

# Think-Alouds: The How And Why

## Getting Started with think-alouds

To help students become strategic readers, it is essential that teachers lend readers their strategic knowledge through active modeling. Teachers must generously model how to work through a task, highlighting and naming how a particular strategy or TEKS can be successfully applied. Then the teacher needs to provide opportunities for students to try the strategy with various levels of assistance.

For best results, a think-aloud works well when the teachers stops, asks a questions or makes a directive statement to guide thinking about something noticed in the text.. The think-aloud is explicit, i.e., “I am stopping here because there is an interaction between characters in the text(the TEKS). I always stop to analyze the characters actions because these actions are important to understanding the character or the plot. “

“The author uses character interactions to help me understand the important elements of the story. Authors rarely tell me the character's traits-I figure them out by thinking about the character's actions and/or the characters interactions with other characters.”

The modeling of the think-aloud focuses on the TEKS to be taught. The example used above is a Figure 19 D TEKS interpreting and analyzing the actions and relationships of characters and how they change over time. The key academic vocabulary words are: actions and interactions.

To summarize- the important elements of the think-aloud are that teachers identify what caused them to stop and think(the WHAT), why is it is important (the WHY),and how they used text evidence to analyze the stopping point/target TEKS the HOW).When using released STAAR Reading Tests to model think-alouds, the following procedure is recommended:

## THINK-ALOUDS: A TASK Analysis For Mentor Texts

### PLANNING

1. The process begins with careful planning. Begin by deciding which strategy or strategies will be modeled in the think-aloud.
1. Choose a short mentor text—preferably picture book—that presents multiple opportunities to teach the targeted Figure 19 strategy. It works well to choose a text that presents an opportunity to teach with a think-aloud in the first page or two. Struggling readers especially tend to give up within the first few paragraphs. Helping them understand the strategy with an explicit example in the early portion of the read-aloud helps get them off to a fast start.
2. Teachers identify and choose narrative and informational texts as mentor text for read-alouds and for modeling the Figure 19 strategies, general process strategies, and other TEKS. The texts can be picture books, passages, articles or any appropriated texts. Teachers read each text carefully several times to first determine the theme/big ideas, and to determine which strategies and TEKS the text supports.
3. Mentor texts can be categorized into those for use before, during, or after reading. The number of mentor texts varies. Teachers decide how many mentor texts are needed.
4. Next, select stopping points within the text for modeling are chosen. The stopping points are strategically selected to guide the student to **deduce the theme/big idea. When using a mentor text for the first time the key teaching point is for the students to deduce the main/big idea. Subsequent uses for the mentor text is to develop specific skills/strategies. For this purpose, read only the part of the text where the teaching of the target skill/strategy is presented.**
5. After choosing the strategy to teach, and selecting stopping points within the text, prime the text with scripted sticky notes that have the precise wording to be used for the think-aloud. This step can prove to be challenging at first, but with practice scripting think-alouds becomes much more manageable.
6. Many narrative texts support multiple themes, and many informational texts are comprised of multiple text structures and key concepts. An important characteristic of mentor texts is that each can be used more than one time to teach a various themes, strategies, or concepts.
7. Before introducing the lesson to students, practice the think-aloud until you are able to perform it well.

## During Reading

8. Before performing the think-aloud, introduce/review the think-aloud process for students. Stress that successful readers and writers are thinkers and problem solvers. They use strategies to help them read the text to make meaning.
9. Tell and show students how it will look when you are reading and how it looks when you are thinking. Some teachers point to their temple when thinking-aloud, for example.
10. Tell students that when you are reading/thinking aloud that their job is to listen carefully and notice **when, why, and how** you are thinking. Explain that when you are finished you will ask them to explain in detail what they observed and heard during the think-aloud.
11. The instruction begins by stating the purpose-the teaching point- for the lesson. Tell students what part of the reading process you will model for them (before, during, after)
12. When teaching a TEKS or a strategy, the when, why, and how for applying the strategy or TEKS must be stated by the teacher.
13. Use STAAR Language and question stems. The stem should be written and visible to students. Fully discuss what the question is asking.
14. The teacher then reads the text aloud to students and models using a think-aloud protocol at selected stopping points. The stopping points have been carefully selected to guide the students **to deduce the theme/big idea during the first reading**. Mentor texts are used repeatedly for various teaching purposes.
15. Incorporate STAAR Language and Question Stems in the Think-aloud..." As I read this, I can **conclude...**, Or, I can **determine** that the character is...
16. The teacher's modeling should include talking to yourself, asking yourself questions, activating background knowledge, and giving yourself directions to negotiate meaning.
17. At selected parts of the read-aloud, have students turn and talk to retell the steps of the think-aloud in the correct sequence. They also identify what strategies were used with emphasis on when, why, and how your thinking was applied to the text.
18. The teacher is alert to students retellings and prompt as needed. Also, it is important to label the behaviors being modeled. e. "I infer that..." "I predict..."
19. Continue to read-aloud for several days, introducing new strategies followed by retelling and labeling.

20. The teacher guides the learner's practice. Teacher and students work together through several increasingly challenging examples of the strategy together using authentic texts. At this phase invite students to tell what strategies you used during the read/think-aloud.
21. Teacher gradually releases responsibility to students, allowing the students to do what they are capable of on their own and intervening and supporting only when needed and only as much as is absolutely needed.
22. During guided practice, students are asked to identify and explain the process and list the cues and clues the teacher used to think through the text. Teachers' modeling should include talking to yourself, asking yourself questions, activating background knowledge, and giving yourself directions to negotiate meaning.
23. Ask students to identify other situations in which they could use these same strategies.
24. Reinforce the think-aloud with follow-up lessons.
25. When reading independently, have students record their thinking in reading journals or think-sheets you have prepared.