



Study Guide

Disciplinary Literacy Inquiry and Instruction

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This study guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. This guide is designed to help you reflect on and apply the ideas presented in the book by providing thoughtful questions and prompts related to each chapter. Hopefully it will serve as a useful companion piece for individuals, small groups, or an entire faculty.

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Learning Sciences International thanks you for your interest in this book, and we hope that this guide proves a valuable addition and support to your professional development practices.

Chapter One: The Case for Disciplinary Literacy

1. After reading Chapter 1, how would you define “disciplinary literacy” for yourself, your classroom, and your school?
2. What are the big differences that you see between a disciplinary literacy approach and a content-area literacy approach to instruction?
3. Which units, lessons, or activities have you already tried that seem to focus more on disciplinary literacy? How did it go? What are you hoping to learn and try as a result of reading this book?

4. On your own, or with a colleague, take a look at a unit, lesson, or activity recently completed. What might it look like to shift that unit/lesson/activity toward disciplinary literacy instruction or to weave in disciplinary literacy instruction?

5. Select one or two of the resources mentioned in this chapter or from Appendix A: "Further Reading on Disciplinary Literacy." Read the text(s) alone or with colleagues and select one or two ideas to test out in your classroom or school. What happened as a result of your experiment?

Chapter Two: Learning to Teach Disciplinary Literacy: Connecting Inquiry and Instruction

1. After reading Chapter 2, how would you summarize the RAND model to a friend and colleague? How would you summarize the inquiry cycle?
2. Which of the RAND elements (text, tasks, students, or culture) do you naturally wonder about most? Which elements are more difficult for you to consider?
3. When have you engaged in inquiry work similar to that described in this chapter? What went well? What would you like to do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

4. On your own, or with a colleague, spend five minutes brainstorming an initial list of literacy-focused inquiry cycle questions. Look over your list, and see if you can begin to sort the questions into the four categories suggested by the RAND model (text, tasks, students, and culture). Which bin has the most questions? Which questions cut across bins? Which questions might be the most productive starting points, given our advice about not aiming for questions that are too broad or too narrow?

5. If you were going to engage in an inquiry cycle alone, where would you start and why? If you were going to engage in an inquiry cycle with colleagues, whom would you want to invite and why? Talk with colleagues, and ask them to create their own lists of potential inquiry questions. Compare notes and discuss the benefits and potential pitfalls of collaborating on an inquiry cycle soon.

Chapter Three: Text as a Focus for Disciplinary Literacy Inquiry and Instruction

1. After reading Chapter 3, which text-focused inquiry questions might be most relevant to your discipline, classroom, department, or grade level team?
2. Which of the steps in the text-focused inquiry cycle would be easiest for you or your team to complete? Which would prove most challenging?
3. How do you use texts in ways that build discipline-specific skills versus general literacy skills? Are there ways that you can increase your use of texts to build discipline-specific skills?

4. As you look back at the opening vignette from Alisa Conner, which parts of the text-focused inquiry cycle seemed most important to her? What were some of the big shifts she and her team made as a result? How might this connect with your own work?

5. On your own, or with a colleague, conduct a small text-focused self-assessment. Which texts and text-focused activities are working well in your class? Which are proving challenging for students or less effective overall? How might an inquiry and instruction cycle focused on text help? Who might join you in this work?

Chapter Four: Tasks as a Focus for Disciplinary Literacy Inquiry and Instruction

1. After reading Chapter 4, which task-focused inquiry questions might be most relevant to your discipline, classroom, department, or grade level team?
2. Which of the steps in the task-focused inquiry cycle would be easiest for you or your team to complete? Which would prove most challenging?
3. Which tasks in your classroom are already nudging students to acquire and use discipline-specific literacy skills? Which tasks are bolstering basic or intermediate skills?

4. Who might be your best collaborators in designing, testing, and reflecting on new disciplinary literacy tasks?

5. On your own, or with a colleague, conduct a small task-focused self-assessment. Which literacy-focused tasks are working well in your class and truly supporting disciplinary literacy thinking and work? Which are proving challenging for students or less effective overall? How might an inquiry and instruction cycle focused on new tasks help? Who might join you in this work?

Chapter Five: Students as a Focus for Disciplinary Literacy Inquiry and Instruction

1. After reading Chapter 5, which student-centered inquiry questions might be most relevant to your discipline, classroom, department, or grade-level team?
2. Which of the steps in the student-centered inquiry cycle would be easiest for you or your team to complete? Which would prove most challenging?
3. Which student-level factors have caused questions or concerns for you and your school? How might these factors become the focus of new inquiry and instruction cycles for disciplinary literacy instruction?

4. Who might be your best collaborators in designing, testing, and reflecting on new disciplinary literacy tasks?

5. On your own, or with a colleague, conduct an interview, survey, or focus group with students. Which literacy-focused or identity-focused elements might help you learn a good deal more about your students? How might knowing a bit more about your students and their individual and collective views of reading, writing, speaking, and content-focused work help you rethink your own teaching practices? Who might join you in this work?

4. As you look back at the vignettes in the chapter, which seem to resonate for you? Which provide an entry point for your own inquiries?

5. Thinking about culture usually means thinking about equity. What does this mean in the context of your classroom? Your school?

Chapter Seven: Taking Disciplinary Literacy Work to Scale While Considering Contextual Factors

1. After reading Chapter 7, which contextual factors in your school and district seem most critical for you to consider as you embark on disciplinary literacy inquiry and instructional work?
2. Which questions highlighted in the tables spread throughout this chapter—both individual and team-level questions—seem most important for you to answer first?
3. Which of the school vignettes featured in this chapter, focused on context, timing, and meeting students' needs, resonated most for you? Which parts of the vignettes provide ideas for starting places in your own DL inquiry and instruction work?

4. On your own, or with a colleague, take a look at the questions in the tables spread throughout this chapter. Choose at least three questions to begin with, and journal some initial responses. Which questions push your thinking most? Which make you most nervous? Which, if any, might you need to ask of your school leaders?

5. Choose another question or two from the tables in this chapter. First try to answer the questions alone, as an individual. Then ask/answer the same questions with a colleague or team. How did the experience of answering the questions alone and with colleagues change your thinking or your planned next steps?

Chapter Eight and Appendices: Co-constructing the Future That Teachers and Students Need

1. Independently explore the different resources provided in Appendix A. Discuss your favorite in groups.

2. Complete the Appendix B survey for your classroom. A blank survey can be printed from the free and reproducible section on the LSI website.