

Literacy in All Subjects

A Shared Responsibility for Students' Literacy Development

Literacy skills are an important part of every academic discipline. However, each discipline relies on different types of texts, writing styles, and language to convey ideas and learning. For students to be fully prepared for the challenges and expectations of college and career, it is critical that they develop literacy skills in all content areas. As Maryland transitions to its new Common Core State Curriculum, educators in all subject areas will be expected to incorporate content-specific literacy into their instruction.

Background

In June, 2010, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. These new standards establish a set of shared goals and expectations for what students should know and be able to do in grades PreK-12 in order to be on track for success in college and the workplace. For grades PreK-5, one comprehensive set of Standards covers reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language across the entire curriculum, since most or all of the instruction in these grades comes from one teacher. For example, literacy standards are embedded in the

Reading Standards for Informational Texts and the Writing Standards. However, for grades 6-12, the Standards are divided into two sections, one for English/Language Arts and the other for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Dividing the 6-12 Standards this way ensures that students develop consistent literacy skills in many academic contexts and reflects the role English/Language Arts teachers and teachers in other content areas play in developing students' literacy abilities.



Why Teach Literacy in All Subjects?

Reading and writing do not take place solely in the English/Language Arts classroom. Literacy skills are critical across all content areas and each discipline utilizes specialized texts, writing styles, and language to analyze and communicate ideas and concepts. The literacy skills needed to research and evaluate primary and secondary sources in a History/Social Studies class are very different from those needed to decipher elaborate diagrams and data presented in a Science or Technical Studies class. Students must develop the skills to comprehend complex informational texts, engage in purposeful writing, and communicate effectively within all content areas. These literacy practices will not only deepen students' content knowledge, but also prepare them for the challenging reading, writing, and research that will be required in college and the workplace.



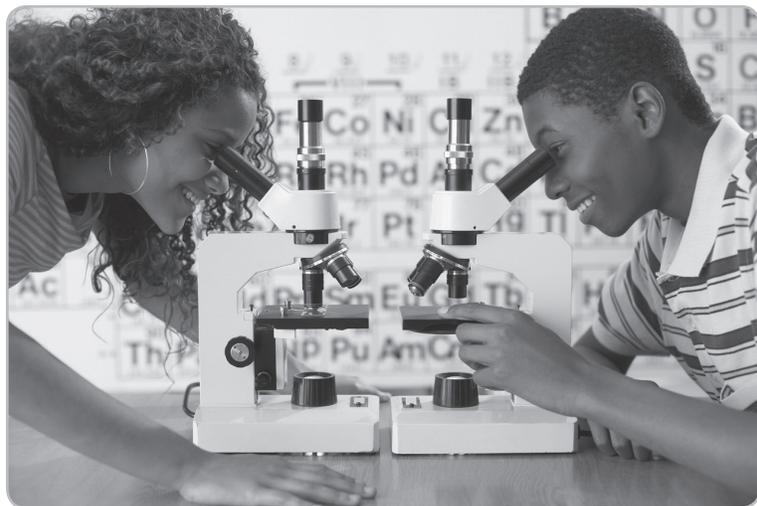
What Does This Mean for Teachers?

Because each discipline has its own unique approach to literacy, content teachers are in the best position to teach the literacy skills employed in their field. When the new Maryland State Common Core Curriculum is in place, teachers will use their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective disciplines. Content teachers are not being asked to become reading and writing specialists and English teachers will continue to teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. Rather, all educators will teach discipline-specific literacy skills as tools to help students better understand the content.

Next Steps

Over the past several months, content experts have been working to develop new Curriculum Frameworks for Literacy in all subjects. The Frameworks define the essential skills and knowledge associated with the academic goals of the Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. The Frameworks will be presented to the Maryland State Board of Education for approval this summer and introduced to educators statewide at this summer's Educator Effectiveness Academies. These Literacy Standards will also be incorporated into Maryland's new assessments. Future assessments, aligned with the Common Core State Standards, will take into account all the reading students do in a grade, not just in English/Language Arts.

To view the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects go to www.corestandards.org/the-standards:



Maryland Classroom

A Publication from the Maryland State Department of Education

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The contents of this flyer were developed under a grant from the U. S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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