

Review: Sutton, Ruth (1995), *Assessment For Learning*, Ruth Sutton Publications, Lutterworth – Lorraine Witton, Feb 2009

As a secondary Faculty Principal Teacher from a large comprehensive secondary school, I found this book on assessment both easy to read and informative.

Ruth has the ability to write at a level which is appropriate for all practitioners regardless of their interest and/or understanding of assessment. Much of the content is aligned to that of the *Scottish Assessment is for Learning Programme* and many Scottish teachers will recognise the clear messages that come through from the text.

The most useful aspect of the book is the practical suggestions that can be taken forward at individual teacher level, at departmental level and at whole school level.

From my perspective, I found the chapter on 'Differentiation' extremely valuable. Ruth is open and honest about the difficulties that teachers face when teaching a mixed ability class of children or young people. There are useful strategies that secondary teachers, who do not have the same day to day contact with their youngsters, can use to find out about the learning needs of each child in order to make the learning activities more appropriate to meet these needs. For the first time I was also alerted to the fact that I might unconsciously use my own learning style in the way that I teach – something all teachers should be aware of.

I was also particularly interested in the chapter on 'Portfolios'. I know I am guilty of collecting lots of evidence (mainly written tests and investigations). Ruth makes the reader think about the purpose of an evidence portfolio, the audience it is designed for and ultimately how the evidence should be selected. Of special significance to my role as Science PT was the account of how a science department had created a standards-based portfolio to help ensure that judgements were consistent across the science team. The potential of this portfolio in helping the primary and secondary sector to work together appealed to me and is something I would like to develop in my own cluster group.

I recommend this book to any teacher as it will help to inform their thinking on assessment and could have a positive impact on learning and teaching by reinforcing the central role that assessment should play in the learning process. Ruth leaves the reader contemplating some very searching questions. She does not claim to have all the answers, but the strategies she suggests are based on tried and tested models and are clearly explained.