

# You Are Smarter Than You Think! Newsletter

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## The Subject of Teaching

### Hello!

Welcome to those of you who are new to this newsletter. I must inform you that we refer to the **You Are Smarter Than You Think** book as YASTYT. This name was lovingly coined several years ago by an instructor who uses the book and it stuck.

Welcome back to my longtime readers. Your presence is always appreciated.

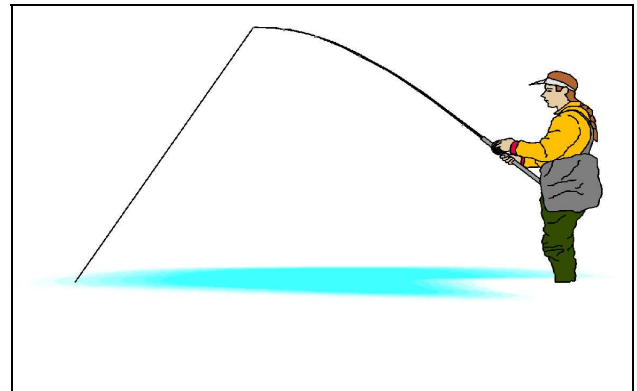
I hope that everyone finds within some thoughts and ideas that help. Please let me know what you think. Let me know what you want to hear about. I can be emailed at [yastyt@mind.net](mailto:yastyt@mind.net)

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### Some Thoughts About Teaching

Instructors, what are you being paid for, really? Are you being paid to spoon feed your students to guaranteed that they will pass your tests? Or are you being paid to challenge your students into being independent learners so that they will be quality employees and citizens way beyond school?



As the saying goes, “If you give a man a fish he will eat for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he will eat his whole life.” If you spoon feed your students they might pass your current test. If you help them to be responsible for their own learning, they will have a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The man who receives a fish is powerless and dependant. A student who is spoon fed is

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dependant and limited in what he knows and not very effective.

The man who knows how to fish is a reliable provider. A student who knows that ultimately learning is in his own hands is a responsible provider of services and can react in a responsible way no matter what occurs.

## Portrait of a Good Student

When a student is primed for acquiring knowledge, a spark ignites internally and it is this spark that propels the student into learning above and beyond what is required for the test. I can remember having such an experience. I was in a speech pathology class and we were studying linguistics, a very complicated subject. Our instructor didn't do much lecturing. Instead he assigned us to investigate the most difficult subjects and report on them in class. To us it was a grand adventure. Six of us were assigned the project of discovering everything we could about "distinctive features".

When we started, we didn't even know what "distinctive features" were. As a matter of fact we couldn't even understand the words that talked about them. In our first meeting together, we began reading aloud some of the literature about our subject. We literally read the material one word at a time. Finally at some point we began to understand exactly the nature of "distinctive features."

We got so turned on by this process that the excitement filled the room. We cheered. There was curiosity, enthusiasm, and joy present. We were on top of the world because we had uncovered something that seemed so totally out of our reach. We wanted to know more. We craved to know more. It was a passionate experience.

To this day I can still tell you many things about "distinctive features" even though I haven't used the term for many years. Grades were not our

motivating force. We didn't even think about grades or tests or anything. We just wanted, no we hungered, to know the truth about this subject.

Our instructor somehow ignited our curiosity and this curiosity somehow ignited a spark inside that carried us forward.

## Portrait of a Good Teacher

Sometimes when I make a presentation, before I begin to speak, I feel excited to share my subject. When that is present, I do my very best work. My motivation is a love and enthusiasm about the topic. Whether or not the audience gets what I am talking about is second in importance.

The other piece of this phenomenon is if I can let the presentation unfold naturally instead of controlling its outcome, something organic happens in the process that breeds excitement on the part of the participants. This excitement is very important because it is the fuel for expanded learning.

The person who is excited will go home and learn more about what has been discussed in



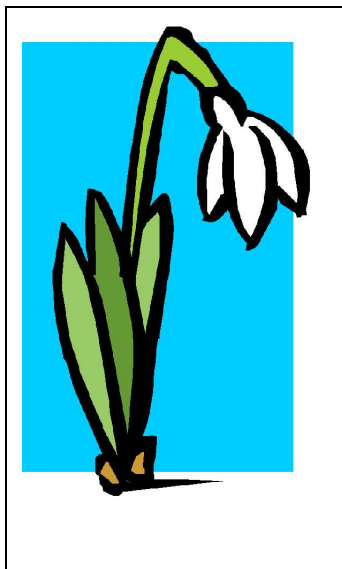
class and will do it not because it will help with the test but because there is a desire that wants to be satisfied. Good teachers find ways to get their students excited about their subject matter. This excitement, not the grade, becomes the motivation for each students' learning.

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## How YASTYT Cultivates These Two

Students today do not realize that they hold the key to their success. Many of them think that they can only learn if they have a good instructor. They are learning-dependent.

When YASTYT shows students how they learn best, they suddenly understand that **they** hold the key to their own success - not their instructor. This claim to responsibility opens the way for curiosity. When curiosity is present learning follows naturally. Teachers foster this curiosity by refusing to spoon feed and by sharing their enthusiasm for their subject.



Students are like seeds. Instructors are the soil, the sun and the water. The seed might have great potential to bloom but if the soil is not good, or there is not enough water or there is no sun, the seed will never grow. YASTYT helps students to be productive seeds. And it helps

instructors to be the nurturing soil, water, and sun that must be present for good learning.

## News From the Field

Some thoughts from Dr. Janie Brenden, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College:

*"I am just as excited about your book today as I was the first time we used it. Our students love the YASTYT video you sent us. It is something they can relate to and they express some of the same thoughts as the students in the film. We*

*use it prior to presenting YASTYT in the classroom."*

*"We continue to have huge successes with the students who use and understand the YASTYT model. Our biggest block sometimes is the instructor who does not continue to support students in applying the strategies as they progress through the program. We let the students' comments do the talking for us and encourage them to not give up something that really works. Let me share some of the comments we have heard this semester: 'It is too freaky, I never could remember things, and now it doesn't take any time at all! This is amazing! I thought oh no, not another thing to worry about, but figured I would read my icon pages anyway. When I put the book down to go fix supper, I could remember everything I just read! It made a huge difference on my test! This is super, why hasn't someone done this before?'"*

## Bad News From the Field

The number one question that I receive is, "When is the best time to introduce YASTYT to the students?" Some disturbing news has been coming out recently in regards to this question. The following is what two schools have discovered and how they are dealing with the problem. The following is what is what Janie Brenden is doing at her school:

*"We have tried to introduce YASTYT at different times to our students, but still find the best time is right after they have received their grades on their first test of the semester. It seems to be a motivator for some and for others it seems to validate that they are on the right track. I have done many teaching presentations over the past year and continue to recommend this book to all who attend. It really can change lives and that is what we are all about as educators."*

The following is what Nancy Mott reported from Villanova University:

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*“I incorporate YASTYT into two one-credit courses that I teach. One is for first-semester freshmen and the other is for upperclassmen. The upperclassmen sections have had terrific success but the freshmen group has not responded in the same way.”*

*“I really believe that the freshmen are not ready for it. They arrive convinced that they will have the same level of success they had in high school and are not yet open to others’ ways of doing their work. By the second semester it is a different story. I really need to rethink how I use this with my freshmen. The upperclassmen are an entirely different story. They have struggled and are eager for some guidance and are therefore willing to make the necessary adjustments.”*



One thing I have learned over the years is that nothing every stays the same. I have also learned that bad news can lead to good news. It would seem that the good news in the story is that we now know that it is important for students to have some difficulty before they are introduced to YASTYT. We hate change and YASTYT asks students to do things differently. The motivation has to come from within and poor grades have always been a powerful attention getter.

If you have something more to say about this subject, I would love to hear from you. Please email your comments to [yastyt@mind.net](mailto:yastyt@mind.net)

## Finally

Have a wonderful Spring. Have fun in the classroom. Do something you have never done before. Be outrageous. Feel free to do what you want. Let the goodness that is within out. And as you are doing these beautiful things know that I am out here doing the same and supporting all of you to feel wonderful about you and your profession.