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Resisting Reading Mandates: How to Triumph with the Truth

Elaine Garan

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Teachers today are in a stranglehold as a glut of mandates and standards restrict our ability to make decisions in our own classrooms. In many schools, scripted, regimented commercial programs further erode our power to view our students as individuals with unique talents and needs. Even the words we use to "teach" are no longer our own as we read our way through the tightly scripted manuals. How demeaning it is to be told that the curriculum is now "teacher proofed."

In addition to district and state mandates, the federal government has joined in the attack as monies are distributed or withheld based on schools' compliance with the smoky, "scientific" research that is robbing us of our power to think and act. In this book, Elaine Garan dejargonizes the research and takes us behind the curtain, using her own research and analysis of the issues and applying them to us as real teachers in real classrooms in an easy-to-read format we can use. Garan takes on the National Reading Panel Report, specifically the research summarized in the phonics subgroup report, and robs it of its power by meticulously documenting its basic flaws. In the process, she enables us to respond to the "research says" claims with solid arguments of our own, using the NRP's very own words. Furthermore, her book reveals the true findings of the NRP's report on commercial programs and isolated phonics instruction and the strong financial links that are connected to its "science." As Dick Allington says in the foreword to this book, improving teaching and learning in the real world of schools and classrooms is difficult enough without government-sponsored misallocation of effort and funding.

Garan's purpose, however, is not to produce a research book, but a **handbook for empowerment**. She gives us all-teachers and administrators alike-the tools we need to stand up and talk back. What Garan proposes is to triumph over outside forces with the truth.

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