



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BARRINGTON 220

## A Place to Gather

BARRINGTON HIGH SCHOOL'S STAFF AND PTO  
CREATE A POSITIVE NEW SPACE

**B**ARRINGTON HIGH SCHOOL students returned to school on Thursday, August 20 to find a newly renovated common area just off of the lobby that feels more like a college hub than a high school. Gone are the cafeteria tables that once filled the space. Instead, students have modern tables and chairs perfect for collaboration. There are a variety of seating arrangements available including larger tables that seat eight or more, and high-top bar seating with accessible electric outlets for powering laptops and other devices. More renovations are coming, including televisions, coffee, and food options.

The vision for the Junior Commons started three years ago, when the BHS staff and PTO collaboratively determined the need to re-design the space formerly known as the Junior Commons. Over the years, the Barrington High School PTO spent a great deal of time with professional design teams, student focus groups, and design mock-ups to come up with a



space where students are able to collaborate on projects while having easy access to multiple power sources and data ports. With \$74,000 in donations from generous BHS families and community members, the new furniture was installed over the summer. Barrington 220 staff will be working with the student body to rename the space this year, in order to remove the long-standing notion that the commons is only for juniors.

The commons will be available to students from 6:40 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. on school attendance days. Starting in January, Chartwells, the district's



food service provider, will be offering snacks and beverages from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. There will also be vending machines with food, drinks, and Starbucks coffee for students and staff. If demand is there, Chartwells may extend these hours accordingly.

If more funds can be raised, the BHS PTO's goal for this school year is to continue enhancing the project by relocating some locker banks near the main office and adding four glass-wall meeting rooms for students to hold study groups or meetings. The Academic Boosters Committee will be accepting donations through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal. We will also be reaching out to local businesses to sponsor a meeting room to receive naming rights in return.

Since school has started, the feedback from students and staff has been consistently positive. The students are taking advantage of this space during the school day, but the great thing to see is how it is being used before and after school for group meetings, getting homework done, and even meeting with teachers. This space will ultimately be used by most students in the district as they move through the elementary and middle schools, eventually benefiting more than just the students currently at BHS.

The Barrington High School PTO thanks the supportive community for helping to make this space possible. We hope parents, alumni, and community members will have a chance to stop by the high school and see how incredible it has all turned out.

*Academic Boosters was established by the Barrington High School PTO to provide additional funding for academic needs not otherwise met through the Barrington 220 budget. Funds are used for projects that will enhance the learning experience of all students at the high school. U*

*Jennifer Lekai is the Barrington High School PTO President for 2015-16.*



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