Motivational Techniques for Lessons

Many have heard the old saying that “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” While this is true, the owner’s job may be to find a way to make the horse thirsty if he wants him to drink. The same may be applied to teaching. We can bring children to school, but we can’t make them learn. The job of the teacher is to make the children “thirsty” for knowledge and skills. This is done through the use of appropriate motivational techniques for each lesson taught.

Here is a list of some possible ways to introduce a lesson and motivate students to be involved in the learning process.

1. Ask a question that causes students to reflect on prior knowledge. Did you know that......? Did you hear about.....?

2. Ask a question that causes students to reflect on personal experiences. Has anyone ever seen....? Have you ever been....?

3. Ask questions that cause students to use prior knowledge to draw conclusions. What do you think would happen if......?

4. Use a picture that illustrates or leads into a discussion of the concepts to be taught. Magazines are great sources for these.

5. Use a riddle that gets student attention and relates to the lesson topic or concept.

6. Read a poem about the topic.

7. Show a film or film clip as an introduction to a unit of material.

8. Use a cartoon related to the topic.

9. Demonstrate a concept through actions, such as a sneeze after dropping a chalk eraser demonstrates the meaning of cause and effect.

10. Put a problem-solving puzzle or question on the board to get students thinking in a particular direction for the lesson.
Suggestions for Lesson Closure (Summary)

Research has shown that students retain the contents of a lesson more readily when the teacher guides them to summarize the main points that have been made during the lesson. This procedure may be used at varying points throughout the lesson to emphasize stages of understanding or certainly should be done prior to the follow-through activities. There are numerous ways in which a lesson may be summarized to increase student retention. For example:

1. Ask the students to summarize the main points of the lesson orally, giving a large number of students an opportunity to respond. Write these on a transparency on the overhead as they are given.

2. Ask a series of questions that reflect the lesson content. Students may answer these orally or in an informal written form.

3. Ask the students to write on a scrap piece of paper two things that they learned from the lesson. Let students then share their statements.

4. Use true-false statements of fill-in-the blank questions for students to respond to orally or on paper.

5. Ask students to get into pairs or small groups and summarize for each other in five minutes the main points of the lesson.

6. Ask students to sequentially order the steps in an experiment. This is easily done while using the overhead projector.

7. Ask a student to volunteer to pretend to be the teacher and to give the main points of the lesson. See if the “audience” agrees with the summary.

8. Write several questions that reflect the main points of the lesson on slips of paper. Let individuals or groups “draw” a question and respond to it as others listen.

9. Let one half of the students each write one question based upon the lesson content to be asked to a fellow student on the other side of the room. Additional teacher questions may fill in the gaps that are not covered.

Of course the summary procedure chosen reflects the nature of the subject or lesson being taught. One may summarize again after students have completed the follow-through activities. This provides the teacher with another opportunity to determine if there are any misunderstandings regarding the lesson.