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GRADES 6 TO 12

Essential Practices for Literacy Instruction in the Secondary ELA Classroom

Deliberate, research-supported efforts to motivate, engage, and support reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing in English Language Arts

1. Problem-based instruction

Develop and implement interactive units of instruction that frame important problems or questions in order to provide authentic purposes for students to read and write beyond being assigned or expected to do so (e.g. for their enjoyment/interest, to ask and answer questions about humanity, society, their community and/or individual lives, to address needs in their community or beyond, or to communicate with a specific audience).

Within these problem-based units, the teacher:

- engages students in asking questions, both literal and conceptual, about the world around them to develop generative thinkers.

- engages students in abstract and disciplinary-specific thinking and reasoning (e.g. analyzing literature, composing texts in a rhetorically-appropriate manner, participating in effective communication).

- helps students make sense of texts from different time periods, cultures, and regions.

- aids students in seeing themes from literature in their everyday lives.

- supports students to develop critical literacy and critical viewing practices across different text genres and formats.

- helps students understand the text features of different genres, and how different genres function in the world outside of school.

- creates opportunities for students to enact literate identities, drawing from both within and outside of school literacy practices and funds of knowledge (e.g. providing opportunities for students to see themselves as authors by publishing and sharing their work in the school community).

- presents regular opportunities for students to choose materials, products, and processes in their reading, writing, and communication.

- offers regular opportunities for students to engage in independent, sustained reading and writing activities as well as collaborate with peers, such as through small-group discussion of texts of interest and opportunities to write within group projects.

- provides scaffolded support to students as needed to assist them in developing their literacy proficiencies, removing supports over time to generate more independence.

- differentiates instructional processes and product expectations to account for varying academic needs and capabilities and appropriately challenge all students.

Rainey, E. C. (2017). Disciplinary literacy in English language arts: Exploring the social and problem-based nature of literary reading and reasoning. *Reading Research Quarterly, 52*(1), 53-71. doi:10.1002/rrq.154

Ertmer, P. A., Glazewski, K. D., Jones, D., Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A., Goktas, Y., Collins, K., & Kocaman, A. (2009). Facilitating technology-enhanced problem-based learning (PBL) in the middle school classroom: An examination of how and why teachers adapt. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research, 20*(1), 35.

2. Diverse texts and abundant reading opportunities in the school

The teacher:

- engages students with texts that provide entry way into questions, puzzles, themes, authors, issues, and/or genres that can be investigated further.

- provides access and regular opportunities to work with a wide range of texts (i.e. print, audio, visual, and multimodal) of varying complexity, structure, and genre (e.g., novels, short stories, poetry, comics, newspaper articles, magazines, journals, advertisements, websites, discussion boards, internet postings), including the following:

  - ❖ rigorous texts on grade level and beyond,

  - ❖ texts that connect to their interests and that also reflect their own and others' backgrounds and cultural experiences,

  - ❖ texts that allow students to reflect on their own identities as well as engage them in exploring identities different than their own.

- engages students with online texts, databases, and tools in the service of investigations, inquiries, or analyses.

- fosters a reading culture that promotes engagement with diverse texts in a variety of contexts (e.g. independent reading, online communities, reading conferences, book clubs, book talks).

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Athanases, S. Z. (1998). Diverse learners, diverse texts: Exploring identity and difference through literary encounters. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *30*(2), 273-296.

Lopez, A. E. (2011). Culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy in diverse English classrooms: A case study of a secondary English teacher's activism and agency. *English Teaching*, *10*(4), 75.

Lee, C.D. (2007). *Culture, literacy, & learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

3. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary reading practices

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for reading, listening to, and viewing a variety of texts (see recommendation #1 above).

- teaches students to apply disciplinary tools and concepts when working with text.

  - ❖ explicitly names, describes, and models the dispositions, strategies, and patterns of thinking typically applied or used in disciplines connected to English Language Arts.

  - ❖ models through think-alouds how to ask questions of texts.

  - ❖ provides explicit instruction in vocabulary, literary elements and devices, and language skills in the context of reading.

  - ❖ in addition to reading for literary merit, also supports students as they read texts to examine author's craft in producing the text.

  - ❖ models how to consider texts from different perspectives and engage in critical reading or viewing practices.

  - ❖ supports students to work with different literary theories to interpret texts.

  - ❖ teaches students how to synthesize concepts and ideas, as well as analyze language use, across texts, and disciplines.

- supports students to read, analyze, and critically view multimodal texts (e.g. web pages, graphic novels, and digital narrations) in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes.

- engages students in research and argumentation about questions of interest to them.

  - ❖ connects literature and other texts to current social problems and themes.

  - ❖ provides instruction and practice in reading, analyzing, and synthesizing across multiple texts in the research process.

  - ❖ supports youth in determining the significance of examples, information, or facts they locate through different sources(digital and physical) in the context of research and inquiry.

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3. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary reading practices (continued)

- ❖ models how to discern patterns and relationships (e.g. cause and effect) across data, accounts, or explanations.
- ❖ teaches students to gather and evaluate evidence from multiple sources to develop evidence-based arguments
- ❖ helps students learn to identify and critique the claims of others
- explores non-fiction and fiction texts with students to examine how words, sentence structures, and the organization of texts are used to convey concepts and messages.

- provides learning activities that develop critical digital, media, and visual literacies.
- scaffolds reading activities as appropriate using a range of strategies.

Rainey, E. C., & Moje, E. B. (2012). Building insider knowledge: Teaching students to read, write and think in ELA and across the disciplines. *English Education, 45*(1), 71-90. http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/stable/23365001

Lee, C.D., Goldman, S.R., Levine, S., & Magliano, J. (2016). Epistemic cognition in literary reasoning. In I. Braten, W.A. Sandoval, J.A. Greene (Eds.), *Handbook of epistemic cognition* (pp. 165-183). New York, NY: Routledge.

Reynolds, T., & Rush, L.S. (2017). Experts and novices reading literature: An analysis of disciplinary literacy in English language arts. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 56*(3), 199-216.

4. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary writing

The teacher:

- establishes various compelling reasons for writing in English-related disciplines (e.g. literary studies, journalism, technical writing, creative writing) (see recommendation #1)
- teaches students how to analyze rhetorical context when producing text and communication, including:
  - ❖ writing for different purposes, such as analyzing a literary text, entertaining an audience, or informing an audience.
  - ❖ writing for different authentic audiences (such as peers, community members, and other public audiences)
- considering how language choices and conventions can shift depending on purpose and audience
- provides regular time for students to write both formally and informally, acknowledging and providing opportunities for practice with different writing strategies and processes
  - ❖ reinforcing the different recursive stages of process writing (including prewriting, planning, drafting, revising for feedback, editing, and publishing)
  - ❖ reinforcing that writing for different purposes and genres relies on different processes and strategies
- teaches and reinforces the habits of minds of good writers (e.g., creativity, flexibility, persistence, curiosity)
- explicitly names, describes, and models the dispositions, strategies, and patterns of thinking

that are typical of different genres within ELA (e.g., literary analysis, creative nonfiction, poetry, book reviews, technical documents)

- ❖ provides students practice in writing in different modalities, registers, voices, and rhetorical styles, using different media for different purposes and audiences
- offers explicit instruction in ELA-related vocabulary, textual elements and devices, and language skills in the context of writing
- teaches students to use digital tools to deepen and communicate content knowledge
- moves students to independent levels of research, reading, and writing

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Rainey, E. C., & Moje, E. B. (2012). Building insider knowledge: Teaching students to read, write and think in ELA and across the disciplines. *English Education, 45*(1), 71-90. http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/stable/23365001

VanTassel-Baska, J., Zuo, L., Avery, L. D., & Little, C. A. (2002). A curriculum study of gifted-student learning in the language arts. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 46*(1), 30-44.

5. Higher-order discussion of increasingly complex text across varying participation structures

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for engaging in discussion of text (see recommendation #1 above), including texts produced by students.

- allocates time for whole-group, small-group, and paired discussions of text, and uses a range of grouping and discussion strategies (e.g. Socratic seminars, jigsaw, etc.) , including face-to-face and online formats.

- has students use appropriate evidence from the text to support claims in discussion.

- poses questions that foster textual understanding and deep engagement with text, as well as development of critical viewing and critical reading of diverse texts (including visual texts).

- provides modeling and instruction to teach students how to generate their own higher-level questions about texts (e.g. appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria).

- teaches students how to engage in productive discussions, including discussion moves appropriate to ELA (e.g. discussing a text from different perspectives, identifying and discussing an author's use of literary devices, identifying rhetorical moves in a model text).

- offers opportunities for dramatic interpretations of literature.

- engages students in discussions around how words, sentence structures, and the organization of texts are used to convey concepts and messages in both non-fiction and fiction texts.

- asks students to identify similar themes, characters, conflicts, linguistic features, plot structures, and text structures among different texts and seek connections, analogies, and patterns.

- supports students in connecting historical, social, political, and psychological issues with texts.

- engages students in discussion around digital and media literacies, and engages students in dialogue through digital tools to share and communicate ideas with text, speech, and visualization.

Applebee, A. N., Langer, J. A., Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (2003). Discussion-based approaches to developing understanding: Classroom instruction and student performance in middle and high school English. *American Educational Research Journal*, *40*(3), 685-730.

Nystrand, M. (2006). Research on the role of classroom discourse as it affects reading comprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 392-412.

6. Opportunities for and instruction in critically viewing, speaking and listening

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for presenting or performing and listening to presentations/performances.

- provides regular opportunities for students to listen and respond to oral presentations, including those that incorporate visual and quantitative information to make students' conclusions public (e.g., debate, reports, presentations to external audiences).

- models and teaches strategies for effective oral communication across different genres.

- teaches students strategies for critically viewing, as well as listening and responding to presentations or performances.

- engages students in discussion of, and practice with, norms and strategies for engaging in civil discourse around a range of issues, including potentially controversial topics.

Nystrand, M. (1997). *Opening Dialogue: Understanding the Dynamics of Language and Learning in the English Classroom. Language and Literacy Series*. Teachers College Press, PO Box 20, Williston, VT 05495-0020 (paperback: ISBN-0-8077-3573-6, $19.95; cloth: ISBN-0-8077-3574-4, $44)..

Langer, J. A. (2001). Beating the odds: Teaching middle and high school students to read and write well. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(4), 837-880.

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7. Intentional efforts to build vocabulary and conceptual knowledge

The teacher:

- presents vocabulary as language in use (in context).

- teaches multiple, nuanced meanings of a word across different contexts and encourage students to use new words in meaningful ways (e.g., discussion of texts, discussions of content area learning, semantic maps).

- provides repeated opportunities for students to review and use new vocabulary over time, including discussing ways that new vocabulary relate to one another and to students' existing conceptual knowledge.

- explicitly teaches words that build necessary knowledge for reading and writing texts of instruction.

  - ❖ engages students in morphemic analysis (i.e., analysis of the meaning of word parts) of unfamiliar vocabulary encountered in texts and instruction.

- selects Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words to teach using disciplinary texts of instruction.

- encourages talk about vocabulary among students, particularly during disciplinary learning and students' discussions of print and/or digital texts.

- encourages students to identify, explore, and use new vocabulary independently and provides instruction to support this process.

Smagorinsky, P., & Smith, M. W. (1992). The nature of knowledge in composition and literary understanding: The question of specificity. *Review of Educational Research*, *62*(3), 279-305.

Smagorinsky, P. (1991). The writer's knowledge and the writing process: A protocol analysis. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 339-364.

8. Ongoing observation and assessment of students' language and literacy development that informs their education

The teacher:

- engages in observation and assessment guided by:

  - ❖ an understanding of language and adolescent literacy development (e.g. creating a range of assessment items guided by an understanding of different reading processes such as literal and inferential comprehension of text).

  - ❖ students' strengths, areas for improvement, and socioemotional needs .

  - ❖ relevant standards documents; for example, Michigan K-12 Standards for English Language Arts.

- prioritizes observation and assessment that is closest to authentic reading and writing

  - ❖ e.g. prioritizing student work/writing as data for making instructional decisions as opposed to standardized test scores which can mask proficiencies and areas in need of development.

- administers assessments as one source of information to determine which students may need additional instructional supports.

- employs formative and diagnostic assessment tools as needed to inform specific instructional targets (e.g., assessing knowledge of specific vocabulary words taught, reading and writing strategies being used and not used) and engage in the instructional practices described in this document.

- provides timely and specific formative feedback to guide students' learning and literacy development

- involves students in the development of success criteria and learning goals, as well as in supported, productive self and peer assessment.

- develops assessments that analyze how students develop and use disciplinary tools, concepts, and literacy practices.

Marshall, B. (2004). Goals or horizons—the conundrum of progression in English: or a possible way of understanding formative assessment in English. *Curriculum Journal*, *15*(2), 101-113.

Hodgen, J., & Marshall, B. (2005). Assessment for learning in English and mathematics: A comparison. *Curriculum journal*, *16*(2), 153-176.

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9. Community networking to tap into available funds of knowledge in support of developing students' knowledge and identities

The teacher:

- helps students connect and build on their in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and identities,
  - ❖ connecting learning and literacy development to family and community issues, as well as economic and political decisions.
  - ❖ engaging with community activities and audiences to address natural and social concerns.
  - ❖ connecting to youth and popular cultural production, activities, networks, and concerns.
- leverage students' literacies, learning, and knowledge to benefit their school, district, and/or community (e.g. peer education, research fairs, student to student mentoring, service learning).

- invites authors, artists, journalists, media professionals, and other speakers relevant to English Language Arts to the classroom (either face-to-face or via digital tools) to work with and engage in conversation with students.
- connects to and engages with literary experiences and spaces in local communities (libraries, bookstores, local writers, etc.).
- honors and engages with the diversity of literacy practices in the school community.
- enables students to communicate conclusions to and/or share literary work with authentic audiences.

Lee, C.D. (2007). *Culture, literacy, & learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gutiérrez, K. D. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading research quarterly*, *43*(2), 148-164.

10. Metadiscursive awareness within and across academic and cultural domains (attention to language use at the "meta" level, e.g. talking about talk)

The teacher:

- supports students to connect and build on their in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and ways with words by identifying language processes and discussing how language is used based on different purposes and audiences.
  - ❖ e.g. discussing the role of audience and purpose with students by having them compare how they communicate with friends about an issue or problem to how they might communicate about the same topic with an authority figure like a principal, and then using this discussion to help them think about other comparisons like the differences between writing a text message and writing an academic paper. The goal is to make them aware of how language can and should shift in different contexts.
- engages students in high level discussion about ways with words within and across the disciplines.
  - ❖ e.g. discussing how and why the meaning of a word like product changes in meaning across academic contexts
  - ❖ e.g. noting how the use of first person in writing changes across academic disciplines and genres

- provides learning activities that teach students to evaluate how language is used in powerful and effective ways in the discipline based on the purpose, audience, social context, and genre of the text.
  - ❖ e.g. having students analyze important, influential texts (e.g. Langston Hughes' poem, "I too") and discuss why and how and why that particular text made an impact, with an emphasis on the use of language.
  - ❖ e.g. teaching students about the standards of evidence in the disciplines associated with English Language Arts (journalism vs. literary critique) and using these to create powerful arguments.

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Heath, S.B. *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Commuities and Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Martínez, R. A. (2010). " Spanglish" as Literacy Tool: Toward an Understanding of the Potential Role of Spanish-English Code-Switching in the Development of Academic Literacy. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 124-149.

Gabriel, R., Wenz, C., & Dostal, H. (2016). Disciplinary Text-Dependent Questions: Questioning for Learning in the Disciplines. The Challenge of Literacy in the Disciplines. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *89*(6), 202-207.