



New Sierra Linda Performing Arts Center

Can “Turf” Create Community? Students Say ‘Yes!’: Sierra Linda High School Looks Ahead to Facility Improvements While Celebrating Recent Upgrades

By Staff Writer

Students and staff at Sierra Linda High School are already benefiting from several major facility improvements, while additional campus enhancements could be on the horizon as part of Tolleson Union High School District's long-term facilities plan.

During a recent episode of The Education Exchange podcast, Superintendent Jeremy Calles joined Sierra Linda High School Principal Vikki Haught, Student Body President Hayley Barrera, and Student Body Vice President, Janeen Carrillo, to discuss completed campus projects as well as future improvements being considered for the school. The discussion highlighted how recent investments are enhancing student life while identifying infrastructure, safety and academic needs that may shape the campus in the years ahead.

Among the most visible recent improvements is the installation of artificial turf and solar-shaded gathering spaces in the school's central quad. Students said the area has quickly become a hub for lunchtime activities, club events and student engagement.

"The turf has definitely welcomed us to more opportunities in hosting," Barrera said. "We're able to collaborate more since it's a bigger space and a lot of students like being there just because it's a shaded area."

Carrillo noted that before the solar structures were installed, students often crowded into indoor spaces to escape Arizona's heat.

"Nobody was really as comfortable as how it is now with the solar," she said.

Principal Haught said the space has become a valuable venue for campus events, club activities and community gatherings.

Another significant addition in recent years has been Sierra Linda's Performing Arts Center. Before the facility was constructed, student performances were held in the campus cafeteria.

"I think it makes a drastic difference," Carrillo said. "That performing arts center has brought a lot of opportunities for more events to pop up."

Barrera said the venue elevates the experience for both performers and audiences.

"It brings a whole another level of professionalism," Barrera said. "Our community sees it and they're in shock and it brings a whole another experience to the performance they're seeing."

While those improvements are already in place, several future projects discussed during the podcast remain proposals. District leaders explained that potential upgrades, including athletic field improvements, roof replacements, additional safety enhancements and a new auxiliary gymnasium, are among the projects that could move forward if Tolleson Union High School District's bond measure is approved by voters this November.

One proposed important enhancement would laser-level the athletic fields to improve playing conditions and reduce injury risks.

"[I am a] student athlete myself [JV softball]," Barrera said. "Since it's not leveled correctly, there are a lot of dips. There's a lot of potential for somebody to get hurt."

The district is also evaluating roof replacements as buildings on campus approach the end of their original warranty lifespan. Haught said addressing aging infrastructure before major failures occur helps minimize disruptions to student learning.

"It becomes very disruptive to the kids, to the teachers," Haught said, describing the impact of classroom relocations caused by roof leaks.

Another proposal generating interest among students is the addition of an auxiliary gymnasium. District officials said the additional space could help expand athletic offerings and improve scheduling for existing programs. "A lot of people have brought up why we don't have as many sports," Barrera said. "It would bring a lot more student athletes to our school."

Killo agreed, noting that sports such as boys and girls basketball often compete for available practice space. "I feel like the auxiliary gym would help that time management a lot," she said.

Campus safety also remains a district priority. Proposed perimeter fencing upgrades would complement recently implemented security measures and help strengthen access controls around the campus.

"I do think it is very necessary," Barrera said. "A lot of parents of our fellow students would really appreciate it." Haught emphasized that student safety remains at the center of every campus decision.

"My number one job is to make sure our kids and our staff are safe," she said. "Kids can't learn if they don't feel safe."

Students also shared ideas for future enhancements, including misting systems or fans beneath the solar canopies to improve comfort during the hottest months, while Haught highlighted classroom furniture upgrades and modernization of the campus alarm system as additional priorities.

As Sierra Linda approaches its 20th year, district leaders, educators and students continue to work together to identify ways to improve the educational environment. Whether through completed projects already transforming daily campus life or future improvements that may be funded through the district's proposed bond measure (which will go before voters on November 3rd of this year) the shared goal remains creating a safer, more engaging and more supportive learning experience for current and future Bulldogs.