
The Death of Content Area Reading: Disciplinary Literacy

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Traditional Approaches to Adolescent Literacy

- Adolescent literacy as an extension of primary grade literacy (this often happens in schools)
 - Content area literacy courses focused on teaching discipline-spanning general comprehension strategies and study skills often with a remedial focus (historically, this has been championed by the reading community)
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Content area reading

- The idea was that we could teach students the specialized reading skills required for reading in the content areas (but no effort was made to look at those content areas—beyond seeing what reading skills fit textbooks in the area)
 - Instead of teaching reading with literature, the notion was that literacy should be taught with content texts (but the same instruction and the same skills)
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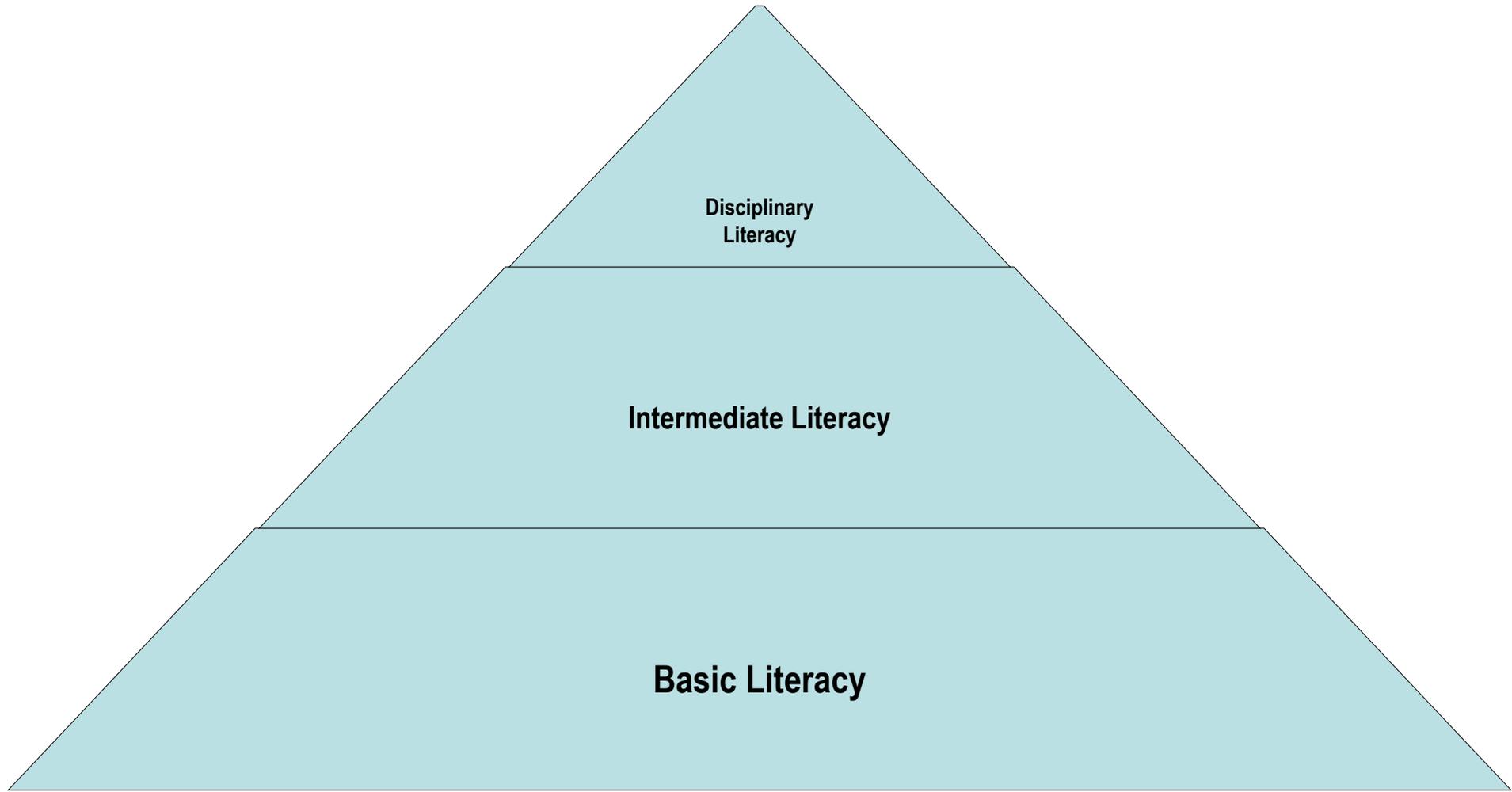
Problems with Traditional Approaches

- Literacy not as generalizable as once thought
- Some things taught in literacy make no sense in content area (and some doesn't make any sense at all)
- Strategies more helpful to poorer readers
- Pre-service teacher resistance to non-disciplinary courses
- Increasing awareness of the unique practices of disciplines in creating, disseminating, and evaluating knowledge (Bazerman, 1998; Fang, 2004; Geisler, 1994; Halliday, 1998; Schleppegrell, 2004)

Disciplinary Literacy Initiative

- Two-year project
 - Focused on developing disciplinary curriculum for adolescent pre-service literacy education courses
 - Developed partnerships between teacher education and liberal arts and sciences
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Increasing Specialization of Literacy



Goals of Disciplinary Literacy Initiative

- To identify specialized reading skills within mathematics, chemistry, and history
 - To develop instructional materials and strategies linked to those specialized reading skills
 - To implement those strategies successfully in high schools and with pre-service teacher education candidates
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Year 1 - Methodology

- 3 working panels: 2 literacy experts, 2 high school teachers, 2 teacher educators, 2 disciplinary experts
 - Individual think alouds with disciplinary experts (audiotape, transcription)
 - Focus group readings and discussions of texts (as well as reactions to the individual think alouds)
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Year 1 – Methodology (cont.)

- Review/critique of high school textbooks
 - Examine traditional content area reading strategies
 - Consideration of role of vocabulary, fluency, reading comprehension (including text structure), writing in each discipline
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Math Reading

- Goal: arrive at “truth”
 - Importance of “close reading” an intensive consideration of every word in the text
 - Rereading a major strategy
 - Heavy emphasis on error detection
 - Precision of understanding essential
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Chemistry Reading

- Text provides knowledge that allows prediction of how the world works
 - Full understanding needed of experiments or processes
 - Close connections among prose, graphs, charts, formulas (alternative representations of constructs an essential aspect of chemistry text)
 - Major reading strategies include corroboration and transformation
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History Reading

- History is interpretative
 - Importance of authors and sourcing in interpretation
 - Consideration of bias and perspective are essential
 - Helpful to recognize history as an argument based on partial evidence (narratives are more than facts)
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Year 2

- Designed new strategies or select appropriate existing ones
 - Refined these through field tests in inner city high school classes
 - Included in secondary reading classes and have student teachers and interns attempt to teach these in schools
 - Strategies were workable in these circumstances and seemed appropriate to our content experts (now need effectiveness tests)
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Chemistry Note-taking

Substances	Properties	Processes	Interactions	Atomic Expression

History Events Chart

TEXT	WHO?	WHAT?	WHERE?	WHEN?	WHY?
1					
Relation:					
2					
Relation:					
3					
Relation					
4					
Main point:					

Story Map

Setting:

Main Character:

Problem:

Internal response:

Attempt:

Outcome:

Reaction:

Theme:

Character Perspective Chart

Setting:

Main Character:

Problem:

Internal response:

Attempt:

Outcome:

Reaction:

Theme:

Setting:

Main character:

Problem:

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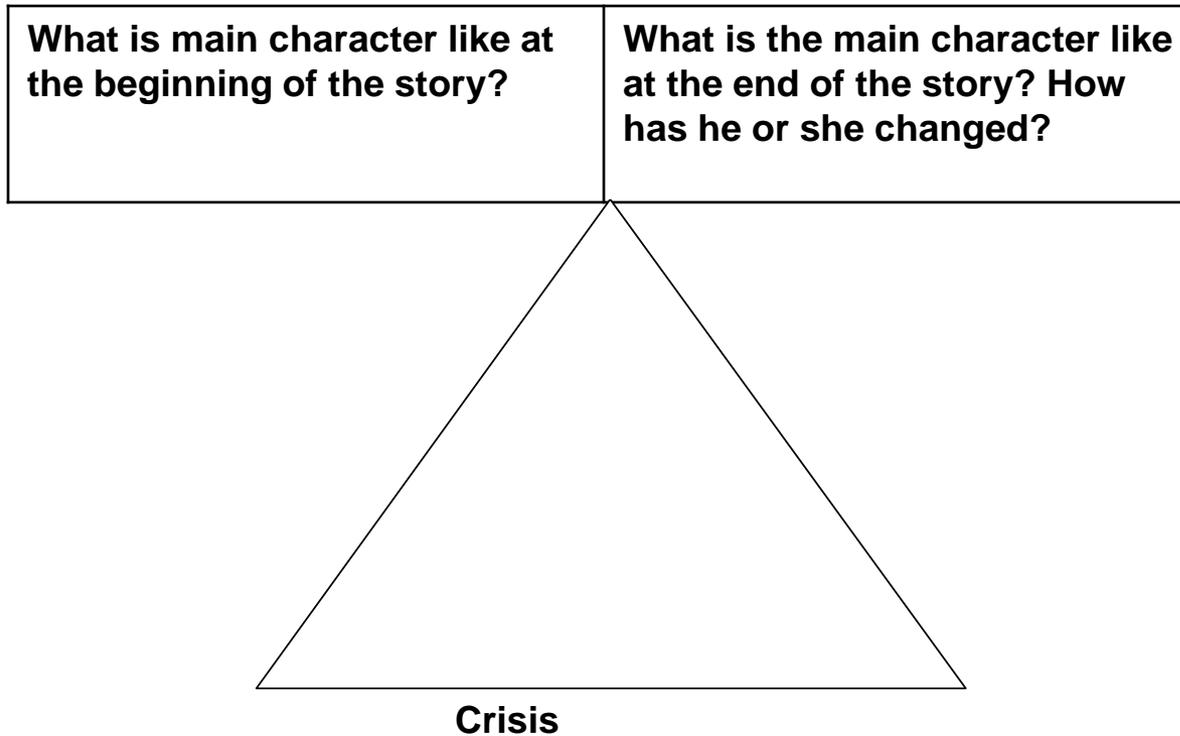
Attempt:

Outcome:

Reaction:

Theme:

Character Change Chart



Given this character change, what do you think the author wanted you to learn? _____

One important outcome of this work

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR

- English Language Arts and
- Literacy in History/Social Studies & Science



Literacy in History/Social Studies (6-8, 9-10, 11-12) – Key Ideas/Details

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Determine the main ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; summarize the source, basing the summary on information in the text rather than on prior knowledge or opinions.

Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

Determine the main ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; summarize how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text and the causes that link the events; distinguish whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Determine the main ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide a summary that makes clear the relationships between the key details and ideas.

Analyze how ideas and beliefs emerge, develop, and influence events, based on evidence in the text .

Literacy in History/Social Studies (6-8, 9-10, 11-12) – Craft & Structure

Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Identify how a history/social studies text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text, including the vocabulary describing political, economic, or social aspects of history.

Explain how an author chooses to structure information or an explanation in a text to emphasize key points or advance a point of view.

Compare the point of view of two or more authors by comparing how they treat the same or similar historical topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Interpret the meaning of words and phrases in a text, including how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist No. 10 and No. 51*).

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, evidence, and reasoning.

Literacy in History/Social Studies (6-8, 9-10, 11-12) – Integration

Integrate graphical information (e.g., pictures, videos, maps, time lines) with other information in a print or digital text.

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a historical account.

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Integrate quantitative or technical information presented in maps, time lines, and videos with other information in a print or digital text.

Assess the extent to which the evidence in a text supports the author's claims.

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Synthesize ideas and data presented graphically and determine their relationship to the rest of a print or digital text, noting discrepancies between the graphics and other information in the text.

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other sources of information.

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

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Next directions...

- Development of more sophisticated strategies in various disciplines
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies in improving achievement (over a sustained period)
 - Exploring whether disciplinary strategies improve learning for both struggling readers and more advanced ones
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