Farsighted by Steven Johnson

Think you might want to read this book?
For those interested in the complexities of thought, a deep dive into *Farsighted* will bring much satisfaction, as it broaches the uncommon topic of how we make important decisions. Models, such as storytelling and scenario planning, combined with warnings of "fallacy of extrapolation" and "anchoring" keep the reader engaged from page to page. Perhaps the most complex and pertinent example illustrated in Johnson's book is SEAL Team Six's capture of Bin Laden at the Abbottabad compound in Pakistan. If school leaders can understand the intricate and multiple processes used in important decisions, such as SEAL Team Six's strategic plan, leadership teams will be better equipped to shape the future of our schools.

What would Socrates ask?
- What if decision-making was an elective for all high school students?
- How do we maximize the research that clearly states that taking a break from thinking about a problem once we understand it completely, is beneficial to the decision-making process?
- If we know that diversity of thought equals solutions with more quality and quantity, how should that impact the way we approach dilemmas and the decision-making process?
- What if all decisions made by an administration team happened with specific roles, so that all perspectives are represented?

Research
- Literature on both innovation and decision-making have the same conclusion: diversity generates the most new ideas.
- Paul Nutt, a business professor at Ohio State University, found that only 15% of case studies involved a stage where the decision-makers actively sought out a new option beyond the initial choices on the table at the outset of the discussion.

Concepts
- "Decision Theory" is a scientific field that consists of a number of helpful frameworks for making long-term decisions. It has roots in Economics, Behavioral Psychology, and Neuroscience.
- "System 1 Thinking vs. System 2 Thinking" illustrates that System 1 Thinking is intuitive, fast-acting, and emotionally-charged while System 2 Thinking is consciously thinking through a situation.
- There are two steps in decision-making, Knowledge and Plan of Action. The Plan of Action step should have two phases. A divergent phase where all possibilities are accepted for consideration, and a consensus phase where possibilities are narrowed down to the best possible solutions.

- "Anchoring" is the idea that when people are facing a decision, they have a tendency to pick one "anchor" variable, and make their decision based on that element.
- In most cases, having a diversity of perspectives will trump any group's ability to make a decision.
- "70 Percent rule" refers to Jeff Bezos' rule of thumb when making decisions that involve uncertainty - he only pulls the trigger on decisions when certainty levels get to 70%.
- Part of being a smart decision-maker is being open-minded enough to realize that other people might have a different way of thinking about the decision.
- "Downstream flexibility" is when a decision leaves open the possibility for more decisions to be made in the future or for multiple outcomes to play out.
- Once protocols and exercises have widened your decision-making perspective, the next step is to go for walks, let your mind wander, read about another topic, and focus on other things. Sometimes taking a break and distracting oneself makes the decision-making process easier down the road.

Quotes from the author
- "You almost never hear at a political debate or a shareholder meeting where one of the candidates or executives is asked how he or she goes about making a decision, but in the end, there may be no more valuable skill for someone in any kind of leadership position."
- "You can enhance the diversity of an existing group - without bringing in outsiders - simply by designating "expert roles" to each of the participants based on the knowledge they happen to bring to the discussion."
- "We all suffer from a tendency to overvalue the importance of the variables of a given system that we do understand, and undervalue the elements that are opaque to us, for whatever reason."
- "If you find yourself mapping a 'whether or not' question, you're almost always better off turning it into a 'which one' question that gives you more available paths."
- "When a member of Parliament suggested in 1854 that it might be scientifically possible to predict London's weather 24 hours in advance, he was greeted with howls of laughter".... " The first scientifically grounded forecast appeared in the *Times* on August 1, 1861, predicting a temperature in London of 62 degrees Fahrenheit, clear skies, and a southwesterly wind. The forecast proved to be accurate - the temperature peaked at 61 degrees Fahrenheit that day - and before long, weather forecasts became a staple of most newspapers."
- "A group of men is more likely to make the wrong choice about *anything*, not just women's issues."
- "More than any other creative form, novels give us an opportunity to simulate and rehearse the hard choices of life before we actually make one ourselves."

Quotes from others

- "One thing a person cannot do, no matter how rigorous his analysis or heroic his imagination, is to draw up a list of things that would never occur to him." - Thomas Schelling
- "Moral decisions, both public and private should be based on actions that produce the "greatest happiness for the greatest number." - Jeremy Bentham

Implement tomorrow?

- Make sure all decision-making teams are as diverse as possible and include both a divergent phase to generate ideas, and a convergent phase to narrow down the best ones.

Gateways to further learning (we research)

- Untangling your organization's decision-making
- Decision-making in your organization: Cutting through the clutter
- 7 Steps of the decision making process
- How Good Are Your Decision-Making Skills?

Referenced books with the potential to impact leading and learning in education

Author(s) Last Name	Title
Gladwell	*Blink*
Lehrer	*How We Decide*
Kahneman	*Thinking, Fast and Slow*
Klein	*Sources of Power*
Feynman	*The Meaning of It All*
Hawken, Schwartz and Ogilvy	*Seven Tomorrows*

The applicability of this book to leading and/or learning is ….

Abstract ←——————✗——————→ Obvious