

**7 Principles of a Top-Notch Class: What Great Teachers Understand by Jeff R. McGowan Synopsis (Book chalk-full of details, checklists, methodologies and more will be available in 2023...)**

Through my 23 years of teaching, all of the 7 Top-Notch Principles have shown and proven themselves. They are tried, tested, and verified. Whether you teach kindergarten, middle school, high school, even college or professional courses, these are foundational. Whatever your scenario (and I know there are many, with many different political and cultural challenges), follow the Top-Notch Principles and Process, and you will build a thing of beauty. You'll still have to do the diligent work, but little by little, with the principles as your baseline, you'll create a top-notch class. And more top-notch classes means a more top-notch world. 7 Principles of a Top-Notch Class: What Great Teachers Understand is scheduled to be published in 2023.

**7 Principles of a Top-Notch Class**

1. It Inspires...

Whatever our subject, the world and its never-ending wonders is our canvas. Celebrate your subject and celebrate learning as a way of life. Embody enthusiasm and excitement.

Show them that a life satiated with learning is a good life to live.

2. It's All About Attitude—Yours: Teaching as a Spiritual Practice...

Find and cultivate compassion and non-judgement towards all students. Never forget that they all have a story, that there's a reason for their behavior and attitude, and getting them to change begins when they see you have only love, non-judgement, and a vision of potential to give them. I know it's hard, but it's that all-important.

3. It Includes Visuals and Ambiance...

A picture really can be worth a thousand words, so use pictures and visuals to reinforce everything you do. Make your classroom a haven. Include beautiful and diverse music, sometimes to calm, sometimes to rock. Vary the lighting. Include plants and art.

Maximize the space and seating arrangements. Find that balance between overstimulation

and peacefulness. Have slide-shows and music going when students enter and leave.

Your class ambiance sets the tone. Make it magical, fun, and inspiring!

4. It Includes Ongoing Connection...

Authentic connection means less resistance. Incorporate opportunities to get to know students into your daily routine. Listen. You'll learn a lot, and they'll be more likely to listen, learn, and make an effort. Your class will be more effective, more top-notch.

5. It Includes Ongoing Information Credibility Analysis and Character Education...

A Top-Notch Class emphasizes the existence of facts and our ongoing responsibility to find them. Teach students how to verify information (see steps in book). Model and cultivate critical thinking, and integrate Character Education into most everything you do. My points of Character Education emphasis are: Character, Self-Responsibility, Purpose, Intelligence, Diligence, Compassion, Spirituality, Creativity, Humility, Toughness, and Respect. A Top-Notch Class, whatever its subject-area, seeks to cultivate self-aware, thoughtful, and inspired citizens.

6. It's Organized Tooth and Nail. Think Like a Scientist, Then Let Go...

Think like a scientist. *Exactly* how do you want every facet of class to work? Be detail-oriented, specific. Rules and procedures, all lessons, the entry and exit routines, assessments, projects, materials, fun—everything. Don't stress. All will come, little by little, with due diligence. But brainstorm, plan, and execute. And evaluate and renew yearly, so it's an ongoing process that builds and tightens. When you're tooth and nail organized, you can relax, let go, and allow the spontaneity and magic to happen.

7. It's Fun and Full of Surprises...

Once everything else is in place, the best way to earn students' attention is to keep them on their toes with fun and surprises. A few daily minutes of spontaneous fun will do wonders towards creating a positive class culture. A puppet-debate, a dance-off, a banana-eating contest (yes, and I'm still the reigning champion), the list goes on and on. And when they're having fun, you're having fun. So plan surprises and fun into each and every day, and watch your class culture blossom and shine.