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**Sincerely,
Karen Haag**

**I hope I can help you in some small way.
Please feel free to email with questions ☺**

7 Steps of Think Aloud

Based on Jeffrey Wilhelm's Chapter 2 of *Improving Comprehension with Think-Aloud Strategies*

STEP ONE

1. Choose a text. It can be the first few pages of a text the students will be reading on their own, a short story, or a picture book. Carefully select it for (1) content, (2) challenging difficulty, and (3) strategy instruction. Give each intermediate student a copy of the text --- either type a "text copy" or project for all to see.

STEP TWO

2. Choose ONE strategy to highlight.
Explain what you will be doing. Ask them why using this strategy may be helpful to them when they read independently.

STEP THREE

3. State your purpose: (1) why you chose the book you did and how it related to the content you are studying; (2) what strategy you will be highlighting; (3) how you hope that students *will pay careful attention to how you're reading* so that the strategies highlighted today will help students with their independent reading.

STEP FOUR

4. Provide a copy of the text for students. In front of the students overview the book like you taught them to do: look at the cover, the back, the pictures, set a purpose for reading, etc. Then, read the text aloud to your students. Talk aloud about your metacognitive process. Read slowly, stop often, and think aloud about the focus strategy and how text features affect your thinking. When you think aloud, put the text down so the students have a visual of you reading vs. you thinking. Some authors recommend standing on one side of the room for reading and walking to the other side for thinking. Or, point to your head when thinking and hold the book up when reading.

Research on reflection (e.g. Edmiston, 1992) shows that asking students in the midst of an activity (or immediately after) what strategies they are using and how they could be used in other situations helps students learn and transfer these strategies to other contexts.

---J. Wilhelm, p. 49

STEP FIVE

5. After you've modeled a few paragraphs, ask students to underline phrases and words that they see you using to help you with the strategy.
For primary students, make photocopies of the pages. I have the students cut out the text or pictures they noticed I used when I modeled the strategy. Then, we glue these cut outs onto a chart so that, together, we can see what clues helped me as I modeled my thinking.
Students who need additional help with think aloud will benefit from completing a more concrete task. Tanny McGregor (*Comprehending Connections*) recommends cutting up construction paper into red and green ½ inch squares. Students place a red square in a bowl when the teacher reads the word or phrase she will think about. They place a green square in

the bowl when she thinks aloud about that word or phrase. Students see at the end of this demonstration that reading is a mixed up “salad” - a combination of reading and thinking.

STEP SIX

6. Make a list of the words that prompt us to do the thinking. You’re teaching students to be on the lookout for words the author uses that cause readers to stop and think. For example, when teaching questioning, I was reading a Chinese fable. When I read, "Anyone older than 70 was considered useless" I immediately wondered what was going to happen to the mother in this story. She was clearly older than 70 in the pictures. What did it mean to be considered useless in China? Even though this sentence was in the middle of a paragraph, I could not move on. I had to stop a second and think.

STEP SEVEN

7. Ask students to reflect on (1) what they learned and (2) how they will apply the new learning to their reading life. Determining other reading situations that might demand this kind of thinking will help students connect Think Aloud to its real-life purpose: understanding that reading is always about figuring out the words, paying attention to one’s inner voice, and merging the two to make sense of the text. Students should then write their new learning in their reader’s notebooks.

Reading is a mixture of finding facts
and recognizing thoughts
readers make to understand the text.

