

Key reasons against using William Spady or his Strategic Design Process in our district:

- 1) Spady's ideas are too controversial. Even proponents admit he is very controversial. His previous company, High Success Network, went out of business due to controversy and failures in the 1990s. He believes in "Non-Educentric" thinking which is not-curriculum based. You must change everything; "Melt the edacentric iceberg". Many people in our community do not agree with his methods. We are starting the planning process amidst controversy.
- 2) The failure rate of his program is too high. Spady has no research that confirms his methods work. After over 10 years of doing SDP in numerous districts, he can only name two districts he claims are a success. Spady admits he has never returned to a district that has used his process to systematically study the results. His key research is based on a study (of Valedictorians) he cannot locate. We cannot have a solid expectation of success with the SDP.
- 3) Focus on Spady's "Spheres of Living" is the core problem. The SDP is feelings-based instead of academic-based, leading to outcomes that are abstract and difficult to connect to curriculum. Other districts have defined 50 or more subjective outcomes such as, "sustains and enhances his/her culture within society" and "consistently contributes to the emotional support of the family". Does anyone really understand what these outcomes mean, how to put them into practice, or how they should be measured?
- 4) The SDP is not flexible to the unique needs of our community. Spady does not even try to determine or understand our needs. He "trains" community members to ask leading questions and then filters the answers ("wordsmithing"). Many SDP plans look alike and have similar outcomes. The SDP does not allow for any true dissension. You are allowed to be part of the group if you espouse Spady's views. If you don't buy into the concept up front, you are shut out of the discussion.
- 5) Spady does not either implement or offer help in implementing the SDP plan. The Devil is in the details, and that is certainly true in Spady's five-step SDP. The further along in the process you are, the less Spady has to offer in the way of guidance and real-world examples. His books offer no examples of how to put the SDP ideas into practice either. Even a great idea is worthless if it cannot be implemented.

EXAMPLE OF SPADY'S BELIEFS:

The actual process of learning MATH, not just the end demonstration of using math in a life role performance in a sphere of living (Spady's SDP), is essential to being competent in math. Can you imagine an engineer, a computer scientist, or a statistician simply focusing on the life role performance of math? Isn't it necessary to learn basic math facts, practice these math facts until they become second nature, and then go on to learn more complicated math skills (e.g. Statistics) in order to be successful in using math?

Spady was asked this question: In a fully outcome-based system - what you call a transformational OBE- the traditional subject-based curriculum disappears? *(continued)*

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Spady: Yes, as the basic definer and organizer of the curriculum. But content itself can't disappear; we just develop a fundamentally different rationale of organizing and using it; one that is linked much more to what we call the significant spheres of successful living rather than to separate disciplines and subjects. Certain musical knowledge, certain aspects of philosophy, great works of literature and art; they'll be taught of course, but they won't be segregated into separate subject compartments, and they'll be linked more to the quality of life experience.

Interviewer: Still there is such a thing as mathematics, and it has a definite structure. You don't learn it overnight, you don't learn it by accident. Don't we have to say we want the kids to know mathematics?

Spady: Mathematics in our framework is an enabling outcome, not an outcome in its own right. It is a critical enabler to function effectively in many life roles. It is not an end in itself.

Interviewer: Mathematics educators have never claimed that mathematics was an end in itself. They said it had all sorts of important purposes.

Spady: Good! Then the question is whether it's best to teach it as a totally separate subject, 50 minutes a day, in its own separate classroom, or whether it should be learned in ways that link it to real-life problems, issues, and challenges so that it becomes the tool it was intended to be.

Interviewer: What is your model of the curriculum, then? Where do the disciplines of science and history and music fit in? What does the written curriculum - plan for what students are to learn- look like in an outcome-base program?

Spady: Well, As I've said, you start with the exit outcomes: the complex role performance that the significant spheres of living require of us. After that, you're dealing with a blank sheet having a million exciting choices. These choices involve two things: the kind of competencies you need to build and the kinds of problems and issues they are linked to.

Interviewer: And what do you do with the blank sheet and choices?

Spady: Well, let's assume that you have those role performances arrayed at the top of a matrix - actual demonstrations of the capability to address life-role changes.

Interviewer: Like the role of citizen?

Spady: Exactly. The critical dimensions or kinds of performances that you want to see demonstrated become the columns of that matrix. The rows of the matrix are the significant issues and phenomena they will encounter within those life-roles. So the decisions you make as you fill in the rows and cells of that matrix are your curriculum design decisions: they involve the knowledge, competence, and orientations (our word for the affective and attitudinal dimensions of learning) that you deem critical for assuring success on the outcomes.