

# Becoming a Board of the Future

Mark Crotty  
Educators Collaborative

Association of Colorado Independent Schools  
Spring Governance Workshop  
Mon, April 13, 2026  
9:00-11:00 MT

**“The present was an egg laid by the past  
that had the future inside its shell.”**

**--Zora Neale Hurston**

**“My vision is changing our how, more  
than seeing clearly our what.”**

**--adrienne marie brown**



**“The board is the guardian of the school’s mission. It is the board’s responsibility to ensure that the mission is relevant and vital to the community it serves and to monitor the success of the school in fulfilling its mission.”**

--The Principles of Good Practice from  
The National Association of Independent Schools

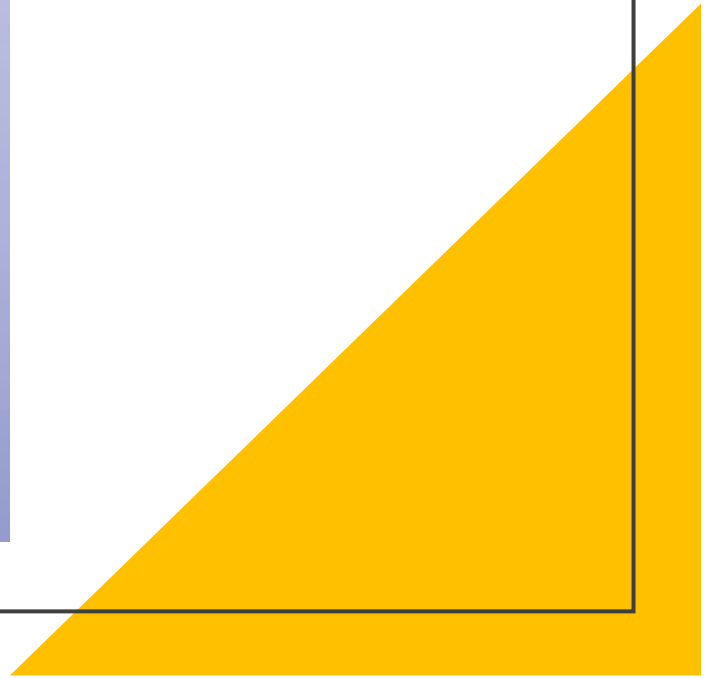


**Governance can be a messy business!**

a lot has changed...

some things haven't.

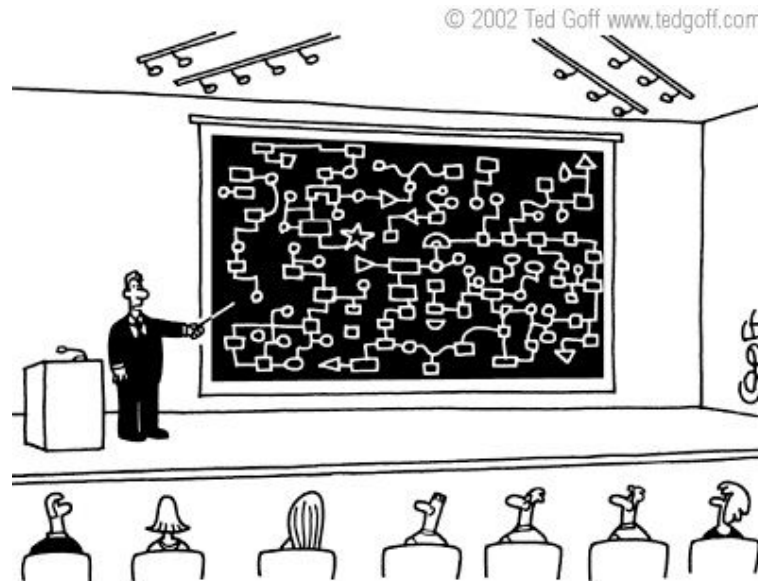




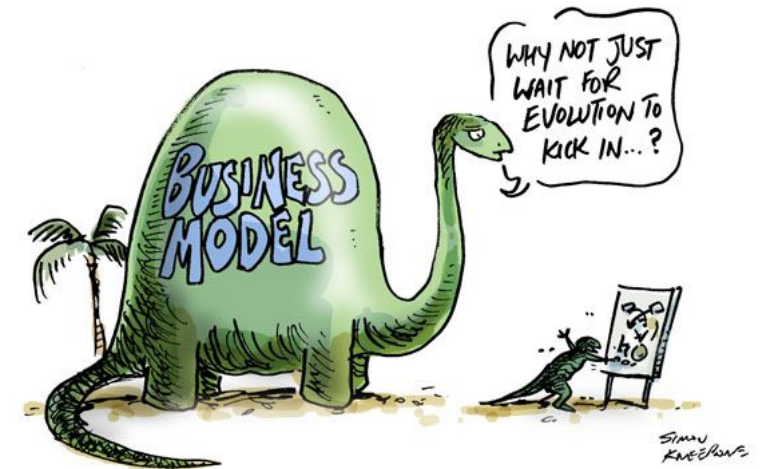
# Strategic Planning



"Enough with all the strategic planning.  
Get out there and kill something."



"This is our plan for  
the next 1,000 years."



Shifting from linear, short-term forecasting to long-term "futuring" by analyzing data-driven signals (weak signals) to map potential scenarios.

Key principles include using a "time cone" to manage uncertainty, working backward from potential futures, and distinguishing between urgent, immediate tactics and long-term, strategic foresight.

Amy Webb

How to do Strategic Planning like a Futurist

Harvard Business Review

# A Futurist's Framework for Strategic Planning



Source: Amy Webb, Future Today Institute

# Macro Forces Facing the World Today



## Demographic

- Aging population
- Declining Birthrates
- Greater religious and ethnic diversity

## Technological

- Pervasive technology
- AI Rapid Advancements
- Toll of Technology

## Economic

- Rise and fall of the middle class
- Employee power shift
- Generational wealth disparities

## Socio-Culture

- Growing mental health crisis
- Systemic health inequality
- Integration of health and technology

## Political

- Increasing geopolitical conflicts
- Entrenched inequality
- Plateau of globalization

## Ecological

- Climate change
- Greener sustainability
- Over-development



"A fascinating, well-written, and important book." —YUVAL NOAH HARARI

TECHNOLOGY, POWER, AND THE  
21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY'S GREATEST DILEMMA

NEW YORK  
FINCH  
HARVARD

**THE  
COMING  
WAVE**

**MUSTAFA SULEYMAN**

CO-FOUNDER OF  
DEEPMIND AND INFLECTION AI

WITH  
MICHAEL BHASKAR







2020



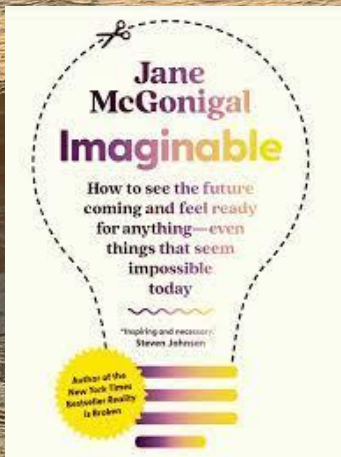
Horrible Service. Terrible atmosphere.  
Do not go there.



Urgent optimism is the desire to act immediately to tackle an obstacle, combined with the belief that we have a reasonable hope of success.

Jane McGonigal

quote fancy



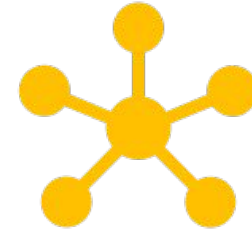
# Three Domains of Governance



Fiduciary Oversight

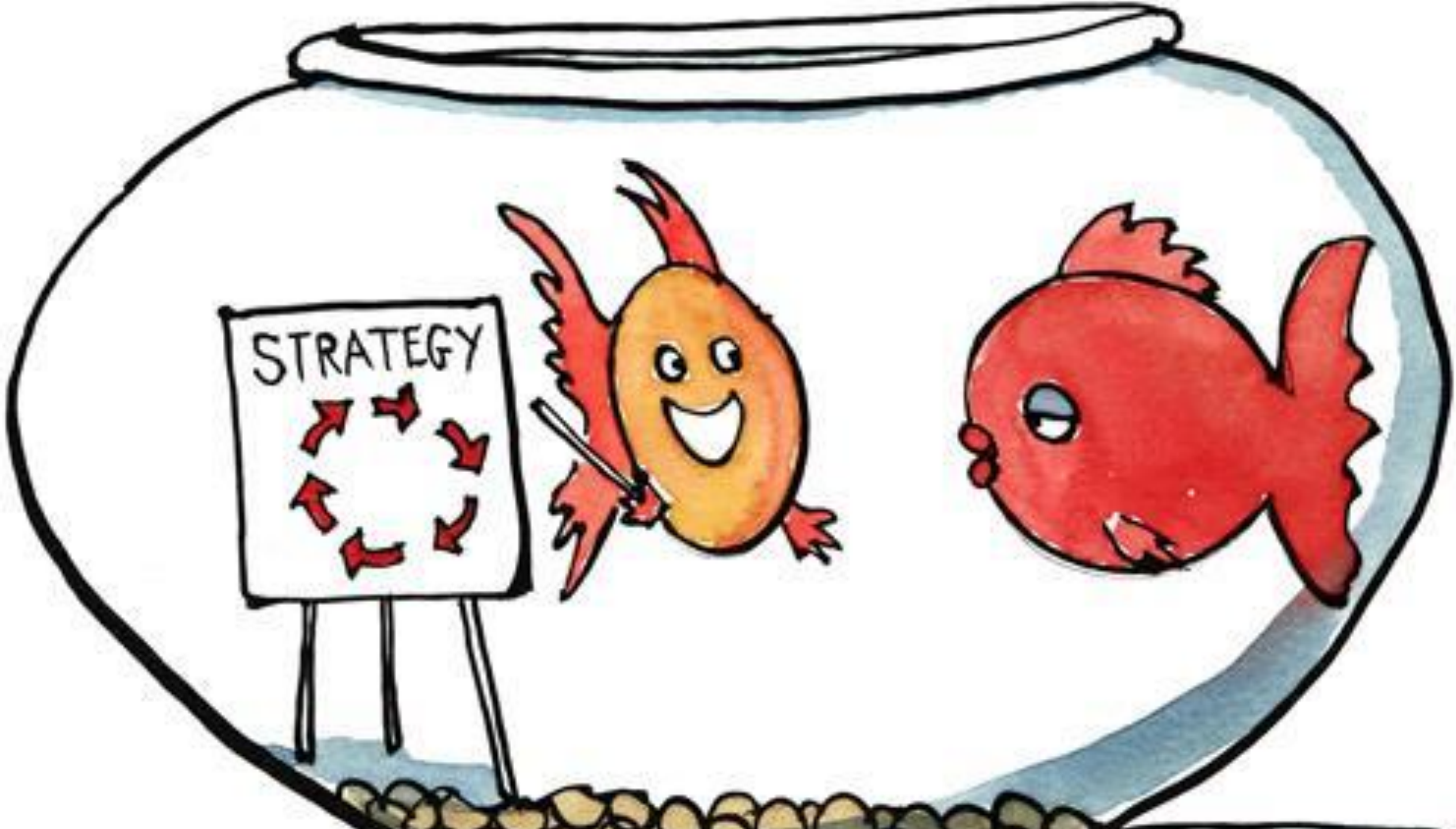


Problem Solving



Strategic/Generative



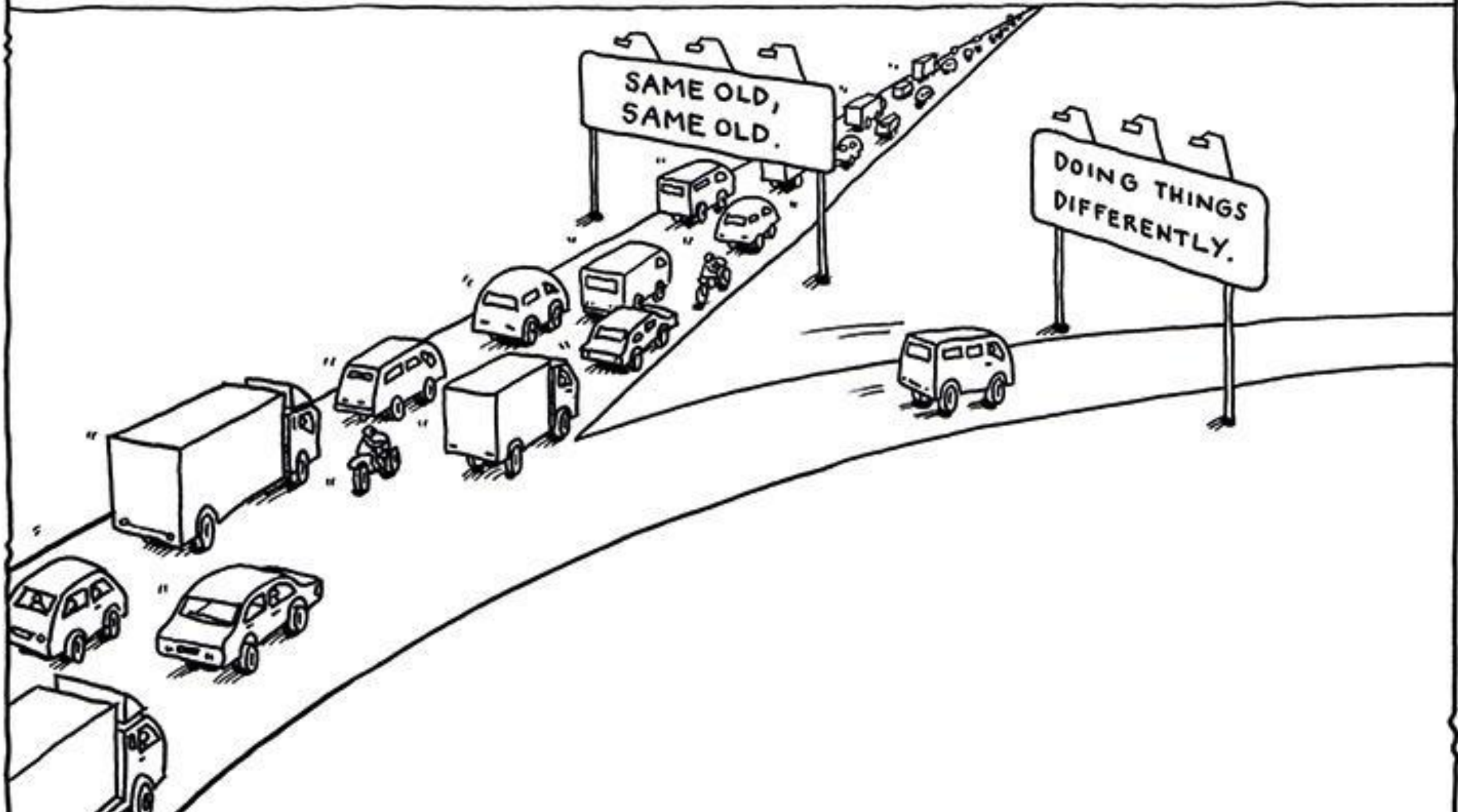


STRATEGY



THE  
SAME  
OLD  
THINKING

THE  
SAME  
OLD  
RESULTS



SAME OLD,  
SAME OLD.

DOING THINGS  
DIFFERENTLY.

# Five Mindsets for Strategic Thinking

Systems Thinking	To view the school as complex and interconnected ecosystem
Critical Thinking	To analyze data, assess proposals, and question assumptions
Creative Thinking	Generates innovative approaches to complex problems
Generative Thinking	To anticipate trends and plan for emerging challenges
Collaborative Thinking	Promotes open dialogue, active listening, and consensus building

Where to start?



Marijke

CC33851



*“May I offer a very different scenario?”*

- 
- “Strangesense”
    - Oddity Block
    - Glimmers
  - Questions
  - Innovation Spur
  - Games
  - Scenarios




# Three-Question Innovation Spur

What is the existing practice/recipe for success/way we've always done it?

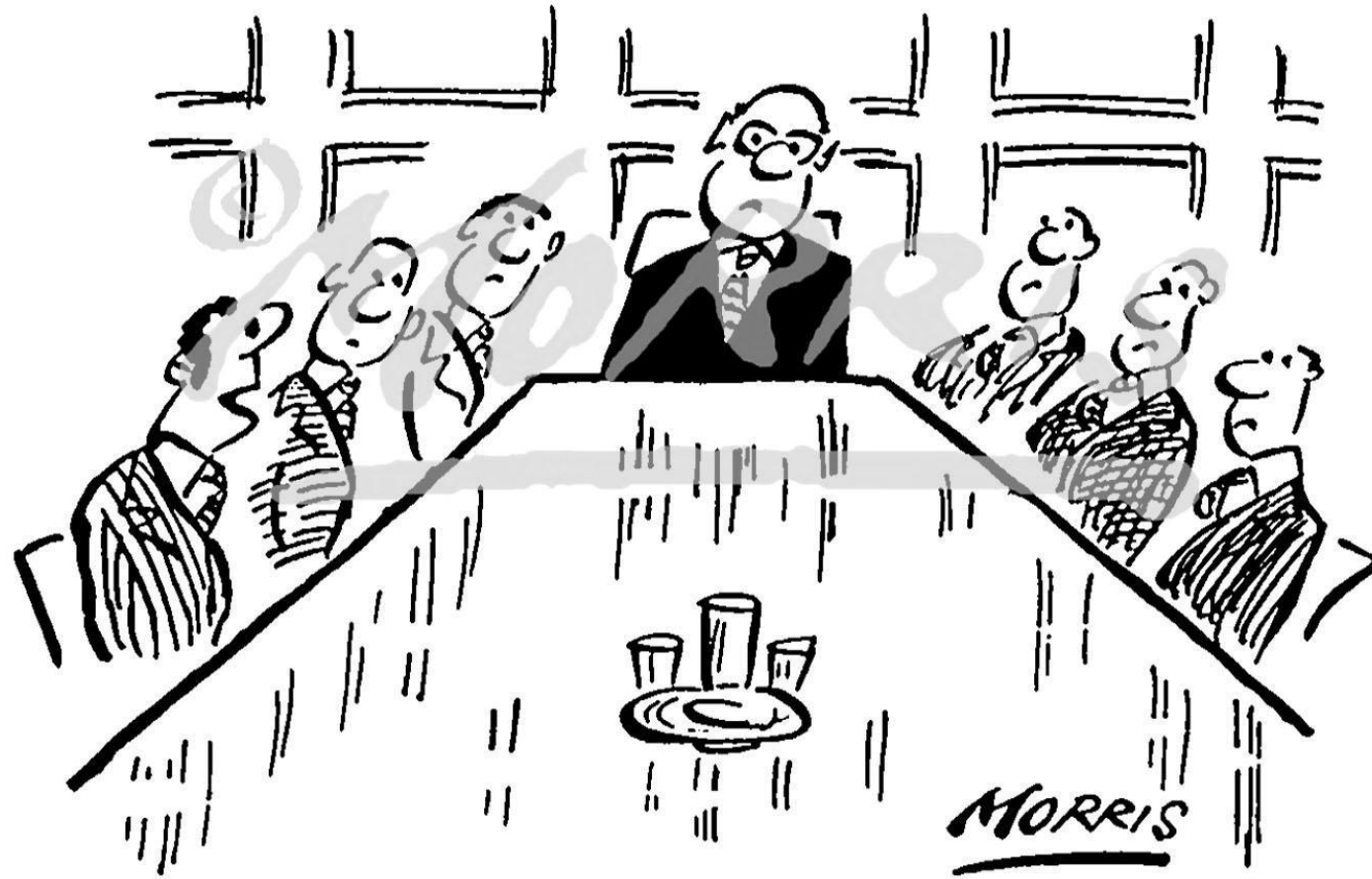
An orange rounded rectangular box containing the first question. A light orange arrow points downwards from the bottom right corner of the box towards the second question box.

What threatens elements of our operational status quo?

A grey rounded rectangular box containing the second question. A light grey arrow points downwards from the bottom right corner of the box towards the third question box.

What can we do about these potential disruptors?


A yellow rounded rectangular box containing the third question.



**"What about a game of Monopoly? It might give us some ideas."**



**Stump the  
Futurist**



**I didn't fail the  
test. I just  
found 100  
ways to do it  
wrong.**

**-Benjamin Franklin**

**Flip it  
100 Ways**



## Middle School

“Where Technology Empowers Students to Flourish”

Meta Middle School opened two years ago, and the market response has been strong. The school, whose mission is to “use cutting edge-technology to augment the unique human potential of each student,” has grown quickly. The primary features of the program are:

- The use of artificial intelligence and virtual reality to provide immersive learning experiences
- Automated grading and personalized lessons provide a highly-personalized program for each student that allows each to proceed per their own pace and competency
- Lessons are available on-demand via streaming services
- The curriculum combines traditional learning with project-based work that connects students with professionals in different areas
- While working on projects with students and mentors from around the world, translation software breaks down any language barriers
- Students can work on flex schedules
- Cloud-based portfolios contain extensive data and artifacts on student progress
- Parents can log into their portals to track their students at any time
- The school offers no extracurricular activities so students can focus on academics and pursue other personal interests with experts outside school

Because of how Meta Middle School has harnessed technology and reduced the number of adults necessary to run the school, it can keep tuition at roughly two-thirds the cost of competitor independent schools.



# Scenario Playing/Planning

“...has the benefit of forcing all decision-makers to set aside their assumptions about the future and to embrace contingency planning for multiple possibilities, for exogenous shocks and for crises, considering the risks and opportunities they may entail.”

--“Future-Proof Your Strategy: Scenario Planning” by J Harris and M Lenox, UVA Darden Idea to Action, Sept 22, 2022

## Questions for Time Traveling

- Where exactly are we, in our future—who else is here and what's around?
- What's true in this version of reality that isn't true today?
- What do we *really* want in this future, and how will we get it?
- How do we feel, now that we're here?



Adapted from McGonigal's  
*Imaginable*

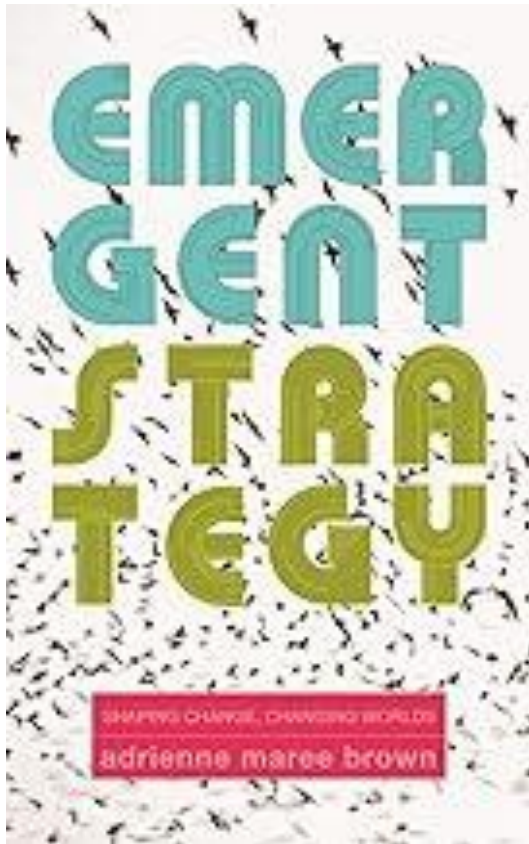
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## Warning Signs

- Operational Dives
- Short-Term Focus
- Nostalgia
- Skepticism/Cynicism
- Sureness
- Pessimism Aversion





“Creating more possibilities is my favorite aspect of emergent strategy—this is where we shape tomorrow towards abundance...The word strategy is a military term which means a plan of action towards a goal. I want to really emphasize the “a”s in that sentence—there is a practice of narrowing down, identifying one path forward, one strategy, one way, one agenda, one leader, one set of values, etc.”

## I Dwell In Possibility

657

I dwell in Possibility—  
A fairer House than Prose—  
More numerous of Windows—  
Superior—for Doors—

Of Chambers as the Cedars—  
Impregnable of Eye—  
And for an Everlasting Roof  
The Gambrels of the Sky—

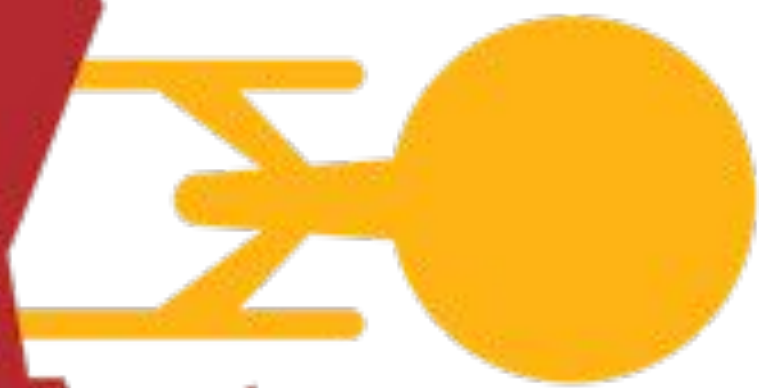
Of Visitors—the fairest—  
For Occupation—This—  
The spreading wide of narrow Hands  
To gather Paradise—

*Emily Dickinson*



*"All I'm saying is now is the time to develop the technology to deflect an asteroid."*

**TO  
BOLDLY  
GO**







THANK YOU

**Mark Crotty, Educators Collaborative**  
**[mcrotty@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:mcrotty@educatorscollaborative.com)**  
**214-808-6550**

**Tracy Bennett, Educators Collaborative**  
**[tbennett@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:tbennett@educatorscollaborative.com)**  
**425-466-4748**

## Some of Our Favorite Strategy Resources

### Books:

*Playing to Win* by Roger Martin

*A New Way to Think* by Roger Martin

*The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* by Henry Mintzberg

*emergent strategy* by Adrienne maree brown

*Good to Great* by Jim Collins

*Start with Why* by Simon Sinek

*Think Better* by Tim Hurson

### Articles:

[4 Ways Leaders Can Sustain Strategic Success](#)

[In Search of Clarity](#)

[Strategic Planning Should be a Strategic Exercise](#)

[In a Volatile World, Your Strategy Must be Flexible](#)

[Turn your meetings into jam sessions](#)

[How to Find Out if Your Company is “Chaos Ready”](#)

[Future-Proof Your Strategy: Scenario Planning](#)

[In Uncertain Times, the Best Strategy is Adaptability](#)

[The Case for Embracing Uncertainty](#)

[Don't Confuse Strategy with Lofty Goals](#)

[A Strategic Culture is Deliberately Different](#)

[Strategic Leadership: Understanding its Purpose and Core Attributes](#)

[How to Help Your Team Think Bigger](#)

[Now is the Time to Write Your 1-Page Strategic Plan](#)

[Can You be Too Strategic?](#)

[The Tao of Strategy: 12 Principles and 4 Action Directives](#)

[Why Do So Many Strategies Fail?](#)

[Scenario Planning vs. Forecasting: 6 Questions to Ask to](#)

[Prepare for a Post-Pandemic Future](#)

[Reliability vs Validity in Strategy](#)

[How to Build Strategy When “Set It and Forget It” Won't Work](#)

[The 5 Elements of a Strategy Mindset](#)

[To Build Strategy, Start with the Future](#)

[Strategy Consulting Needs to Change and This Is How](#)