Halliard Trust

INSET Day Pre Reading: Surrounded by Idiots

Understanding Yourself and Others to Build Stronger Teams

What is Surrounded by Idiots?

Thomas Erikson's book explores human behaviour through a simple but powerful model based on four color-coded personality types. It's not about labelling people—it's about understanding how we communicate, why misunderstandings happen, and how we can work better together.

Why This Matters for Us

In a Trust-wide setting, we work with a diverse range of colleagues, students, and stakeholders. Miscommunication can lead to frustration, inefficiency, and conflict. By understanding our own style and appreciating others', we can:

- Improve collaboration

- Reduce workplace tension

- Enhance leadership and team dynamics

- Support student outcomes through better staff cohesion

The Four Personality Types

Red – The Dominant Type

Traits: Assertive, goal-oriented, competitive

Strengths: Decisive, driven

Challenges: Can be perceived as aggressive or impatient

Yellow – The Influencer

Traits: Enthusiastic, sociable, creative

Strengths: Inspires others, brings energy

Challenges: May overlook details or struggle with follow-through

Green – The Stabilizer

Traits: Calm, empathetic, loyal

Strengths: Great listener, team player

Challenges: Resistant to change, avoids conflict

Blue – The Analyst

Traits: Detail-oriented, logical, precise

Strengths: Thorough, reliable

Challenges: Can be overly critical or slow to act

Personality Colour Quiz – Based on 'Surrounded by Idiots'

Answer the following 12 questions by selecting the option that best describes you. Each option corresponds to a colour: Red (A), Yellow (B), Green (C), or Blue (D). At the end, use the scoring guide to determine your dominant personality colour.

1. When working on a team project, I usually:

A. Take charge and delegate tasks
B. Bring energy and enthusiasm
C. Support others and keep harmony
D. Analyse the situation and plan carefully

2. In a conflict, I tend to:

A. Stand my ground and assert my view
B. Try to lighten the mood
C. Avoid it and keep peace
D. Seek logical resolution

3. When making decisions, I prefer to:

A. Decide quickly and move forward
B. Go with my gut feeling
C. Consider how others feel
D. Gather all facts first

4. Others often describe me as:

A. Confident and determined
B. Fun and outgoing
C. Kind and dependable

D. Thoughtful and precise

5. When faced with a challenge, I:

A. Tackle it head-on
B. Look for creative solutions
C. Stay calm and steady
D. Break it down and analyse it

6. In meetings, I usually:

A. Lead the discussion
B. Share ideas and jokes
C. Listen and support
D. Take notes and ask questions

7. I value:

A. Results and efficiency
B. Recognition and excitement
C. Stability and relationships
D. Accuracy and structure

8. When under pressure, I:

A. Push harder to succeed
B. Stay optimistic
C. Stay calm and wait it out
D. Withdraw and think things through

9. My communication style is:

A. Direct and to the point
B. Expressive and animated
C. Gentle and considerate
D. Clear and detailed

10. I prefer to work in an environment that is:

A. Fast-paced and goal-oriented
B. Dynamic and social
C. Friendly and consistent
D. Quiet and organised

11. When giving feedback, I:

A. Say it straight
B. Use humour to soften it
C. Be gentle and encouraging
D. Be constructive and specific

12. I am most motivated by:

A. Achieving goals
B. Being appreciated
C. Helping others
D. Solving problems

Scoring Guide

Count how many times you selected each letter:
- A = Red (Dominant)
- B = Yellow (Influencer)
- C = Green (Stabilizer)
- D = Blue (Analyst)

The colour with the highest count is your dominant personality type.
If you have a tie, you may have a blend of styles.

Reflect Before the INSET Day

Take a few minutes to consider:

1. Which colour do you most identify with? Why?

2. Think of a colleague who communicates very differently from you. What colour might they be?

3. How do you typically respond to conflict or pressure?

4. What do you hope to gain from understanding these styles better?

What to Expect on the INSET Day

- Interactive workshops with a focus on better understanding self and others

- Opportunities to reflect on team dynamics and leadership

- Tools to apply this understanding in your role

- Opportunities to shape how the Trust work with you to support you to be most effective and happy in your role.

Optional Pre-Reading

If you'd like to dive deeper before the day:

- Read the introduction and first few chapters of Surrounded by Idiots

- Watch a short video summary of the book (search “Surrounded by Idiots summary” on YouTube)