Building the Discipline-Specific Classroom: A Pedagogical Discussion

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The central goal of disciplinary literacy instruction becomes to help learners achieve insider access in these communities so that learners are active rather than passive observers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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a blend of short stories based on student interest and selected chapters from the differing disciplines the stories invoke. This proposed course allows students to engage with texts, adapt inferencing strategies, and continue practicing literary analysis as they learn the underlying premise of various disciplines. As an example, students would start with the excerpt from Adams’s *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (1980) in which two computer programmers question the computer they designed, Deep Thought, which is “the second greatest computer in the Universe of Time and Space” (p. 112), about the answer to life, the universe and everything. The satirical response pokes fun at philosophical texts while it entertains. For the humorous argument to be successful, however, students must understand the basic message, purpose, and structure of typical philosophical readings. Thus, students would then read chapters from Nagel’s (1987) philosophy text *What Does It All Mean?* Additionally, they will read *How to Think Like a Computer Scientist* (Wentworth, Elkner, Downey, & Meyers, 2018) since Adams also satirizes computer programmers. Students will learn strategies for approaching these disciplines, read the texts accordingly, and then comparatively analyze the short story to identify the basis for the humor and ultimately evaluate its effectiveness.

This proposed course represents just one of many possible proposed courses for addressing discipline-specific literacy curriculum needs. Its premise is based on student interest because part of the challenge of becoming a good reader is feigning interest when texts are uninteresting, or more appropriately, too unfamiliar to be interesting. Thus, an important goal of instruction is teaching students to become engaged enough to comprehend challenging texts. But again, this is just one proposed course, the results of which will be revealed after the pilot.

Until then, let this exploration begin a discussion. What does effective discipline-specific curriculum look like?

References


