



Costiniuk, Bill; Robicheau, Suzanne; and Shaver, David. (1999). *Crisis Management: Keys to Prevention and Intervention*. Toronto: [Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation](#).

This book focuses on prevention and intervention strategies to avoid conflicts. For teachers, crisis prevention has become a major issue as the instances of student violence rise and the media raise public concern. *Crisis Management* was written by practicing educators. Their expertise and experience make it a practical resource for education workers in any work site.

The book is divided into two sections. In the first section, the authors investigate the developmental factors that contribute to crises in secondary schools. One chapter focuses on threats to the physical and emotional well being of staff and students. It provides a framework for understanding student behaviors. Other topics covered include the role of substance abuse as a crisis starter and teenage suicide. Early warning signs, causes, predictors of self-harm and strategies for dealing with both disclosure and the aftermath of suicide are outlined.

The final chapter in the first section describes the legal perspectives of violence in our schools. It provides a tool for staff who are uncertain about the legal ramifications of their actions. The chapter also offers current examples of school violence and how such examples are described in the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The final part of the chapter deals with the role of educators and students in the discipline process.

Section Two of *Crisis Management* outlines practical strategies for prevention and diffusion of crisis situations. It examines the effectiveness of peer helping programs and outlines the growing success of peer mediation as an intervention strategy. A chapter in this section explores community partnerships, emphasizing programs that enhance the adolescent's feeling of being part of a community. Possible program topics include substance abuse, positive relationships, dealing with the police. The aim is to make student feel they are worthy members of society.

The final chapter of the book presents a plethora of strategies for preventing crises and intervening when they occur. Some are aimed at students, others are provided for staff development, while others describe whole-school or district approaches to crisis management. These programs are from locations all over Ontario. Names of contact people and agencies are provided for those who wish to seek further information. As has been the standard in OSSTF Resource books throughout the years, *Crisis Management* is a practical book of clearly written information and valuable, field-tested strategies for education workers. It is an excellent guide written by educators for their peers. This one is sure to be a hot seller!

Pages: **258** Price: **\$20.00 Canadian** ISBN: **0-920930-90-5**

Reviewed by Gail Lennon, Bluewater District School Board (Ontario, Canada)

National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment. (1999). *The Educational System in Germany: Case Study Findings*. Washington, DC: [U.S. Department of Education](#).

The full text of this document is online at
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/GermanCaseStudy/>

This is one of a series of books about education in Germany, Japan and the United States. These studies are an outgrowth of the TIMSS (Third International Math and Science Study), and aim to provide a holistic view of the systems they study to aid policy makers who hope to improve U.S. school performance by emulating successful foreign systems. If this tactic is ever going to work, these books should be key. *The Educational System in Germany* presents an amazing amount of information about the German system, not just from a policy viewpoint, but also trying to convey how schooling fits within the German culture. An overview of the main section headings should make this point well: "The Development and Implementation of Education Standards in Germany," "Individual Differences in the German Education System," "The Role of School in German Adolescent's Lives," and "Teachers and the Teaching Profession in Germany."

In addition to utilizing data from Germany as a whole, the researchers chose representative schools from different parts of the country to study in depth. Each section of the book provides an overview of issues and discusses practices in each school studied. Teachers parents and students are interviewed to assure that all viewpoints are considered. The researchers are all American and have conducted this study in hopes of gaining insights to improve U.S. schools. They focus on issues that are problems in the U.S., such as equity issues for children in the tracked German system, looking at how German citizens perceive the "fairness" of student placements.

Educators who have wondered at the performance of students from other countries, or just want to challenge their assumptions about schooling will find this an excellent, even handed presentation.

Pages: 255 Price: Free/depository SuDoc: ED 1.302: G31/3

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

O'Connor, Ken. (1999). *How to Grade for Learning*. Arlington Heights, IL: [Skylight Training and Publishing](#).

In his introduction the author promises to offer readers the skills to design and conduct grading practices that reflect student achievement and at the same time promote student success. While this may seem like a tall order, the author does, indeed, deliver on that promise. Ken O'Connor has a vast amount of experience as curriculum coordinator for assessment and evaluation with the former Scarborough and now the Toronto District School Board. He brings to the pages of this book a common sense, practical guide to meaningful assessment practices. In *How to Grade for Learning*, O'Connor presents eight guidelines for successful assessment at any grade level and for any teacher regardless of experience. In

clearly written language, he sets down guidelines and sample assessment tools. The text is sprinkled with examples of student work and assessment of those tasks. The author discusses the rationale for each guideline:

1. Use individual achievement as the only basis for grades. O'Connor contends that to have meaning, grades must be relatively pure measures of each student's achievement of the learning goal.
2. Sample student performances, do not mark everything for grades. A student's most recent effort should be reported, not his trials to reach that level.
3. Grade in pencil. Keep records so they may be updated easily.
4. Relate grading procedures to learning goals.
5. Crunch numbers carefully. With this guideline, O'Connor challenges teachers to question their practice of simply averaging marks to arrive at a final grade.
6. Use criterion-referenced standards to distribute grades and marks. O'Connor devotes an entire chapter to railing against such established practices as bell curves, quotas, comparison marking, exemplars, and coding systems.
7. Use quality assessment and properly record evidence of achievement. The author discusses the importance of record-keeping procedures, presenting several methods of indicating grades and recording marks.
8. Discuss assessment, including grading, with students at the beginning of instruction. O'Connor encourages a clear, written grading policy that is shared with students and parents at the outset. He goes on to explain: "when students know how they will be assessed and especially when they have been involved in the assessment decisions, the likelihood of student success is increased greatly."

To simulate critical thinking and changes to the educator's attitude toward assessment procedures, each chapter ends with a page called "What's My Thinking Now?". A comprehensive list of resources and an extensive bibliography enhance the usefulness of this practical handbook.

Pages: **208** Price: **\$28.95** ISBN: **1-57517-123-6**

Reviewed by Gail Lennon, Bluewater District School Board (Ontario, Canada)

Servis, Joan. (1999) *Celebrating the Fourth: Ideas and Inspiration for Teachers of Grade Four*. Portsmouth, NH: [Heinemann](#).

In *Celebrating the Fourth*, Joan Servis, a fourth-grade teacher of twenty five years experience, shares her ongoing struggle to continually enhance and improve her teaching. Her success and dedication to ongoing improvement will provide fellow teachers with a positive impetus to rethink and recharge their own teaching practices. In addition, Servis' engaging, personal writing style allows her to move beyond "author" and become mentor and motivator.

The book is divided into nine chapters, each dealing with a topic or subject:

community building, fostering independence, self-assessment, and professional growth. Servis also dedicates chapters to each of the main subject areas: language arts, reading, mathematics, and science and social studies. Each of the chapters is filled with a winning mix of research, personal, and practice-based information. Readers will not only learn about Servis' specific methods, models, and recommended resources, but they will also learn about current pedagogical and developmental research. With Servis' encouragement and example, readers will be guided to move beyond imitation and towards the development of their own personal approach to collaborative teaching and learning.

This is not simply a "how to" and "how I did it good" book; Servis does model and provide details about her own personal practices, but she is quick to acknowledge that what works in her classroom may not work in others and is careful to cite readings that support her assertions. Neither is this a research book. Rather, this is an engaging, encouraging book in which a talented teacher shares with her colleagues her experience, her research, and her thought processes. Best of all, this is a book in which the never ending process of pedagogical change and the process of putting research into practice are modeled.

Pages: **154** Price: **\$19.00 (paperback)** ISBN: **0-325-00145-6**

Reviewed by Jeneen LaSee-Willemsen, Kansas State University



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