

Thursday, January 23, 2025 |  41°F[Sign Out](#) [Subscribe](#) [Newsletter](#) [Contact Us](#)

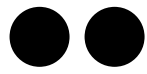
K I T S A P Daily News


41°F

NEWS

Fewer entrances, bus app to make SK schools safer

By [Britney Fletcher-West](#) • January 21, 2025 1:30 am



The South Kitsap School District is taking steps to make students safer.

Superintendent Tim Winter said at the school board meeting Jan. 15 that new security measures are being implemented at the high school, including restricted public access to certain entrances and the addition of a new security officer. Visitors will now be required to check in at the office upon arrival.

The district is also introducing new GPS software for bus transportation that will allow parents to track their child's bus in real-time via a mobile app. The district hopes to pilot the program this spring and fully implement it by fall. The new system will also alert drivers if a student boards the wrong bus.

Also at the meeting, Winter talked about a program to give students more of a voice in district matters called Student Circle of Champions.

Students from Discovery Explorer and South Kitsap High School will attend monthly meetings with board members and principals. The initiative aims to give students a voice in district decision-making, with plans to expand the program next year to include additional groups of ninth-graders.

Board member Kate Epsy called it a "fabulous idea," noting that students at a recent legislative conference had expressed a desire to be heard.

During public comments, four people shared their views on the upcoming Feb. 11 school levy.

David Cruz raised concerns about the district's staffing and math proficiency. He said in 2018-19 enrollment was 9,645 students with 1,109 staff. Math proficiency was 55% at the elementary school level and 45% for middle school. But in 2023-24, enrollment dropped by 670 to 8,974 students, but staff was up four to 1,113. But that hasn't resulted in better student performance as proficiency dropped to 49% at the elementary level and 38% in middle school. High school was a lowly 24%. "The increase in staffing should lead to an improvement in student outcomes, but the data tells a different story. Before we support another levy, the district must show how they plan to rectify these inefficiencies," Cruz said.

Judy Abrogast defended the district's management of resources and urged support for the levy. "It's easy to throw around criticism, but what I have seen through my work is that there really are no inefficiencies in the district," she said. "You are careful with your money. I'm encouraging everyone...to vote for this levy."

Holly Cruz expressed concerns about the lack of transparency surrounding the levy's specifics. "Wouldn't the logical reasoning be to listen to the community's priorities in the first place to see what we want to support instead of generalizing information from money that will allow you to dictate how it is dispersed without our input? If you can show us what the levy covers, you can show us what will be cut."

Because of that lack of transparency, she said she will be voting no. She wants to know how it will pay for academic success and security. She also wants to know how much goes to athletics when student body funds already go to that.

John Richardson, president of the SK Education Association, tried to address some of the concerns. He praised improvements in Professional Learning Communities for teachers. "It's not based on just a magical belief. It's based on the that we did this years back, and the process has improved a lot," he said.

Richardson added that test scores were higher then, and, “It was through that work we were able to do it. So I really hope that people do support the levy because it isn’t more money, it’s just keeping the same things that we have in place.”

Also at the meeting, three staff were recognized: Kim Smart, office assistant at SK High School, retired after nine years in the district; Brenda Ward, Hidden Creek Elementary principal, retired after 35 years in education, including seven at SK; and Joanne Warren, assistant director of Teaching & Learning, retired after 27 years in education, 18 at SK.

January also marked School Board Recognition Month, so Megan Higgins, Jay Villars, Jeff Wilson, Kate Epsy and Brian Pickard were commended for their work. Richardson acknowledged the significant time board members dedicate, adding: “You put your hearts and souls into this, and it really helps. We have a high-functioning board right now.”

Independent Kitsap school expands to...

Heating, structural issues put halt...

By Britney Fletcher-West

By Britney Fletcher-West

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU



[Wizz App used by man to hook up with 14-year-olds](#)