

Systems That Support Disciplinary Literacy

Equitable literacy instruction is vital for preparing all students for success in career and college. School leaders play a crucial role in supporting student literacy development across all disciplines by fostering a culture of literacy, providing necessary support and resources to teachers, and ensuring that literacy instruction is a shared and collaborative effort. By prioritizing the following practices, school leaders can create an environment in which every student has the opportunity to develop strong literacy skills.

PRACTICE: Promote a culture of shared responsibility.

Disciplinary literacy cultivates adolescents' ability to think, read, write and communicate like experts in a field of study. Leaders advance student success by fostering a culture of shared responsibility for literacy across all disciplines.

Ways to enact the practice:

- Establish a learning culture and trusting relationships for adults and students alike.
- Communicate a compelling vision for schoolwide and districtwide literacy efforts.
- Articulate expectations for shared literacy responsibility.
- Set up accountability and support structures for disciplinary literacy instruction.

EXAMPLE: *A school leadership team facilitates professional learning communities in which educators examine discipline-specific text types and discourse. The educators identify the skills and explicit instruction needed for students to be successful in the discipline they teach.*

PRACTICE: Foster a schoolwide approach to literacy.

Equitable literacy instruction requires a schoolwide approach. Leaders advance student success by building a system that helps all teachers effectively integrate literacy into their disciplinary instruction.

Ways to enact the practice:

- Offer educators ongoing, discipline-specific and curriculum-based professional learning.
- Provide regular protected time for planning and collaboration.
- Provide supports for instructional improvement (e.g., instructional coaching, formative feedback).
- Partner with families and communities to enrich students' literacy learning.

EXAMPLE: *A principal asks a literacy coach to facilitate a session during science department collaboration time to identify opportunities for providing explicit literacy instruction in their upcoming units which focus on explaining scientific concepts precisely. The literacy coach also conducts a series of follow-up sessions in which science teachers reflect on their instruction and plan next steps.*

PRACTICE: Conduct purposeful classroom visits.

Leaders enhance teachers' instructional practices through regular classroom visits and observations. These visits provide firsthand insights into literacy instruction, enabling leaders to offer effective feedback and guidance and to adjust support and accountability structures.

Ways to enact the practice:

- Build your own capacity for instructional leadership by knowing what high-quality literacy instruction looks like in each content area and within each curriculum being taught.
- Partner with teachers to maximize the value of formal classroom visits. Set goals collaboratively, define the focus of the visit, and debrief and support planning for instructional next steps.
- Build trusting relationships with educators through informal classroom visits focused on learning about disciplinary literacy practice and supporting problem-solving.

EXAMPLE: *A health teacher and administrator collaborate to plan for the administrator's observation of the teacher's lesson in which students reflect on their strengths and challenges in evaluating the legitimacy of health claims in popular media. The teacher and administrator meet afterward to plan an observation where the other health teachers can observe a similar lesson as a basis to discuss student experiences and plan future lessons.*



Questions for teachers reflecting on and discussing how to enact these practices at a schoolwide level:

- ⦿ What professional learning opportunities exist for teachers to collaborate and plan for literacy instruction?
- ⦿ What strategies might engage families and caregivers as partners in promoting literacy, ensuring these partnerships are meaningful and culturally responsive?

Download [Oregon's Adolescent Literacy Framework](#) to learn more about how leaders can improve classroom literacy instruction.