



## AN OLD STORY WITH A NEW BEGINNING

Now is a good time to remember what we have always known, taught, and practiced regarding the inseparability of crisis and strategy. One is implicit in the other. After more than fifty years as a professional strategic planner, this is what I know.

**First**, the current crisis (which is actually the convergence of crises) will eventually end, and organizations will emerge either better or worse, depending on the kind of planning they have done. Traditional “Long-range” planning is today obsolete because we now are forced to admit that the future cannot be predicted. “Comprehensive” planning no longer makes sense because all systems are subject to a life-cycle and stasis is impossible.

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**Second**, our nation will always have a system (systems) of public education, not only because it is necessary for the preservation of democracy, but primarily because it is the significant moral imperative of our culture to ensure the common good of citizens in a free society.

**Third**, circumstances and conditions – no matter how adverse or threatening – are not crises, unless we deem them so. Ironically, even then the locus of control is still and only within each person and each organization. In the person, it is called “agency;” in the organization it is “governance.” In school districts it is held as a sacred right – “local control.” On this we must depend. There can be no national resolution of the current crisis because each community and its schools will emerge at their own time in their own way; and also because federal and state governments, reeling from the shock of realizing that all rationalistic systems sooner or later turn on themselves, have become dysfunctional relics, dependent on “contingency” reactions.

**Fourth**, school districts will emerge from this crisis worse or better, or, if strategic, something “other.” It depends on what they do now. Those which do not have a real strategic plan will struggle to survive until their resources and reason for being run out. Those which have an authentic strategic plan, developed by a strategic process, must infuse it with a new creative energy to discover and seize upon the possibilities found only in crisis. Those districts which follow the Cambrian Process and Discipline already have in place a strategic system in which to actualize new ideas and new initiatives. Their current “Beliefs,” “Mission,” and “Parameters” already provide the strategic context. Only their “Action Plans” and perhaps the “Parameters” will have to be adjusted (not “adapted”) to the new reality and strengthened to replace the new, more noble, resolve.

Leaders – true to Strategies – thrive in crisis. Likewise those who follow them.

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*Since 1977, Dr. William J. Cook and his Associates have facilitated strategic plans for 1,450 systems of education and trained more than 16,000 facilitators of strategic planning. His book, Strategic Planning for America's Schools, introduced strategic planning to education. Today it is still used as a text in graduate schools throughout the nation.*

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