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978-1-107-69595-5 - Sustainable Learning: Inclusive Practices for 21st Century Classrooms

Lorraine Graham, Jeanette Berman and Anne Bellert

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Sustainable Learning

Inclusive practices for 21st century classrooms

Sustainable Learning provides readers with the knowledge and skills to be confident and effective inclusive teachers. The authors show that these skills are essential to quality teaching – teaching that is evidence-based, purposeful, relevant and responsive to students’ needs.

The book employs three overarching frameworks to examine inclusive practices in education: equity (learning for all), relevance (learning that matters) and sustainability (learning that lasts). It encourages teachers to see all students as learners and to consider the complexities and diversity of learning in the 21st century.

Chapter features include:

- ‘Think and do’ exercises to promote reader reflection
- Tables, figures and diagrams to help readers visualise core ideas, theories and themes
- Examples to illustrate the links between theory and practice, and showcase contemporary research in the field of inclusive education.

Lorraine Graham is Professor of Learning Intervention at the University of Melbourne, Victoria.

Jeanette Berman is Director of Educational Psychology at Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand.

Anne Bellert is a Lecturer in Primary Education at Southern Cross University, New South Wales.

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Lorraine Graham

Thankfulness, Bernice.

Sustainable love and hope

Joy, Sorcha, Jamie!

Jeanette Berman

For my mother, my husband and my children

Anne Bellert

I acknowledge the support of my family, friends and colleagues. Thank you.

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Foreword

The adjective ‘sustainable’ is perhaps one of the most important words we can apply in the field of contemporary education. For more than fifty years I have argued strongly for the use of sustainable teaching practices that will bring about optimum and enduring learning in all our students. Underpinning my argument is a firm belief that sustainable learning can only be achieved through effective and *sustainable teaching*. In addition, sustainable learning can only be achieved if the school curriculum and the methods of instruction are compatible with, and relevant for, the culture and society in which the students grow as members. This book has addressed both these aspects in a very constructive and practical way.

Sustainable learning is evident when students feel good and confident about the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that they have acquired, and can apply them effectively and build upon them as they continue to learn across the life span. A particularly strong perspective that Lorraine, Jeanette and Anne have all presented here is that sustainable learning is essential for an individual’s future life in an ever-changing world. They eloquently argue this point when they remind us in chapter 3 that students in our classrooms today will still be active and influential in the 2070s. For these students, and all others who come after them, sustainable learning is an essential attribute for adaptive living in the years ahead. As the authors stress throughout this book, *learning that lasts* is meaningful, intentional and future directed. This applies to all students, including those with differences, disabilities, learning difficulties, or other special needs.

This book presents a well-argued case for viewing sustainable learning as an essential component and goal of successful inclusive education. Although inclusive education has been advocated and practised worldwide for more than 20 years, it is still very much a work in progress. Teachers are still challenged every day to decide how best to achieve sustainable and relevant learning for all students, regardless of their ability or disability. One solution is differentiation of teaching method and curriculum content; but this approach is far from easy to sustain, as the authors point out in chapter 7. But without differentiation, adaptation and culturally responsive teaching some learners will fail to reach their potential.

The authors here argue that what is required is *responsive teaching* that can address the needs of all learners. Figure 3.1 in chapter 3 provides a good reference point for teaching that is indeed responsive. For our teaching to be responsive to individual differences among students it is necessary also to be skilled in formative assessment processes and strategies. Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive coverage of this important topic.

Overall, this book should provide beginning teachers with a good understanding of the issues involved in achieving sustainable learning across the ability range.

Foreword

The format of the book, with its clearly stated ‘intended learning outcomes’ (objectives), ‘big ideas’ and embedded activities in each chapter certainly makes it a user-friendly resource.

Although the text often refers specifically to inclusive education in the Australian and New Zealand contexts, the principles of using responsive teaching to support sustainable learning has universal appeal and wide application. Sustainable learning is learning that lasts. It is achieved through well-structured and responsive teaching for all learners.

Peter Westwood

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About the authors

Lorraine Graham is professor of learning intervention at the University of Melbourne. She has been an active researcher since the 1990s, with positions as associate director of the National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia, co-developer of the *QuickSmart* literacy and numeracy programs, and professor of inclusive education and psychology in the School of Education at the University of New England. Lorraine is a fellow of the International Association of Research into Learning Disabilities and recipient of the University of New England's Team Award for Excellence in Research. She has dedicated her career to creating relevant and responsive systems of strategy and instructional support.

Dr Jeanette Berman is director of educational psychology at Massey University, Auckland, where she teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses and provides continuing education for practising psychologists and teachers. She has previously taught special and inclusive education in teacher education programs at the Australian universities of New England and Canberra. Jeanette continues active practice as a psychologist in schools, is registered in both Australia and New Zealand, and is a member of the Australian and New Zealand Psychological societies. She is also a member of the Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools, the International School Psychology Association and the International Association of Cognitive Education and Psychology and has presented at conferences around the world. Jeanette has a special interest in understanding learning and teaching through assessment and has researched and applied dynamic assessment within her practice. She also has a strong focus on Indigenous education and has been the school psychologist in an independent Aboriginal school for many years. Jeanette is an artist, calligrapher and photographer.

Dr Anne Bellert is a qualified primary-school and special education teacher and consultant who has worked in a wide range of school settings since the late 1990s. As well as teaching, Anne has worked closely with classroom teachers, school executives and family members of students with disabilities or learning difficulties to promote inclusive practices and approaches. Anne was involved in the development of the *QuickSmart* programs and pursues research and publication interests focusing on learning difficulties in basic academic skills, literacy, numeracy and, more recently, the potential role of cognitive neuroscience in 21st century education. She is currently a lecturer in education at Southern Cross University.