

# School Performing Arts Center Opens

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## “Cornerstone to revitalizing downtown”

It took nearly 40 years, but Broken Arrow Public Schools finally has its own performing arts center.

The school held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday for the new Performing Arts Center and Educational Services Center, a \$26.4 million, 86,200-square-foot structure on Houston and Main streets that will host performances by Broken Arrow students and be home to school district offices.

A performing arts center was first mentioned at a 1970 Chamber of Commerce retreat and was considered No. 1 on the chamber's wish list, said Keith Isbell, a spokesman for the school district.

The issue was brought before the chamber again in 2003, and two bond issues were passed in 2004 and 2006 that included funding for the building.

Construction began in 2006.

Students in school productions have sometimes had to use church facilities or those at Tulsa Community College if the auditorium at North Intermediate High School was booked, Isbell said.

And although that auditorium still will be used, the new center eliminates the need to go "knocking on doors" to find a location.

The new center not only will serve students but also members of the community, and it will be a cornerstone to revitalizing downtown, Isbell said.

"The first and foremost users will be our students, but when the students are not using it we could certainly get with the community and find other uses for it," Isbell said.

"When the North Intermediate auditorium was being used, it was kind of like knocking on doors and seeing if they have space to perform in. The community understood that need."

The center features seating for 1,500, including a balcony, as well as a 3,500-square-foot stage.

A grand opening gala is planned for the fall.

The three-story center also will house school offices, and although the human resources department already has moved in, other departments, including the superintendent's office, will begin moving in June 1, Isbell said.

## Project funded by two bond proposals

Funding for construction of the Performing Arts Center and Educational Services Center originally was approved March 9, 2004, through a \$40.5 million bond proposal, of which \$19.1 million was designated for design and construction of the building.

In 2006, school officials announced the need for \$7.3 million more in bond money to cover upgrades to the facility, bringing the total project cost to \$26.4 million.

A Dec. 12, 2006, bond proposal, for \$48.1 million, which included the \$7.3 million, passed with 78 percent voter approval.