

From the District 46 Web Site, Posted April 23, 2001

On Monday evening, April 9, 2001, the Board of Education hosted a Public Forum to gather input about the district's proposed Strategic Design Process. Using 3x5 cards, everyone in attendance had the opportunity to ask questions of the Board.

Some of those questions pertained directly to Dr. William Spady, a consultant who the Board of Education is currently using to facilitate the process. Those questions are written below and will be answered directly by Dr. Spady at the next public forum on Tuesday evening, April 24, 2001, at 7:00 p.m., in the Frederick School Gym. Additionally, as agreed to on April 9, questions submitted by Mrs. Kelley Dickson and Mrs. Carla Brumm will also be answered by Dr. Spady.

Dr. Spady:

- What are the real goals of the Strategic Design Process?
- Who is setting the outcomes? You say everyone is involved. How?
- What is your role in the process?
- When you were here in February, I felt that you led us to where you wanted to go rather than facilitate us to where we wanted to go. What safeguards or checks would prevent that happening in the future? What mechanism will you provide the parents with to ensure they're empowered?
- During the Strategic Design Process how will differing points of view and differing conclusions be resolved? For example, if 75% decide on one paradigm and 25% decide on another paradigm, do you vote or what?
- You are well known for Outcome Based Education (OBE), how will that not become an outcome here? How can we separate you, the facilitator, from your philosophy? How will you insure that you stay "objective"?
- Will you be asking us the four Key Strategic Design Questions, that are stated in Paradigm Lost during our strategic design process? (See pages 119,121,133,136)
- You are a "sociologist" not an "educator." Why is a "sociologist" the right person to help us improve academic achievements?
- We know that our community has changed, but can you explain why that means the dynamics of educating children has changed?
- Your methodology of OBE is to keep an entire class on one aspect of a subject until all students in the class master that aspect before moving ahead. This method does not meet the needs of faster learners who are ready to move ahead faster than the rest of the class. This does not meet the stated goals of District #46 to allow "each student to develop to his or her fullest capacity." Please speak to this issue, especially whether this OBE philosophy will be used to implement the Strategic Plan.
- Aren't "Spheres of Living" parents responsibility? The school should be about academic things.
- Please comment on the fact that you have had a history of failures and your thoughts and ideas are extremely controversial. You have no educational background, and your philosophy is in strict contradiction to meeting the State academic goals.
- Since you formed Change Leaders in the late 90's with Senior Partner Chuck Schwahn, what schools have successfully implemented the Strategic Design Process? What are their learning results?
- Communities that you have guided in the past have run into severe financial problems, Dodge City, Kansas being a good example. What are the financial implications of your program?

- Please comment on the following quote from your writing (no citation is given): “Strategic design’s focus stands in bold contrast to the apparent goal of today’s edcentric federal and state reform juggernaut: establishing in school a universally applied framework of ‘content standards’ in the academic subject areas that will be documented and enforced mainly through standardized, pencil-and-paper test scores.”

There were other questions asked by using the 3x5 cards at the forum. Almost all were answered by Board members. Some of those questions with abbreviated answers appear below (*answers are in italics*):

- Did you look at our neighbors, i.e., Libertyville, Lake Forest, Stevenson, Deerfield, to benchmark our program? Why don’t we look at those successful districts? *The Strategic Plans of all of those districts are available in our District Office on the Frederick School Campus.*
- Is the problem that the District is not presently matching our current vision? If so, why not? Is it the wrong vision? Who says so? *The intent of this process is to discuss these very questions. What do we want for our “learners” ? This process, like these questions, begins with determining a vision of what we want to “create” rather than beginning with what we want to “fix.”*
- What are we not doing currently to ensure our students success? *This question cannot really be answered without understanding your definition of “success.”*
- Why should we defer to State Standards (mediocrity)? Why shouldn’t we use local community standards? *These are two questions that should be discussed at a community level. Strategic Design is a process that will allow us to talk about your questions. While we align with State Standards, that is merely the starting point for our discussions or our local expectations for our students.*
- Will class size be addressed as part of the Strategic Design? *During the past several years, the Board of Education has been committed to the issue of class size. Currently a proposal is under consideration to lower class size in Kindergarten and other primary grades. We would assume that class size will continue to be a topic of great importance. We also believe that we must rely on the research relative to this topic to continue to guide us.*
- What is the exact plan for implementation (including a timeline)? And how will the community be involved? *Without a vision there is no plan to implement. Consequently, no timeline can be given until we agree on a vision to act upon. The community will be involved throughout this process, and we would expect that any change in curriculum, instruction, or assessments would be piloted, studied, and then fully implemented if appropriate.*
- Please define “success,” and “achieve.” *These are two of the concepts that need to be defined by our community as we engage in the Strategic Design Process.*
- How will the Strategic Design Process affect special education and I.D.E.A.? *Certainly I.D.E.A. and many aspects of special education are mandates of either the federal government or the state. Consequently, those areas will not be affected. In the areas that are left up to local discretion, however, the beliefs and values upon which our plan is anchored will certainly affect all aspects of what we do in District #46.*
- Before any plan is implemented, will it be brought to the community for approval? Who will make the final decision, the Board or the parents? *Our Strategic Design Process calls for a “Central Committee,” made up of any and all interested people, to gather the community’s input, synthesize that input, write a document and then go back to the community for final input. Ultimately, that committee will present the plan to the Board of Education who will approve it for use in the district.*
- How will this plan affect the current Challenge Program? How will these children continue to be challenged? *All children in District #46 will be affected by the vision that we create. Once again, based on that vision and our beliefs and values, every aspect of curriculum, instruction, and assessment will be affected. We believe that every child has the need for curriculum and instruction that challenges them. Historically, we have examined a portion of our challenge program every year, and sought to improve it to meet the needs of those students.*

- What specifically is the shared vision of District #46? *That is exactly what the Strategic Design Process creates. At this point, we do not believe one exists.*
- Standardized testing has made early intervention possible for my child with a reading disability. I'm concerned under the Spady Theory he would have been overlooked. How will special needs children be affected? *Dr. Spady's opposition to standardized tests is based on the growing tendency to only rely on one test to make decisions that a child is learning or that a is school successful. The use of large group standardized tests, as well as individual diagnostic tests, will always continue in District #46. The key is how we use them, and in your case it appears that we used the results correctly.*
- Have you considered a pilot program using volunteers from each grade first before changing the whole district? *For the past two years, we have instituted a "Plan-Do-Study-Act" cycle in our district. In this cycle, a pilot program is exactly what is used in the "Do" stage. Once the pilot is implemented, data is collected and we advance to the "Study" stage. That pilot data is then studied to determine if the program should be enacted district wide, changed and re-piloted, or discarded. This would be done once we determine what our vision is, and then align that vision with what should be done. Once those two ideas are in place, the "how" or the "pilot program" would begin. How we do something is the last step in the process.*