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THE KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN UNDERTAKING STRATEGIC PLANNING

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The key questions for boards and heads considering a process of strategic planning are these:

1. Are we undertaking strategic planning now just because the accrediting agency is dictating the timing? What is the proper timing for launching strategic planning, i.e., when is it opportune and when might it be risky?
2. How do we envision the outcome of the process? Might it be an update of the status quo or potentially a plan that is transformational for the future of the school? Are we willing to entertain “out-of-the-box” conversations as part of the process? Can the plan ask the big sky questions that relate truly to the future health of the school or is it the usual questions of people, space, and program? Can we undertake a plan that is useful, powerful and not draining and boring?
3. What are the cultural risks of initiating this process?
4. How democratic should the process be or how controlled and directed should it be? Who should participate? How large should the group be? How do we engage appropriately (and not dangerously) the stakeholders?
5. What role will the head as the designated visionary thought leader have?
6. Is the board ready for this commitment and the time involved? This process is more time consuming than the board often thinks.

There is no one planning approach that works for all schools. Strategic planning can be as risky as it can be useful and invigorating. It can be enervating for board members or it can engage them at a level that is highly productive and visionary. Littleford & Associates has a powerful track record of facilitating mission appropriate strategic planning for over 600 organizations including schools, government agencies, museums, zoos, universities and foundations.