

## Sage Creek christens performing arts center

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Sage Creek High School unveils its new Performing Arts Center Monday in Carlsbad. Photo by Shana Thompson

CARLSBAD — It is the crown jewel of Sage Creek High School.

On June 4, more than 100 students and VIPs were treated to the grand opening of the newly opened performing arts center, which was years in the making.

The 17,500-square-foot facility is a professional-grade performing arts center with state-of-the-art lighting, sound and stage functions with a 29-person, 9-foot-deep orchestra pit and capacity for 343 people.

The nearly \$15 million facility sits 53 feet high with a massive back entrance for sets, a classroom and streaming capabilities with two large-screen TVs in the main hallway. The building is also energy efficient, according to Carlsbad Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Ben Churchill.

Since its inception, Sage Creek has been a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math-based school. But with the addition of the arts, it now widens its focus. Churchill also received the biggest applause and cheers when speaking about the movement forward for the five-year-old school.

“This allows us to shift from STEM to STEAM,” Churchill said to a roar from the audience. “We are so fortunate to have a facility like this.”

Principal Cesar Morales, who has been the only principal in the school’s history, said the past several weeks and months have been highly anticipated. He said the official opening was on June 5 for the senior awards, however, a group of students beat him to the punch with an impromptu singing number on June 4.

Morales said the vision from the district and school means students throughout the district and residents have a new place to celebrate the arts.

He thanked all the students, parents and anyone who has visited the school for their patience during construction, which took about 18 months. The performing arts center sits at the main entrance to the campus.

“It’s a great addition to our visual arts program we got going,” he explained. “What I’m fired up about, is we have the kids in position to make the most out of it. I want to give our community kudos for the journey up to this point, now it’s the fun part. We have a phenomenal community here and they were team players.”

Ray Pearson, president of the Carlsbad Unified School District board of trustees, said the center is a result of the Proposition E, which passed in 2006 and pumped in \$198 million to the district. Thanks to state grants, plus the bond, the district was able to complete about \$250 million in projects over the past 12 years.

The Sage Creek Performing Arts Center is the second such facility for the district, the other is the Community Arts Center at Carlsbad High School. The Community Arts Center, Churchill announced, will be “offline” for renovations and modernization beginning this summer and will reopen in 2019.

For the next year, the Sage Creek Performing Arts Center will be the only one for district students, as both high schools will use the facility. Once the Community Arts Center reopens, Churchill said it will give the district a pair of premier arts facilities.

“This is a very proud day for our district and our community,” Pearson said.