

Texas State University Student Teaching Program

Using “Think-Alouds” in Mentoring Student Teachers

Teachers often use “think-aloud” strategies with PK-12 students to model how expert thinkers solve problems. These strategies are also helpful when mentoring student teachers (ST). When cooperating teachers (CT) verbalize their decision-making processes as they plan, make classroom management decisions, and adjust lessons, student teachers will begin to understand the thinking behind the actions experienced teachers take.

Suggested steps in mentoring student teachers through think-alouds:

1. A classroom management, instructional planning, lesson implementation, or interpersonal issue occurs, or the CT simulates a situation. Examples: a student exhibiting off-task behavior, a lesson activity that didn’t work, a schedule change at the last minute.
2. The CT “thinks aloud” to demonstrate how to make connections that lead to an action, showing the ST what to do in a particular situation. For example, after a discipline situation occurs in the classroom, the CT explains how the behavior management system was applied and talks through his/her decisions about appropriate consequences. Questions and statements a CT might use during a think-aloud discussion could include:
 - a. “Let’s think about what just occurred.”
 - b. “What did you see me do?”
 - c. “What options do we have?”
 - d. “If we do ____, what might happen?”
 - e. “I know I have already done _____. So, my next step is to _____.”
 - f. “Is there an alternative ...”
3. The next time a similar situation occurs, the CT asks the ST to think aloud his/her thinking, guiding as needed. As the ST is thinking aloud, the CT can monitor his/her understanding and reasoning processes.
4. Provide time to discuss how you make decisions about discipline and classroom routines, and about instructional strategies and delivery.