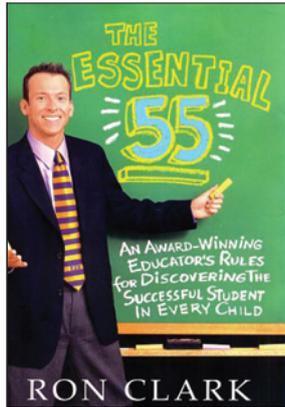


## Essential Lessons

**The Essential 55.** Ron Clark. New York: Hyperion, 2003. 196 pages. Available from: Time Warner Book Group Order Dept., 3 Center Plaza, Boston, MA 02018. Also available through NAESP's National Principals Resource Center. 800-386-2377. \$19.95

It is often said that the best things come in small packages. Such is the case with *The Essential 55*, a little book outlining how we can give young people what the author's grandmother gave him—an upbringing "...which included respect, manners, and an appreciation for others." Ron Clark, the 2001 Disney Teacher of the Year, began his career in a rural North Carolina classroom before taking on the challenge of teaching fifth grade in Harlem. In *The Essential 55*, he presents the 55 rules that shaped the culture



of his classroom. Would you like to make your life easier by delegating responsibilities to students? Rule #17 will give you some ideas. For example, Clark explains how he delegates each step in setting up an overhead projector (e.g., closing the blinds, turning off the lights, closing the door, pulling down the screen, wheeling the projector into place, and plugging it into the wall) to a particular student. He can then simply say, "Let me show you that on the overhead projector" and the whole process is set in motion and completed in the time it takes him to pick up his overhead pen.

of his classroom. Would you like to make your life easier by delegating responsibilities to students? Rule #17 will give you some ideas.

My favorite is Rule #16—"Homework will be turned in each day for each subject by every student with no exceptions." Clark then shows us how he accomplishes that goal by assigning detentions for those who fail to turn in homework, displaying a banner outside the room stating how many days in a row *everyone* completed *all* homework, and using peer pressure. Ten days in a row with all homework being done triggers a reward of cookies, brownies, or other treats for the class each day the streak remains intact.

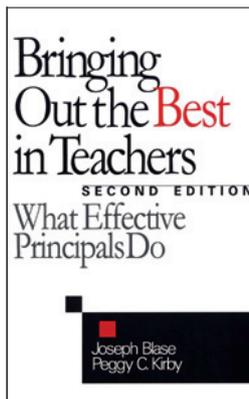
As a young person, Ron Clark was "...shown how to enjoy life, take advantage of opportunities, and live every moment to the fullest." Every child deserves the same. Reading this book is a great start toward making that goal a reality. ■

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## Lessons from Teacher Feedback

**Bringing Out the Best in Teachers: What Effective Principals Do.** Joseph Blase and Peggy C. Kirby. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, 2000. 168 pages. Available from: Corwin Press, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. 800-818-7243. Also available through NAESP's National Principal Resource Center. 800-386-2377. \$24.95

Have you ever wondered if your words and actions are having an impact on your teachers? In *Bringing Out the Best in Teachers*, Joseph Blase and Peggy Kirby attempt to provide an answer by asking teachers about the effectiveness of various strategies principals use.



schools. What they found was that praise from principals has the most influence, but that principals who seem sincere in their praise were deemed more effective than those who praise only sporadically, or who were perceived as less sincere.

Creating an environment where they are involved in decisions is another strategy that teachers felt was important. Blase and Kirby found that "the process of shared decision-making significantly strengthens support for

The authors collected feedback from more than 800 teachers on what effective principals do to promote a positive climate and higher achievement in their

decisions and improves faculty morale." Principals who struck a balance between recognizing teachers' ability to determine the most effective teaching strategies and monitoring instruction to provide relevant feedback were deemed more effective than principals who either tried to dictate instructional strategies or took an extreme hands-off approach.

Finally, a principal's visibility and personality play important roles in their perceived effectiveness. More important than an inspiring charisma, according to the teachers, were honesty, optimism, and concern for people.

By providing information from the teacher's perspective, the authors give principals an opportunity to reflect on their own effectiveness and how they might improve. ■

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