

## **Give Teachers the Best Professional Books!**

**by Evan Robb**

I've been a principal for twenty-seven years, and during that time I've come to understand that teachers and administrators grow as professionals and practitioners when they experience ongoing professional learning at their schools. In addition to encouraging teachers to study and discuss with colleagues books and articles related to their subjects, I also read reviews of recently published books in the hope of finding a few to recommend to teachers and one to purchase for a specific group.

In early January, I discovered a book that addressed an educational challenge: across our country teachers have classes with students reading at a wide range of instructional levels. Using one book or one program for an entire class reached students reading at or near grade level. However, a large number of students reading far below or above their grade level weren't being served.

The day I received and then read a copy of *Promote Reading Gains with Differentiated Instruction* by Laura Robb, David L. Harrison, and Dr. Timothy Rasinski, I knew I had struck gold! Besides the rich and engaging texts and lessons, I learned that teachers in grades three, four, and five had vetted the lessons and provided the authors with valuable feedback.

This book was a perfect fit for teachers in grades three to five, but could also be used in grades six to eight to boost the reading skill of students reading or more years below their grade level because no grade level is printed on the reproducible lessons. This book became my annual gift to ELA teachers to read, study, and

discuss with colleagues and then to collaborate as they planned using the differentiated lessons with students!

An evidence-based resource, *Promote Reading Gains with Differentiated Instruction* opens with a Preface on “The Science and Art of Reading.” The authors explain why reading is an art as well as a science and point out that the phonics and word work students complete in each lesson is appropriate for their grade levels. Moreover, the original poems and short texts by David Harrison can enlarge students’ background knowledge on a wide range of topics and also meets the instructional reading needs of students below, at or near, and above grade level. Each lesson closes with a Word Ladder created by Dr. Tim Rasinski that improves students’ word knowledge and application of phonics!

Every set of differentiated lessons opens with a focus lesson presented by the teacher to the entire class. Each teacher-led focus lesson has a poem or short text that shows students how to read and think about their specific texts. It also provides students with the practice needed to successfully complete their differentiated lesson working with a partner or on their own. There are thirty-six differentiated lessons, one for below, one for at or near, and one for above grade level readers. Each lesson has its own reproducible poem or short text, discussion questions, word study components, and a word ladder. Students respond in their reader’s notebooks to text-related discussion and word work questions. Using accessible, motivating texts, lessons introduce and have students practice four high-order reading strategies: visualizing, inferring, drawing conclusions, and comparing and contrasting.

The teachers who received this book thanked me again and again because they were able to meet the needs of students across a range of reading by using lessons that foster improving reading growth and fluency. They reminded me that students enjoy reading and learning when they can read and comprehend texts they find engaging and interesting!

