

Protocol Toolkit: Effortful Thinking

Effortful thinking toolkit protocols (or instructional routines) support novice teachers in meeting the criteria for this teacher action and in building fluency with a small but flexible set of instructional routines that they will be able to apply. The strategies below allow novice teachers to elicit effortful thinking from all their learners.

Everyone Talks



“Turn and talk”

A teacher-offered opportunity for students to turn to another student and talk something through for a brief period of time before whole group activities resume.

“Table talk”

A similar protocol to "turn and talk" except that students engage with everyone at their table (or group of desks). Students get to hear from more than one person in the process.

“Stand up pair up”

Creates opportunities for movement during the class period by allowing students to discuss with a partner.

Everyone Writes



“Chalk talk”

Fosters a ‘silent discussion’ among students, allowing for significant think time, equity of ‘voice,’ and a safe space for risk-taking in both initial ideas and responses to others’ thoughts.

“Stop and jot”

Ensures that all students have deep processing time before discussion with peers.

“Whiteboards”

Allows students to quickly write, erase, and rewrite what they’re working on and give them a larger space to work out ideas. This protocol allows students to do effortful independent thinking before showing work to the class.

Key Takeaway



These structures for engaging all learners are **only as good as the quality of the prompts** students are thinking about. If the prompt isn't effortful, these structures won't get students thinking.