



THE GUIDE BESIDE

Creating Sustainable Futures Now

Need a hand with Sustainable Learning?

What's Up?

New Professional Development for Sustainability Facilitators!

A new project is under way in Victoria, piloting and putting into practice innovative professional development for facilitators of environmental sustainability. The aim of the project is to assist both experienced and not so experienced facilitators to acquire and further develop the best available practices, for use in their learning and change programs.

The Guide Beside project, funded by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and delivered through the Victorian Association for Environmental Education, has now been through two stages of development: Stage 1 in 2006 brought together the most up to date resources and approaches to establish a working collection of best practices. In Stage 2, these were piloted in various ways throughout 2006.

Details of the next stages of the Guide Beside project will become available soon.

... If you would like to be involved in some way, or be kept up to date with latest developments, please contact the Victorian Association for Environmental Education on (03) 9349 1806, or email admin@vaee.vic.edu.au and refer to the Guide Beside project, or find out more at www.vae.org.au .



Early in 2007 we will be organising a series of workshops covering key elements of the GB approach. Support materials and outcomes will be reported on the GB website (at VAEE – see below). We will also explore useful ways to form collaborative learning groups to foster ways to implement the GB approach to professional development. A key aim in 2007 will be to build a primary network of collaborative professional learners, and to form nucleus for a larger scale PL project the future.



What is the Guide Beside?

“Professional support for those who work in education & change for sustainability”

The Guide Beside (GB) is a new and evolving approach to professional development, for those who facilitate, train, lead or educate using learning and change programs to achieve environmental sustainability outcomes. This includes those working with communities, councils and shires, businesses, in education settings, in consultancies and special projects – wherever sustainability is being fostered.

“Education for Sustainable Development implies a shift...to the recognition that we are all learners as well as teachers.”

Why professional development for sustainability educators?

“The GB is about how best to develop knowledge, skills and networks for facilitating sustainability”

The Learning to Live sustainably Strategy of the State Government of Victoria, which the Guide Beside project is part of, calls for:

“... learning-based change for environmental sustainability [which] is the development of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and aspirations leading to changed behaviour in support of environmental sustainability.”



We need major changes in our daily living and ways of working to achieve sustainable water, waste, energy and biodiversity over the next decade. How will people make these changes? How will we ensure that they are informed to take appropriate and effective actions, in ways that are equitable in their outcomes?

We need creative solutions that are locally derived as well as globally informed. And we need a large number of people across government, agencies, community, industries, education, etc., who can facilitate this creative process and link with the efforts of others.

These agents for sustainable learning and change will themselves need developed knowledge, skills and networks to do this facilitation work effectively. The GB is about how to best to collaboratively learn and further develop these facilitation and networking capacities.



How did the Guide Beside come about? – What is the GB for?

“We cannot learn, through conventional sit-and-listen training, how to facilitate collaborative transformative approaches for change – we need professional learning that itself is active and collaborative, and that involves making changes in ourselves”

At the local, national and international levels it is clear that awareness alone does not lead people to act for sustainability. The alternative to this ineffective and inefficient ‘transmission of knowledge’ model for change is a more interactive, participant-based and creative approach that is widely referred to as ‘collaborative’ and ‘transformative’.



As facilitators of sustainability, **how are we going to do learn these more transformative ways ourselves?**

Where and how do we experience these processes? What are the best situations to practice? How do we best organise to learn effectively from one another? What place does theory, research and consolidated experience have in this active, collaborative, transformative learning process – for us, and for participant in our on-ground programs?

We cannot undertake this new type of professional learning alone – learning better ways to facilitate collaborative learning is by its nature a collaborative, transformative process. It involves practice, reflection on this practice, and changing as a result of this reflection and experience. We need ourselves to change our behaviour, not just try to learn transmissively, or limit our learning to superficial awareness of what methods others are using.

If we want others to make personal changes in their lifestyle, as well as in their communities and businesses changes, then we need to understand and have experience of equivalent changes ourselves, as well as skills and methods of positively facilitating these types of changes.

GB Professional Learning Looks and Feels Different

“What-to-do run throughs and do-as-I-do sessions from experts will not suffice”

This means that GB professional development will look very different to most 'training' models. A series of lectures or booklets or pamphlets (like this one!) on transformative approaches will not suffice. Active doing has to be a significant part of the GB approach to professional learning.

Just listening, or in other ways learning from an expert facilitator, for example experiencing a 'run through as a participant' to experience some recently formulated methods, will also not necessarily be sufficient. Knowing what others have found to be useful with participants, although helpful in limited ways, is not the same as knowing and exploring how you personally will facilitate and foster collaborative transformative learning.



Getting to the bottom of what does work for others is part of the GB approach (collaborative learning), as is transforming this understanding into ways of knowing and facilitating that are personally useful for you.

The real learning and change for effective facilitation will happen in planned, appropriately facilitated sessions that bring together collaboration, reflection on experience, theory and practice. GB professional learning will plan for and facilitate opportunities for transformative shifts in understanding – these are the same characteristics of deep, effective and long lasting learning and change that we want for participants in our programs.

What is collaborative transformative learning and change?

“We can make a list of characteristics, although awareness of these alone will not produce the learning and change we want”

From pilot GB sessions and participant reflection on these we have observed that collaborative transformative learning space can be created by:



- allowing and facilitating people to 'arrive' and begin the process of creating a collaborative transformative community of learners
- actively recognising and valuing one another, to build trust and connection, sharing eventfulness and playfulness to foster creativity and positive energy for action
- constructing together shared purpose, clearer objectives and active engagement
- allowing ourselves to become open to ideas and approaches beyond our preconceptions
- recognising that our learning and change is not entirely logical, and allowing the intellectual, emotional and personal elements of PL to interweave
- trusting that positive intention, once created in a group, will optimise effective and efficient change, even though how this will occur might not be immediately evident at the start



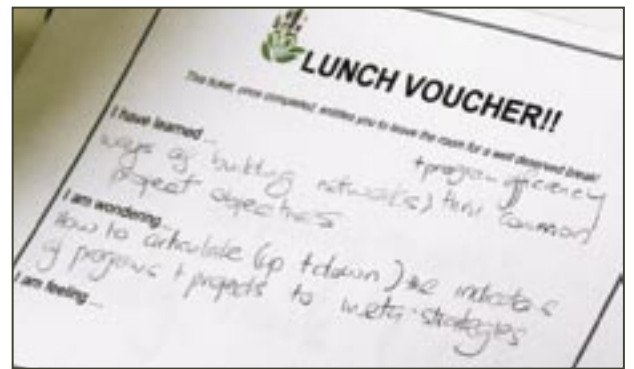
What collaborative transformative learning is not

“We need to integrate content and process and not get captured by either”

While the GB approach moves beyond an over-emphasis on transmission of content, it is also **more than an emphasis on process only** – it is easy to become awash in process, and expect focused outcomes to somehow fall out of the soup.

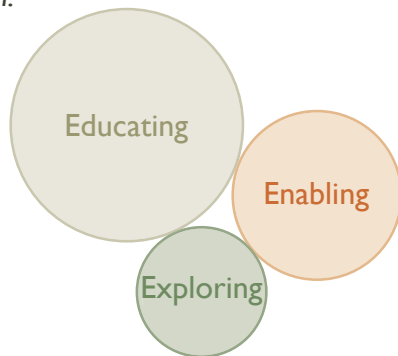
Content **is** important for achieving sustainability, but what is more important is the relationship of the content to the experiences and needs of your participants. We need to avoid the tempting notion that we can identify a pre-determined content level that can somehow be magically transmitted to others, through a well designed powerpoint, or a series of presentations interspersed with discussion.

The GB approach is not getting rid of ‘presentation’ mode, but rather ensuring there is a genuine **re-balancing** between learning modes:



Recently a conventional 15 minute powerpoint presentation at a conference also included an activity where the entire audience wrote a poem about ‘collaborative evaluation’ as the presentation proceeded. The poem was read out at the end of the presentation, to kick off the question and answer session. This re-set the discussion so that it became much more interactive and collaborative, and linked ‘audience’ experience with the powerpoint content in ways that the presenter alone could never have achieved.

From:



To:

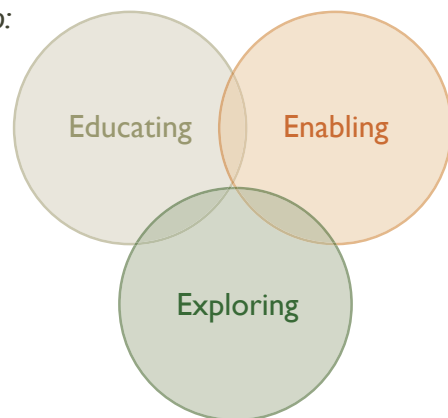


Table: Three roles of the sustainability facilitator - adapted from S. Stirling 2001 *Sustainable Education: Revisioning Learning and Change*. Green Books for Schumacher Society, Devon).

Educating <i>Informing</i>	Enabling <i>Involving</i>	Exploring <i>Empowering</i>
<i>‘Learning About Sustainability’</i>	<i>‘Learning For Sustainability’</i>	<i>‘Learning As Sustainability’</i>
More transmissive processes	More adaptive processes	More transformative processes