Georgia Performance Standards Framework for ELA Unit 4 – 4th Grade

Grade: 4
Topic: Using a Thesaurus to Identify Synonyms
Instructional unit: Unit 4, Retracing Our Steps: Where have we been? Where are we now? Where are we going? (in reference to Week 2, Reading, Number 2)
Contributed By: Denise Taylor, Dr. Cynthia L. Allen-Golden, Terry K. Erbsfield, Christine Parker, Julia D. Brackett, Tracy Gutierrez

The task: Prior to teaching this lesson, the teacher will do the following: Obtain a thesaurus and write some of the overused/tired words on index cards that students in the class use too frequently in their writing. Write the following phrases on the board or on chart paper: the big dog, a big box, the big house, a big pool, the big mountain, a big boat. Complain about the word “big” being used over and over again in writing and how boring/unexciting that is to read. Tell the students that all of us tend to use ordinary words when we are writing something and that sometimes the simple/ordinary word does not even create the picture in the reader’s mind that we intended. Ask students to brainstorm other words that mean the same thing as “big” but have a stronger image (e.g., huge, enormous, gigantic…). Tell students that words that have similar meanings are called synonyms. Explain to them that if they are going to write a story about a giant, they would try to think of all the words that meant the same thing. However, if a writer runs out of words and still feels like he or she wants another word to use to describe how large the giant is, the writer could go to a thesaurus for help. The teacher should then look up the word “big” in the thesaurus and read the list of words slowly and clearly so that the students can see the numbers of synonyms that are given. Then, ask the students to use some of the synonyms with the sample phrases that they have written on the board/chart to make more interesting sentences. Ask each student to select one phrase, write it on the top of his or her paper, and then write a better sentence under it – using a synonym that better describes their topic. After the students have completed their new sentences, allow them to share with the class. Before dismissing the class for independent reading, ask them to notice synonyms from their leveled texts.

Differentiation:
- The teacher may sit with a small group and review the thesaurus. Allow the students to say a word, look it up, and find synonyms.
- The students may go into their own pieces of writing and change their simple/ordinary words to create a more vivid image. The students should have access to a thesaurus.
- Students may take the index cards of overused/tired words and write synonyms to be used instead.

Focus Standard:
ELA4R3 The student understands and acquires new vocabulary and uses it correctly in reading and writing. The student
d.) Determines the meanings of words and alternate word choices using a dictionary or thesaurus.

Circumstances of the assignment/Notes to the Teachers:
The class should have access to a thesaurus during this lesson. Also, the teacher should write some of the overused/tired words onto index cards for the class to use during independent time.