

# An Introduction to the MAISA General Education Leadership Network's Essential Practices for Disciplinary Literacy Instruction in the Secondary Classroom

Our students learn the foundations of literacy throughout their elementary school years. As students continue to develop their skills through middle school and high school, literacy instruction must also help them meet increasingly complex subject area demands. These demands include developing the critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills specific to each discipline.

In the secondary grades, content-expert educators enable students to develop the skills of disciplinary literacy, including the specialized vocabulary, communication practices, and tools for each discipline. Students learn to navigate reading, writing, speaking, and listening demands. These demands shift depending on the contexts, purposes, and audiences specific to a discipline. Educators provide instruction intentionally designed to support students as they are apprenticed into ways of thinking and communicating that are valued in subjects like mathematics, science, social studies, the English language arts, and all other secondary school content areas.

The *Essential Practices* document identifies ten cross-disciplinary strategies based on findings from an extensive review of a wide body of research conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan. Michigan content and learning experts from the intermediate school districts (ISDs), state professional educator organizations, university researchers and educators, and the Michigan Department of Education have detailed these strategies within each of the four core subject areas. In classrooms where disciplinary literacy is a focus, students experience engaging, deep, and highly relevant learning that is readily applicable to life in and out of the classroom.

## Key Themes Which Guide Disciplinary Literacy Instruction

- Learning is problem- or question-driven
- Students access, analyze, and create a variety of texts typical of the discipline
- Educators intentionally integrate the disciplinary literacy instructional practices into each unit of study
- Educators and students connect to their communities and networks as they engage in disciplined inquiry and apply diverse literacy practices
- Educators and students attend to language use within and across the disciplines

These essential instructional practices will be the focus of ongoing professional learning to support educators as they integrate disciplinary literacy practices with other high-quality approaches. GELN and the Disciplinary Literacy Task Force are working to develop a variety of supports, including a website, webinars, and workshops.

To find out more, please visit <http://bit.ly/DISCIPLINARYLIT>.

Contact for any questions:

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