

CRITICAL REVIEW:

“Discipline survival guide for the secondary teacher”

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Thompson, J. (2012). *La gestion de classe au secondaire: Guide pratique [Discipline survival guide for the secondary teacher]*. Montréal: éditions Chenelière.

Teaching in secondary schools is a demanding profession that requires a great sense of adaptability to cope with unforeseen situations that may arise in the classroom. It therefore is important that teachers take a critical look at their classroom management. With this in mind, Julia G. Thompson, in her practical guide titled *La Gestion de Classe au Secondaire: Guide Pratique*, explores different strategies for teachers who look to improve their teaching and identify effective classroom management strategies. This French adaptation of the second edition of *Discipline Survival Guide for the Secondary Teacher* is divided into five major themes: (1) the role of the teacher in classroom management, (2) establishment of a positive teaching environment, (3) involvement of the student’s network (e.g., student’s family), (4) the links among didactics, pedagogy, and classroom management, and (5) prevention/management of discipline problems.

This book is intended to be practical and offers plenty of strategies to deal with all that classroom management entails. Despite the many topics covered, it is particularly well structured. Each chapter ends with useful sections that can be used to support implementation of the techniques presented. Each chapter also ends with a summary and set of thought-provoking questions. Overall, the content is clearly delineated with subtitles that help the reader locate topics quickly.

First, the author defines the role of the teacher while managing students’ conduct. In Chapter 1, Thompson explores the teacher’s responsibility in the establishment of a positive classroom climate. Arguing first against the use of punishment, the author then suggests that teachers master specific skills to deal with challenging adolescents. Once the role of the teacher is presented,

Chapter 2 enables the reader to develop his or her own classroom management plan, which leads to Chapter 3 in which Thompson discusses the importance of having strong leadership to adopt a reflective approach as a teacher. The author also discusses often-overlooked topics such as stress management, nonverbal cues, the importance of respect, and the quality of spoken language.

Second, Thompson explores ways to establish a positive and effective classroom environment. In Chapter 4, the author provides an outline for establishing this environment; this chapter deals with, among other things, the physical arrangement of the classroom and time management. In Chapter 5, the author presents strategies that can help students develop self-discipline, overcome challenges, and set goals for themselves. Thompson introduces strategies to help impulsive students, underachievers, and students with low self-esteem. The author includes the possibility of encouraging student empowerment through the use of a classroom contract as a framework for behavior expectations in the classroom. From this standpoint, Thompson discusses monitoring and elaborating a set of common rules to apply in the classroom (Chapter 6).

Third, the book stresses the pivotal role of the student's network in his or her success in school. In Chapter 7, Thompson points out the importance of the student's family involvement and suggests fostering a strong and positive relationship with the student's family through the use of different ways to spur collaboration, such as meetings, phone calls, or the creation of a classroom website. In Chapter 8, the author explores a few strategies that favor cooperation among all members of the school community and methods that help students resolve conflicts. Thompson provides a thorough explanation of how to enable students to know themselves better as well as how to react when students tell teachers personal things.

Fourth, the author explores the links among didactics, pedagogy, and classroom management. In Chapter 9, Thompson presents strategies for stimulating and promoting student participation in the classroom. Among the many topics covered are the importance and the relevance of the subject matter, differentiated instruction, monitoring techniques, homework management, the use of games and technology, and ways to prepare for a substitute for the class. Chapter 10 outlines the use of strategies that spur students' intrinsic motivation, their critical judgment, and a culture of excellence.

Finally, the last two chapters deal with the prevention and management of discipline problems. In Chapter 11, Thompson cites 20 mistakes teachers often make that may give rise to conflicts with students and disciplinary issues, and introduces strategies that address these problems. The author examines how meetings should be held with students, and the use of deducting reasoning and

strategies to increase positive behaviors and reduce negative behaviors. There also is a list of tips that can help teachers deal with challenging groups. The last chapter gives high school teachers the structured assistance they need to deal with problems they encounter each day: omissions of material, sleepers in class, lateness at the beginning of a class, management of students' cellular phones, cheating, thefts, provocation, abuse of illicit substances, and aggressive students.

To conclude, Julia G. Thompson has written a book well organized and highly readable for both young and experienced teachers. Teachers may consider this book a useful primary or supplementary text when preparing their school year. Its impressive array of strategies and tools is in line with what teachers often want to observe in their classroom—the active involvement of their students. Although researchers might find it disappointing given the lack of scientific references, I highly recommend this book as a resource for teachers and students in education sciences who are looking to better manage their classroom.

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