6-12 Content Literacy:
Helping Students Read and Understand Within All Content Areas

Why do we need to consider literacy support for students in grades 6-12?
- 66 percent of 8th grade students fall below the proficient level in their ability to comprehend the meaning of text at their grade level.
- Students need to extract information and meaning from content area texts.
- Reading ability is a key predictor of achievement in mathematics and science.
- Students need literacy support in accessing the information so that they can become proficient within their disciplines.

What is Content Literacy and why do we need it?
"Content Literacy can be defined as the ability to use reading and writing for the acquisition of new content in a given discipline" (McKenna & Robinson, 1990). It represents the skills needed to acquire the knowledge of the content areas, such as basic content comprehension and writing skills, as well as partner reading, analyzing rubrics, and annotating text which are crucial to proficiency before moving on to more demanding literacy skills.

What is Disciplinary Literacy and why do we need it?
"*Disciplinary Literacy* refers to the shared ways of reading, writing, thinking, and reasoning within academic fields" (Sedita, 2015). Each discipline has different demands on students' abilities to read and comprehend that require a multitude of literacy-based skills, and these skills are learned best through direct instruction and application rather than observation. "Thus, middle and high school teachers, who are already part of the disciplinary culture by virtue of their disciplinary preparation, need to help students into the culture by making explicit the discipline-specific literacy practices of their areas" (Sedita, 2015). Disciplinary literacy gives students the skills they need that are aligned to the experts in those curricular fields.

Why are we focusing on Content Literacy before moving on to Disciplinary Literacy?
Before students can understand the literacy demands of specific disciplines (Disciplinary Literacy), they first need to understand the general demands of Content Literacy. Until the fundamental content literacy skills are mastered, there is a need to build competency before moving on to disciplinary literacy skills.

How does this tie into the science of reading?
Evidence-based practices grounded in the science of reading improve student literacy outcomes. The science of reading conveys to teachers how to provide direct instruction through the continuum of skills to become a proficient reader. Grades K-3 focus on the foundational skills of word recognition such as phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. Grades 4-12 develop the more advanced skills of language comprehension instruction that includes systematic and explicit language structures, verbal reasoning, background knowledge, literacy knowledge, and vocabulary strategies. These skills build a reader's ability to read and comprehend texts. Teachers should incorporate those strategies into daily reading foundations instruction so that students can better understand and comprehend the concepts of each discipline.

What is the purpose of infusing content literacy practices into the curriculum? The purpose of the following supports is to help students access the information and knowledge in the sources and texts that they encounter across content areas in middle and high school. Students in middle and high school need to be explicitly taught how to access the information, the purpose of the support that teachers are using in the classroom, and how it will help them within that discipline, as well as in life.

What are the supports needed for my content area?

English Language Arts
➔ Annotating ➔ Independent Reading ➔ Partner Reading ➔ Using Rubrics ➔ Using Student Exemplars ➔ Whole Class Read Aloud ➔ Reading and Writing for a Purpose ➔ Creating a Claim ➔ Direct and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction ➔ Close Reading ➔ Analyzing a Prompt

Math
➔ Annotating ➔ Using Rubrics ➔ Using Student Exemplars ➔ Whole Class Read Aloud ➔ Creating a Claim ➔ Reading and Writing for a Purpose ➔ Writing Frames ➔ Direct and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction ➔ Analyzing a Prompt

Science
➔ Annotating ➔ Independent Reading ➔ Partner Reading ➔ Using Rubrics ➔ Using Student Exemplars ➔ Whole Class Read Aloud ➔ Reading and Writing for a Purpose ➔ Creating a Claim ➔ Direct and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction ➔ Analyzing a Prompt

Social Studies

- ➔ Annotating
- ➔ Independent Reading
- ➔ Partner Reading
- ➔ Using Rubrics
- ➔ Using Student Exemplars
- ➔ Whole Class Read Aloud
- ➔ Reading and Writing for a Purpose
- ➔ Creating a Claim
- ➔ Direct and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction
- ➔ Close Reading
- ➔ Analyzing a Prompt

References

ACT, Inc. (2006). Reading between the lines: What the ACT reveals about college readiness in reading. Iowa City, IA: Author.

Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Slainger, T., and Torgensen, J. (2008). "Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices: A Practice Guide (NCEE #2008-4027)." Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retired from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc

McKenna, Michael C, and Richard D Robinson. "Content Literacy: A Definition and Implications." *Journal of Reading*, vol. 34, no. 3, Nov. 1990, pp. 184–186.

"NAEP Report Cards - Home." *The Nation's Report Card*, NAEP, 2020, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/.

Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2004). Pennsylvania reading requirements for school, the workplace and society: Executive summary of findings. Harrisburg, PA: Author.

Rainey, Emily, and Elizabeth Birr Moje. "Building Insider Knowledge: Teaching Students to Read, Write, and Think within ELA and across the Disciplines." *English Education*, vol. 45, no. 1, National Council of Teachers of English, 2012, pp. 71–90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23365001.

Sedita, Joan, et al. "What Is Disciplinary Literacy?" *Keys to Literacy*, 21 Apr. 2015, https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/disciplinary-literacy/.

Snow, C. E., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). Preventing reading difficulties in young children. *Washington, DC: National Academy Press*.