



Essential Practices for Disciplinary Literacy Instruction in the Secondary Classroom

This document was developed by the **Disciplinary Literacy Task Force**, a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN), which represents Michigan's 56 Intermediate School Districts.

Deliberate,
research-supported
efforts to motivate,
engage, and
support reading
and writing

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCIPLINARY LITERACY ESSENTIAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

This document is intended to be read in concert with the Essential Practices in Early and Elementary Literacy. For more information, visit www.LiteracyEssentials.org

You may not excerpt from this document in published form, print or digital, without written permission from the MAISA GELN Literacy Task Force. This document may be posted or reproduced only in its entirety (thirty-six pages).

To reference this document: Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators General Education Leadership Network Disciplinary Literacy Task Force (2019) *Essential instructional practices in disciplinary literacy: 6 to 12*. Lansing, MI: Authors

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to increase Michigan's capacity to improve children's and adolescent's literacies by identifying a focused set of research-supported instructional practices that have been shown to increase student achievement and/or engagement with academic literacies. These identified practices can be the focus of professional learning experiences throughout the state. The focus of the document is on classroom practices, rather than on school or system level practices. Research suggests that each of the ten sets of practices, if implemented in every secondary core content classroom (English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics) at the unit and course

level, could make a measurable positive difference in the literacy development and achievement of secondary students in the state.

These recommended practices should be integrated into instruction for all students, not just for those who are already high achieving or doing advanced coursework. Furthermore, these instructional practices should not be approached as an add-on to teaching content, but rather as a means to teach content and engage students in deeper learning. Students will need scaffolding as well as differentiated instruction as they are apprenticed into disciplinary literacy and learning practices. In addition, educators will need to pay careful attention to learning progressions and vertical alignment across grade levels when considering how to implement these practices systemically.

These practices should be viewed as essential components of all core course instruction at the secondary level. However, this document is not a list of instructional standards, nor is it meant to be an evaluation tool or checklist, but rather a resource for planning and implementing teacher professional learning opportunities that promote research supported teaching practices. Teachers will need time, opportunities to collaborate, and differentiated professional learning to implement these practices.

When implemented well, these instructional practices will help teachers engage their students with the content and skills outlined by the Michigan academic standards for English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics at the Secondary level. Thus, they should not be presented or understood as being in competition with the learning of content, but rather in the service of content learning.

Choosing to enact the practices on this list does not lock individual districts, schools, and teachers into any particular curriculum or approach and allows for considerable autonomy and choice for educators. Disciplinary literacy instruction can and should be incorporated with instructional approaches and systems such as Project Based Learning, Culturally Responsive Teaching, or Cultures of Thinking. The practices listed can be used with a wide range of instructional resources and within many different structures of the school day; the document does not specify one particular program or approach to literacy instruction. We limited this list to ten practices; there are other literacy instruction practices that may be worthy of attention. In addition, new literacy research could alter or add to the instructional practices recommended here.

1. Problem-based instruction

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

The teacher:

- engages students in developing and asking questions, as well as planning inquiries;
- engages students in disciplinary-specific thinking;
- helps students make sense of problems at different scales, persevere in solving them, or make conjectures about solutions;
- helps students see connections to their lives by reading and engaging in real-world and issue-based investigations;
- creates opportunities for students to enact literate identities connected to their learning;
- provides regular opportunities for students to make choices in their reading, writing, and communication;
- offers regular opportunities for students to collaborate with peers in reading and writing, such as through small-group discussion of texts on questions of interest, and opportunities to write within group projects; and
- provides scaffolds and differentiation to appropriately challenge all students and develop their literacy proficiencies.

Goldman, S.R., Britt, M.A., Brown, W., Cribb, G., George, M., Greenleaf, C., Lee, C.D., Shanahan, C., & Project READI. (2016). Disciplinary literacies and learning to read for understanding: A conceptual framework for disciplinary literacy. *Educational Psychologist*, 51(2), 219-246. doi:10.1080/00461520.2016.1168741

Greenleaf, C., Schoenbach, R., Cziko, C., & Mueller, F. L. (2001). Apprenticing adolescent readers to academic literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(1), 79-129.

Mergendoller, J. R. , Maxwell, N. L. , & Bellisimo, Y. (2006). The Effectiveness of Problem-Based Instruction: A Comparative Study of Instructional Methods and Student Characteristics. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 1(2).

Moje, E.B. (2015) Doing and Teaching Disciplinary Literacy with Adolescent Learners: A Social and Cultural Enterprise. *Harvard Educational Review*: June 2015, Vol. 85, No. 2, pp. 254-278.

Sungur, S., & Tekkaya, C. (2006). Effects of Problem-Based Learning and Traditional Instruction on Self-Regulated Learning. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(5), 307-320 doi:10.3200/JOER.99.5.307-320

2. Diverse texts and abundant reading opportunities in the school

The teacher:

- engages students with texts that provide entry way into concepts, themes, and/or investigations of compelling issues;
- provides access and regular opportunities to work with a wide range of texts (print, audio, digital, multimodal); authentic to the disciplines of varying complexity, structure, and genre; and
- engages students with online texts, databases, and tools in the service of investigations.

notes _____

Moje, E. B., Dillon, D. R., & O'Brien, D. G. (2000). Re-examining the roles of the learner, the text, and the context in secondary literacy. *Journal of Educational Research*, 93, 165-180.

Walker, N.T. & Bean, T. W. (2005). Sociocultural influences in content area teachers' selection and use of multiple texts. *Reading Research and Instruction* 44(4): 61- 77.

3. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary reading

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for reading;
- teaches students to apply disciplinary tools and concepts when working with text;
- explicitly names, describes, and models the dispositions, strategies, and patterns of thinking typical of the discipline;
- models through think-alouds how to ask questions of texts;
- teaches students to evaluate, gather, and use evidence from multiple sources (including multimodal and digital texts);
- Helps students learn to identify and critique the claims of others;
- regularly models and coaches students in critical reading practices relevant to the discipline;
- models how to discern data patterns, cause and effect relationships, and determine significance and provides students with support opportunities to do so themselves;
- engages students in real-world investigations about questions of interest to them using a range of texts; and
- models how to draw and present conclusions in oral and written language.

Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C. E. (2006). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy*. A report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Carnegie Corporation Adolescent Literacy Council. (2010). Time to act: An agenda for advancing literacy for college and career success. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Conley, M. (2008). Cognitive Strategy Instruction for Adolescents: What we know about the promise, what we don't know about the potential. *Harvard Educational Review* 78(1): 84-106.

Deshler, D. D., Schumaker, J. B., Lenz, B. K., Bulgren, J. A., Hock, M. F., Knight, J., & Ehren, B. J. (2001). Ensuring Content-Area Learning by Secondary Students with Learning Disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 16(2), 96-108. doi: 10.1111/0938-8982.00011

Fang, Z., & Schleppegrell, M. J. (2010). Disciplinary literacies across content areas: Supporting secondary reading through functional language analysis. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(7), 587-597.

Fang, Z., & Schleppegrell, M. J. (2010). Disciplinary literacies across content areas: Supporting secondary reading through functional language analysis. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(7), 587-597.

Goldman, S.R., Britt, M.A., Brown, W., Cribb, G., George, M., Greenleaf, C., Lee, C.D., Shanahan, C., & Project READI. (2016). Disciplinary literacies and learning to read for understanding: A conceptual framework for disciplinary literacy. *Educational Psychologist*, 51(2), 219-246. doi:10.1080/00461520.2016.1168741

Greenleaf, C., Schoenbach, R., Cziko, C., & Mueller, F. L. (2001). Apprenticing adolescent readers to academic literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(1), 79-129.

Learned, J., Stockdill, D., & Moje, E.B. (2011). Integrating reading strategies and knowledge building in adolescent literacy instruction. In A.E. Farstrup & J. Samuels (Ed.s), *What Reading Research Has to Say*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Lee, C. D., & Spratley, A. (2010). Reading in the disciplines and the challenges of adolescent literacy. New York City: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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.

Schoenbach, R., & Greenleaf, C. (2012). *Reading for understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship improves disciplinary learning in secondary and college classrooms* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content-area literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(1), 40-61.

notes _____

4. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary writing

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for writing and communicating;
- engages students in writing to process and analyze texts;
- teaches students to apply disciplinary tools and concepts when producing text;
- explicitly names, describes, and models the dispositions, strategies, and patterns of thinking typical of the discipline;
- provides opportunities to study models and write a variety of texts for a variety of purposes and audiences;
- provides instruction in discipline-specific writing processes, strategies, and conventions;
- teaches students to gather and organize evidence to support and communicate.
- provides explicit instruction as needed in text features, writing mechanics and other standards-aligned content;
- provides regular time for students to write, both formally and informally; for a variety of purposes and audiences;
- engages students in using both paper/pencil and digital media tools to research; and
- scaffolds writing activities as appropriate, and moves students to independent levels of research, reading, and writing.

Graham, S. and Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high school*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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.

Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content-area literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(1), 40-61.

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

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons and allocates time for whole-group, small-group, and paired discussion of text, using a range of discussion and grouping strategies;
- teaches students how to engage in productive discussions, including through digital tools;
- develops discussions that surface in productive ways students' misconceptions about topics, concepts, or issues, and engages students in communicating and critiquing conclusions;
- poses questions that foster textual understanding and higher-order engagement with text;
- provides modeling and instruction to teach students how to generate their own higher-level questions about texts;
- engages students in discussion of text genres, structures, and discursive practices of the discipline;
- supports students in using artifacts and data to build arguments;
- helps students learn to situate facts and events in larger schemes and concepts in their talk and discussion; and
- supports students in explaining or connecting real world events and trends from a disciplinary perspective.

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. doi:10.3102/00028312040003685.

Lee, C. & Smagorinsky, P. (2000). Introduction: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry. In C. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskian Perspectives on Literacy Research*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

6. Opportunities for and instruction in speaking and listening

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for presenting and listening to presentations;
- 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., debates, reports, presentations to external audiences);
- models and teaches strategies for effective oral communication in academic disciplines; and
- teaches students strategies for listening and responding to presentations.

7. Intentional efforts to build vocabulary and conceptual knowledge

The teacher:

- presents vocabulary as language in use (as opposed to words from decontextualized lists);
- teaches multiple meanings or nuanced meanings of a word across different contexts and encourages students to use new words in meaningful contexts (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 relates 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;
- 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 or digital texts; and
- encourages students to identify and explore new vocabulary independently and provides instruction to support this process.

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. Guilford Press.

Nagy, W., & Hiebert, E. (2011). Toward a theory of word selection. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, P. Afflerbach, & E. B. Moje (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 4). New York: Routledge.

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 literacy development
 - ❖ an understanding of the student as a member of a cultural community;
 - ❖ students' strengths, areas for improvement, and socioemotional needs;
 - ❖ relevant standards documents;
 - ❖ prioritizes observation and assessment that is closest to actual reading and writing (e.g. prioritizing student work/writing as data for making instructional decisions as opposed to relying on 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;
- involves students in the development of learning goals, as well as in supported, productive self- and peer-assessment and feedback;
- develops assessment that analyzes how students apply disciplinary tools, concepts, and literacy practices across relevant domains; and
- assesses students' ability to evaluate sources, use evidence, and make evidence-based claims.

Afflerbach, P. (2007). *Understanding and using reading assessment, K-12*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Johnston, P., & Costello, P. (2005). Principles for literacy assessment. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 40(2), 256-267. doi:10.1598/RRQ.40.2.6

notes

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

The teacher provides learning activities that:

- help students connect and build on in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and identities;
 - ❖ connect learning to family, cultural, and community histories;
- address community activities, issues, or concerns engage students in communication and problem solving about them;
- invite people representing a variety of occupations into the classroom (either face-to-face or via digital tools) to work with and engage in conversation with students; and
- enable students to communicate conclusions to authentic audiences.

notes.

Moje, E. B., & Hinchman, K. (2004). Culturally responsive practices for youth literacy learning. In J. Dole & T. Jetton (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy research and practice* (pp. 331-350). New York : Guilford Press.

Moll, L. C., C. Amanti, et al. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice* 31(2): 132.

Moje, E.B. (2015) Doing and Teaching Disciplinary Literacy with Adolescent Learners: A Social and Cultural Enterprise. *Harvard Educational Review*: June 2015, Vol. 85, No. 2, pp. 254-278.

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 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;
- engages students in **metalinguistic** discussion about ways with words within and across the disciplines; and
- 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, context, and genre of the text.

Fang, Z. (2012). Language correlates of disciplinary literacy. *Topics in Language Disorders* 32(1), 19-34.

Fang, Z., & Schleppegrell, M. J. (2010). Disciplinary literacies across content areas: Supporting secondary reading through functional language analysis. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(7), 587-597.

Moje, E. B. (2007). Developing socially just subject-matter instruction: A review of the literature on disciplinary literacy. In L. Parker (Ed.), *Review of research in education*, (pp. 1-44). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Moje, E.B. (2015) Doing and Teaching Disciplinary Literacy with Adolescent Learners: A Social and Cultural Enterprise. *Harvard Educational Review*: June 2015, Vol. 85, No. 2, pp. 254-278.

notes

