



## **Facilitator's Guide to the Vision 2021 Scenarios**

Vision 2021 Scenarios Toolkit

**Created By**



**Institute for Alternative Futures**

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# Introduction to the Scenario Toolkit

In the year 2021 the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) will celebrate a hundred years of service to principals in pre-K-8 schools. It will also be the year that kindergarteners from today's classes graduate. In preparation for this future NAESP has commissioned the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) to conduct a far reaching futures project to help the principalship understand and prepare for future changes in education. NAESP's *Vision 2021* initiative asks the important questions: What will schools be like in 2021? What will be the role of principals in 2021? What needs to be done today to prepare schools for the next generation?

The *Vision 2021* project created four scenarios on the future of education and a scenario toolkit to help the leadership of NAESP, their state affiliates and principals worldwide answer these important questions. These scenarios build on the in-depth research conducted by IAF and numerous workshops with a select group of leading principals. You can find out more information about the *Vision 2021* project at <http://vision2021.org>.

This is the first part of the scenario toolkit. It provides everything you need to run a scenario workshop. A scenario workshop is a powerful tool to get your colleagues, staff and the larger community to prepare for the future of education. The second part of the toolkit is a participant's guide to scenarios that includes the four scenarios developed by the *Vision 2021* project as well as forecasts for the future and a futures readiness survey.

## Scenarios for the Future of Education

Scenarios are alternative descriptions or stories of how the future might unfold. They compile information about divergent trends and possibilities into internally consistent images of plausible alternative futures. Scenarios are designed to systematically explore future challenges and opportunities and aid in strategy development. In the process, they often provoke the imagination, raise fundamental questions, make explicit our deeply held values, and stretch our worldviews.

Scenarios are not predictions of the future. Rather, they encourage people to think about how to navigate successfully across the different circumstances that might be encountered. Scenarios can expand our 'field of view' and help people to see possible threats and opportunities that would otherwise have remained hidden.

Scenarios are an investment in learning. A set of several significantly different scenarios helps “bound the uncertainty” of the future so that organizations can systematically plan for future contingencies and clarify their vision of the future they prefer. Scenario thinking is real and useful, but it happens only when you actively use the scenarios. The scenarios are not the end product, but merely a powerful tool.

Assessing trends and key forces can reduce some uncertainties about the future, but it cannot eliminate them, and it often will highlight just how great the uncertainties really are. The key forces and forecasts identified through environmental scanning are important for constructing scenarios. The scenarios serve three purposes:

1. To bound the range of uncertainty and display the broad range of possibilities ahead.
2. To stimulate participants to explore both dangers to be avoided and positive possibilities that can be used in constructing a vision of the preferred future.
3. To test how potential strategies and actions might work in different future circumstances, in order to identify the most “robust” strategies that make sense across a wide variety of future conditions.

Scenarios need not be elaborate or highly quantitative to be valuable. In fact, they are often used as an antidote to highly quantitative approaches to strategic planning that sometimes lose in imagination and adaptability what they gain in precision. What is more valuable about scenarios is that they change the way people who use them think about the future.

## Examples of Successful Scenarios

Scenarios have been successfully used in a wide variety of situations. Businesses often use scenarios as part of their strategic planning process in order to identify future threats and opportunities. Government agencies around the world have used scenarios to help guide their policy decisions and tackle tough issues. Associations often use scenarios to help guide needed changes in their professions. Below are two of the more famous examples of using scenarios to shape the future.

### **Royal Dutch/Shell Scenarios**

The long investment cycle of oil and gas projects lend themselves to using scenarios for strategic planning. Royal Dutch/Shell has one of the most experienced and successful scenario groups. In his book *The Art of the Long View*, Peter Schwartz details how Royal Dutch/Shell’s scenario group were able to anticipate major changes in the price of oil as well as the fall of the Soviet Union. While they did not accurately predict exact

prices and dates, they were able to have models and plans in place for when those events did occur. While their competitors scurried to adjust to the “surprises,” Shell was able to rise from a small player in the oil industry to one of the largest.

### **South African Mont Fleur Scenarios**

At the end of apartheid in South Africa there was a need for an inclusive discussion on the future of South Africa. Twenty-two prominent and diverse leaders from across South Africa were brought together to discuss the future of the country as it marched toward its first fully democratic, multi-racial elections. The scenarios depicted the positives and negatives resulting from a variety of popular opinions on how to successfully transition power in the country. Because both the good and bad of each strategy were brought to light and discussed, downsides were mitigated and the country underwent a successful transition in three years.

### **IAF’s Aspirational Scenario Method**

IAF used its aspirational futures approach to develop the scenarios in this toolkit for NAESP. In this method, two of the four scenarios describe a visionary future. People often have difficulty imagining or clarifying what they may most want in a preferred future. These two scenarios help facilitate this dialogue. One scenario describes what people expect will happen and helps them surface their assumptions about their future. A fourth scenario confronts the fears people have about their future. In a set, these scenarios are often ordered with the expected future first, then the feared followed by the scenarios that explore a preferred future. In a typical scenario workshop, while everyone may read all scenarios in advance, they will only work to analyze and understand the implications of one scenario.

### **EXPECTED FUTURE**

This scenario is the future the organization expects will occur. It represents the “official future.” And it is an important reference point in a strategic planning process.

For schools and the principalship, the expected future can best be described as **Doing the Best We Can**. It includes the trends most likely to continue over the next 14 years such as the importance of assessment in education, pressures on school finances, improvements in educational research and the continued importance of preparing students to compete in a highly competitive global workplace.

## FEARED FUTURE

This is the scenario most people in an organization fear. It looks at important forces of change that could create challenging conditions for the organization. The feared future scenario is strategically vital because it explores what people must work to avoid. It is also a powerful motivator for bringing people together in a shared vision of a preferred future.

For schools and the principalship, the feared future can best be described as **Fighting for What We Believe In**. This scenario focuses on the negative aspects of school choice, the fiscal crunch on public schools caused by an aging population and increases in the digital divide between rich and poor students.

## PREFERED FUTURE

Visionary scenarios identify the most promising opportunities for the future. They are inspirational because they challenge assumptions of what is possible and help build momentum for change. These scenarios can focus on striking advances in technology, shifts in thinking and dramatic changes in the operating environment.

In this scenario set for NAESP, one preferred future scenario is described as **Setting Learning Free of Boundaries**. This scenario looks at striking advances in education technology, global learning communities and the development of networks of innovation among schools and universities. The other preferred future scenario is **Leading Learning Communities**. It focuses on a shift in thinking among principals to focus on holistic standards in education, developing new ways of integrating scientific knowledge and educational research into education and addressing educational equity.

## How to Use the Toolkit

One of the key insights from the Vision 2021 process is that the world is changing rapidly. Scenarios can help your school, organization or community plan for future changes by creating a dialogue about the future. This facilitator's guide provides everything you need to run a successful workshop with your staff. Included are ready-to-use materials, adaptable templates, and some helpful hints to make this process as streamlined and productive as possible. The other half of the scenario toolkit, the participant's guide, contains the forecasts, scenarios and futures readiness survey.

## Before You Begin

The exercises in this toolkit will help your educational community think about the future and anticipate changes that others may find overwhelming. Before you champion this exploration of the future, you should consider the readiness of your organization. Here are some questions to think through before you start recruiting others to join you in this process.

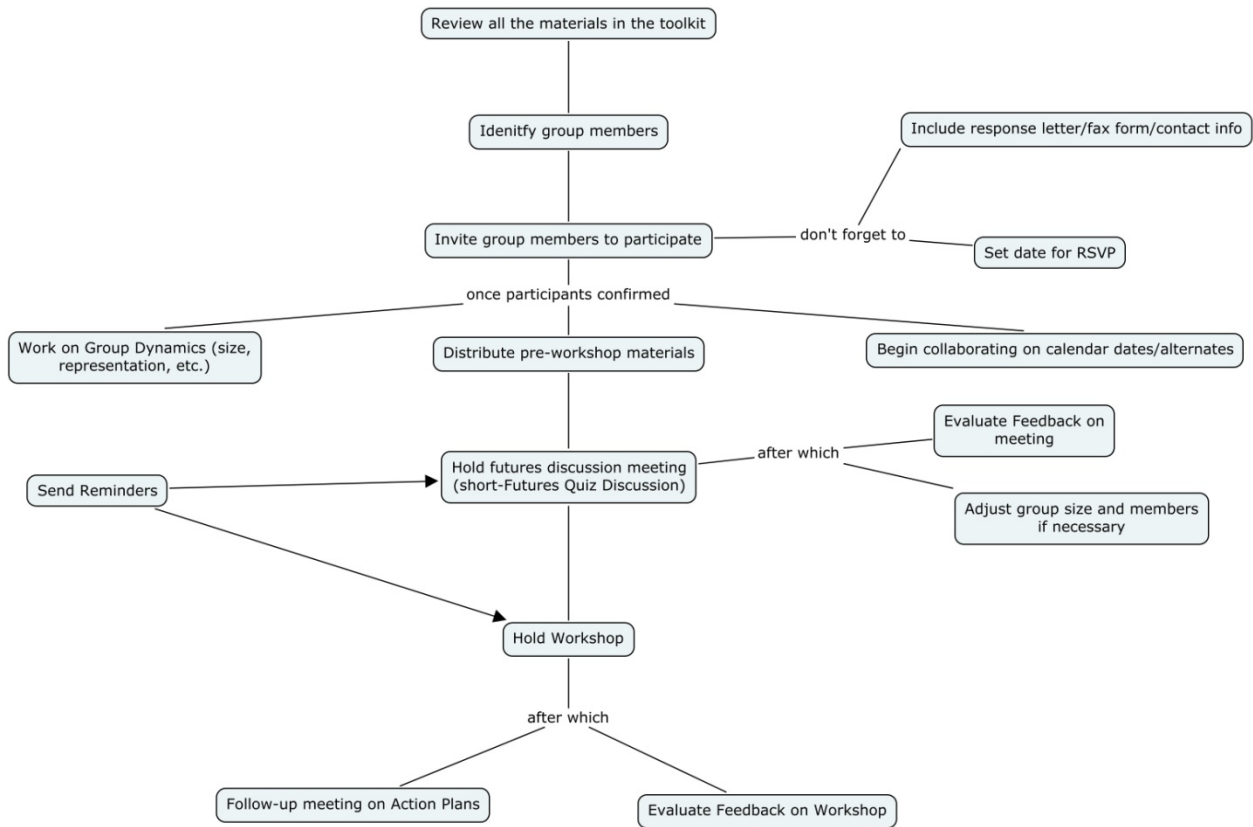
1. Are there significant uncertainties about the future of education?
2. Can you risk opening up core assumptions about your role in education?
3. Do you have a team of volunteer and staff leaders for the next two years who can engage the future and implement critical changes?
4. Can you put today's urgent matters on hold long enough to open up time for study and reflection?
5. Are your colleagues ready to trade the status quo for a preferred future?

The scenario workshop is the first step in anticipatory learning that can lead to new directions for your organization. You want to be able to accomplish more than just holding an intriguing one day workshop. Later in this facilitator's guide, you will find some tips to help you to move beyond the scenarios and lead change in your educational community.

In order to lead change it is important that your educational community or organization is ready to change. In today's fast paced and hectic world it is difficult for any organization to confidently say 'yes' to all of the questions above. However, if you answer 'no' to all or the majority of the questions above, it may be an indication that your organization is not ready for the hard work it will take to use the scenarios effectively.

## Flowchart

The flowchart below will help guide you through setting up a scenario workshop.



## Setting Up a Successful Workshop

The most important aspect of running any workshop is making sure the right people are involved. The size of the workshop should be large enough to generate good discussions among the different table teams, but small enough that you feel comfortable facilitating the discussion. The toolkit is designed for a workshop of 20 to 25 people, which will be broken up into four working groups during the workshop. The workshop is flexible and can be scaled up or down depending on your needs.

Some time should also be spent on determining who to invite and how to invite them. One option is to have an open enrollment where an email is sent out or sign-up sheet is placed in the staff room to solicit interest on a first come first serve basis. This is a good option for “in-house” workshops. It is also less time consuming and has the advantage of self-selecting those who are most interested and enthusiastic.

However, the best choice is combining an invitation with open enrollment. Spending some time upfront to assemble the right team will make it much easier to push for change after the workshop. You want to find leaders who can help create positive change. Here are some ideas about who you may want to recruit:

- ✓ **Thought Leaders.** Find people who are willing to push the boundaries of what is possible and are not afraid to bring up new ideas. They will be instrumental in helping you generate new ideas and possibilities during the workshop.
- ✓ **Staff Leaders.** These are the known leaders in your staff that can help sell the action items that come out of the workshop to other staff members. Look to select leaders from across disciplines and from support staff. They will be vital in helping you create change after the workshop.
- ✓ **Young Leaders.** These are the teachers and principals of the future. Their insights will be very valuable during the workshop.
- ✓ **Outside Leaders.** If you anticipate that many changes will require the support of the larger community, consider inviting a few outside leaders to participate. They also provide an external perspective that can be quite valuable in questioning assumptions about the status quo.

Here are some additional hints to help you in your preparation and planning for the workshop:

- ✓ **Go beyond the ‘usual suspects’.** The best scenario workshops are big tent meetings that bring together participants with different perspectives and viewpoints. When drafting your invite list, go beyond the ‘usual suspects’.
- ✓ **Invite both extroverts and introverts.** Extroverts are vital to keep a meeting fun and exciting and open up brainstorming and dialogue. However, introverts provide depth of thought and can be a great asset during the scenario exercises, which are designed for the strengths of both extroverts and introverts.
- ✓ **Be clear about your intent.** People will offer their own interpretations of why you are convening this workshop if you do not offer your own explanation. State your objectives clearly in your invitations and all subsequent explanations.
- ✓ **Pick a Good Time.** Holding the workshop at the wrong time can limit the important discussions that follow. Try to avoid holding a workshop in the last month of the school year or the day before a major holiday.
- ✓ **Orient and prepare your participants.** Provide a preview of your plans for the workshop in the invitation and encourage people to do some advance preparation. If you signal through the care you take in the set-up and invitation, you will set the tone for the participants.
- ✓ **Use the parking lot for contentious issues.** In every organization there are unresolved issues that get people stuck and draw energy away from a meaningful dialogue on the future. If you know that one of these issues is likely to come up at the workshop it is a good idea before the workshop or at the beginning of the workshop to put those issues in the ‘parking lot’. The ‘parking lot’ is the place for important ‘here and now’ issues that need to be discussed at a later date. Feel free to invite your participants to add to your list.

There are also some simple hints to help with your scenario workshop.

- ✓ **Have Some Serious Fun.** At the beginning of the workshop, stress that the idea is to have some “serious fun” with colleagues with discussing the future.
- ✓ **Stress That Scenarios are a Tool.** There is no one scenario that is completely predictive although each has elements that are likely to happen. The key is to view the scenarios are tools for thinking deeply about the future. Try to avoid picking one scenario as THE future during the workshop and instead explore the implications of all of them.
- ✓ **Keep an Eye on the Agenda.** Scenarios spark great discussions. Make sure to check in with the groups to make sure they don’t get lost in the discussion and are keeping up with the agenda.

## Suggested Timeline

This suggested timeline will help you recruit the participants you want to attend, signal your intention to respect everyone's time and priorities, and give your participants adequate opportunity to prepare.

- Eight Weeks Before Workshop – Invite potential participants
- Six Weeks Before Workshop – Deadline to RSVP
- Four Weeks Before Workshop – Solidify dates for both meetings
- Three Weeks Before Workshop – Distribute materials
- Two Weeks Before Workshop – Survey meeting (approx. one hour)
- One Week Before Workshop – Select workshop groups and prepare materials
- **WORKSHOP**
- One Week After Workshop – Look at evaluation data; follow-up contacts on people willing to help with action steps
- Two or Three Weeks After – Reconvene to address action steps/future directions

Planning and executing this workshop will take some planning if it is to be done well. Because of the mix of people and their differing schedules, the further in advance you being, the better the response will be.

## Pre-Workshop Meeting

For the purpose of the workshop, it will be good to have some starter discussions on the future before diving into the forecasts and scenarios. A pre-workshop meeting will help start the futures discussion, introduce the members of the group, build rapport and trust, and establish that everyone participating cares about the future of education.

Discussing the future and its possibilities, opportunities, and challenges will be a new experience for most. This meeting will begin to open the minds of the participants to those possibilities. Aside from the introductions and information dissemination, the Futures Quiz will be the main activity. Here is a sample timeline for this meeting:

- 5 min – Introductions
- 10 min – Overview of Process
- 15 min – Distribute and Take Quiz
- 20 min – Discuss Answers to Quiz
- 10 min – Debrief on Process; remind about workshop

Before the meeting prepare copies of the Participant's Guide for all the participants. In the back of the guide is the Futures Quiz. The Futures Quiz is meant to spur discussion

and open people to the possibility that they can anticipate and shape the future. At the conclusion of the meeting, ask everyone to read the forecasts and scenarios in their Participant's Guide before the meeting.

## Assigning Roles and Groups

After the pre-workshop meeting is a good time to determine the groups for the scenario workshop. Group size will be dependent on the total number of people participating. A good group size is around five to six members. If there are too many participants for just four groups you can assign one or more scenarios to the same group.

Try to make sure that the groups are as heterogeneous as possible to allow for different perspectives on the same issue. What may be seen as positive by one group may be neutral or negative to another. Traditional group roles, such as recorder and moderator, should be assigned to record dialogue and keep the group on task, respectively. As principal, you may or may not want to be the facilitator of the workshop or discussion. Feel free to defer the facilitator's duties to someone who can be impartial and lead discussions well.

## Suggested Timeline(s) for the Workshop

The workshop developed for this toolkit was based on a six hour scenario workshop run at the 2007 NAESP Annual Conference. In addition to the six hour workshop a three hour workshop is also included for those facilitators who are unable to free up a full day of time. In the full-day workshop, participants will spend time discussing the provocative forecasts for the future of education by NAESP and IAF, and then do the scenario activities in the second half of the day. The forecast exercise is removed in the half-day option.

If you decide to only do a half-day workshop, it is imperative that the participants look over the forecasts for background knowledge before the workshop. This will provide them with some knowledge coming into the workshop and help spark better discussions. Facilitator agendas are available in the Appendix.

### **Full-Day Workshop (6 hours)**

9:00	Orientation to the Workshop/Agenda – 15 min
9:15	Warm-up Activity (optional) – 15 min
9:30	Analysis of Forecasts and Their Significance – 30 min
10:00	Break – 15 min
10:15	Provocative Forecast Exercise – 60 min (Adhere to Timetable!)
11:15	Large Group Discussion – 45 min (be sure to document discussion)
12:00	Lunch – 45 min
12:45	Orientation to Creating and Using Scenarios – 5 min
12:50	Analysis of Scenarios and Their Significance – 15 min
1:05	Scenario Exercise – 60 min (Adhere to Timetable!)
2:05	Shared Learning/Debrief – 45 min
2:50	Closing/Evaluation – 10 min
3:00	End of Workshop

### **Half-Day Workshop (3 hours)**

9:00	Orientation to the Workshop/Agenda – 10 min
9:10	Warm-up Activity (optional) – 10 min
9:20	Analysis of Forecasts and Their Significance – 10 min
9:30	Orientation to Creating and Using Scenarios – 5 min
9:35	Analysis of Scenarios and Their Significance – 15 min
9:50	Break – 15 min
10:05	Scenario Exercise – 60 min (Adhere to Timetable!)
11:05	Shared Learning/Debrief – 45 min
11:50	Closing/Evaluation – 10 min
12:00	End of Workshop

## After the Workshop

The key goal after the workshop is to push for continued dialogue on the topics discussed during the workshop. Follow up with participants who suggested in their evaluation that they would be willing to help in formulating action plans. It is not crucial to take immediate action; however, it is crucial to keep willing participants involved through continued discussion.

Over the next several weeks, try to plan a ‘Where do we go from here?’ meeting to address the ideas and issues that arose from the workshop and any post-workshop discussions. Depending on your individual situation, another approach may consist of a short informational meeting followed by more informal meetings over the course of several days. Along with time constraints, a more casually-paced approach may be necessary for groups who did not receive the information as well as hoped.

Below are some hints to help you and others as you try to build momentum and commitment for change.

- ✓ **Keep the lines of communication open.** Even if you cannot schedule follow-up meetings, use other means of communication to keep the enthusiasm for change going. The important thing is to signal a commitment to continued dialogue and next steps.
- ✓ **Use the participants to help network.** It is unlikely that everyone who is needed to push for change will be able to attend the workshop. Draw on the knowledge of your participants to help you think about whom else should be part of the process and ways to involve them.
- ✓ **Mine ‘hot language’ from the workshop.** Often scenario workshops will create an open space where colleagues are able to express their highest goals and aspirations. These ‘hot language’ statements can be great tools to motivate others to buy into important changes. However, always make sure that you check with participants first before using quotes from the workshop.
- ✓ **Be determined.** Change is often a slow process and schools can be very resistant to change. The key is to select a few key actions to move forward after the workshop and be persistent in pushing for those changes.

## For Further Reading

Assigning a book to read before the workshop is not feasible; however, what follows is a list of both books and articles for those who take an especially strong interest in the process. Some of the books go more into leadership than scenario planning.

Broden, F. (June, 2002). There is no alternative to... *Fast Company*, 60(2), 106. Retrieved 5/30/2007 at <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/60/tina.html>.

Collins, J. (2005). *Good to great and the social sectors: why business thinking is not the answer : a monograph to accompany Good to great : why some companies make the leap, and others don't*. Boulder, CO: Jim Collins.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap, and others don't*. New York: HarperBusiness.

Cornish, E. (2004). *Futuring: The exploration of the future*. Bethesda, MD: World Future Society.

Kahane, A. (1999). Changing the winds. *Whole Earth*, (1999, Spring). Retrieved 5/30/2007 at <http://www.wholeearthmag.com/ArticleBin/222.html>.

Rhea, Marsha (2005). *Anticipate the World You Want: Learning for Alternative Futures*. Lanham, MD: ScarecrowEducation.

Schwartz, P. (1996). *The art of the long view: Planning for the future in an uncertain world*. New York: Currency.

Senge, P. et al. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. New York: Currency.

# Appendix A: Pre-Workshop Materials

## Letter of Invitation

[school letterhead]

[name & address of invitee]

[date]

Dear [name of invitee]:

In the year 2021, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) will celebrate a hundred years of service to principals in pre-K-8 schools. It will also be the year that kindergarteners from today's classes graduate. In preparation for this future NAESP has commissioned the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) to conduct a far reaching futures project to help the principalship, understand and prepare for future changes in education. NAESP's *Vision 2021* initiative asks the important questions: What will schools be like in 2021? What will be the role of principals in 2021? What needs to be done today to prepare schools for the next generation?

We would like to conduct a workshop to start a dialogue on the future of our school(s) here in [your area]. We plan to use the scenarios from the *Vision 2021* project to explore the implications of anticipated changes and discuss how we can steer our schools toward a better future.

The time commitment over the course of 4-6 weeks will be a one hour informational meeting and a [three or six]-hour workshop. We can determine after the workshop whether we need any follow-up meetings to continue to dialogue and discuss action. We are sending this letter out well in advance so that we can accommodate a variety of scheduling concerns.

Please complete the fax-back confirmation form and return it to me at your earliest convenience [your fax number]. Let me know if you need any further information.

We very much look forward to having you on our team.

Sincerely

[your name and title]

Enclosures

## Confirmation Fax Form

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I am very willing to participate in the workshop

\_\_\_\_\_ No, thank you.

Here is my contact information:

Name

Title

Company/organization

Address

Office phone

Office fax

Office e-mail

Contact person at my office

Contact person's phone and e-mail address

Possible alternate if I suddenly cannot attend:

Unavailable dates:

Preferred dates:

Signature

Date

Please fax to: [your name and fax number] or email to: [your e-mail address]

Please call me at [your phone number] or e-mail me at [your e-mail address] with any questions.

Thank you again for your commitment to education.

## Readiness Survey/Futures Quiz Exercise

This "test" consists of 15 questions that measure your ability to think like a futurist. The questions are designed with no clear right answer. Instead they probe your assumptions about the future. The text following the items describes how futurists usually answer these questions.

1. Can we know the future?

- a. Yes            b. No

2. Are there one or many futures?

- a. One            b. Many

3. What is the longest that we can usefully forecast?

- a. 1-2 yrs      b. 3-5 yrs      c. 5-10 yrs      d. 10-25 yrs      e. More than 25 yrs

4. Which is better for understanding the long-term future?

- a. Single, clear predictions            c. Neither  
b. Multiple possible futures            d. Both

5. Which is the most important characteristic for a good forecast?

- a. Accuracy            b. Precision            c. Utility            d. Clarity

6. Is the future already determined?

- a. Yes            b. No

7. Which influences the long-term future the most?

- a. Trends            c. Choices  
b. Events            d. All influence the future equally

8. Which type of future is most useful?

- a. The most probable future            c. The future we prefer  
b. Plausible futures other than the most probable      d. All are equally useful

9. Which influences the long-term future the most?
- a. Demographics
  - b. Physical environment
  - c. Technology
  - d. Economics
  - e. Government
  - f. Culture
  - g. All influence the future equally
10. Which is the most serious cause of forecasting errors?
- a. Lack of information
  - b. The forecaster's assumptions
  - c. External events
11. Which attitude toward the future is most often correct?
- a. Optimism
  - b. Pessimism
  - c. Transformationalism
  - d. Fatalism
  - e. All are equally correct
12. Telling stories about possible but unlikely futures is useful.
- a. True
  - b. False
13. Who sets the vision for the organization?
- a. The leader
  - b. The top management
  - c. The strategic planning team
  - d. Managers in general
  - e. Everyone
  - f. None of the above
14. Which are the three most important characteristics of an effective strategic plan?
- a. Commitment to carry it out
  - b. Coverage of everything the organization does
  - c. General direction for fundamental change
  - d. Detailed implementation plans
  - e. Understanding by everyone
  - f. Valid planning methodology
15. Which is the most frequently overlooked characteristic of successful change?
- a. Communication
  - b. Trust
  - c. Vision
  - d. Commitment

## **Answers and Discussion**

This test is about your assumptions about the future. Assumptions are never completely right or wrong although some may be better than others under certain circumstances. The assumptions that futurists use help them anticipate the complex and sometimes surprising futures that awaits us. If you choose to use those same assumptions, you will be better prepared for those surprises as well.

### **1. Can we know the future? -- a. Yes**

About 50% usually answer Yes; about 50% No. Your answer, of course, depends on how you define "know." If by "know" you mean that you can predict what will happen, then the answer is obviously No. Efforts to predict the exact future of human systems are so prone to error that they are futile. However, if by "know" you mean what might or could happen, then the answer is a qualified Yes. Futurists hold that we can know the majority of plausible futures, if we relax our assumptions and preconceptions of what is possible.

### **2. Are there one or many futures? -- b. Many**

Despite half of the respondents answering No to #1, most people say there are many futures. The future is plural, not singular—hence the term "futures." The multiplicity of the future is a blessing. While we can know many if not most of the plausible futures, we cannot tell exactly what will happen until it does (and even then we are often not sure what is happening). On the other hand, the multiplicity of futures gives us freedom to influence what the future will be. If the future were one, it would be completely determined and our influence would be either negligible or pre-ordained (like being a character in Isaac Asimov's Foundation Trilogy).

### **3. What is the longest that we can usefully forecast? -- All are correct**

The answer depends on the subject of the forecast. Actuaries and futurists prefer the long-term (more than 10 years); politicians and investors must be prepared for radical change in the short-term (next week!). Contrary to what most business people think, the future beyond five years (the standard business planning horizon) can be useful, particularly when long-term investments or decisions are involved. Individuals, and even companies, also have more influence in the long-term. Short-term outcomes are already determined for the most part. Consistent effort toward a goal over long periods, however, can produce amazing results, even when one's power or influence at any one time is small. Rock holds water in the short-run, but water erodes rock in the long.

#### **4. Which is better for understanding the long-term future? -- b. Multiple possible futures**

Would that we could have single, clear predictions that are useful! The problem is that predictions give a false sense of certainty and precision. Multiple possible futures are the best we can do and are therefore better for understanding the future. Unfortunately, some if not most clients prefer single, clear predictions. Futurists believe that intelligent decision-makers can understand that basing a decision on a single prediction is like "putting all their eggs in one basket" and that the real future is more uncertain than that. The purpose is not to be "right," but not to be surprised. If decision makers are prepared for the range of plausible futures, then they can be successful no matter what occurs as long as it occurs in that range.

#### **5. Which is the most important characteristic for a good forecast? -- c. Utility**

Accuracy and precision are supposed to make the best forecasts, particularly quantitative ones. People even ask futurists how often they are correct—i.e., what their batting average is. The question indicates a misunderstanding of applied futurism. Long-term forecasts are more qualitative than quantitative because the long-term is defined as the period of time in which fundamental change is likely to occur. Forecasting precise quantities from one side of a fundamental change to another is nearly impossible. How accurate were 5-year forecasts of the Russian GNP in 1988? The best long-term forecasts are not necessarily accurate or precise, but useful to decision-makers. They point out the most likely future as one possibility in a range of alternative plausible futures. Useful forecasts can even be inaccurate, as when the forecast of impending doom promotes action that averts the doom.

#### **6. Is the future already determined? -- b. No**

Most people say No. A No answer, however, means that single predictions are almost always wrong. The problem is that most people learn about forecasting from well-behaved mechanical systems rather than from complex human systems. We learned to predict where a pendulum would be, how much ice would melt, when a lunar eclipse would occur. Single, clear predictions are possible even essential there. Similar predictions are impossible, however, in the economic, social or political systems in which individuals acting with incomplete knowledge and free will have yet to exert their influence. Fortunately, the indeterminacy of the future also gives us the time and opportunity to exert our own influence.

**7. Which influences the long-term future the most? -- d. All influence the future equally**

Good test taking recommends All as the answer, but it does point out how often people think otherwise. The three specific factors each represent a theory of how the future develops. Those who emphasize Trends believe that the future will be like the present only different in some measurable quantities. Those who select Events see a turbulent future, full of uncertainty and unpredictability. Those who emphasize Choice believe they and others control the future. In fact, each influences the future somewhat, but differently in different domains (trends in demographics, events and choices in politics for instance. The future is a combination of them all. Leaving out any one truncates the range of plausible futures.

**8. Which type of future is most useful? -- d. All are equally useful**

All again is a good answer, but looking at the individual choices highlights what each is good for. The Probable Future is what most people believe a forecast should be. The Probable Future is useful—what will happen if nothing really surprising happens. It is about as useful as the expected value of probability distribution--the center of the distribution no doubt, but no one ever expects to the expected value to occur exactly. Plausible Futures are useful for indicating the variations around the Probable Future. Listing all possible futures is impossible; sampling, however, is not. Possibilities that represent critical assumptions about the future prepare decision-makers for a wider range of contingencies than the Probable Future alone. The Preferable Future is valuable both for forecasting (things preferred are more likely to occur) and for action (mobilizing action toward a consensus goal). Not articulating and working for our preferred futures is the same as being part of a deterministic future.

**9. Which influences the long-term future the most? -- g. All influence the future equally**

Depends again on the domain. Some think some influences are more powerful than others. Americans generally see technology as more powerful than people from other cultures do. Rulers and politicians believe that government is in charge. Environmentalists believe that the physical environment will have the last word. Economists the economy, and so on. Futurists are careful to weigh all the influences appropriately and realize that in the long-run, all of these forces will have their impacts. Rather than specializing in any one field, futurists specialize in the interaction of all fields with each other.

**10. Which is the most serious cause of forecasting errors? -- b. The forecaster's assumptions**

Most people respond that Assumptions are the most serious error, but significant numbers choose Lack of Information and External Events as well. It is easier to blame Information and Events because we are not responsible for them. Our Assumptions, on the other hand, are our own making. A reading of history shows that the most serious errors are the result of mistaken assumptions. Which shall we choose as an example? The patent official who forecast the decline in invention around the turn of the century? The physicist who said heavier than air flight was impossible? The office equipment executive who saw no need for more than six computers worldwide? The list goes on. Forecasters had all the information in front of them. Their interpretation of what the information meant caused the problem. It's not what we don't know that's the problem; it's what we think we know and don't.

**11. Which attitude toward the future is most often correct? -- e. All are equally correct**

All are equally correct because the future is plural—there are optimistic, pessimistic, transformational and fatalistic futures out there. The most often correct depends again on the domain and the time frame. Fatalism is more appropriate for the short-term; transformationalism for the long. Personality also plays a role. Some people are natural optimists, some are pessimists. Level also plays an interesting role. People tend to be more optimistic about their individual future and more pessimistic about societal or global issues. (Perhaps the subtle hand of the media is at work.) The point is that all views need to be considered to get a full, well-rounded view of the real future.

**12. Telling stories about possible but unlikely futures is useful. -- a. True**

You can't be a futurist without telling stories. Stories are the most ancient yet still the most effective way of getting a point across, even in our hyper-scientific age. AI researchers say they will know when a computer is human when, in response to a query, it said, "Let me tell you a story..." Stories capture the essence of the future without claiming to know the details. Storytellers abound in our society—comedians, politicians, leaders. A story about the future, called a scenario, can enliven a plausible future that the audience had never thought. The best response to a scenario is "Yes, you're right; that could happen..." That person's future is now wider than before they heard the story. And, as a result, they are better prepared for the future that does become the present.

### **13. Who sets the vision for the organization? -- f. None of the above**

Most people answer The Leader. A sizable group of people also say Everyone. Both are correct. Vision is a tool of the futurist or leader who wants to create transformational change. A vision is that attractive future that motivates people to work beyond themselves (and beyond what they're getting paid for) and synchronizes their effort with those of others working for the same vision. It appears as though the leader sets the vision, but a more accurate view holds that the leader articulates the vision in everyone's heart. The leader is the spokesperson for the vision, but he or she can only know what to speak after listening to the visions of everyone involved.

### **14. Which are the three most important characteristics of an effective strategic plan?**

- c. General direction for fundamental change
- e. Understanding by everyone
- a. Commitment to carry it out

Strategic planning is the most often used and the most poorly practiced technique in the futurists' toolkit. We have all had the experience—endless forms, pointless meetings, large three-ring binders stuffed with 1.1.1.1.1.1... The "plan" is supposed to contain everything the organization is going to do for the next 5 years. What it really contains is what everyone is currently doing, put there to protect their position. The best strategic plans are short. They set the Direction, not every detail of carrying it out. Details more than a year out are impossible anyway. Everyone must Understand the plan. Who can understand 350 pages of closely dense outlines? And everyone must be Committed to it. Aha, there's the rub! The plan is approved, but serious disagreements remain. What happens to the implementation? Strategic planning is often so painful that the last thing people want to do is ever see the plan again, much less implement it. Direction, Understanding, Commitment—those are the essentials. Leave the details to the annual plan.

### **15. Which is the most frequently overlooked characteristic of successful change? -- b. Trust**

Every one of us has one or two golden projects in our background--a group of people that worked together for a worthy goal and maybe even made a difference. A staff group, reflecting on the projects in their past, developed these four attributes of successful projects: Communication, Trust, Vision, Commitment . They are clearly all important, even necessary. The leadership of that same organization went through the same exercise and came up with exactly three of the characteristics. Which

characteristic of a successful project did not occur to them? Trust. All are necessary, but trust is the most often overlooked.

Trust among project members reinforces the belief that everyone is working for the good of the project, not using the project to advance themselves or their interests. Even more importantly, trust between managers and workers prevents the cynicism that often accompanies the announcement of significant change. People have been burned too many times before. Leaders have announced change; people have gotten on board; only later the leaders "change their minds." The goal is harder to achieve, more expensive, more time-consuming than once thought. Trust is the organization's belief that their colleagues and their leaders will do what it takes to achieve the goal.

No "right" answers, to be sure. Rather a host of common sense insights that can help us understand, anticipate and influence the future more effectively. Your Futurist IQ is the measure of your ability to 1) conceive alternative plausible futures, 2) understand the implications of those futures for yourself and others, and 3) begin to work with others to increase the chances of your preferable future occurring.

*This survey is drawn by an article by noted futurist Dr. Peter Bishop. (Bishop, P. 1998, Jun/July. Thinking like a futurist. Futurist, 32(5), 39-42). For more information on the Futures Studies program at the University of Houston, contact Peter at [pbishop@uh.edu](mailto:pbishop@uh.edu) or visit <http://tech.uh.edu/futureweb>.*

**Use the following questions to guide a post-quiz discussion:**

1. Are there significant uncertainties about the future of education?
2. Can you risk opening up core assumptions about your role in education?
3. Do you have a team of volunteer and staff leaders for the next two years who can engage the future and implement critical changes?
4. Can you put today's urgent matters on hold long enough to open up time for study and reflection?
5. Are your members ready to trade the status quo for a preferred future?

# Appendix B: Workshop & Post Workshop Materials

## Supply List

### Must haves

- ✓ Paper for notes
- ✓ Flip charts or comparable large writing display
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Spare pens or pencils
- ✓ Copies of Scenario materials (briefs, background information, worksheets)
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_

### Copy List of Materials

- ✓ 1-2 extra copies of the **Participant's Guide**
- ✓ Copies of the **Forecast Exercise** (1 per participant)
- ✓ Copies of the **Scenario Exercise** (1 per participant)
- ✓ Copies of the **Crisis & Opportunity Worksheet** (1 per participant & 4 extras)
- ✓ Copies of the **Key Actions for the Future Worksheet** (1 per participant & 4 extras)
- ✓ Copies of the **Evaluation of the Workshop** (1 per participant)

### Additional Resources

- ✓ Projector and Screen
- ✓ Power point slides
- ✓ Access to the Internet (for additional research)
- ✓ Flash drives (to quickly transfer material for collation)
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_

## Full-Day Workshop Agenda (6 hours)

- 9:00**      **Orientation to the Workshop/Agenda – 15 min**
- Introductions
  - Show Agenda
  - Discuss Background
- 9:15**      **Warm-up Activity (optional) – 15 min**
- Creative Warm-up/Icebreaker of your choosing
- 9:30**      **Analysis of Forecasts and Their Significance – 30 min**
- Open discussion on the forecasts – 20 min
  - Q & A – 5 min
  - Vote on most relevant forecasts– 5 min
- 10:00**      **Break – 15 min**
- 10:15**      **Provocative Forecast Exercise – 60 min (Adhere to Timetable!)**
- Select Recorder & Discussion Leader (2 min)
  - Review Selected Forecasts (8 min)
  - Brainstorm of Key Implications for the 1<sup>st</sup> Forecast (20 min)
  - Selecting the Top Three Implications (5 min)
  - Brainstorm of Key Implications for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forecast (20 min)
  - Selecting the Top Three Implications (5 min)
- 11:15**      **Large Group Discussion – 45 min (be sure to document discussion)**
- Share “Best of” Implications (15 min)
  - Share Stakeholder Differences (10 min)
  - Top “A-Ha” moments (10 min)
  - Where to go from here (10 min)
- 12:00**      **Lunch – 45 min**
- 12:45**      **Orientation to Creating and Using Scenarios – 5 min**
- 12:50**      **Analysis of Scenarios and Their Significance – 15 min**
- Open Discussion on the Scenarios – 10 min
  - Q & A – 5 min
- 1:05**      **Scenario Exercise – 60 min (Adhere to Timetable!)**
- Assign Each Team a Scenario
  - Each Team Selects a Recorder & Discussion Leader (5 min)
  - Each Participant Reads the Scenario & Identifies Future Changes (10 min)
  - Paired Discussion on Actions for the Future (15 min)
  - Small Group Discussion on Actions for the Future (20 min)
  - The Group Picks Three Future Actions (10 min)
- 2:05**      **Shared Learning/Debrief – 45 min**
- Report Out from Each Group’s Drivers and Actions (15 min)
  - Discussion on Which Action Should be Carried Forward (30 min)
- 2:50**      **Closing/Evaluation – (10 min)**
- 3:00**      **End of Workshop**

## Half-Day Workshop Agenda (3 hours)

- 9:00 Orientation to the Workshop/Agenda – 10 min**
- Introductions
  - Show Agenda
  - Discuss Background
- 9:10 Warm-up Activity (optional) – 10 min**
- Creative Warm-up/Icebreaker of your choosing
- 9:20 Analysis of Forecasts and Their Significance – 10 min**
- Assign reading the forecasts beforehand
  - Q & A - 5 min
  - Vote on most relevant forecasts– 5 min
- 9:30 Orientation to Creating and Using Scenarios – 5 min**
- 9:35 Analysis of Scenarios and Their Significance – 15 min**
- Open Discussion on the Scenarios – 10 min
  - Q & A – 5 min
- 9:50 Break – 15 min**
- 10:05 Scenario Exercise – 60 min (Adhere to Timetable!)**
- Assign Each Team a Scenario
  - Each Team Selects a Recorder & Discussion Leader (5 min)
  - Each Participant Reads the Scenario & Identifies Future Changes (10 min)
  - Paired Discussion on Actions for the Future (15 min)
  - Small Group Discussion on Actions for the Future (20 min)
  - The Group Picks Three Future Actions (10 min)
- 11:05 Shared Learning/Debrief – 45 min**
- Report Out from Each Group's Drivers and Actions (15 min)
  - Discussion on Which Actions Should be Carried Forward (30 min)
- 11:50 Closing/Evaluation – 10 min**
- 12:00 End of Workshop**

## Open Discussion Starter Questions

The following questions are provided to help facilitate discussion in both the analysis of the forecasts and the analysis of the scenarios. These questions are meant to spur discussion on the overall content of the scenarios and forecasts. Discussion over the impacts and implications of these alternative futures should be saved for the subsequent exercise.

- ✓ Do you see any aspects of the forecasts/scenarios occurring in your schools today?
- ✓ Do you think that some aspects of these alternative futures will occur much sooner than proposed? Much later?
- ✓ What parts of the forecasts/scenarios did you find interesting?
- ✓ Were there any parts of the forecasts/scenarios that you found confusing or need clarification on?
- ✓ Do you disagree with any aspect of the forecasts/scenarios?

## Forecast Exercise

### Learning Objectives

The following **forecasts** are used to lead future-oriented conversations in educational communities. These **forecasts** explore a range of important trends in education. The learning objectives for these **forecasts** are:

1. Better **understand the potential future** for schools.
2. Identify how these forecasts will **impact the future of education**.
3. **Interact with your colleagues** around areas of mutual interest and future importance.

### Instructions

1. Each team should **select a recorder** and a **discussion leader** from the group. Review the assigned forecasts. (10 min)
  - a. The **recorder should take notes** on the open discussion and should be **prepared to talk for the group** during the large group discussion.
  - b. The **discussion leader should help keep track of time** and make sure **everyone has an opportunity to speak** during the brainstorming sessions.
2. In an open discussion, **brainstorm the implications of the first forecast** for education. Use some of the following discussion questions to help guide your discussion: (20 min)
  - a. How will this forecast **impact support for education** both locally and nationally?
  - b. How will this forecast **change the way learning occurs**?
  - c. How will this forecast **impact the day-to-day operations** of your school?
3. Under the direction of the discussion leader, **select three implications of the forecast** to share in the large group discussion. (5 min)
4. **Brainstorm the implications of the second forecast** (20 min)
5. **Select three implications for the second forecast** for the large group discussion. (5 min)

## Forecast Exercise Worksheet

**1<sup>st</sup> Forecast Selected:** \_\_\_\_\_

- **Implication #1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Implication #2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Implication #3:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2<sup>nd</sup> Forecast Selected:** \_\_\_\_\_

- **Implication #1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Implication #2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Implication #3:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Scenario Exercise

### Learning Objectives

Based on the research of IAF, these scenarios were developed to help explore the future of schools. The **learning objectives** for these scenarios are:

- Better **understand a potential future** for schools.
- **Identify crisis and opportunity** in this scenario.
- **Identify important lessons** from the scenario for principals, educators and the larger community.
- **Identify actions** you can take now to influence the future in a positive way.

### Instructions

1. Each team will be **assigned one of four scenarios**.
2. Each team should **select a recorder** and a **discussion leader** from the group. (5 min)
  - a. The **recorder should take notes** on the open discussion and should be prepared to talk for the group during the large group discussion.
  - b. The **discussion leader should help keep track of time** and make sure **everyone has an opportunity to speak** during the brainstorming sessions.
3. Each team member should individually **review the Crisis and Opportunity changes** in the assigned scenario and **identify** significant changes that will be important to your school. The crisis and opportunities chart is in your Participant's Guide. You can also propose other examples of crisis and opportunity you see in the scenario. (10 min)
4. **Discuss the Crisis and Opportunity changes you selected with your neighbor.** Between the two of you, **select three actions for the future** from thinking about this scenario (15 min)
5. The **discussion leader should lead a group discussion** on important changes and actions for the future. (20 min)
6. The **group should pick three future actions**. (10 min)

## Crisis and Opportunity Worksheet

Based on the scenario vignette that introduces this alternative future, please identify the most important changes you observe in the 2021 scenario. Each change could be a crisis or opportunity, an event or development, or an issue or trend in the larger environment with the power to shape the future for schools. You can select from the Crisis and Opportunity chart in the scenario or propose another change that you think will have an impact on the future of schools in 2021.

After you are finished, turn to your neighbor and discuss your changes with him/her. After you've both had a chance to discuss your changes, turn to the next exercise.

<b>Crisis or Opportunity Change</b>	<b>What impact will this change have on the future of education?</b>	<b>Is this change recognized and understood among my colleagues?</b>
1.		
2.		
3.		

## Key Actions for the Future Worksheet

Scenarios help leaders identify those actions that can be taken now to either accelerate a desired future or prevent a challenging future. Identify at least three actions that can be taken now or over the next few years to accelerate a desired future or prevent a challenging future. These actions can be undertaken in your community or can be undertaken by principals (and NAESP) at a collective level.

- **Key Action #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Key Action #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Key Action #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Evaluation of the Workshop

Purpose: The purpose of this evaluation is to assess how successful the scenario process was in terms of educating the participants as well as inspiring the participants to take action based on the outcomes of the workshop.

1. How would you rank today's workshop? (circle one)

Very Useful      Somewhat Useful      Not Useful      Meaningless

2. Did the workshop open your eyes to the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead in education? (circle one)

Yes      No

3. Did you learn something new about the worldviews of the different stakeholders that were present today? (circle one)

Yes      No

If so, what?

4. Do you think the scenario process in general is helpful in allowing us to shape a preferred future? (circle one)

Yes      No

5. Are you willing to work with the group of stakeholders to help shape a preferred future for the school or school district?

a. What stakeholders would you consider vital to the process?

b. Would you like to be contacted about pursuing items on the action list?

c. Can you think of any additional questions or issues this group should consider when it convenes?

## Facilitator Evaluation of the Toolkit and Workshop

Purpose: The goal of this evaluation is to give NAESP/IAF feedback on how to improve the toolkit and workshop for others to use in the future. Please send to [futurist@altfutures.com](mailto:futurist@altfutures.com) or the Institute for Alternative Futures, 100 N. Pitt St, Suite 235, Alexandria, VA 22314

1. What part of the toolkit or scenario process seemed to work the best?
2. What part of the toolkit or scenario process did not work as well as you had hoped? Please explain.
3. Was there any part of the toolkit that you thought was unnecessary?
4. Please give us any additional comments on how we can improve the toolkit.

## Thank You Letter

[school letterhead]

[date]

[name & address of recipient]

Dear [name of recipient]:

I want to extend my sincerest thanks to you for taking the time to participate in the Scenarios for the Future Workshop for our school and community. I hope it was as rewarding for you as it was for me.

We are looking to follow up on our learning and ideas for next steps discussed at the workshop. We hope that you will take some time to reflect on the workshop and consider joining us as we work together for a preferred future for our schools and community.

Sincerely,

[your name and title]

Enclosure