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General Education Leadership Network
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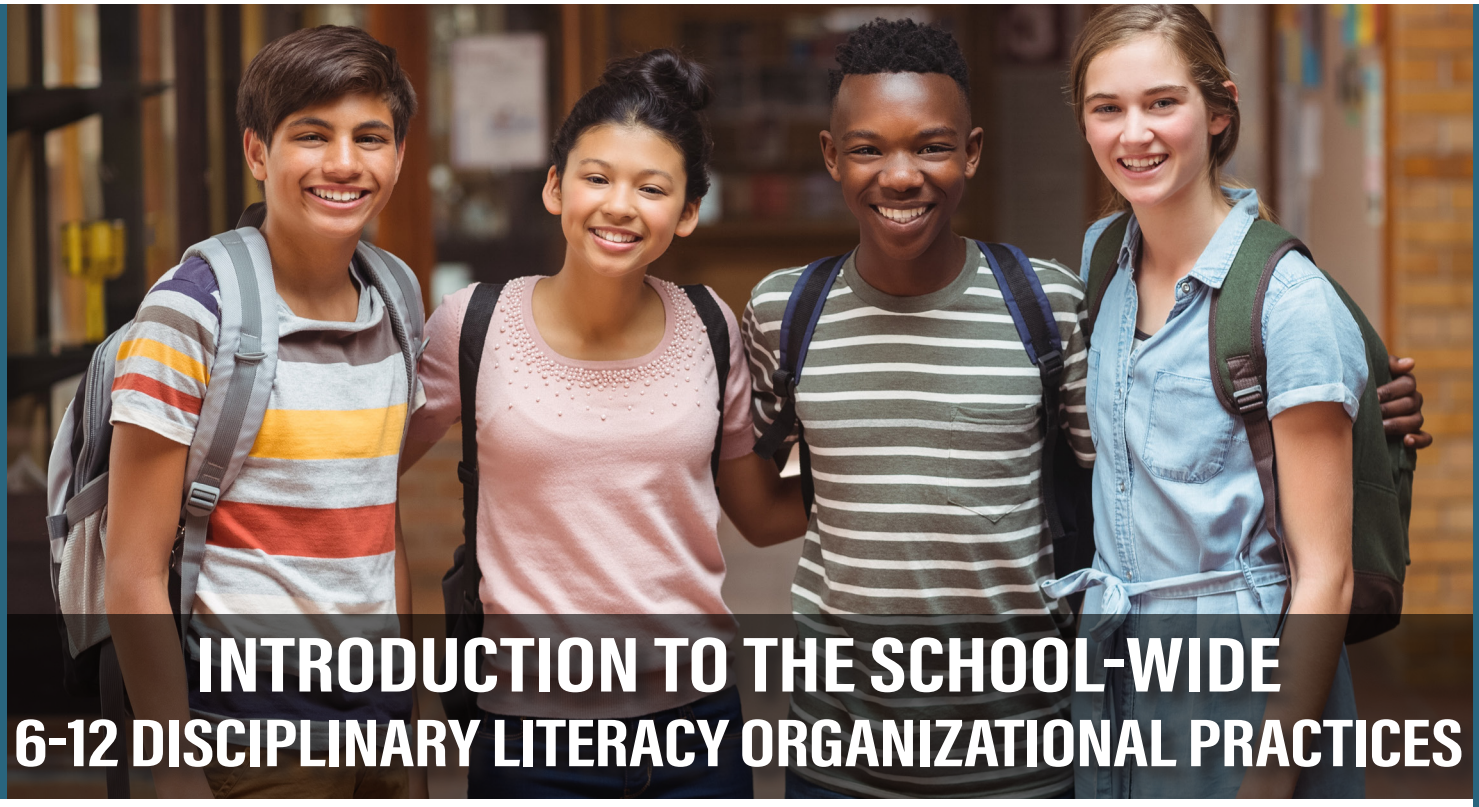
Essential School-Wide Practices in Disciplinary Literacy: Grades 6 to 12

This document was developed by the 6-12 **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.



INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL-WIDE 6-12 DISCIPLINARY LITERACY ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

Disciplinary literacy refers to the specialized literacy practices of a particular disciplinary domain or area (e.g. mathematics, history, biology). These practices include the ways that scholars identify, evaluate, use, and produce the wide range of texts and information or data sources typical of their particular discipline, including the specialized reading, writing, and communication practices used to analyze, produce, and share information.

This document is intended to be read in concert with the **Essential Practices for Disciplinary Literacy Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Grades 6 to 12.** For more information, visit www.LiteracyEssentials.org.

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to increase Michigan's capacity to improve adolescents' literacy by identifying effective practices that can be implemented at the organizational level in secondary schools. To meet the needs of all learners, organizational practices must support literacy development in ways that systematically impact learning throughout schools. Each of the eight recommended school-wide practices should occur in all Michigan middle and high school learning environments. These Essential School-Wide Practices in Disciplinary Literacy: Grades 6 to 12 should be viewed, as in practice guides in medicine, as presenting a minimum 'standard of care' for Michigan's students ; where all efforts, structures, resources and people involved in creating effective learning environments for students share a clear, common vision for equitable learning and development, and this vision is clearly communicated, understood, and used to drive this work. As rigorous as this resource is, it is not a checklist of activities, a guide to implementation science or change theory, nor is it a how-to on team development. The processes leaders use to enact the Essential Practices will lead to continuous improvement that supports disciplinary literacy.

The Essential School-Wide Practices in 6-12 Disciplinary Literacy can be used in a variety of secondary settings. The document does not specify any particular programs or policies but focuses on research-based practices that can apply to a number of programs and settings. At the organizational level it is the responsibility of the school leadership to ensure that these practices are implemented consistently and are regularly enhanced through a continuous improvement process.

1. The school forms a ***leadership team*** composed of instructional leaders with a shared commitment to continuous improvement in disciplinary literacy and ongoing attention to data.

With the guidance and support of the lead administrator, the school or program leadership team:

- includes members with considerable and current expertise and/or leadership roles (e.g., department chairs, media specialist, school librarian, reading specialist) in literacy within all disciplines (social studies, mathematics, science, English language arts, career readiness, performing and technical arts, etc.);
- promotes the implementation of intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary literacy (See *Essential Practices for Disciplinary Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Grades 6 to 12*);
- develops or aligns current vision, mission, set of goals, and educational philosophy that guides the school climate and students' learning and that are shared among all roles and subject areas to support continuous improvement;
- maintains a comprehensive system (e.g., formative, summative, family input, student voice) that focuses on equitable whole student learning and adolescent development, and uses that information to inform students' education;
- focuses on multiple points of data and evidence and keeps the best interests of students paramount in assessment, knowing the primary purpose of both data usage and assessment is to improve teaching and learning;
- ensures a collaborative problem-solving approach that may include administrators, teacher leaders, teachers, parents, aides, instructional specialists, library media specialists, special educators, students, and others as needed;
- distributes leadership throughout the organization for the purpose of building leadership capacity among all staff;
- protects and supports time for collaborative teacher teams to learn, practice, and reflect on their skills related to disciplinary literacy instruction; and
- makes decisions based on deep understanding of community, school and district goals, strengths, and needs.

2. The ***organizational climate*** reflects a collective sense of responsibility for all students and a focus on developing independence and competence in a safe disciplinary literacy learning environment.

All adults—administrators, teachers, specialists, and support staff—throughout the organization:

- share and act upon a sense of responsibility for the academic growth and overall well being of every student that is grounded in the shared belief that every student can and will be successful, leveraging assets from their location, demographics, identities, or program funding;
- ensure that the entire learning environment is emotionally and physically safe, such that there are positive adult-family-student relationships and positive peer relationships;
- support the development of students' identities and self-efficacy by engaging them in such practices as planning for, observing and regulating, and monitoring their literacy growth in each discipline;
- help all students develop perceptions of competence and agency in disciplinary literacy through such practices as helping students identify and build on their academic strengths, providing specific feedback to help students grow, and modeling the thoughts and practices in each discipline; and
- promote authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students by building culturally sustaining and responsive learning environments.

3. The ***learning environment*** reflects a strong commitment to disciplinary literacy.

Throughout the learning environment, there is evidence of the following indicators:

- disciplinary literacy is a priority and is integrated into daily learning across all content areas (See *Essential Practices for Disciplinary Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Grades 6 to 12*);
- students and teachers are actively engaged with the school library, media center, and library media specialists, technology specialists and tools, and teachers across multiple disciplines;
- students regularly read, write, speak, listen, and critically view to enhance learning within the disciplines, and their work is made prominently visible (See *Essential Practices for Disciplinary Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Grades 6 to 12*);
- books, online texts, databases, and tools reflect diversity across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic locations, genders, and social roles, providing an entryway into concepts, themes, and/or investigations of compelling issues authentic to the disciplines and of varying complexity, structure, and genre;
- volunteers (e.g., parents, college students, community members) are recruited and prepared to support disciplinary literacy in an ongoing manner;
- opportunities for student voice and advocacy (e.g. student council, goal-setting, Restorative Circles, focus groups);
- class and school environments and instructional practices foster adolescent motivation, engagement, and belonging; and
- families and school staff work in authentic partnerships to develop and advance a shared definition of student success in disciplinary literacy.

4. Ongoing ***professional learning*** opportunities reflect research on adult learning and effective disciplinary literacy instruction.

School leaders ensure that professional learning opportunities are:

- data- and evidence-informed so that they meet the needs and best interests of teaching staff and their students;
- focused on the "why" as well as the "how" of effective problem-based instructional practices for each respective discipline;
- followed with opportunities for teachers to observe effective practice and to be observed and receive feedback from grade-level and disciplinary peers, mentors and coaches, and literacy consultants;
- driven by the understanding that teacher expertise is a strong predictor of student success;
- collaborative in nature, involving colleagues working together (e.g., study groups, collaborative inquiry, and problem solving) and inclusive of other classroom and school staff and leaders;
- focused on research-based instructional practices that foster meta-awareness within and across academics and cultural domains (See *Essential Practices for Disciplinary Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Grades 6 to 12*);
- based in an understanding of knowledge and skills to be learned (See *Essential Practices for Disciplinary Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Grades 6 to 12*);
- informed by current research on motivation and engagement to support students' learning;
- inclusive of modeling with colleagues who demonstrate effective practices with students; and provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their knowledge, practice, and goals in an ongoing and continuous manner.
- aligned to district and school continuous improvement goals; and
- informed by evidence-based practices in adult learning theory (e.g. active engagement, modeling and practice, discipline-specific, collaborative, reflective, job-embedded and sustained).

5. There is a system for implementing the allocation of ***academic support*** equitably in addition to high-quality classroom instruction with multiple supports available to students, building on existing disciplinary literacy skills.

School leaders ensure that:

- instruction and additional supports are implemented across learning environments, including the home, and are coherent and consistent with instruction received elsewhere in the school day and occur in addition to, not instead of, core instruction (e.g. extended learning time and tutoring);
- supports are differentiated to the individual student's specific profile of strengths and needs;
- highly effective educators are those teaching the students needing the most support;
- teachers are supported in using and reflecting on analyses of multiple, internal assessments (e.g., formative tools and feedback) and observation as an on-going basis to: identify individual student strengths and needs early and accurately; tailor instruction; and measure progress regularly; and
- students are provided regular opportunities to provide feedback and input into their learning experiences in school.

6. Organizational systems assess and respond to ***individual student needs*** that may impede disciplinary literacy development.

School leaders ensure that:

- any potential student learning, physical, visual, regulatory, and social-emotional needs that require specific conditions and supports are identified;
- current student support initiatives align with the organization structure; community, regional, and state priorities; family and community values, culture, and history; and other interventions and initiatives;
- every adult has access to research-informed strategies (e.g healing-centered, trauma-informed classroom practices) and tools to address each student's demonstrated needs, including, for example, strategies for improving socio-emotional skills such as emotional understanding and techniques for helping students develop executive functioning skills such as planning, reflecting, and goal-setting;
- students receive coordinated, intensive supports and services as needed, which are identified through continued collaboration among teachers, interventionists, family, and others whose expertise is relevant (e.g., special education teacher, school psychologist, school nurse, social worker); and all adults intentionally work to:
  - identify conditions that may impede disciplinary literacy learning;
  - modify learning environments to increase engagement and positive behavior;
  - draw on relationships with professional colleagues and students' families for continued guidance and support;
  - assess which school-wide behavior patterns warrant adopting school-wide strategies or programs, and then implement strategies shown to foster positive interactions that are restorative, empathetic, and student-centered (e.g. Restorative Practices), with particular attention to strategies or programs that have been shown to have positive impacts on disciplinary literacy development;
  - use data effectively to identify student strengths, assets, and funds of knowledge, and leverage these to address student needs in achieving disciplinary literacy; and
  - provide and resource student support services, including physical and mental health services (e.g. Community Schools models).

7. High-quality ***instructional resources*** are well maintained, available, and effectively utilized.

Leaders ensure that:

- teachers have consistent access to resources, including technological and curricular resources, that support research-informed instruction in all components of disciplinary literacy instruction and that provide continuity across content areas;
- teachers have professional learning and support for effective use of available technologies, materials, and resources;
- each student has diverse texts and abundant resources to support learning;
- well-stocked school and classroom libraries and/or media centers, with library media specialists, offer a large collection of digital books, print books, accessible information, and varied media for reading independently and with others; and
- the school engages in pro-active community-building activities that promote positive relationships across roles and lines of difference (families, partners, local business owners, neighbors, artists, healers, and others).

8. An intentional community networking strategy ***is implemented*** to support disciplinary literacy practices and identities.

Members of the learning organization connect beyond the school and engage with families to:

- prioritize learning about families and their language and literacy practices to inform instruction, drawing from families' daily routines, cultural knowledge, and skills accumulated in the home;
- provide regular opportunities for families to build a network of social relationships to support language and disciplinary literacy development (e.g., connect families with community organizations and with each other in order to celebrate and support disciplinary literacy);
- foster familial and community partnerships in the education of students;
- partner with local businesses and other organizations that facilitate opportunities for students to read, write, speak, listen, and view for purposes and audiences beyond school assignments;
- provide opportunities for individualized learning (e.g. one-on-one tutoring);
- develop opportunities for students to apply disciplinary literacy outside of the school hours, including through engaging in out-of-school time, library, community, citizen engagement, and school programs in the summer; and
- promote college and career readiness experiences.

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Process for Development and Review

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- GELN Early Literacy Task Force
- MAISA ELA ISD Leadership Group
- MAISA Mathematics Leadership Team
- MAISA General Education Leadership Network
- Michigan Department of Education
- Michigan Mathematics and Science Leadership Network
- Michigan State University
- MiSTEM Network
- Salem State University
- University of Michigan

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