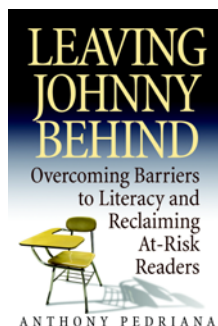


Book review for

Leaving Johnny Behind: Overcoming Barriers to Literacy and Reclaiming At-Risk Readers

by Anthony Pedriana



For Immediate Release:

In 1955, Rudolph Flesch shocked the nation with his best seller, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. In it he chastised the reading community for promoting methods that produced heretofore unknown patterns of reading failure. Flesch's tirade rekindled the reading wars and spawned a research movement designed to resolve the issue once and for all.

With *Leaving Johnny Behind*, Pedriana continues in that same tradition by pointing out that in the five decades since Flesch, the reading establishment continues to turn its collective back on scientifically based reading practices. Instead, he maintains, we continue to engage in an endless interfusion of innovations, modifications and gimmicks while two-thirds of American 4th graders read below proficient levels and an achievement gap of some 30 percentage points separates minority children from their white counterparts.

But unlike Flesch who stressed the differences between phonics and holistic practices, Pedriana seeks common ground among reading practitioners. He notes that there is plenty in the data for both sides to love, and failing to take advantage of that common ground is to mock our high-minded expressions of "children first."

Perhaps that is what makes *Leaving Johnny Behind* something special, its advocacy for a cohesive reading policy to guide instruction at the national, state and district levels, and one that will guarantee Johnny's literacy future no matter what school he attends or where his life circumstance might take him.

While the book is of special interest to educators and home-schoolers, it has broader appeal as well, especially among those who are dissatisfied with their children's literacy progress and those who are alarmed at America's declining status as a world power.