

Caught'ya! Lesson Plan

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I use Visual Thesaurus during the warm-up portion of my class. I get my warm-ups from Jane Bell Kiester's *Caught' ya Again, More Grammar with a Giggle*. These sentences are similar to the old Daily Oral Language sentences, except that there are 100 sentences that create one story, so every day that we edit a sentence in class, we are adding a sentence to the story. I have found the students to be more interested and engaged during the warm-up time in class. The fact that I go around and make noises to help clue the students in on an editing mark they miss helps add to the interest (the idea is explained in Kiester's book).

The sentences also include one or two new words to add to their vocabulary list. The sentences are written on my laptop and projected onto the interactive white board (SmartBoard) in my room. A student will edit the sentence and then highlight the new word. We then look it up in Visual Thesaurus. The screen is projected onto the SmartBoard for the whole class to see, and together we look at all the options for the new word. We discuss which word choice fits our sentence better, and the students write it on their vocabulary list. We often roll over the yellow dot to the definition window for a definition or to see the word used as a phrase. Our vocabulary word is written on a sentence strip and added to the word wall.

Visual Thesaurus is a great tool to use with an interactive white board. Not only does it appeal to the visual-spatial learners, but bodily-kinesthetic learners appreciate going to the board and manipulating the word web, especially when it is set on 3-D! Typically, students want to go to other words and see how else the web will "grow." They see doing this as "playing" or "getting off topic" (which they try to do at any given moment) but really it's word development disguised as fun! Children are so technology-driven these days, and Visual Thesaurus is one way to meet this need and use it as a teaching tool in the classroom. Whenever I'm showing other teachers how to use the SmartBoard, I always pull up Visual Thesaurus and they are always impressed! I have been using VT as part of my classroom for three years now, and I consider it to be an essential part of my classroom tools.