



## What Great Principals Do Differently: 15 Things That Matter Most

A Summary of the book published by Gale, Cengage Learning

Below are the KEY POINTS from this book.

Todd Whitaker, a former principal who works with more than 50 schools each year as a consultant, believes that all principals are intelligent and knowledgeable. However, the author asserts that effective principals do things differently, with the focus on "doing." The conclusions presented are drawn from research studies as well as personal experience in discerning the specific practices that effective principals have in common.

1. **It's the people, not programs.** A school's degree of excellence is perceived from the quality of its teachers. Effective principals use input from their most effective teachers in making decisions for the school.

2. **Effective teachers and effective principals have high standards for themselves.** Effective principals take the attitude that they are responsible for everything that happens in their schools.

*When people believe that they are valued, they are motivated to give the best of themselves to their work.*

3. **Treat everyone with respect, every day, all the time.** Effective principals can improve school climate by increasing positive interactions with staff members, especially through praise.

4. **The principal is the filter. Principals set the emotional energy level of teachers and students through many different means.** A principal's goals should be to squash negative attitudes and encourage enthusiasm for school among the staff and students.

5. **Teach the teachers. One of the principal's most important tasks is to help teachers improve their instruction and rapport with students.** One method is to have teachers observe each other in action: Get

the ones who need improvement into the superstars' classrooms.

6. **Hire great teachers.** As a principal, set your standards high: look for educational leaders ...

7. **Recognize standardized testing as a reality.** The principal can encourage the staff to work together for the good of the students regardless of how they feel about the tests.

8. **Focus on behavior, then focus on beliefs.** Teachers' beliefs are not as important as their actions, and with practice in new methods, their beliefs will likely come around as well.

9. **Consideration for loyalty, but to whom?** (Principals make decisions that) are not easy choices to make, but the question of loyalty is clear: The principal must act in the best interests of all students and staff for the good of the whole school.

10. **Base every decision on your best teachers.** These teachers can bring much energy and creative force to bear on any school improvement plan.

Continued on page 2



## Protocol Thank You

**Thank you to everyone participating in the Protocol Review!**

**A special thank you to the administration and staff of the following schools:**

- Clarence Boswell Elementary School
- Dr. N. E. Roberts Elementary School
- Highlands Grove Elementary School
- Jewett Middle Academy
- James E. Stephens Elementary School
- Kathleen Middle School
- Medulla Elementary School

- Mulberry Senior High School
- R. Bruce Wagner Elementary School
- Tenoroc Senior High School
- Union Academy Middle School
- Valleyview Elementary School
- Winter Haven Senior High School

11. **In every situation, ask who is the most comfortable and who is least comfortable.** The implementation of ideas that causes some teachers to feel uncomfortable may be good, especially if they are ineffective teachers. However, if the effective teachers are uncomfortable, the plan is poor and should not go forward.

12. **Understand high achievers.** The effective teachers in the school are rightly seen as sources of creative energy and power that can launch any school into an improvement mode. But how do principals protect this precious resource? ...high achieving teachers must not be given work that other teachers can do, because there are many tasks that only these achievers

can perform.

13. **Make it cool to care.** When individual teachers or even an entire school staff support an apathetic, actively negative attitude toward students, it is a daunting challenge to change the situation.

14. **Don't need to repair--always do repair.** Engaging in constant repair, even when things are not obviously broken, is a way to keep school relationships strong.

15. **Set expectations at the start of the year.** The beginning of the year is the only time when the principal can talk about classroom management and not have the teachers and staff feel guilty or angry because no one has had any negative interactions with students yet. This is the best time

for the principal to set forth school-wide classroom management expectations. . The idea that respecting, involving, and developing staff is the best way to improve a school is exciting. Not only is it within every principal's means to implement, but this approach is certain to enhance the learning environment regardless of any school improvement goals.

In conclusion, when people believe that they are valued, they are motivated to give the best of themselves to their work. These ideas have the power to transform a struggling school into a hope-filled one where the "golden rule" is active on an administrative level for the benefit of all students and staff.

- **Congratulations to Kenyetta Feacher and the Lesson Study team at Lakeland Highlands Middle School for the outstanding entry in the April, 2011 PD Showcase!**
- **Congratulations to Bobbi Jo Smith at Lake Shipp Elementary for the outstanding entry in the May, 2011 PD Showcase!**