

*Make Objectives Meaningful*

- **Start with the end in mind.**

Lesson planning should begin with state content standards and district objectives in the forefront. However, teachers must be aware that many of their ELL students have major gaps in their educational backgrounds. Therefore, you may have to pull from earlier-grade objectives to build sufficient background while working toward current objectives.

- **Keep objectives short and sweet.**

Teacher guides use complex and comprehensive wording. For ELLs content objectives need to be stated simply. Choose one or two goals for the day or even the unit and write them on the board. Also read goals aloud to your students and refer to them regularly.

- **Link lesson and assessment to objectives.**

A wide range of language objectives should be incorporated while teaching and assessing any lesson. These may focus on developing key vocabulary needed for understanding content, summarizing information, displaying higher-order thinking skills, or mastering specific grammatical points. You should also plan for multi-level responses based on language proficiency, such as pointing, drawing, and simple phrases by your novice students.

- **Use student-friendly language.**

Content objectives need to be stated in a way that all students can understand them. For example, instead of saying, "Students will evaluate the impact of the author's belief," simplify by saying, "I can talk about why the writer wrote this story."

- **Ask students to rephrase objectives.**

Have students repeat the written or oral objectives in their own words. It is appropriate to encourage the use of complete sentences. Even novice students should say, "I can read," rather than saying, "Read." It is important for students to move beyond their comfort zones in speaking English.

- **Allow LEPs to clarify objectives in their native language.**

When possible, have higher-level first language speakers explain content and language objectives to students who have less English language experience. Double-check for understanding. Incorporate activities that involve partner work and small group assignments in order to decrease language anxiety.

## *Build Student Background*

- **Use warm-ups to make connections.**  
Students from other cultures struggle with texts written for American classrooms. You should not assume that all students have the same prior knowledge. What may appear to be a lack of comprehension or poor memory skills might actually be a need for cultural linkage.
- **Utilize visuals and realia: Real Stuff**  
Explicit links to a student's background can be made by using real objects, photographs, or videotapes. Teachers must build a bridge between past learning and new information. Texts and verbal explanations may not be sufficient to insure connections to a student's cultural schemata.
- **Introduce and explore key vocabulary.**  
There is a strong relationship between word knowledge and academic achievement. Students must be actively involved in learning vocabulary, such as by using cloze exercises, word sorting, word games, and personal dictionaries. Simply copying unfamiliar words from the board or a dictionary is ineffective. Vocabulary must be contextualized in order to be understood.
- **Meet students where they are.**  
The number of new words introduced at one time should be based on a student's English proficiency as well as his or her native literacy skills. For example, novice learners can define words by drawing and labeling, while intermediate students can use words in sentences. Even older students must begin by learning high frequency words like prepositions and pronouns.
- **Review, review, review.**  
In order to retain new information, it is critical for students to recall prior lessons. "Who remembers what we learned about...?" Graphic organizers, outlines, word banks, leveled study guides, charts, and other memory aids help English learners retrieve the enormous amount of input they are expected to remember. Frequent review, especially of key vocabulary, is vital for student success.