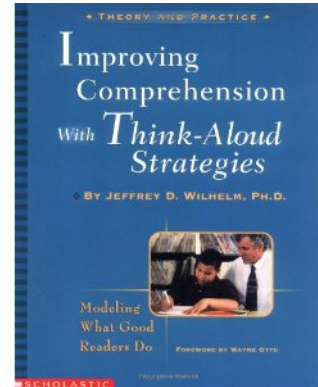


Think Aloud

Keene and Zimmermann call thinking aloud “the bread and butter of metacognitive instruction” in their updated book, *Mosaic of Thought*. Using think aloud, in its various forms, helps students slow down, recognize and articulate their thinking over time.

And yet, many of us have just begun to scratch the surface when using teacher think-alouds and student/teacher combinations to help students improve their understanding of metacognition. I’m not even sure it has been given the lofty title of “central metacognitive strategy” in our toolboxes.



Thinking aloud in front of your students with text in hand helps children see that all readers have to think while reading in order to comprehend. Using this strategy to model what you expect your students to say aloud or write on paper at first *but* only in their heads eventually is a critical step toward helping students internalize interactive thinking about texts.

Select a book carefully so that you can model ONE comprehension strategy at first. Connect the text to the content you are studying or the metacognitive strategy you’re teaching. Pick a challenging text that’s just a little bit of a stretch for your readers, so there is a reason to work together to understand the text.

Read aloud with the book in your hands; think aloud with the text in your lap. Students need that extra visual so they separate “reading text” from “thinking about text.” Share how you think and gain meaning from what you’re reading...

- Connections you make with the text: what the book reminds you of, what a character or the setting looks like, what other books or movies you think of.
- Your questions and how you find the answers.
- How you infer or predict based on evidence.
- What you do when you come across a word you don’t know.
- How you gather evidence as you read to build an impression of each character.
- How you use literary elements to help you (foreshadowing, metaphors, setting)

Also, be sure to laugh where there’s humor, explain your sadness where there’s sadness, get excited when the book gets exciting...you get the idea. We don’t want to let go of our love of reading for strategy sake.

Eventually, include your students in stopping and thinking along with you. Then ask your students to do the same independently either aloud with a partner or by writing their thoughts in their daybooks.

If your students have trouble getting started, then take a look at the text ahead of time and mark a dot for them at the places you would like your students to stop and “think aloud.” As your students get comfortable with this strategy, it will become automatic. Segue quickly from writing “think alouds” to *briefly* recording enough of their thoughts so that they can participate in dynamic book discussions: noticings and wonderings the students want to share with their book clubs.

Share the think aloud strategy with parents. Model it for them on Open House night. Make a video of you thinking aloud with your students that parents can check out so parents can use think alouds as well!

Three Great Sources to Help With Think Alouds:

1. *Improving Comprehension with Think-Aloud Strategies: Modeling What Good Readers Can Do* by Jeffrey Wilhelm (Scholastic Professional Books) --- pictured
2. *Knee to Knee, Eye to Eye: Circling in On Comprehension* by Ardith Davis Cole (Heinemann)
3. *7 Keys to Comprehension: How to Help Your Kids Read It and Get It!* Susan Zimmermann and Chryse Hutchins, Three Rivers Press --- great for parents also and is available at Borders, etc.