



Why Strategic Planning? It's more challenging for a great school to improve than it is for a mediocre one. Yet we are continuously called by our vocation as educators to do a better job of accomplishing our mission of forming young people, of preparing them to encounter God at work in their world and to assist in spreading God's love wherever they go. St. Ignatius, who founded the Society of Jesus, called this the *Magis*, the "more." How does an already excellent school determine what its *Magis* is and go about accomplishing it?

Just as a good chess player must think not just about his next move, but many moves ahead, so a good school must do more than respond to immediate circumstances. It must gauge the trends forming in its environment, and determine which are threats that must be neutralized and which are opportunities that can be harnessed. Developing a multi-faceted yet coherent approach to future conditions is the core of Strategic Planning.

The Strategic Planning process developed by *Managing for Mission* was forged in the experience of successive strategic plans in the context of one school, and then applied to other schools. The result is a process that is thorough, efficient and especially geared to the unique mission and culture of the faith-based school. The process is designed to be strategic yet flexible, broadly-owned yet focused, comprehensive yet coherent, forward-looking yet timely, implementation-oriented and accurate.

To achieve these characteristics MfM has honed planning tools geared for the faith-based school. It begins with a board retreat based on the school's spiritual values that allows the board to anchor the process in the school's unique mission and its own vision for the future. A Steering Committee is chartered to oversee the process on the board's behalf. Past and current plans are reviewed and data is collected. Leaders from all areas of the school community participate in a SWOT process to identify external and internal issues to be addressed. The broader school community is invited to share its knowledge through an on-line survey designed with the Steering Committee, and then invited to engage the issues in person at an all-Stakeholders meeting. Topic Teams are set up to drill down into the various sectors of the school and propose strategic goals. The Steering Committee then distills these goals to the "strategic few" and crafts a concise strategic plan with 4-8 key goals the school must accomplish over the next 5-10 years. As the strategic goals are being finalized, the school administration begins work on its first Annual Implementation Plan, with the tactical action steps that will be needed to accomplish the strategic goals.

While this process is adapted to the needs and circumstances of each client school, the school can benefit from the experience of what works and doesn't work based on years of testing and improvement by MfM's principal and consultant, Jack Peterson, who spent over three decades in faith-based school administration and assisted other schools in their planning even before founding *Managing for Mission*.

If you would like more information about MfM's strategic planning process, our website, www.managingformission.com, has both downloadable 5-page and 30 page descriptions, as well as how to order the book, *Managing for Mission*, which explains not only strategic planning for faith-based schools, but also how it fits with the apostolic, pedagogical, community and business aspect of the school.