345**

TEACHERS & STAFF GROWTH

2013-14: **87** 2023-24: **117**
34.5% GROWTH

OHS SQUARE FOOTAGE GROWTH

Main Building **220,000**FT²
+
Fine Arts Building **42,134**FT²
+
Center for Applied Engineering **13,000**FT²
Total: 275,134FT²

