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Book Study:

Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives by Peter Johnston

Syllabus



Dr. Anne F. Goiran-Bevelhimer

Book Study: *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives* (2012) by Peter H. Johnston

Instructor: Anne F. Goiran-Bevelhimer, Ed.D.
Email: annegoiran@collegecoursesonline.com
Web site: <http://www.collegecoursesonline.com/>
Phone: 303-905-7332
Fax: 303-479-7420
Address: P.O. Box 312, Galeton, CO 80622

COURSE CREDIT: 1.0 graduate credit / 1.5 quarter hours
DATES & TIMES: 30 hours Directed Study
METHOD OF DELIVERY: Online and Print-based Correspondence

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Using the book *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives* by Peter Johnston, explore the language and teaching practices of dynamic learning that motivate students to actively engage with their learning, feel empowered and think together as collaborators in the learning process. In this dialogic environment, learning is energized through productive conversation useful in any content area, curriculum, K-12. The language of dynamic learning focuses on the processes of learning, believing the more you learn the smarter you get. And challenges mean learning is just getting interesting. Through the practice of the language of dynamic learning, students learn to listen to each other, develop social care for what other students have to contribute, accept and welcome mistakes as expected aspects of learning, are open to disagreements as opportunities for problem solving and learn the inner workings of social imagination – the foundation of a civil society. The language of dynamic learning reframes praise to supportive feedback and focuses on process and ability. Read, reflect and apply. Convert theory into immediate practical application in the classroom.

*This course meets the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** for English Language Arts focusing on the Anchor Standards for CCSS Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening 1-6; Reading, 1-9; and through the dialogic framework, supports the CCSS Anchor Standards for Writing 1- 10. Teachers taking this course will focus on their grade level or content area expectations of the Common Core State Standards.*

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify the consequences of a fixed performance mindset to dynamic growth mindset.
2. Recognize the value of error as a learning opportunity.
3. Select causal process language to encourage agentive narratives and active learning
4. Employ dialogic teaching and productive talk as a teaching / learning tool and tool for formative assessment.
5. Apply dynamic learning practices to social learning – classroom and non-classroom environments.
6. Analyze the effect of a dialogic environment and its consequences on classroom management, reading, writing and speaking and listening.
7. Prepare a plan for continued implementation of productive talk based on dynamic growth mindset.
8. Evaluate the efficacy of developing social imagination, the foundation of conversation, democratic problem solving, collaboration, and the effects on academic progress.

TEXTS, READINGS, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

Study Guide: *Book Study: "Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives" (2012) by Peter H. Johnston.* Instructed by Anne Goiran-Bevelhimer, Ed.D. This study guide will be sent upon registration.

Required Text:

Johnston, Peter H. (2012) *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This course is delivered asynchronously; you may start anytime and will work one-on-one with the instructor. You are expected to invest 30 hours* of directed study to this course. You may submit all work and complete the course anytime between 6 weeks to one year from date of registration.

Use the study guide to direct your reading of *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives*. Complete the following course requirements:

1. **Annotated Reading Log:** Keep an annotated reading log for the duration of this book study. As you read, note what's important, and what's interesting – to YOU. Summarize your annotated reading log in the synthesis paper. It is expected that you will invest a minimum of 10 hrs. in close study, reading and writing.
2. **Application:** Demonstrate what you are learning in theory to classroom* practices. Each of the 9 chapters in *Opening Minds* deepens and intensifies the dynamic learning theory, offering you more than just language, but also systems and a philosophy of teaching that create a culture of social and emotional learning to foster engaged learning and productive talk. **Choose a minimum of 3 ** activities from the suggestions in this study guide or create your own.**

Record the activity and its outcome in an activity log. It is anticipated that you will spend 18 hrs, applying the principles of dynamic learning to the classroom* and evaluating their outcome.

***Classroom:** You may not be in the classroom while you are taking this book study course. The dynamic learning mindset may be practiced in any interaction even with yourself. Developing the language of dynamic learning requires a certain shift of thinking for most of us, from fixed traits to a mindset focused on the process of learning. Choose activities that will help you be a teacher who uses the language of dynamic learning to actively engage students in productive talk. Record your process and findings in an activity log, summarized in the synthesis paper.

A Sample of Activities from the Study Guide:

- Create a list of the words, phrases, and questions suggested in *Opening Minds* by Peter Johnston, Chapters 1-9. Use the language of dynamic learning in your classroom. Write the language of dynamic learning on your white board, sticky notes or create posters for the classroom. The more visible the language of dynamic learning mindset, the more it will remind you to practice and offer students ways of having productive conversations with others. Focus on process and causal statements. Start small. Use the statements over a period of a week or until you find that you are using the dynamic language automatically. Repeat this process adding two or three phrases a week. Notice if you start creating your own process oriented / causal statements. Be sure to record your observations in your activity log, summarized in the synthesis paper.
 - What do you notice in your process of trying on new language patterns?
 - What do you notice about students' response to the dynamic learning strategies?
 - What do you notice about engaging students in productive conversations?
- Johnston includes transcripts in the text showing how the dynamic learning process engages student conversation. Notice that the role of the teacher is somewhat detached from the outcome of the discussion, but integral in valuing student contributions and guiding the conversation in productive ways. Review the scripts and examples in the text (Chap. 1-9) and make a list of teacher moves. What can you surmise are the intentions and guiding principles a teacher must believe to maintain a dynamic learning mindset and foster productive engagement? What do you notice about how teachers behave as illustrated in the text that helps them stay detached from the learning process of the student, and guide the conversation to deeper levels while also making formative assessments? Describe situations where you could you imitate these moves as you practice the language of dynamic learning.
- Trade terms of praise for feedback. This is an exercise that requires conscious thought and application. Catch yourself when you want to evaluate and use terms of judgment and replace praise with terms centered on student process and effort. Study the text for examples. Make a list of language that offers feedback instead of praise. Post it in the classroom. Use it and evaluate the process.
- Discuss the dynamic learning concept of “language can change lives” with a colleague. Pay attention to how this kind of process and causal language invites

students in productive talk. Ask a colleague (teacher, administrator, paraprofessional, another adult) to observe (10 minutes +) your classroom specifically for evidence of the effects of how the language of dynamic learning engages students in productive talk. Ask for feedback.

- Johnston's work is a collaboration of thinking with teachers, research, and research studies. Each chapter is replete with reference to studies and research to support the power of dynamic learning theory. Read the "Notes" for each chapter at the end of the book. Review the bibliography. Choose an article, or research study to further your understanding of dynamic learning, social imagination, praise versus feedback or any other topic you found interesting in your reading. Record your thinking in your activity log and include your views in your synthesis paper.

This is just a sample of activities. Others are listed at the end of each chapter in the study guide. You are also invited to submit activities of your own choosing. Please contact the instructor with your ideas.

3. Synthesize Paper (3-4 pages): Summarize the highlights of your annotated reading log, what struck you and what was interesting. Name the 3 activities you chose, the outcome and your evaluation. What are the results of engaging students in productive talk? What did you see working well? What needs improvement? What questions do you have? What advice do you have to offer a colleague who wants to create dialogic classroom practice based on dynamic learning principles? The synthesis paper represents **90 % of your grade.**

4. Final Reflection Paper (2-3 pages): Peter Johnston asks readers to remember 6 statements about taking "researched-based" teaching seriously. **Choose 2 statements from the six provided in Chapter 9** and reflect on how this book has opened your mind to their meaning and influenced the application of these teaching practices in your classroom, classroom learning culture, and school community. What is valuable to you about this book study and application process? What did you learn? How will you continue your practice? How could you share what you've learned with your colleagues? Focus on the effects and result of creating a dynamic learning environment that promote active student engagement and productive talk.

- How will you hold yourself accountable and what outcome do you anticipate?
- How can you enlist a colleague to help you with implementing a dynamic learning change?
- What indicators will you look for and listen for that will ensure you have made a positive change?

Identify 3 most important things you have learned as a result of this reading/learning experience. Elaborate in more detail on the 1 most important thing you have done and will continue to do to change the dynamic learning environment in your classroom to actively engage students in productive talk. **10% of your grade.**

GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND SCALE:

Grade Distribution:

1. Annotated Reading Log/ Activity Log
Summarized in a 3-4 page Synthesis Essay 90 pts.
2. Final Reflection Paper (2-3 pages) 10 pts.

Grade Scale:

A	91-100%	91-100 pts.
B	81-90%	81-90 pts.
C	71-80%	71-80 pts.
D	61-70%	61-70 pts.
F	Less than 60 %	Less than 60 pts.

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