Blue Sky Thinkers
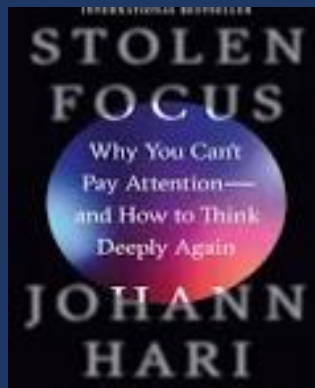
Blue Sky Book Reviews

☀ **Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention and How To Think Deeply Again – Johann Hari (Excerpt Here)**

One of the most personally impactful books I have read in years. Well-researched, personal, and has massive implications for education. The general theme and statistics resonate strongly and are frightening as to the implications personally and for our world. The latter part of the book addressing ADHD and the critical importance of "Play" also resonated. This book has changed my behaviours, hopefully for good.

☀ **CEO Excellence: The Six Mindsets That Distinguish the Best Leaders from the Rest – Dewar, Keller and Malhotra (Excerpt Here) – For a sense of the book, check out these short video pieces.**
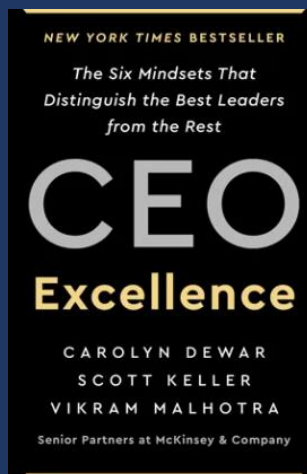
Based on significant research of "The Best", this book runs the entire gamut of Excellence. I bookmarked over a hundred different parts that I thought were worthy of re-consideration and application. This will be seen as one of those foundational books in leadership for organizations.

Blue Sky Leadership Team Coaching, Growth and Development (I had 15 I could have included)

10+ Examples of Leadership Development Goals for Managers (Click Here)

"Leadership development is essential because it helps broaden the employees' capacities to perform well in the leadership roles within the team and the organization. And if employees want to grow as leaders, they should set trackable leadership development goals. To complete the process and become good leaders, employees must understand their strengths and weaknesses, and based on this understanding, leadership development goals should be set."

This article addresses the following in a clear and concise form, with examples. "Why is Leadership Development Important"; "What are Leadership Development Goals"; "How to Write Leadership Development Goals"; Goals and Tests of Leadership Skills.

Understand yourself. Understand others. Help others understand you (Click Here)

This is less an article than a link to a leadership diagnostic tool. While I am trained in CoreStrengths, I recognize that the expense is not in everyone's wheelhouse. As a free diagnostic this one is pretty good. It just doesn't provide the depth of the team cross analysis that is so rich in CoreStrengths. As an individual diagnostic, I did it, and thought it was accurate. Maybe something for your team members.

From Ray Dalio of Bridgewater, an American investor and hedge fund manager comes this tool. I listed to a podcast on Dr. Michael Gervais podcast "Finding Mastery (recommend it highly) and Dalio is in the helping people business at this point in his life.

The Chief of Leadership Development: Preparing Today's Leaders for Tomorrow's Challenges (Click Here)

"The Reasons for Failure:
1. Organizations rarely do the work to thoroughly understand the breadth and depth of the challenges leaders face.
2. There is a gap between the skills that programs build and the skills that organizations require.

	3. The third issue stems from identifying responsibility for leadership development."
	Written from a business perspective, many/all of the overarching themes of this piece resonate directly with leadership in independent schools.

Blue Sky the Onboarding Process

☀	**Big-Picture Reflections to Inform Your Faculty Onboarding (Re)Design. (Click Here)** "With retention suffering and hiring becoming increasingly difficult, onboarding new faculty with clear purpose has never been more critically important. How can we leverage and meet the radically diverse strengths and needs that each new community member brings to the table? Creating a space where newcomers feel welcomed, seen, and respected does not happen accidentally, and planning for success is especially important when your school is trying to diversify the make-up of your faculty. This piece stands as an outstanding guide to help schools consider all the parameters that need to be considered as they look to re-consider their onboarding processes for faculty and staff. I can see a committee chair distributing this as a roadmap to consider all the things that need to be considered.
☀	**Hiring Practices: Developing a Year-Round Model (Click Here)** "Ask, "Why are we hiring?" Schools should explore the goals in a new hire, why faculty members leave, and the value of the hiring/onboarding process. These conversations can be uncomfortable but useful in generating ideas to create a greater sense of buy-in and improve faculty morale." Almost everything from the NAIS is well-written, relevant, and instructive. This piece on hiring generally is fabulous food for thought around re-thinking the hiring process in the face of new realities. A must read if for other reason than it supports how we are feeling.
☀	**New Teacher Onboarding and Cultivation (Click Here)** From the Teacher Talent Toolbox, a step-by-step guide to all the pieces that should be considered in an effective onboarding process, with worksheets. I have used this document as one of my foundational documents to consider as I helped a school through a new onboarding process. One document of many great resources.

Blue Sky Residential Curriculum

☀ **The Restorative Practices in ResLife: Residential Curriculum and Curricular Approaches (Click Here)**

"Most of the work of Restorative Practices, including the pieces that lend themselves best to a residential curriculum, focus on proactively building relationships and establishing norms. These practices mitigate the likelihood that harm will be perpetrated and establish commitments to community that make addressing harm in a restorative way easier."

Just a truly fabulous article outlining the overarching goals of Restorative Practices in ResLife, but also videos and checklists to help a school begin that journey.

☀ **Residence Life Curriculum from Emory and Henry College (Click Here)**

"To provide a foundation of safety, support, and success in an inclusive community that empowers residents to navigate their experiences of personal growth."

An incredible document that outlines five areas of campus living and the principles that embody the best version of life in this community. Within each of the following categories are "Each Student Should" and "We Hope to Observe Students". Categories include – Creating Connections, Exploring Identity, Developing Community, Making Educated Decisions, and Diversity-Equity and Inclusion.
Every school should develop a set of principles in residential life to live by!

☀ **Developing a Co-Curricular Learning Model:
Residential Curriculum and Curricular Approaches in Student Affairs and Residence Life Work (Click Here)**

"One thing curricular approaches always come back to is learning. Student learning. How are you impacting student learning? What do you want students to learn? How effective are you in teaching students what you want them to learn? Creating a campus community of engaged learning forms the heart of our work. Make sure you develop your curriculum and examine your practices through the lens of student learning. If something doesn't contribute to student learning, should you still continue to pursue it? There are many other goals you may have that are not explicitly about learning per se, but contribute to learning, such as your community building efforts. Be mindful of these efforts as well."

Wow. This is the most extensive guide to developing a residential curriculum I have ever seen. Every boarding school in this country needs to do a deep dive with their residential teams to see where they are in addressing some of the pieces in this document! It is tailored to university campuses, but almost everything remains relevant.