Lesson Skill: Context clues

Strand   Reading — Vocabulary

SOL   3.4

               4.4

               5.4

Materials
- Copies of grade-appropriate fictional texts
- Flag sticky notes (dark color works best)

Lesson
1. Write the following sentence on the board:
   o   Susie brought home a brand new b_____.
   Have students come up with options for the missing word. Add to the sentence:
   o   Susie brought home a brand new b_____ from the library.
   Have students discuss what words from their first list can be eliminated. What makes them so sure? Be sure that second-language learners make the connection between book and library. What clues were they given to help them realize the missing word?

2. Split students into small groups so that each group has a grade-appropriate fiction text. Pass out flag sticky notes to each group.

3. Instruct students to read a passage of their text and cover up a total of five words with their sticky notes. The words they cover up should be spaced out accordingly so that no more than one word should be covered for every five. Model this.

4. Once students have covered up their words, rotate texts to a different group. Each group should make a T-chart. On the left side of the T-chart, have students list their guess for each of the covered words. On the right, they should list any of the clues they found in the text they could read to help them come up with the word.

5. Each group should then reveal their words and give themselves a point for each word they got correct. If the word they wrote down is not an exact match, but is a synonym for the correct word (a thesaurus might need to be used here), then they still receive a point.

6. Pass out prizes for each level of winner—for example teams with five points get a certain prize, while teams with only one point get a smaller prize.

7. This activity is fun, but why is it important? Students might not make the connection between missing words and their importance to the context of the story. They may need some more practice here.

Strategies for Differentiation
- Model and think aloud with a known cloze passage with whole group to provide multiple examples of using words in context.

- Provide multiple copies of texts with target words covered with sticky notes; have students write the sentence with the covered word and write the word they think is covered; have students underline the added word.
- Model how to use context to determine a word; provide a word bank of target words from which to choose; assign students one of the target words; have students create a sentence for the word on a whiteboard, leaving the word out; have students show the sentence to the group and read the sentence aloud; have group guess the covered word.
- Use teacher-generated sentences and student-generated sentences.
- Display text using available technology.