

## **Introduction**

Long-range strategic planning is essential to the ability of any school to survive and flourish. While the terms “strategic planning” and “long-range planning” are often used synonymously, there are, in fact, some important differences between them. Long-range planning is the projection of current trends to some future point, usually three, five, or ten years. Strategic planning, on the other hand, involves projecting the preferred future of the school and planning how to arrive at that future. If planning is to be beneficial and to aid the school to move into the future, it must be long-range strategic planning, incorporating both approaches.

Long-range strategic planning is a process whereby leadership involves all constituencies of the school in designing the preferred future of the school. The process results in goals that articulate the preferred future of the school and strategies to achieve these goals. It sets goals, assesses budgetary implications, and establishes priorities and a timeline for their implementation. The plan should outline realistic goals in areas such as: enrollment, staffing, curriculum/programs, facilities, technology, governance, development (including marketing and public relations), and finance.

The guidelines suggested here are intended to assist in long-range strategic planning.

## **Organizing the Planning Process**

The head/principal and board initiate the planning process and do preliminary work in preparation for the actual planning process. While the long-range strategic plan is intended to provide direction for the school, it also requires an historical perspective for the direction. Thus, the narrative section of the plan should be completed in a way that discusses for each major area the historical perspective, the current situation, and the assumptions which have been adopted for the future.

The head/principal and board should decide on the scope of the long-range plan. Most schools do planning for a five-year period. This time span tends to be short enough to determine trends with some accuracy, yet long enough to accomplish significant goals. The head/principal and board should construct a timetable for planning and determine a calendar of meetings.

Once the scope of the plan, the timetable, and calendar have been determined, the board and head/principal should establish the Planning Committee. The committee should be made up of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Members must have a commitment to the school and be willing to devote the time necessary for the planning process. The Planning Committee may include members with expertise in the areas to be addressed in the process. The committee should be representative of the school’s constituencies. Study committees should be formed to study each of the areas to be addressed by the planning process. These study committees should be chaired by Planning Committee members, but may involve many others with specific interest and expertise. Background material should be provided to all committee members. The initial packet of materials should show trends for the past three to five years. This data should include:

- brief history of the school
- mission and philosophy statements
- enrollment statistics
- curriculum information
- personnel information, e.g. faculty/student ratio, teaching assignments, time on faculty, etc.
- buildings and grounds
- financial data

Sample forms are included in the appendix.

## **Process for Strategic Planning – and those responsible for each step**

1. Affirming the mission – All constituencies, led by head/principal and board.
2. Assessment – Study committees
  - a) gather data
  - b) write narrative description
    - 1) Where have we been?
    - 2) Where are we presently?
    - 3) Where do we want to go?
3. Assumptions/Environmental Scan – Planning Committee
  - a) underlying beliefs about environmental conditions in the future
  - b) financial, demographic, staffing
4. Analysis of information – Planning Committee
  - a) identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)
  - b) determine priority issues
5. Formulation of goals – Planning Committee
  - a) broad statements which address issues
  - b) what we want the school to look like in the near future
6. Consultation with constituents – Planning Committee
  - a) to gain support, promote ownership
  - b) external community – broader groups
  - c) internal community – students, parents, alumnae
7. Creation of first-year objectives – Planning Committee
  - a) statements that allow you to move toward the goals
  - b) specific, single-focused, measurable
8. Writing action plans – Planning Committee
  - a) strategies that carry out objectives
  - b) who, when, where, how, how much
9. Writing 5-year long-range financial plan (to be updated annually) – Planning Committee
  - a) incorporate income projections
  - b) incorporate action plans
10. Implementation/Monitoring – Head/Principal and Board
11. Evaluation/Updating – Head/Principal and Board

## **Environmental Scan**

Before considering specific elements directly involving the school, the Planning Committee should consider the broader trends and attitudes in the world and society which are influencing all institutions and organizations. Indicate briefly, and as specifically as possible, how those trends and attitudes are likely to affect the school and how they relate to students, parents, teachers, and the community.

Consider the school's "strategic advantages", i.e. those characteristics or qualities about your school which can help the school respond to opportunities and challenges, and to the needs of parents and students.

Consider:

1. Major Trends/Changes/Attitudes
  - Religious (if applicable)
  - Economic
  - Legal/Political
  - Technological
  - Social/Demographic
  - Competition (those school/education programs considered "competition")
  - Changes in schools/colleges which graduates may attend
2. What are the possible effects of the above facts on the school and on its relationship with: parents, students, teachers, community?  
What are the opportunities and constraints presented by those environmental factors?
3. What are the strategic advantages of the school in relation to the environmental factors?  
What are the qualities or characteristics that can enable the school to overcome constraints, respond to opportunities and meet needs?

## **Study Committees**

1. Enrollment
  - a. Review five-year enrollment data
  - b. Collect demographic data and identify trends
  - c. Develop recruitment/marketing plans
2. Curriculum
  - a. Review current offerings
  - b. Examine sequence and integration of courses
  - c. Review textbooks, technology, teaching aids, supplies, and equipment
  - d. Examine co-curricular and extracurricular activities
  - e. Project future offerings
3. Staffing
  - a. Review current staffing
  - b. Study qualifications, experience, salary, benefits
  - c. Review comparative data for schools which compete for staff
  - d. Project future staffing needs

- e. Develop a recruitment plan
- 4. Buildings and Grounds
  - a. Survey physical plant, buildings, grounds
  - b. Determine maintenance, repairs, capital improvements
  - c. Examine furniture and equipment and project necessary replacements and update
  - d. Project future facilities needs
- 5. Development
  - b. Review annual giving and other non-tuition income
  - c. Project needs
  - d. Develop a plan to obtain needed resources (tuition, gifts, grants, endowment, capital campaign)
- 6. Finance
  - a. Study finances: tuition, other income, operating expenses, capital improvement
  - b. Review income and expenses for previous three years
  - c. Review budgeting process
  - d. Develop 5-year financial plan based on assumptions of all subcommittees and including funding action plans that carry out the objectives

### **Drafting the Plan**

The Planning Committee may draft the plan itself or the chairperson may appoint a writing committee which should include one member of each subcommittee. This team takes all the pieces of work done by the subcommittees and puts them together into a full document.

An implementation plan should be established which includes actions to be taken, the name of the person responsible, relevant dates, and required financial and other resources. This provides the basis for the board to project additional funding needs for subsequent years. Specific areas from the implementation plan may also be helpful when developing a case statement or speaking to donors.

It is the board's responsibility to monitor the progress of the implementation of the long-range strategic plan.

Prior to drafting the annual budget, there should be a review of the strategic priorities. The plan and the implementation program should be revised and updated as needed. The Planning Committee should annually update the goals or create new ones, and suggest implementation strategies to achieve the goals. With revisions and changes in mind the five-year financial plan should be updated accordingly.

A long-range strategic plan is a guide for moving into the future. The plan gives the head/principal the major goals toward which to guide the school. It is this vision, combined with effective leadership and collaboration with the community, that will ensure the future of the school.

# Appendix

Enrollment Statistics

Curriculum Changes

Staffing Detail

Buildings and Grounds

Enrollment Projections

Salary Scale/Projections

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Strategies

Five-Year-Plan Goals

Summary of Planned Steps

Five-Year Financial Plan

## Enrollment Statistics

<b>Grade</b>	<b>5 Yrs. Prior</b>	<b>4 Yrs. Prior</b>	<b>3 Yrs. Prior</b>	<b>2 Yrs. Prior</b>	<b>1 Yr. Prior</b>	<b>Current Yr.</b>
Pre-K 3						
Pre-K 4						
K						
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
<b>Total</b>						

Explain any significant changes that may have occurred.

## Curriculum Changes

List the subjects taught in the school. List significant changes that have taken place in that area in the past three to five years and indicate the year the change took place. This could include such things as the adoption of a new textbook series, staff development, updating of equipment and materials/resources, review and revision of curriculum.

Subject	Significant Changes	Year of Changes

Subject	Significant Changes	Year of Changes

Subject	Significant Changes	Year of Changes





## Enrollment Projections

Grade	Current Yr.	1 Yr. Hence	2 Yrs. Hence	3 Yrs. Hence	4 Yrs. Hence	5 Yrs. Hence
Pre-K 3						
Pre-K 4						
K						
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
<b>Total</b>						

**Explain any significant changes projected, e.g. adding grades/classes, closing grades, etc.**

## Salary Scale/Projections

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>2 Yrs Prior</b>	<b>1 Yr. Prior</b>	<b>Current Yr.</b>	<b>1 Yr. Hence</b>	<b>2 Yrs. Hence</b>	<b>3 Yrs. Hence</b>
<b><u>Low</u></b>						
<b><u>Median</u></b>						
<b><u>High</u></b>						
<b>Administration</b>	<b>2 Yrs Prior</b>	<b>1 Yr. Prior</b>	<b>Current Yr.</b>	<b>1 Yr. Hence</b>	<b>2 Yrs. Hence</b>	<b>3 Yrs. Hence</b>
<b><u>Low</u></b>						
<b><u>Median</u></b>						
<b><u>High</u></b>						
<b>Other Staff</b>	<b>2 Yrs Prior</b>	<b>1 Yr. Prior</b>	<b>Current Yr.</b>	<b>1 Yr. Hence</b>	<b>2 Yrs. Hence</b>	<b>3 Yrs. Hence</b>
<b><u>Low</u></b>						
<b><u>Median</u></b>						
<b><u>High</u></b>						

## SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Opportunities:

Threats:

## SWOT Strategies

How do we enhance strengths?

How do we take advantage of opportunities?

How do we diminish weaknesses?

How do we minimize threats?

## 5-Year-Plan Goals

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Est. Cost Per Item

1 Yr. Hence

2 Yrs. Hence

3 Yrs. Hence

4 Yrs. Hence

5 Yrs. Hence

## Summary of Planned Steps

Examine the goals in each area. Develop a calendar for implementation with cost estimates for each step and name of person responsible.

<b>Y E A R  1</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Person Responsible</u></b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>
	<u>Enrollment</u>			
	Curriculum			
	Staff			
	Building & Grounds			
	Development			

<b>Y E A R  2</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Person Responsible</u></b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>
	<u>Enrollment</u>			
	Curriculum			
	Staff			
	Building & Grounds			
	Development			

Summary of Planned Steps cont'd

Y E A R  3	Committee	Description	Person Responsible	Est. Cost
	Enrollment			
	Curriculum			
	Staff			
	Building & Grounds			
	Development			

Y E A R  4	Committee	Description	Person Responsible	Est. Cost
	Enrollment			
	Curriculum			
	Staff			
	Building & Grounds			
	Development			

Y E A R  5	Committee	Description	Person Responsible	Est. Cost
	Enrollment			
	Curriculum			
	Staff			
	Building & Grounds			
	Development			

*In preparing the financial plan schools should use a format consistent with their normal budgeting process. The format offered here is merely an option. Whatever is used should be appropriate for the school's planning purposes.*

### Five-Year Financial Plan

<b>OPERATING BUDGET</b>	<b>CURRENT YR.</b>	<b>1 YR. HENCE</b>	<b>2 YRS. HENCE</b>	<b>3 YRS. HENCE</b>	<b>4 YRS. HENCE</b>	<b>5 Yrs. Hence</b>
Tuition						
Fees						
Annual Giving						
Endowment						
Other						
<b>Total Revenues</b>						
Salaries						
Benefits						
Instructional						
Transportation						
Maintenance						
Gen. Admin.						
Athletics						
Financial Aid						
Faculty Scholar.						
Transfer to Debt						
Other						
<b>Total Expense</b>						

## **Other Sources**

Taking Hold of the Future: The ABC's of Strategic Planning, Jean Wincek, CSJ, Ed.D. and Colleen O'Malley, CSJ, Ed. S., 1995

Strategic Long-Range Planning Guidelines for Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of Hartford, Office of Catholic Schools, Bloomfield, CT, 1995

Shaping Strategy, Independent School Planning in the '90s, Susan C. Stone, National Association Of Independent Schools, 1993