
Foreword

Educational change depends on what teachers think and do—it's as simple and as complex as that.

Michael Fullan

One of the major challenges facing teachers today is how to best meet the needs of diverse learners. With the population of diverse learners in our nation's schools steadily increasing, teachers serious about educational reform are seeking to better understand not only *who* diverse learners are, but also *what* they need to succeed. Although we know teachers want to provide all students with an excellent education, diverse learners often receive a less-than-equitable learning experience. For this reason, the inclusive strategies outlined in this book are timely. To address this growing need, the authors of this book provide a practical "how to" approach to help teachers begin the delicate dialogue of addressing the complex needs of diverse learners. Exploring these research-based strategies clearly involves a conscious decision to move beyond traditional teaching methods toward a more constructivist classroom environment in which the historical sociocultural experiences of all learners create the foundation for collaborative learning.

During the 30 years I have educated diverse learners as a teacher, counselor, and administrator in the San Dieguito Union High School District, and presently at the San Diego County Office of Education, I am continually reminded that the most successful teachers in diverse classrooms seek to better understand themselves, as well as their students. These self-reflective teachers continually examine their sociocultural and linguistic attitudes, rooted in their own personal experiences. The authors of this text provide a solid overview of straightforward strategies, which inevitably lead teachers to reflect more deeply on this multifaceted topic: How can we best assure equity for all students? How can our schools foster a democratic society? How can schools support teacher collaboration and reflection?

xii ● What Successful Teachers Do in Diverse Classrooms

Because teachers are lifelong learners, they are continually finding new ways to meet the needs of their diverse learners. From professional development to new certifications, teachers have many options to expand their understanding of all students. The strategies in this book serve as a catalyst for revamping teaching methods and an invitation for new enriching classroom experiences. I support the authors as they embrace an expansive definition of diversity with topics ranging from gender equity to students with special needs. Once teachers begin to explore these strategies, they will clearly see how they fit into a constructivist classroom by fostering collaboration among students, by using multicultural resources, and by reinforcing the use of authentic assessments. By incorporating these strategies into their teaching repertoire, reflective teachers will not only continue to learn about themselves and their students, but they will also transform their classrooms by modeling inclusive behaviors and attitudes. I applaud the authors' commitment to improve the learning environment in the diverse classroom.

—Donna Heath
Senior Director, Learning Resources and Educational Technology
San Diego County Office of Education