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Apprenticing Content Area Teachers into Disciplinary Writing Instruction

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PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

High school content area teachers increasingly need to incorporate writing practices and instruction into their classrooms but often do not feel they have sufficient knowledge or expertise to do so.

CASE STUDY



Urban high school in the Mountain West with 2,850 students and 120+ teachers across 14 departments.



Calvin: 5th year teacher of Earth Sciences, AVID, and a freshman orientation course

- District PD introduced science teachers to CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) writing framework and instructed them to work as a department to implement with students.
- Curricular team of Earth Sciences teachers integrated CER into their upcoming units of study.
- Earth Sciences teachers assigned CER writing to students and received widely variable results.
- Earth Sciences teachers did not know how to address students' varied writing needs.

Identified Needs

- Translating professional learning into sustained classroom practice.
- Knowledge of writing development, practices, and instruction.

DESIGN

Framework for organizing and facilitating small group coaching of a secondary content-area teaching team to support their disciplinary writing instruction

PHASE 1

Teachers & Specialist

Investigate the discipline's writing practices to identify foci for student learning.

- Collect and discuss mentor texts to identify instructional goals.
- Write in the discipline then reflect on process and practices.

Role of Specialist

- Facilitate
- Draw teachers' attention to and provide vocabulary to describe elements, processes, and practices of writing.

PHASE 2

Collaboratively plan instruction.

- Prepare lessons/activities using the 4 Es heuristic (Moje, 2015).

- Facilitate
- Help identify, adapt, and/or create writing instruction strategies.

PHASE 3

Reflect on and iterate instruction.

- Complete lesson study cycle: reflect on and revise lesson.
- Analyze student writing samples.

- Facilitate
- Draw attention to student participation in writing practices.
- Help identify, adapt, and/or create writing instruction strategies

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can a literacy specialist support content area teachers in developing and sustaining disciplinary literacy instruction and practices?

Disciplinary Literacy

- Each discipline uses a unique discourse embedded in its cultural (Moje, 2015).
- 4 Es heuristic to apprentice students into a discipline's discourse (Moje, 2015)
 - **Engage** in discipline's practices.
 - **Elicit/engineer** this engagement.
 - **Examine** words and ways with words.
 - **Evaluate** language use.

Instructional Coaching

- Coaching activities that attend to 5 elements of "high-quality professional learning" (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Kane et al., 2018).
- "Teacher collaboration" can lead to "new instructional practices," "particularly under the guidance of an expert facilitator" (Horn et al., 2018, p. 97).
- A literacy coach can help content area teachers identify their discipline's "often tacit" literate practices (Elish-Piper et al., 2016, p. 9).

Writing Instruction

- Apprenticing students into writing:
 - using mentor texts (e.g. Marchetti & O'Dell, 2018).
 - focusing on writing as a process (e.g. Lane, 2016).
- Foundational knowledge of writing: elements of writing (e.g. Spandel's "6 traits" [2013]).