

*Springboro Community Schools  
1685 S. Main Street  
Springboro, OH 45066  
937.748.3960*

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
November 3, 2006

## **Challenging Status Quo Will Be A Major Hurdle For Springboro Schools**

SPRINGBORO, Ohio – During the past couple of months, I have used this space to ask questions, and explain some of the information and research that is circulating among educators throughout the nation, due in part from the International Center for Leadership in Education. This company, funded by Bill Gates, is operated by world-renown economist Bill Daggett.

Back in August, when I began meeting with our administrative staff, I asked them – and continue to ask:

- 1) Is there a crisis in public education?
- 2) Is what we are teaching relevant?
- 3) How do we change?

Springboro Community Schools is at an interesting place in its history. For the first time in decades, its schools are not overcrowded. The district, while maintaining its frugal roots, is in a solid financial situation. Our test scores have never been higher. Academically, a person would be hard pressed to find a better kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public education in the state of Ohio. While I obviously am extremely proud of our accomplishments at Springboro Community Schools, I know we need to establish loftier goals if we are to succeed at an even higher level.

Challenging the status quo is never a popular decision. But as I have written numerous times in this column, if Springboro Community Schools is to continue to be a leader in the academic community, it is something we must do. Part of this change involves the way we as adults look at school. Many times I have heard parents referring to school as their children's "work," similar to the way adults view their professions. For those of us who enjoy getting up each morning and facing the challenges of our careers, life away from home is more than about employment; it is about making a difference in our community, and to put it simply, it is about having fun.

That is a mindset our children could benefit from each day. Instead of getting up thinking about the schoolwork that faces them, our students should be excited about what opportunities they are going to have to explore different areas of our curriculum with their friends. To that end, we need to offer our students innovative and creative classes. Two areas of technology jump to mind – information technology and biotechnology. If you have a student who is curious and likes the field of technology, these two courses of study provide excellent career opportunities.

Information technology is exploding and will continue to do so. At a recent demonstration at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, a researcher stood in front of a crowded auditorium with 11 electrodes situated on his face. In Mandarin Chinese, he said, "Let me introduce our new prototype." But the crowd didn't hear Chinese. They heard that sentence first in English, and then in Spanish. The electrodes were able to distinguish tiny movements in the man's face, neck and throat, and then translate them into another language.

Does this mean we should not teach foreign languages because in the future, computers will be able to take what we're saying and immediately translate them for us? No. But we need to take this information and utilize it as we are planning Springboro Community School's future. Rather than throwing out foreign languages, my question would be, "should we be adding more informational technology classes?"

The other area that is gaining momentum is biotechnology. In the 1970s, before there were computers in every home and classroom, a group of what we would refer to as "computer geeks" formed hobbyist clubs where they would talk their own language, and trade information and computer parts. Today, those hobbyist clubs have evolved to the point where they are discovering modern day medical miracles.

The Biotech Hobbyist group has published several articles that walk other hobbyists through such projects as using a DNA computer, and how to cultivate skin cells or copy plant tissues. (They do this with simple high school kits that cost about \$100 each.) These are everyday citizens, but instead of meeting for coffee at a book club, they are cloning plant life! We have students and teachers alike that would love to live in a laboratory, exploring biotechnology. Since the world is desperate for people with this kind of knowledge, do we begin offering science and math "majors" at the high school level?

The more we look at changing our Standard Operating Procedure at Springboro, the more questions we have to answer.

##