

**SOUTH KITSAP**

# SKSD school board election

District 5 candidates Daily and Wall diverge on school district goals and needs

By Bob Smith

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[SOUTH KITSAP SCHOOL DISTRICT](#)



PORT ORCHARD — South Kitsap School District’s voters in District 5 have a decidedly clear choice between the two candidates — Jeff Daily and Greg Wall — standing for election to become school board director for the next four years.

Daily, who is challenging Wall, the two-term incumbent, is a retired high school teacher and former Air Force officer with an impressive academic resume. He has a bachelor’s degree and an MBA in finance, and another bachelor’s in education.

The challenger touts his 12 years as a special education teacher at South Kitsap High School as giving him a practical background that he says gives him valuable tools and expertise he can share with the school district’s board of directors.

Incumbent Wall also has an impressive background. As a current school board member, Wall has been the board’s president, vice president and legislative representative. He is a practicing attorney in Port Orchard and has served on the board of directors of the South Kitsap Public Education Foundation. His wife Shirley is a retired teacher, and the two have raised three sons who attended South Kitsap schools.

So where's the line of demarcation separating the two candidates? It lands between their views of the state of academics in the school district and their vision of how SKSD can best meet the needs of its students and the community it serves.

### Daily: Better 'bang for the buck'

In Daily's view, the school district's board of directors and administration haven't been getting the "biggest bang for the buck" for the community's taxpayers. In an interview this week, he said increased pay for teachers and administrators, and investments in costly educational programs, haven't yet returned results leading to academic excellence.

"Getting on the board, that's going to be my first priority — then figuring how to get there [academic excellence]," Daily said of his immediate goal, if elected.

"When teachers are evaluated, there are a lot of metrics involved in those evaluations. But the district staff doesn't seem to have a clue about metrics. We need to introduce metrics — you can't get there if you can't measure it."

Daily said that the school district is losing students, not because of its old buildings and a lack of up-to-date learning accommodations, as many in the South Kitsap community have asserted. Rather, he said, families with school-age children either aren't enrolling in the district or are moving out of the area because academic excellence hasn't been a top goal of SKSD's leadership.

"Would you send your kids to a high school where 28 percent [of the students] are passing the math requirements?" he stated. "Given the lack of focus there, we've got to redirect the focus on academic excellence. I just don't think the district and the board have the expertise to get us there."

He said at the board of directors meetings he has attended, discussions have centered on issues that have little to do with achieving that goal. His solution is to enlist greater use of metrics by district administrators and board members.

“I was in the military, and we used metrics for everything. That’s how you measure whether you’re going to get there or not,” Daily said.

“Teachers already use metrics. Why doesn’t the district staff and the board use metrics?”

The board of directors candidate said he supports new Superintendent Tim Winter’s goal of making South Kitsap one of the state’s top five school districts — and he believes metrics would be a critical component in that effort.

Daily said he discounts the notion that he’s simply a school district naysayer. The former teacher said he is supportive of district teachers in their daily work with students. He believes the recent action by the state Legislature to improve compensation levels has given teachers the incentive to achieve higher educational goals.

“I just want the best for the district, like everyone else wants,” Daily said, “but we just need to get there.”

While the challenger opposed recent board attempts seeking voter approval to build a new, second high school, he said he has developed an alternate plan that would modernize the district’s only high school — South Kitsap High.

“CK [Central Kitsap School District] did it with \$50 million from OSPI [Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction]. We certainly can do that. Until we reverse the trend of people going elsewhere and our enrollment falling, we’re going to have extended problems.”

Daily, who says he is a “numbers guy,” fears the district’s payroll will soon rise in six years to match its total budget.

“That will force them to run levies and bond issues for no other reason than to support the increasing costs. Somewhere we’ve got to have some financial management.”

Daily also said he was troubled by recent reports of board member past president Rebecca Diehl’s two DUI convictions. “How is that showing leadership and leadership by example for our children? If I’m not doing

that, then it's time to leave."

Wall: 'We're not going back'

Incumbent and two-term board veteran Wall said he was compelled to run again because he recognizes the importance of education not only for young people but for the community.

"In Port Orchard, schools are really the center of what's going on," he said in an interview this week. "What happens to our schools affects probably most of the people in the community. And that's important to me."

Wall said he is concerned about efforts by what he termed as "extremists who are trying to take over the board. They really don't care about education, they just care about lowering their taxes. What they are doing is very deceitful."

The board member said the erstwhile dissident group has set up an organization called "Citizens In Support Of South Kitsap School District," a name he said misleads people into thinking it's a group of school district supporters.

"That was no accident. The disinformation that they put out, I have a big problem with that," Wall said.

Wall defended the school board and its achievements by pointing to its ability to work together.

"I think it's important to maintain the integrity of the board," he said. "I think we've made a lot of strides in the last eight years. Our members don't always agree with each other, but we really work well together. "

Looking back, Wall said the school district was in "much worse financial shape, the buildings were bad and we were losing kids. Since then, it's come back up."

Predictably, the board member said his greatest frustration has been the district's inability to pass a bond to build a new high school. But Wall believes the district will eventually surmount that barrier through capital levies and will eventually pass a measure enabling South Kitsap to

construct a new school.

But a need for a new high school is cojoined by other capital challenges for the district.

“Our newest building is 35 years old, and we’ve got to do something about it,” he said.

Wall said he took Winter, the new superintendent, on a driving tour to South Kitsap’s network of school buildings, and visited the Old Clifton Road section of the district, which is experiencing rapid growth. He said about 1,000 homes exist in the area, with another 300 to be built and 500 planned for the backside of that community.

“Port Orchard has been discovered,” Wall said of this area’s recent population growth, and projections pointing to substantial growth over the next two decades.

“We’re the last cheap real estate in Puget Sound,” the director said, noting that he’s run into large numbers of new residents who have been priced out of Seattle neighborhoods, where the median home sales price hovers in the \$700,000 range. Referring to South Kitsap, Wall posed the rhetorical question: “Where else can you buy a house for \$300,000?”

He said the median age of residents in South Kitsap has dropped and the median family income has risen. “When I drive around those new neighborhoods, I see a lot of minivans in the driveways. Every house seems to have three kids and two dogs. It’s pretty astounding.”

Wall said the booming growth in areas such as McCormick Woods and Old Clifton Road, where hundreds of new homes will soon be rising from cleared, formerly wooded acreage, requires that the district find ways to house new students.

Despite the school district’s rough road during recent election cycles, he’s optimistic about South Kitsap School District’s future. Wall said he’s pleased with its new superintendent.

“[Winter] is a very inspirational guy. And that’s important because choosing a superintendent is the biggest decision we make as a school

board.”

The top priority during the next four years, Wall said, is to continue the school district’s path toward increasing academic rigor in the classrooms. He said initiatives such as the International Baccalaureate program and AVID — short for Advancement Via Individual Determination — are critical to raising academic standards and providing options for bright students. He said keeping quality athletic programs viable and offering a variety of special-interest clubs and teams keep borderline students in school and on track to graduate.

“AVID is essentially a course on how to study, which is something I could have used when I was in high school,” he said. “We’re expanding that so every freshman will take that course. It will help them learn how to take notes, learn how to organize their thoughts and their time. There’s also a mentoring aspect to it, which is helpful.”

Another effort championed by the school board, Wall said, is to provide opportunities for young people who don’t see a collegiate pathway for themselves. He said the school district has been making progress by forging affiliations with employers such as the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Boeing so students can enter into formal technical and vocational training programs, ultimately leading to solid, well-paying careers.

Wall, who is seeking a third term on the school board, said his time spent learning about and working on district issues has been personally valuable and critical to the future success of South Kitsap students and the community.

“We’ve made a lot of advancements in the almost eight years I’ve been on the board,” he said. “I’d like to continue doing it. It’s an important position because we’re not going back.

“I’ve heard some of these candidates say they want to get rid of programs, including returning to a three-year high school. We owe it to our kids and our community to keep going forward, getting better and improving our schools and our product.”

**Later in the Independent: Candidates for the open SKSD Director 2 seat share their goals and aspirations if elected to the school board.**



Greg Wall





Jeff Daily



Jeff Daily

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