

BOOK REVIEWS



Leading collaborative learning: Empowering excellence

Sharratt, L & Planch, B. (2016).
Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
ISBN 9781483368979 pp. 282

Beverly Christian

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This dual authored book brings together the expertise and experience of educators Sharratt and Planche. Their work contains both theory and practical suggestions for school leaders who wish to maximise learning through creating a collaborative learning culture in their school. The authors recognise that plans and good intentions may not always lead to action and propose a logical and achievable pathway towards *purposeful practice*.

In this book, school leaders and teachers learn to apply a four step collaborative process of

- assessing to plan;
- planning to act;
- acting to make sense of findings; and
- assessing both 'as' and 'of' learning

to every area of education. Although much of what they write fits within existing knowledge on this topic, I believe what sets this book apart is the evidence-based approach taken by the authors, and practical guidelines that are embedded in theory. It is clear on reading this book, that Sharratt and Planche have personally trialled everything they recommend, applied it to broader contexts, and empirically evaluated the effectiveness of their ideas.

This book is more than a superficial description of how teachers may work together. It tackles the complexities and challenges of collaborative learning in a pragmatic way. Each chapter offers insights through vignettes, research, quotes and reflection along with models and tables that will appeal to visual learners. Using this approach, the authors explore ten broad themes ranging from the value of shared beliefs and understandings and how to accelerate learning, to the impact of leadership styles, relationships and creativity on student outcomes. The book is amply resourced with a useful appendix and extensive glossary.

Although I did not need to be convinced that

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collaboration is important in schools, this book consolidated my belief that collaborative learning is a powerful approach to building professional learning communities. It also expanded my range of resources and provided clear directions to establish a collaborative learning environment that is focused on student learning.

I would highly recommend this book to all principals and school leaders. It has much to offer both the experienced and novice school or department leader. [TEACH](#)

See p. 63 for a 15% discount offer.

What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence- based teaching strategies

Mitchell, D. (2013).
New York, NY: Routledge. 368 pp.
ISBN: 978-0415623230

Marion Shields

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This is an excellent book! David Mitchell has identified 24 basic teaching strategies that are used for students with special needs (and others). David writes in a very user-friendly, easy to read style. Each strategy has a chapter, and then each chapter has the following sections:

- The strategy—a brief easy-to-understand description
- The underlying idea—how it really works)
- The practice—principles and specific ideas of how to do it
- The evidence—short, simple descriptions of studies investigating the strategy
- Addressing risks—issues to consider
- Conclusion
- Key References—linked to the evidence.

I found the book not only interesting and easy to read, but also its foundation of over 2000 studies made it practical and workable—enjoy!

Professor John Hattie comments: “This is the book I wish I had written, synthesizing an enormous literature focused on special needs students. It is robust, it is readable, and it is your right-hand resource. A stunner of a book.” [TEACH](#)