



Flint Hill School

## **An Introduction to Strategic Planning**

*"An invitation to dream about the things that can really make a difference in the lives of students and faculty"*

### **Introduction**

*What is Strategic Planning?*

Strategic planning involves analytical thought, judgement, experience, creativity and instinct. Whether short-term or long-range, we plan every day of our lives. We revisit and challenge assumptions based on experiences and new information. We reach different conclusions and modify our actions accordingly.

Long-range strategic planning for a school such as Flint Hill is much more complex. It involves more people and more information. The immediacy of information and the fast pace of change can be overwhelming, and strategic planning decisions made by the Board can have far-reaching consequences. Nevertheless, one of the most potentially rewarding activities of a trustee is helping to plan the school's future. When done well, the school successfully positions itself to respond to challenges and to capitalize on opportunities.

*Long-Range Strategic Visioning*

Long-range strategic visioning is essential to the ability of any school to survive and flourish. While the terms "strategic planning" and "strategic visioning" are often used synonymously, there are, in fact, some important differences between them. Strategic planning is the projection of current trends to some future point, usually three, five or even ten years. Strategic visioning, on the other hand, involves envisioning the preferred future of the school and planning how to arrive at that future. Strategic visioning is critical to the advancement of an institution as it gives an overarching, ambitious, aspirational and inspirational vision for the school.

The most successful strategic visioning exercise includes a process that involves all constituencies of the school in designing the preferred future of Flint Hill. The process results in objectives that articulate the preferred future of the school and strategic initiatives to achieve these objectives. From there, the Strategic Vision is then used as the guide by which Flint Hill's administrative leadership and faculty and staff will set near-term, mid-range and long-term goals, assess budgetary implications, and - with the input and approval of the Board - establish priorities and a timeline for their implementation.

## *Why Now?*

While Flint Hill embarked on a strategic planning process a few years ago, the process was very much focused on crafting and implementing a prudent financial model and key tactical and practical actions that were of immediate priority. Having accomplished those goals, Flint Hill is now in a position to build on the foundation that has been laid, with a long-range vision upon which the School can move forward in a purposeful, intentional and thoughtful manner – vision-driven and mission-appropriate to address the needs of today and the dreams of the future.

## **Organizing the Planning Process**

Over the past six months, Flint Hill has undertaken Parent Satisfaction surveys, alumni surveys, a survey of faculty and staff, and a survey of the Board of Trustees and the School's administrative leadership team. Following that, a number of focus groups and open forums were held to encourage feedback and dialogue with and among the School's parents and alumni. Finally, on October 24, the Board of Trustees participated in a day-long retreat, the culmination of which – based on all of the information gathered – was the identification of several key strategic areas to be explored, reviewed and researched by a number of task forces.

To accomplish this work, a Steering Committee has been established. The Steering Committee is chaired by trustee, Lisa Lisker and is comprised of five additional trustees to include: Randy Byrnes, John Kudless, Gary Rappaport, Liza Wright Renner and John Beatty. In addition, Steering Committee members also include seven senior members of staff: Brian Lamont, Tim Mitchell, Mia Burton, Emily Sanderson, Lisa Williams, Katie Evans and Bill Ennist. These individuals will serve as co-chairs for each of the six identified task forces, which will include parents, alumni, faculty and staff. Each task force is responsible for reporting to the Steering Committee.

### *Goals and Expectations for the Strategic Planning Process.*

The overall goal of the planning process is to develop a Strategic Vision that will guide the school over the next several years, and to have it completed in time for implementation in the 2015/2016 school year.

It is important to bear in mind that the over-riding purpose of Strategic Vision is not to write a beautiful plan – though a well-written Strategic Vision can be very helpful in the Board's governance – but rather to get the Board, the School's leadership, faculty and staff, and the Flint Hill community at large to think strategically.