



Wisconsin Foundations for Disciplinary Literacy

To guide understanding and professional learning, a set of foundations, developed in concert with Wisconsin's *Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning*, directs Wisconsin's approach to disciplinary literacy.

Academic learning begins in early childhood and develops across all disciplines.

Each discipline has its own specific vocabulary, text types, and ways of communicating. Children begin learning these context- and content-specific differences early in life and continue through high school and beyond. While gardening, small children observe and learn the form and function of a root, stem, leaf and soil; or measure, mix and blend while baking a cake. School offers all students opportunities to develop the ability to, for example, think like a scientist, write like a historian, critique like an artist, problem-solve like an auto mechanic, or analyze technological advances like a health care technician. As literacy skills develop, educators gradually shift the responsibility for reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking to students through guided supports in both individual and collaborative learning experiences.

Content knowledge is strengthened when educators integrate discipline-specific literacy into teaching and learning.

Educators help students recognize and understand the nuances of a discipline by using strategies that “make their thinking visible.” They promote classroom reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking using authentic materials that support the development of content-specific knowledge. They guide students through these complex texts by using strategies that develop conceptual understanding of language and set expectations for relevant application of skills. These literacy practices deepen students' content knowledge, strategies and skills so that their learning transfers to real world situations.

The literacy skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking improve when content-rich learning experiences motivate and engage students.

Educators who foster disciplinary literacy develop experiences that integrate rigorous content with relevant collaborative and creative literacy processes to motivate and engage students. Setting high expectations, they structure routines and supports that empower students to take charge of their own learning. When students work in teams to research science

and mathematics concepts in the development of an invention or a graphic arts design; when they collaboratively build a blog that explains their recent marketing venture, they use specific literacy skills and strategies to solidify learning. Students need these opportunities over time to develop the precise and complex reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking skills demanded in today's careers.

Students demonstrate their content knowledge through reading, writing, listening, and speaking as part of a content-literate community.

Students who are literate in a particular discipline are able to successfully read, write, and speak about that discipline and can listen to and think critically as others communicate in that community. Performance tasks that allow students to present the complexity of a content area in a way that is meaningful to the field become authentic approaches to

assessing mastery within a discipline. Such tasks empower students to discover the real world connections across disciplines and to actively participate in communities of discipline-literate peers. As Wisconsin moves to the SMARTER Balanced Assessment System these performance tasks will be integral to assessment of student learning.

