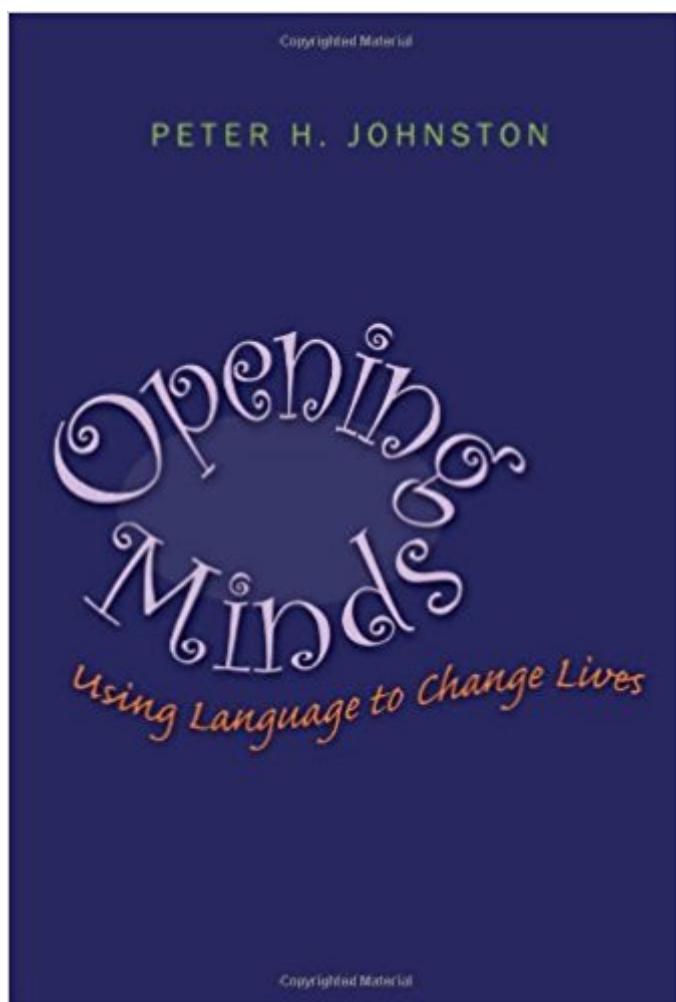


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# Opening Minds: Using Language To Change Lives



## Synopsis

Introducing a spelling test to a student by saying, 'Let's see how many words you know,' is different from saying, 'Let's see how many words you know already.' It is only one word, but the already suggests that any words the child knows are ahead of expectation and, most important, that there is nothing permanent about what is known and not known. Peter Johnston

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Peter Johnston has made a career researching and articulately presenting insights into how to help children grow as readers and develop intellectual curiosity. In *Opening Minds* he focuses on how the words and state of mind we inhabit can make a real difference in the classroom. For instance, when introducing a spelling test, he asks that we observe the difference between saying, "Let's see how many words you know" and 'Let's see how many words you already know.'" The sentences are only different by one word, "but the "already" suggest that any words the child knows are ahead of expectation and, most important, that there is nothing permanent about what is known and not known." In *Opening Minds*, Johnston covers a wide range of issues, from more skillful ways to work with motivating students to ways of developing social intelligence (or, as he calls it, social imagination). Johnston does this in ways that hint at how he hopes others will teach. That is, he never hits us over the head with "shoulds" and "must-dos", but gives examples that help lead us to developing more thoughtful approaches. I especially liked his chapter on praise. In it he points out how relying heavily on praise (which is a popular approach in this era of self-esteem boosting) has

some downsides, such as creating an arms race around what is real praise and what is faint praise -- and ultimately keeps us in an externally-motivated rewards and punishment system. Instead, he gently leads us to see the greater value of taking a real interest in your students work. By asking questions that bring out greater depth, the student learns depth and intellectual probing is most important, and that you genuinely care; all this, without setting up a dynamic that leads the student to look for praise.

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