

What Great Teachers Do *Differently*

**Seventeen Things
That Matter Most**

Second Edition

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About the Author

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my favorite teachers, who are my three children: Katherine, Madeline, and Harrison. Watching them grow and sharing life with them has taught me more than I ever dreamed possible.

Recognized as a leading presenter in the field of education, **Dr. Todd Whitaker** has been fortunate to be able to blend his passion with his career. His message about the importance of teaching has resonated with hundreds of thousands of educators around the world. Todd is a professor of educational leadership at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, Indiana. He has pursued his love of education by researching and studying effective teachers and principals.

Early in his career, Todd taught mathematics and coached basketball in Missouri. He then served as a principal at the middle school, junior high, and high school levels. He was also a middle school coordinator in charge of staffing, curriculum, and technology for the opening of new middle schools.

One of the nation's leading authorities on staff motivation, teacher leadership, and principal effectiveness, Todd has written more than twenty books, including the second edition of *What Great Principals Do Differently*. Other titles include *50 Ways to Improve Student Behavior*, *Teaching Matters*, *The Ball*, *7 Simple Secrets*, *Motivating & Inspiring Teachers*, and *Dealing with Difficult Parents*.

Todd is married to Beth, also a former teacher and principal, who is a professor of Elementary Education at Indiana State University. They are the parents of Katherine, Madeline, and Harrison.

Seventeen Things That Matter Most

1. Great teachers never forget that it is people, not programs, that determine the quality of a school.
2. Great teachers establish clear expectations at the start of the year and follow them consistently as the year progresses.
3. Great teachers manage their classrooms thoughtfully. When they say something, they mean it.
4. When a student misbehaves, great teachers have one goal: to keep that behavior from happening again.
5. Great teachers have high expectations for students, but have even higher expectations for themselves.
6. Great teachers know that they are the variable in the classroom. Good teachers consistently strive to improve, and they focus on something they can control: their own performance.
7. Great teachers focus on students first, with a broad vision that keeps everything in perspective.
8. Great teachers create a positive atmosphere in their classrooms and schools. They treat every person with respect. In particular, they understand the power of praise.
9. Great teachers consistently filter out the negatives that don't matter and share a positive attitude.
10. Great teachers work hard to keep their relationships in good repair to avoid personal hurt and to repair any possible damage.
11. Great teachers have the ability to ignore trivial disturbances and the ability to respond to inappropriate behavior without escalating the situation.
12. Great teachers have a plan and purpose for everything they do. If plans don't work out the way they had envisioned, they reflect on what they could have done differently and adjust accordingly.
13. Before making any decision or attempting to bring about any change, great teachers ask themselves one central question: What will the best people think?
14. Great teachers continually ask themselves who is most comfortable and who is least comfortable with each decision they make. They treat everyone as if they were good.
15. Great teachers have empathy for students and clarity about how others see them.
16. Great teachers keep standardized testing in perspective. They focus on the real issue of student learning.
17. Great teachers care about their students. They understand that behaviors and beliefs are tied to emotion, and they understand the power of emotion to jumpstart change.