

THINK-ALOUDS

Teachers can support student comprehension through the use of Think-Alouds. The think-aloud strategy prompts readers to verbally share their thoughts and reflect on their thinking as they read, solve math problems, or respond to content-based questions. This process allows teachers and students to explain the strategies they are using to better understand the text. This TIPS in Action focuses on planning, implementing, and evaluating the use of think-alouds with students with extensive support needs in inclusive classrooms.

Benefits for Students with Extensive Support Needs

- Think-Alouds teach students how to access prior knowledge, generate predictions, create mental images, develop inferences, effectively problem solve, overcome challenges associated with word recognition and comprehension, and self-monitor comprehension.
- Think-Alouds provide students with a model of how skilled readers comprehend what they've been reading.

Planning

Have I explained the purpose of the think-aloud strategy before asking students to verbalize their thinking? Have I communicated it in multiple ways so that my students understand?

Have I presented students with a set of questions or sentence starters that can be used to support students' thinking? (see Figure 1)

- Have I provided support for students to communicate during the think-aloud? Have I considered various language support needs (e.g. native language, simplified language)?
- What information or keywords am I looking for to confirm students' understanding? Have I provided scaffolds so that students are able to use the information or words?
- How could I build scaffolds and supports into this activity for students to use to help them confirm their understanding? How can I build a consistent pathway using scaffolds and supports so that students can generalize this across different types of think-alouds?

Figure 1. Example Think-Aloud questions and sentence stems

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| • What do I already know about the topic/content? | • I know that... |
| • What reaction did I have to the text/content? | • One thing I tried was... |
| • What questions do I have after reading the text or viewing the content? | • I know this can't be right because... |
| • What did the reading or content make me think of? | • I predict that... |
| • How can I use information from the text or content to support my answer? | • I was confused by... |

In Action: Implementation

1. Read or listen to the assigned text or content.
2. Identify the question(s) being asked.
3. Think about the answer(s) to the question(s).
4. Share thoughts out loud with others (e.g., teacher, peers).

Evaluation

Determine whether the support(s) provided met the needs of the student by considering the following:

- Was the think-aloud designed to be accessible to the students?
- Were all students able to participate in the think-aloud activity independently?
- Was the level of support for the think-aloud appropriate to meet students' needs?
- Was the think-aloud strategy the most appropriate strategy for the skill?

THINK-ALOUDS: TROUBLESHOOTING

The ideas presented are examples of ways to apply principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL; <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>) and are not intended to be comprehensive.

If there is a barrier to student engagement in during the think-aloud, you can:

- Recruit student interest in think-alouds that promote individual choice.
- Optimize relevance by allowing students to choose topics for the think-aloud.

If there is a barrier to student understanding during the think-aloud, you can:

- Supply background knowledge on the assignment such as previously learned vocabulary and symbols.
- Display information in a flexible format that offers customization for individual learners. (see Figure 2)

If there is a barrier to students expressing their ideas during the think-aloud, you can:

- Vary methods for response and allow multiple media tools to be used.
- Build fluency with graduated levels of support.