

## CRITICAL REVIEW:

### **“Positive classroom management: A step-by-step guide to helping students succeed”**

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Di Giulio, R. C. (2007). *Positive classroom management: A step-by-step guide to helping students succeed* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Teachers face daily challenges in terms of their students' behaviors. Indeed, they must act constantly to the best of their knowledge, and interventions must be effective, so as not to jeopardize their students' success. To achieve this, effective classroom management is necessary although it often is a source of stress for new teachers. Fortunately, several books are devoted to classroom management. These books guide teachers by suggesting strategies that facilitate the establishment of conditions that facilitate students' learning. Despite these publications, it is not always easy to adopt strategies that positively impact students' behaviors and learning. The present publication, however, helps identify key strategies. Although published in 2007, its content can still guide teachers to better manage their classroom.

Di Giulio is an American expert educator, administrator, and psychologist with several decades of experience. In *Positive Classroom Management: A Step-By-Step Guide to Helping Students Succeed*, Di Giulio presents concrete and practical tools that favor positive and constructive learning approaches. The third edition updates material in the first two editions published in 1995 and 2000. This edition is more comprehensive and adds chapters dealing with differentiated instruction, development of emotional intelligence, and formative and informal work, as well as useful checklists for teachers. Experienced teachers and new teachers will find their way with this book, in which the author argues that improvement of the public school system is based on teachers' concrete actions. The author severely criticizes those who never stop looking for culprits or never try to find real solutions to educational problems. He asserts that positive

classroom management can have a positive effect on students' development, as well as on society's perception of the educational system.

The first part, *The Positive Classroom*, focuses on the basic principles that characterize the positive classroom management approach. In Chapter 1, the author stresses the importance of establishing rules that favor teachers' proactivity instead of reactivity. Also, Di Giulio offers concrete strategies that enable students to learn how to behave. The author suggests four elements that favor the establishment of a positive classroom climate: respect, cooperation, student's academic success, and inclusion. These concepts are discussed further in Chapter 2, supported by examples drawn from Di Giulio's experiences, and therefore are relevant to educators or students in education sciences.

In the second part, *Four Dimensions of Positive Classrooms*, Di Giulio stresses the importance of student success and emotional intelligence. He suggests four strategies that enable students to be more successful and to become more self-directed as learners: share expectations, show enthusiasm for the content to be taught, make students work more responsibly, and emphasize students' qualities and skills. Di Giulio insists on the importance of intervening in a positive way as well as giving students the recognition they deserve. Chapter 4 presents four strategies necessary for the establishment of a safe and positive learning environment: effective workspace, visual and auditory cues, working atmosphere, and physical arrangement of the classroom. In Chapter 5, the author further suggests that it is important to master a few basic skills to conduct effective teaching lessons (e.g., clarity, questioning, monitoring, feedback). Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on preventing problems rather than reacting to them, and Di Giulio briefly examines humor as a classroom management strategy.

The last part, *Blueprints for Success*, consists of two chapters containing tools to guide teachers when applying a positive management classroom model. Chapter 7 is devoted to preparation. Divided into several phases, teachers' preparation must begin several weeks before school begins. At each step, the author presents a checklist to avoid oversights and to identify what remains to be done. The lists are very well organized, which facilitates understanding. This part of the book probably is one of the most useful for new teachers and students in education sciences. Finally, Chapter 8 spurs reflection on the implementation of these concepts into teachers' practice. Through reflective analysis exercises to be completed at the end of the first school day, at the end of the first school week, in the middle of the school year, and at the end of the school year, Di Giulio makes the content of the chapters very practical, considering that the book offers the possibility of questioning our own classroom decisions. Also, the author suggests several self-assessments that help teachers better target what they need to improve in their classroom management and the points they need to pay attention to while interacting with students.

To conclude, I recommend this book for students in education sciences as well as teachers who wish to improve their classroom management. Although teachers might find some parts rather theoretical, others present relevant and useful tools, such as checklists, creative ideas, models, and sample dialogues illustrating applications.

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