



## education review // reseñas educativas

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Robb, Laura. (2009). *Assessment for Differentiating Reading Instruction*. NY: Scholastic Teaching Resources.

Pp. 144 ISBN 0545111951

Reviewed by Linda Hanna  
West Chester University

Within a user-friendly workbook format, Laura Robb has created a phenomenal reading resource tool for all categories of reading teachers and their students. This manual provides reading summary lists, conference forms, self-evaluation sheets, tiered-task assessments, customized reading tests and scaffolding/re-teaching charts. By design, this grade 4-8 reading resource book could be used with a reading practicum field placement class, first year teachers, seasoned veteran classroom teachers, and reading support specialists.

In a very purposeful and clear introductory overview of the book, Robb details what she believes are some of its strongest hallmarks. The rich array of assessment forms assists teachers in meeting the essential elements of Response to Intervention (RTI), documenting the match between students' needs and chosen interventions, and monitoring all of the students' continued progress. The

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book's purpose is to move students closer to purposeful self-evaluation. As the teacher monitors daily progress in concise and effective ways, students are encouraged and invited to reflect on and write about what they do well and what emerges for them as a growing need. Through all aspects of this process learning, students are motivated to become disciplined and productive learners.

The heart of the book is divided into 6 key chapters which are very carefully crafted and delineated: assessment tools for reading comprehension, assessments which assist teachers in knowing their students as readers, assessment forms for reading strategy conferences, assessing tiered learning tasks, assessing by testing, and self-evaluation with students and teachers. All of these written explanations are also accompanied by a CD containing over one-hundred forms which complement every teacher task or need. The CD is a priceless gem that is more than worth its weight in gold.

Within the first chapter, Robb provides current research on differentiating reading instruction, the concept of tiering, an excellent definition of reading comprehension, and the critical need for on-going assessment. As the chapter unfolds key concepts are linked with prepared forms which appear on the enclosed CD for quick reference and application. As a final bonus, management tips are suggested for creating a practical time frame for on-going assessment, keeping track of large amounts of data, and interpreting assessments for improved planning and scaffolding. The chapter closes with samples of students' work and suggested professional books and journal articles.

The second chapter focuses on using assessments to estimate a student's instructional reading level and to monitor each student more effectively in a whole-class differentiated reading program. Additional assistance is provided, in the interpreting of assessments, the storing of each in a literacy portfolio, and the completing of an oral-error analysis for accurate student placement. The chapter closes with an invaluable chart which spotlights student behaviors that a teacher may observe and the scaffolding and re-teaching suggestions that may address each of these behaviors.

A chart of detailed assessments which assist in documenting conferences can be found in chapter three. Suggestions are provided in how students should apply strategies before, during, and after reading. Additional insights are offered on the analysis of conferences based on a “Reading and Learning” framework.

Within chapter four, Robb addresses tiered assignments and how students progress in a class setting which communicates possible success for every student. Suggestions are provided on how to tier a variety of tasks such as journals, essay writing, individual/group projects, small-group discussions, and homework. Guidelines are presented for the grading of these tiered tasks and a chart is offered with scaffolding/re-teaching strategies.

In a continued discussion of differentiating reading instruction in chapter five, methods for tiering tests to meet each child’s strengths are explored. Discussions, too, focus on what tests reveal about students’ study habits and how often students should be tested. In closing, the chapter enumerates four specific testing guidelines for: reading strategy tests, vocabulary tests, journal-prompted tests, and essay tests.

In chapter six, students are directed in the use of self-evaluation for setting learning goals, reflecting on their behavior, and developing their independence. Their teachers are guided in the positive uses of self-evaluation for gaining insights into their teaching and student learning which in turn may strengthen their instruction through better uses of planning, scaffolding, tiering and differentiating.

With *Assessments for Differentiating Reading Instruction*, Laura Robb has created an invaluable resource for all who teach reading. The CD alone provides so many practical and useful charts and checklists for every possible assessment opportunity. She closes the text with a series of professional development resources for educators. These include a reference guide for strategies, before, during, and after reading, a listing of excellent magazines and newspapers, a bibliography of professional literature, and a bibliography of children’s literature.

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