

An Alternative to Building a 2nd South Kitsap High School

Some comments rebutting some of the statements made by the South Kitsap School Board incumbent director for district #5 regarding why the District should build a 2nd high school and why a bigger “mega” high school is not the way to go:

- Mr. Wall states there are 2600 students attending SKHS when Public School Review and other official records reflect there are actually only 2,293 students enrolled at SKHS. Here is the link that provides the actual student population figure: <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/south-kitsap-high-school-profile>
- Mr. Wall cites a school (prototypical) model developed by State of Washington using 600 students in a high school produces good results and those adverse effects arise when enrollment reaches 2,100 students. SKHS student population from 2019-2020 is actually 2,293. If you subtract the 700 9th graders that Wall and the Board transferred to the high school, the student population would actually be 1,593. Which leads us to this question:
- Why did Mr. Wall (and the Board) intentionally create a student overcrowding situation at SKHS by transferring 700 or more 9th graders to the high school when they knew the student population would exceed a study recommended student populations at high schools? Mr. Wall has gone on the record in the past stating there was plenty of room for the 9th graders to be moved to the high school and that it would not compromise safety... “Plenty of room” he said.
- Mr. Wall is culpable in creating raising a student population at the high school that the study he sites concludes “could” result in adverse effects on student learning. Did Mr. Wall & the Board manipulate the student population at SKHS to try and leverage, or scare the voters into voting for a 2nd high school? The Gates Foundation Study cited below contradicts Mr. Wall’s claims.
- Mr. Wall cites a Gates Foundation Study that suggests 1,400-1600 students (Walls says that is “about” 400) is acceptable student population in high schools. He uses this study to argue what bigger schools are not better for student’s performance and engagement. The Gates Foundation study actually came up with a different conclusion. “The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation spent billions of dollars exploring the idea that smaller high schools might result in higher graduation rates and better test scores. Instead, it found the key to better education is not necessarily smaller schools but more effective teachers.” Here is the link to that article: <https://www.eschoolnews.com/2009/05/29/gates-foundation-teachers-trump-class-size/>

- National statistics reflect that class sizes at SKSD are actually 22.1 students per teacher 2019-2020. See: <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/south-kitsap-high-school-profile> Apparently Mr. Wall did not read the 'memo' that more effective teachers and class sizes are what have the most influence on student academic performance and scholastic success.
- Mr. Wall's citations of various studies do not make him a subject matter expert in education, building design, cost analysis, or budget and finances. Do you think he knew that the action of transferring 700 or more 9th graders to the high school could result in a detriment to student learning at the high school?
- Mr. Wall chides Dexignspro's illustration/rendering of what a larger SKHS school campus might look like. Mr. Wall calls it "pretty", but lacks details, etc. It is notable that the illustration/rendering Wall provides in his rebuttal is only a frontal - one dimensional view. The District's rendering provides no architectural drawings, no engineering specifications. Aren't these some of the same criticisms Mr. Wall has made about the Dexignspro alternative to 2nd HS conceptual illustration?
- The District's "Plan" that continues to be pushed on our community has never gone through the required feasibility study/review required by OSPI. More about this below. Mr. Wall and the Board continue to neglect to mention the State OSPI's requirements to submit feasibility studies to them prior to any bond being put on the ballot for voter consideration. This is not a choice, it is a bond requirement! This lack of compliance by the Board has occurred the last three times that the District has put bonds on the ballot.
- Without the required feasibility studies being conducted it is not possible for OPSI or the District to determine if the land they own near Old Clifton Road is suitable to build on, especially given how many new environmental requirements and standards are now in place since the land was originally purchased by the District. There are wetlands, there are bears, and there are likely many more environmental issues and protected species that have yet to be considered by the District.

All of this taken together shows us that the District is not ready to build on the Old Clifton Road property they purchased. Interestingly enough the District actually purchased the subject property in 1999 for a rock-bottom price of \$48,000! It doesn't take an Einstein to understand why the District paid such a low, low price for this property. Here is the link to that story:

https://products.kitsapsun.com/archive/1999/06-23/0027_south_kitsap_school_district_buy.html

This should make you wonder if the District has adequately planned, is actually ready to construct a 2nd high school. It should also make us ponder whether or not a 2nd high school is needed that would saddle us with at least a \$180 million dollar debt for the next 25 years. As was mentioned in Jeff Daily's article, there are also many other recurring expenses that result from operating a 2nd high school that the District has yet to tell us about.