

33 Strategic Design Questions

PURPOSE and VISION

QUESTION 1

In Chapter 6, (pg. 97-100) of Paradigm Lost, Dr. Spady describes the 5 Bases necessary for paradigm change. The first base is **purpose**. He states that “without purpose your learning community lacks the reason to change.”

What is the compelling reason or purpose that is driving the need for change and the Strategic Design Process (SDP)? In other words, in what ways are the schools in District 46 failing to help our students become learners who are prepared for the future?

Dr. Spady also states that “without vision it lacks a clear road map for change, without vision the specifics of your intended change remain obscure, people hesitate to try anything new, and no one is ever quite sure where they stand as things unfold or unravel.” (page 98)

QUESTION 2

Could you please help us better understand your vision for District 46? In other words, what is the clear, concrete, word picture of what you want District 46’s learning community to look like?

RESEARCH/BEST PRACTICE

QUESTION 3

In the May/June 1998 issue of “On the Horizon”, Dr. Spady explains that in 1977 he was a “major player in the birthing process of what came to be called the Outcome Based Education (OBE) Movement.” Between 1977 and 1987 he and his OBE reform colleagues challenged the most deepseated aspects of educational practice. With enormous effort, Spady states that “we were able to help a variety of schools and districts change them. The improved learning results they experienced were so dramatic that they eventually attracted a following across North America.” Between 1987 and 1991 Spady and Schwann, then a Colorado Superintendent and an experienced strategic planner, developed a process called strategic design. They used this future grounded “life performance” design paradigm extensively in districts throughout North America.

Can you provide the names of schools that he worked with during this time frame between the 80’s and early 90’s and specific examples of these dramatic learning results?

QUESTION 4

We were told by a board member that the school board bases their decisions on research and best practices. Could you share with us the research and best practices that the school board used to make their decision to hire Dr. Spady as a facilitator/consultant for the SDP?

QUESTION 5

Since Dr. Spady formed ChangeLeaders in the late 90’s with Senior Partner, Chuck Schwann, what schools have successfully implemented the SDP? What are their learning results?

STRATEGIC DESIGN PROCESS - Central Committee

QUESTION 6

We understand that a central committee will be formed and that it will be open to anybody who wants to participate in the SDP. We also understand that the mission/goal of the SDP is to develop a description of the learner who leaves our door after 8th grade. This group will meet with Dr. Spady on April 16, 2001 and will be trained to understand the SDP and how to facilitate the process. This group will design the questions used in the SDP. During the next few months they will hold smaller meetings/focus groups to ask key questions and seek input from the community. The central committee will compile the information gathered from the community and a subgroup of the central committee will begin writing the strategic design plan. The central committee will go back out to the focus groups and present the compiled information, seek additional input, and once again assimilate the information. The writing group will draft a final copy of the strategic design plan with a target completion date of May 2002. The central committee will present the final version to the school board. The board will then vote on the plan and decide whether to implement it. If approved it is then up to the Superintendent to implement the learner outcomes and develop the curriculum and strategies for the classroom that will help our learners reach these outcomes.

Is this the correct understanding of the role of the central committee and the SDP?

QUESTION 7

How will the central committee group gather information/feedback from the community? What type of input/feedback are they seeking?

QUESTION 8

We understand that Dr. Spady was hired because he will ask harder and more difficult questions as District 46 goes through the Strategic Design Process.

What types of questions will Dr. Spady be asking the central committee and others as they go through the SDP?

PARADIGM BASED QUESTIONS

QUESTION 9

Based on the paradigms presented in Paradigm Lost, what are the premises/assumptions/beliefs that underlie the types of questions Dr. Spady will be asking?

QUESTION 10

Do you think that the types of questions Dr. Spady asks could influence us to develop a certain type of learner outcomes?

QUESTION 11

We have heard board members say that the school board hired Dr. Spady to facilitate the SDP but that he will not influence us in establishing outcomes and changing the way we structure and define “school”. What is your opinion on this viewpoint?

QUESTION 12

While you didn't buy a "program" when you hired Dr. Spady as the facilitator/consultant to guide us through the SDP, you are in essence buying a process and along with that come his ideas/beliefs/paradigm perspectives.

Could you help us understand this viewpoint that "Dr. Spady will not influence us." In other words, how can the SDP be separated from his paradigm perspectives in light of his statements in Paradigm Lost?:

"Systemic paradigm shifts are inherently transformational - that is they change the fundamental nature of everything known and done previously. By comparison everything else we do amounts to technical tinkering." (page 3)

"Systemic change is comprehensive and involves redefining, redirecting, realigning and restructuring the total organization so that it can achieve what it's stakeholders agree is it's fundamental purpose for existing."(page 33)

"We (Dr. Spady and his colleagues) further argued that schools had to fundamentally change the way they were structured and did business so that these life performance abilities could be achieved. That meant redefining school, not merely reforming it, and it meant that anything less than paradigm transformation wasn't going to cut it. The gauntlet was down!" (page 37)

QUESTION 13

It is important to know the beliefs/assumptions/paradigms that are guiding the School Board and Superintendent as we embark on the Strategic Design Process. Therefore, what aspects of Dr. Spady's learning success paradigm, life performance paradigm and future empowerment paradigms in his book Paradigm Lost do you agree or disagree with?

QUESTION 14

Do you agree with Dr. Spady that what is needed is a complete redefining, redirecting, realigning and restructuring of the traditional school and that technical tinkering isn't going to cut? Why or why not?



QUESTION 15

According to William Spady (Paradigm Lost pg. 128), "A framework of empowering student outcomes gives you the concrete tool needed for redefining, realigning, and restructuring the elements in your instructional system."

33 Strategic Design Questions – Page 4

In his book, OBE: Critical Issues and Answers, Dr. Spady states:

“OBE and its implementation should be given thoughtful examination by anyone it directly or indirectly affects. Given OBE’s major implications for total system change, parents and the public should carefully scrutinize and discuss all nine of these issues.” (Spady lists nine concerns and criticisms of OBE that revolve around nine interrelated themes). (page 145)

In light of this, it is important for District 46 teachers, parents, administrators and all those concerned about how District 46 children will learn to dialog on the implications of redefining, realigning and restructuring our instructional system.

This leads to the question, in what ways do you think District 46 will redefine and restructure the instructional system? For example from the many articles we’ve read and from Dr. Spady’s books we’ve observed that implementation of Future Focused Outcome-Based Education has included these instructional systems: mastery learning, peer tutoring, a system of grades based on A’s, B’s and incompletes, faster learners are held back to keep pace with slower learners, certificate of initial mastery. What are some of the possible instructional systems you will consider in implementing the student outcomes developed through the SDP?

(Note: It is understood that no one instructional system, strategy, curriculum, etc. defines a future focused, outcome driven education. Each community and school must determine the best way to reach their desired outcomes.)

QUESTION 16

In the article “Outcome-Based Education: Concerns and Responses” (page 17) by Spence Rogers, a former associate of Dr. Spady, and Bonnie Dana, an Assistant Superintendent in Wisconsin, they cite that failed OBE programs can be grouped into five categories. They recommend watching out for the pitfalls:

- Lack of community involvement - deep involvement by parents and community members is essential
- Lack of staff in-service training
- Lack of time - excessive zeal to improve learning can lead school people and others to try to rush the change process. Real change requires time to adjust to new ideas and new procedures.
- Lack of resources
- Lack of full understanding of the OBE philosophy

(For more detailed description of the pitfalls refer to page 17 in the article)

How can we avoid these pitfalls and also some of the problems of implementation of Future Focused Outcome-Based Education plans encountered in the early 90’s? (Problems occurred in MN, PA, OR, VA to name a few) Refer to enclosed article entitled “Outcome-Based Education: Miracle Cure or Plague?” by Bruno V. Manno, June 1994, (page 7-15)

In Paradigm Lost (pg 128) William Spady states that, “Outcomes are about student learning, and that student learning comes in at least four categories: content learning (knowledge), competence learning (complex skills), moral learning (values and attitudes), and psychological learning (motivation and relationships)

33 Strategic Design Questions – Page 5

QUESTION 17

Could you please define each of these student learning outcomes and give specific examples of each outcome?

QUESTION 18

According to Dr. Spady's transformational outcome-based education approach, exit outcomes treat the ability to function successfully in life roles such as: being a consumer, a producer, a citizen, a family member, an intimate friend, and a life long learner. (Dr. Spady refers to these as the role performances in the spheres of living.) In this approach educators expect students to "demonstrate those behaviors that denote a positive social, emotional, and physical well being." Manno article (page 7)

Do you agree with this transformational approach to defining outcomes? What is the parents' role and what is the school's role in preparing children to be successful in their role performances?

IMPLEMENTATION/APPLICATION

William Spady also says in Paradigm Lost (pg. 128) "that outcomes are learning results and are what happens at or after the end of prolonged instructional experiences."

QUESTION 19

Could you please explain how this translates into the actual content and curriculum that will be taught?

QUESTION 20

How will the outcomes be measured and assessed?

QUESTION 21

How will target outcomes be developed for each grade level based on the overall description of the learner?

QUESTION 22

What will this "look like?" Can you give us specific examples?

QUESTION 23

How will students learn the core subjects of reading, writing and math?

QUESTION 24

How will it be different than the way students in District 46 currently learn these core subjects?

QUESTION 25

What role will scores on classroom tests of material that students have learned, (ex: spelling tests, math tests, science tests etc.) grades on assignments, grades on student projects, written assignments, homework assignments, etc. have in determining learning performance?

33 Strategic Design Questions – Page 6

QUESTION 26

Let's apply Dr. Spady's Future Empowerment Paradigm to a specific example.

Let's say that the SDP is complete and a description of the learner has been developed and a strategic design plan is written. Careful attention was given to the spheres and contexts of living that we in District 46 want our students to function in effectively and be successful in the future. In addition, the SDP answered the question regarding the significant problems, challenges and opportunities that are likely to exist within each sphere that our students will have to anticipate, address and solve as young adults. (Note: these are based on Spady's Key Strategic Design Questions - Paradigm Lost pg. 119-121) The SDP includes a description of the learner that states we want our students to become: self-directed learners, collaborative workers, complex thinkers, community contributors, quality producers. Now in comes my son to 5th grade. (Note: These are examples of role performer student outcomes developed in Aurora, Co and used for example only.)

How will his 5th grade experience be different from the way learners experience 5th grade currently?

QUESTION 27

How will the instruction/learning goals and system of instruction change?

QUESTION 28

How will the day to day learning experiences relate to meeting the framework of empowering student outcomes/essential performance components?

QUESTION 29

How will you determine whether or not a 5th grader has achieved the desired student outcome?

QUESTION 30

In what ways will the learning environment better prepare him for his future life after school?

QUESTION 31

In Paradigm Lost, Spady challenges edcentric practices that no longer make sense.

For example, he states that some outdated practices include "focusing exclusively on content instruction (the nouns) and ignoring systematic competence development (the verb) (page 27)

How can balance be achieved between helping students learn the basic skills and content standards of the traditional curriculum and also equipping students with the complex competencies and role performance abilities that Spady states is needed for a successful future?

QUESTION 32

Much of William Spady's Future Empowerment Paradigm relates to the high school student. He often discusses Carnegie Units, seat time, electives, semesters, etc. and says that these do not prepare learners for their life after school.

How do you think his philosophy can be applied to a K-8 district?

QUESTION 33

What will be the continuity between how District 46 and District 127 prepare learners for success in the future?