

7 Qualities to Maximize the Impact of Your Lesson Plans

From *Helping Students Motivate Themselves: Practical Answers to Classroom Challenges*, by Larry Ferlazzo (modified from a post on eyeoneducation.com, February 12, 2013)

- Strategic Introductions** include several aspects:
 - **Novelty:** Grab students' attention by introducing information, a topic, or a lesson in a different way.
 - **Relevance:** Provide explicit suggestions on how students will be able to transfer what they learn into other aspects of their lives.
 - **Written and Verbal Instructions:** When students forget what to do, teachers can then just point to the instructions instead of repeating them.
 - **Modeling:** Explicitly model your thinking process, and show students examples of other students' work.
 - **Activate Prior Knowledge:** Remind students of how what they are going to learn relates to what they have previously learned.
 - **Translating:** Ask students to "translate" important concepts into their own words.
- Movement** Creating opportunities for students to move—at least a bit—during lessons can be successful. Students could move to be with a partner for a quick "think-pair-share" activity, or go to a small group to work on a project for a longer time.
- Choices** These can include being asked for their partner preferences, allowed to choose which reading strategies they would like to demonstrate, invited to choose where they would like to sit during small group sessions, or given two or more options of writing prompts.
- Minimize Lecture & Maximize Cooperative Learning** Studies show that smaller groups work best, with three or four students being the maximum. I personally prefer sticking with pairs for most of a school year, and possibly moving to three near the last quarter after six months of student experience with the process.
- Wait Time** The average time between a teacher posing a question and a student giving the answer is approximately one second. Multiple studies show that the quality and quantity of student responses increases when the wait time is increased to between three and seven seconds.
- Fun** Games are good tools for review, and can function as a quick three-minute break or transition time.
- Feedback** It has been found that if students are expecting to receive "rapid" feedback—a teacher's verbal or written response shortly after the work is completed—the quality of student work increases.

