



Oregon's
Instructional Frameworks | **Adolescent Literacy**

Adolescent Literacy

Walkthrough, Planning and Discussion Guide

Part 1: Shadow a Student Noticing Tool

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Walkthrough, Planning and Discussion Guide Overview

All students in grades 6–12 need access to high-quality, culturally responsive literacy instruction across all disciplines. In middle and high school, literacy is a tool for thinking, meaning-making, identity expression and knowledge acquisition – not just a set of general reading and writing skills.

Noticing tools are designed for use during classroom walkthroughs, collaborative lesson planning, peer observation and instructional coaching. They are resources to support educators and leaders to observe, identify and reflect on specific literacy teaching and learning practices as they occur. Their purpose is to help educators and leaders notice literacy teaching and learning when it's happening, celebrate what is going well and identify areas for improvement. Educators can use these tools individually or collaboratively.

This guide highlights the Shadow a Student Noticing Tool. Part 2 of this series focuses on disciplinary literacy noticing tools for multiple subject areas. By focusing on the student experience, this tool helps leaders and educators see patterns across contexts, spark new insights, and strengthen equity of access to disciplinary literacy.

Noticing tools like this are most powerful when they surface insights that foster dialogue and collaborative reflection about literacy practice. Observation data can be shared with groups of educators alongside prompts such as:

- What experiences with text, disciplinary discourse, and writing are reflected in the data?
- What types of literacy opportunities are missing or underrepresented?
- How does this data align with or challenge your own practice?
- What supports might teachers need to deepen disciplinary literacy practices?

When framed as a resource for shared reflection and problem-solving rather than judgment, the data invites educators to learn from one another and co-create stronger approaches to literacy instruction.

Disciplinary Practices in Action

A disciplinary literacy-rich classroom and learning community is defined by the following essential characteristics:

- A focus on comprehension, sensemaking and communication
- A climate of collaboration
- An emphasis on student agency

These descriptions can help paint a picture of literacy practices in action. They can be used as reflection tools and for lesson planning and observation.

A Focus on Comprehension, Sensemaking, and Communication

Literacy in the disciplines includes reading, writing, speaking and listening as integrated tools for thinking, meaning-making and communicating understanding. Disciplinary literacy depends on opportunities where

- Reading is embedded in disciplinary learning: students develop strategies, identify and use text features, build topic knowledge and carry out discipline-based activities using course-related materials.
- The work of comprehension takes place in the classroom, where the teacher scaffolds the learning and serves as a model and guide.
- Students develop and apply strategies for comprehending, analyzing and creating texts in the discipline. They use writing to clarify thinking, synthesize ideas and consolidate new knowledge.
- Students identify and use text features, structures and genres that are authentic to the field.
- Students write in discipline-specific ways to explain reasoning, construct arguments, synthesize information or narrate processes.
- Writing is centered as a way to communicate ideas clearly to an intended audience. Students make strategic choices about genre, modality, audience and purpose.

The work of comprehending is metacognitive: how readers make sense of text is as important as what sense they make of it and how they craft written and oral responses that demonstrate understanding. Additionally, how students write to make meaning, for themselves and others, is equally important.

A Climate of Collaboration

Collaboration in the classroom is a way to make sense of complex material and engage in disciplinary discourse routines. Collaboration supports students in building and co-constructing knowledge, practicing communication, reasoning and argumentation. In well-designed learning environments

- Class members draw on each other's knowledge, serving as resources to make sense of text together through dialogue.
- Disciplinary discourse—the ways of talking, questioning and reasoning used by experts in the field—is explicitly taught, modeled and practiced.
- Classroom norms support risk-taking, respectful disagreement, sharing knowledge and confusion and building on one another's ideas in both speaking and writing.
- Grouping arrangements (independent work, pairs, small groups, whole class) support collaboration and inquiry and are responsive to the oral, written and literary skills students are developing.
- A shared vocabulary to describe reading, writing and disciplinary discourse processes and text features is evident in classroom talk, materials in use and materials on display.

An Emphasis on Student Agency in Literacy

Agency in literacy means that students take ownership of their reading, writing, speaking and listening as part of learning in the discipline. In classrooms that foster agency

- Students are agents in the process of reading, writing and learning: they actively inquire into text meaning, their own and others' reading processes, the utility of reading strategies, and their preferences, strengths and weaknesses as readers.
- Students are expected and supported to read extensively. Course-related materials are available on various levels, and accountability systems are in place to ensure that students read large quantities of connected text.
- Over time, students are expected and able to do more reading, make more sophisticated interpretations and accomplish more work with texts with less support from the teacher during class time.
- Students refine their writing through planning, drafting, soliciting feedback, revising and editing, making choices based on audience and purpose.
- Students use writing to synthesize relationships among ideas and have confidence in the power of their voice to enter the conversation and impact its direction.
- Students produce more sophisticated disciplinary writing with less support over time.

Helpful Indicators for Planning and Observing

Classrooms that center literacy can also be recognized by several classroom characteristics, including how materials and student groupings are used, the types of learning activities students undertake and the roles of the teacher, students and classroom talk in the learning environment. Educators can use the questions as they plan to enhance disciplinary literacy or engage in peer observation.

Materials

Look for materials that invite reading, writing, speaking and listening in authentic disciplinary ways. Notice whether the materials are high-quality and appropriate for the grade level and task. Look for evidence that students—and not just the teacher—are doing the intellectual work.

- ④ Are a range of authentic text types present (e.g., primary sources, scientific articles, technical manuals, literary works, data displays, visuals)?
- ④ How are these materials being used? What kind of work is displayed in the classroom? On the walls? On the board? In the online learning environment?
- ④ Does work include student writing, evidence-based arguments, annotated texts or project work that demonstrates thinking?
- ④ What do these displays indicate about how reading is approached and the role it plays in the class?

Physical and Social Arrangements of the Classroom Support Literacy

Look for a physical arrangement of the classroom that allows for student collaboration, discussion and meaningful grouping.

- ④ How is the classroom arranged? Is it arranged in a way to make it easy for students to read, write and talk together?
- ④ What kinds of groupings (pairs, small groups, whole class) are students in as they carry out classroom tasks?
- ④ Do these groupings give students chances to engage in collaborative meaning-making and disciplinary discussion?
- ④ How do seating arrangements and grouping choices signal that student talk and collaboration are important to learning?

Tasks and Activities

Look for activities that position students as active readers, writers and thinkers.

- ⦿ Are the rigor of activities aligned to the rigor of grade-level standards?
- ⦿ What activities seem to be routine in the classroom?
- ⦿ Who is doing the work of reading, comprehending, discussing and writing to make meaning from texts?
- ⦿ Are students writing to capture new learning and articulate a point of view?
- ⦿ Are students producing writing that reflects disciplinary thinking (e.g., lab reports, historical arguments, literary analysis)?
- ⦿ Are students using discipline-specific language?
- ⦿ Are these discourse and writing activities connected to authentic disciplinary purposes rather than just isolated exercises?

Teaching and Learning Roles

Look for how responsibility for literacy learning is shared.

- ⦿ What roles do the teacher and students play in classroom activities?
- ⦿ Does the teacher model, guide and collaborate in comprehension, writing and disciplinary discourse as well as give instructions, assign and question students?
- ⦿ Are students encouraged to pose questions, share interpretations and problem solve, as well as respond to questions about course readings?

Reaching All Learners

“Core instruction within each discipline provides critical access to standards-aligned learning experiences. Thus, the highest leverage for adolescent literacy development comes from investing in core instruction. Consistent access to core instruction—which includes engagement with discipline-specific grade-level text, tasks and talk—is also a key equity lever, improving the literacy achievement of all students in middle and high school.”
(Oregon Adolescent Literacy Framework, page 42)

Supporting Multilingual Learners

- ⦿ Are students engaged in meaning-making across content areas, beyond isolated grammar or spelling practice?
- ⦿ Do materials and activities affirm and build on students' home languages and cultural practices?
- ⦿ Are students given opportunities to analyze how language works (metalinguistic awareness) and transfer skills across languages?
- ⦿ Do multilingual learners have equal access to graduation requirements, career pathways and college programs?
- ⦿ Are students developing content knowledge and language simultaneously, rather than waiting until they reach proficiency?
- ⦿ Are complex texts made accessible through scaffolds?
- ⦿ Do teachers use collaborative models (co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing, co-reflecting) with multilingual specialists to integrate language and content?

Supporting Students Experiencing Literacy Difficulties or Disabilities

- ⦿ Is core instruction provided first, with high-leverage practices, in the general classroom?
- ⦿ Are accessible materials and technologies (e.g., text-to-speech, alternate formats, digital supports) being used to remove barriers?
- ⦿ Are targeted literacy interventions (Core+More) connected back to disciplinary learning, rather than replacing it?
- ⦿ Are educators collaborating across roles (teachers, specialists, families) to support students through Individualized Education Programs, 504s and inclusive practices?

Shadow a Student

Using the Shadow a Student Noticing Tool

This tool is designed to help educators see the school day through a student's perspective, noticing when and how students are engaged in disciplinary literacy practices. By noticing students' experiences and the literacy demands across the day, leaders can better understand the opportunities students have to read, write, think, and communicate like experts in different disciplines. This tool is not evaluative of teachers or students. It is an opportunity to surface insights that can guide instruction, inquiry, professional learning and increase disciplinary literacy routines for all students.

By closely observing students as learners, we can surface essential insights, such as

- How often students are asked to read, write, speak and think in ways aligned with disciplinary literacy.
- Where opportunities for disciplinary literacy are being missed.
- How small shifts in instruction can make a meaningful difference.

Shadow a Student Noticing Tool

Observing how students encounter and navigate literacy demands in different classrooms equips school leaders to identify patterns, surface opportunities and support teachers in making disciplinary literacy practices more visible, equitable and effective. This observation tool is grounded in the belief that every student deserves regular and meaningful opportunities to engage in disciplinary literacy practices, not just in language arts but across all disciplines. Consider using this tool to gain a fresh perspective on how students interact with texts, tasks and language throughout their day.

This tool is designed to help you capture data on reading opportunities, instructional supports, types of texts and the nature of literacy tasks students engage in. Understanding the student experience in this way can surface powerful insights to inform instructional leadership and strengthen disciplinary literacy across your school.

Prepare

First, consider which student you will shadow and how you will communicate with them, so they know why you're there. A short, friendly explanation can help the student feel safe and understand the purpose of your visit. For example,

- ⦿ “I’d like to spend the day shadowing you to see how students experience different lessons. Would that be all right?”
- ⦿ “I’m spending the day visiting a few classes so I can learn more about how students experience them.”
- ⦿ “I’m hoping to join you for your classes today so I can understand more about how students experience their learning. Are you comfortable with that?”

Next, make sure to connect with any teachers before you visit their class, providing context about your visit, answering any questions and coordinating the timing of your visit.

Finally, reflect on what you are hoping to see and notice. Possible prompts are

- ⦿ “I’m hoping to understand more about how students are ... (using texts in science, reading in math ...)”
- ⦿ “I’m curious whether students in [subject or grade] are being supported to ... (read across multiple genres, answer hard questions ...)”
- ⦿ “I want to notice how much opportunity students have to ... (read in class, make sense of hard text, read instead of listen ...)”
- ⦿ “One thing I often assume is ... I want to see if that’s true.”

Noticing Disciplinary Literacy

During the student shadowing, try to capture what you see, hear and feel from the student’s point of view. Pay attention to who is doing the intellectual work in the classroom. Consider the following questions as you notice and make sense of the students’ experience. Keep in mind, this is not intended as a tool to evaluate teachers or students.

Reading Opportunities

- ⦿ Is the student reading frequently—and does the reading feel essential to their learning? What kinds of text is the student reading, writing or listening to? Are the texts complex?
- ⦿ Is the student reading authentic disciplinary text types (e.g., primary source documents, scientific reports, technical manuals, data displays, literary works) that reflect how experts in the field read?
- ⦿ Is reading supported with clear goals, routines and teacher modeling?
- ⦿ Do these texts give the student opportunities to think like a disciplinary expert?
Who selected the texts?
- ⦿ Does the student read across multiple genres and text types?
- ⦿ Can the student meet expectations without reading?

Writing Opportunities

- Is the student writing frequently for purposes authentic to the discipline (e.g., lab reports, historical arguments, literary analysis)?
- Is writing used to explore ideas (informal, notetaking, journaling) and communicate disciplinary knowledge (formal pieces, presentations, reports)?
- Does the student use discipline-specific language, text structures and reasoning in their writing?
- Does the writing require the student to think and communicate like an expert in the field?
- Does the student receive opportunities to revise and improve their work based on feedback?

Speaking and Listening Opportunities

- Does the student have opportunities to speak as a member of the discipline (e.g., debate as a historian, critique as an artist, explain as a scientist)?
- Is the student engaged in structured, purposeful discussions that require evidence-based reasoning and active listening?
- Do classroom routines and structures support respectful disagreement, synthesis of multiple perspectives, and collaborative problem-solving?
- Does the teacher provide explicit modeling and scaffolding for how to participate in disciplinary conversations?
- What kind of student talk is happening?

Support for Comprehension

- Is the student given time to read during class?
- Is the student expected to work through difficulty, or are answers often provided?
- Does the teacher model discipline-specific comprehension strategies (e.g., think-alouds, annotating, questioning, summarizing) so students see how experts make meaning from texts?
- Is explicit instruction provided for using those strategies, with opportunities for guided practice?
- How much ownership does the student have in making meaning from texts?
- Do the scaffolds (e.g., graphic organizers, exemplars, sentence starters, models) in place aid the student in accessing the lesson's content??
- Are graphic organizers and models used to support student thinking?

Metacognitive Inquiry

- Does the student talk about how they read or think—not just what they understand?
- Does the teacher model their own thinking as a reader of the discipline?
- Is the student encouraged to grapple with challenging texts?
- What is the student being asked to do with the texts?

- ⦿ Are the tasks cognitively demanding?
- ⦿ Do tasks involve analysis, sensemaking and creation rather than just recall?
- ⦿ Do these tasks mirror the reasoning and problem-solving of experts in the discipline?

Collaboration

- ⦿ Is the student working collaboratively with other students to make meaning?
- ⦿ Does collaboration support deeper disciplinary thinking rather than just task completion?
- ⦿ Are students building ideas together?
- ⦿ How are students grouped? What roles do they take on? Who leads discussions?
- ⦿ Are grouping arrangements purposeful and responsive to literacy goals?

Reflect

After the observation, pause to reflect. Take time to surface patterns, insights, surprises and opportunities.

Possible reflection include the following:

- ⦿ What did you notice about the student's opportunities to read, write and think like a disciplinary expert?
- ⦿ Where did they seem deeply engaged?
- ⦿ What literacy supports were present?
- ⦿ How consistent was the cognitive demand across classes?
- ⦿ What surprised you?

Small Shifts

Based on your observation, consider small, doable changes that could increase students' opportunities to engage in disciplinary literacy.

Examples of small shifts include the following:

- ⦿ Add a metacognitive prompt during reading (e.g., "What did you do when you encountered a word you didn't know?").
- ⦿ Introduce a text type not typically used in the subject (e.g., infographics in science, opinion writing in math).
- ⦿ Shift a teacher-led explanation to a partner think-aloud or gallery walk.
- ⦿ Support group talk with sentence starters and roles.