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## New OIS Buildings Foster Supportive Student Culture

By Emma Wong



Photos Emma Wong

The OIS Student Services Building, located directly right of the traffic circle.

On a bright May morning, eighth-grader Sophie Baker will be among an eager crowd filing into Orinda Intermediate School's brand-new Student Center. Featuring a slanted roof and amphitheater steps, the center is one aspect of OIS's broad renovation project, set to open next month with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Boasting a reception, staff lounge, administrative room, and Student Center, the complex will modernize the OIS campus and address prior limitations. With outdoor seating saturated during lunchtime, many Bulldogs wished for an indoor gathering space. "In sixth grade, we had to eat lunch in the

breezeways because the tables were too crowded," Baker said. "I thought we needed more indoor spaces. One friend group usually couldn't fit at a table." Additionally, staff sought space to hold meetings, previously adapting to the library or classrooms. These improvements were goals to address for Principal Stacy Wayne, who oversaw the construction process. "[We hoped for a] new area to enable us to hold gatherings, since we lacked room in the past," Wayne said. Fortunately, in 2018, municipal measures E and I provided over \$100 million to construct modern facilities across the Orinda Union School District (OUSD). With necessary funds, OIS

bulldozed old buildings two years ago, at the start of Baker's middle school career. "I remember the construction starting at the end of sixth grade," Baker said. "I feel like it's been going on for so long, so I'm looking forward to using the whole building." Principal Wayne designed the complex layout to fit students' and staff's needs. The conference room, with its large wooden table and marble countertops, provides a spacious area for stakeholder meetings. The reception and main office, previously located in a hallway, are now at the front of the school, providing increased visibility for new parents. An intriguing devel-

opment comes with the Student Services building next to the front gym. Also called the Wellness Center, the spacious room mirrors facilities provided by Miramonte High School that foster a safe space, where staff provide therapeutic services to students in need.

Beyond accommodating student emotional health, the Student Services building also provides the indoor social hotspot that Bulldogs have been yearning for. "Out of all the new rooms, I'm most excited to use the Student Center," eighth-grader Palig Horoupan said. "It's a cozy place that looks great for hanging out. I'll be checking it out with all my friends before we go to high school."

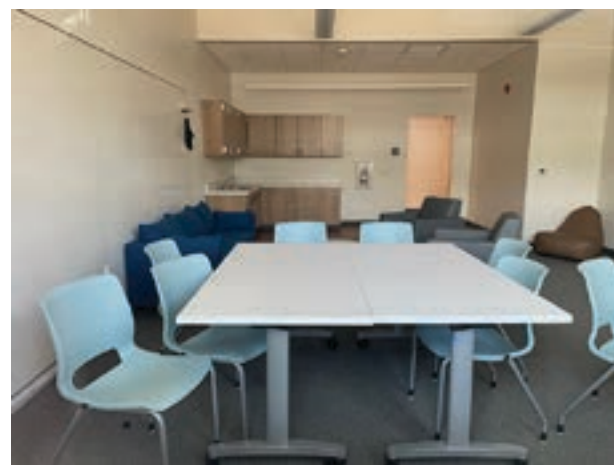
Baker signed up to be an office aide for one of her electives. After the complex opens, she will greet parents and take calls in the new administrative room. "It'll be cool to work there: we'll do lots of things, including delivering items to classes and just helping around," Baker said. "I'm also looking forward to spending time there when I need it." As the eighth-graders move toward graduation, they hope that the next generation of Bulldogs can fully enjoy the renovated cam-

pus. "These buildings provide a great experience for incoming sixth-graders," Baker said. "I think the Wellness Center especially will help out a lot of people at this school."

Wayne hopes that the renovation will further OIS' goal of foster-

ing an environment "where everybody belongs."

"I'm looking forward to having a centralized hub for our community," Wayne said. "We want people to have a positive first impression of our amazing school!"



Student Center, a cozy place for hanging out.

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