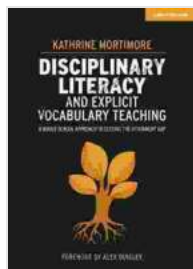


# Disciplinary Literacy and Explicit Vocabulary Teaching: Unlocking Academic Success



## Disciplinary Literacy and Explicit Vocabulary Teaching: A whole school approach to closing the attainment gap

by Kathrine Mortimore

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
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In today's knowledge-driven world, literacy extends far beyond the ability to read and write. Students must master the specialized language and concepts of different academic disciplines to succeed in school and beyond. Disciplinary literacy and explicit vocabulary teaching are two crucial pillars that empower learners to navigate the complex linguistic demands of various subjects, enabling them to comprehend texts, express their ideas effectively, and ultimately achieve academic excellence.

### What is Disciplinary Literacy?

Disciplinary literacy refers to the ability to understand and use the language and conventions of a particular academic discipline. Each subject, from

science to history to mathematics, has its own unique vocabulary, grammar, and text structures. By acquiring disciplinary literacy, students develop the ability to read, write, and communicate effectively within the context of a specific field.

### **The Importance of Explicit Vocabulary Teaching**

Vocabulary is the foundation upon which students build their understanding of texts and concepts. Explicit vocabulary teaching involves intentionally and systematically introducing new words to students, ensuring that they develop a deep understanding of their meaning, usage, and context. Research has consistently demonstrated that explicit vocabulary instruction significantly improves student comprehension, writing skills, and overall academic performance.

### **Strategies for Disciplinary Literacy and Explicit Vocabulary Teaching**

Implementing disciplinary literacy and explicit vocabulary teaching in the classroom requires a combination of effective strategies:

1. **Expose students to authentic texts:** Immerse students in reading and writing tasks that reflect the language and concepts of the discipline.
2. **Provide explicit vocabulary instruction:** Introduce new vocabulary in context, explain its meaning and usage, and provide opportunities for students to practice using it.
3. **Use word walls and other visual aids:** Display key vocabulary terms prominently in the classroom to reinforce learning.
4. **Incorporate discipline-specific activities:** Engage students in hands-on activities, simulations, and experiments that provide hands-

on experiences with the vocabulary and concepts.

5. **Provide feedback and scaffolding:** Monitor student understanding, provide constructive feedback, and offer support to ensure mastery.

## **Benefits of Disciplinary Literacy and Explicit Vocabulary Teaching**

The benefits of disciplinary literacy and explicit vocabulary teaching are numerous:

- **Improved reading comprehension:** Students who understand the vocabulary and concepts of a subject are better able to comprehend texts.
- **Enhanced writing skills:** By mastering discipline-specific language, students can express their ideas more clearly and effectively in writing.
- **Increased academic achievement:** Disciplinary literacy and vocabulary proficiency are strongly correlated with improved academic performance across all content areas.
- **Greater motivation and engagement:** When students feel confident in their ability to understand and communicate in a particular subject, they become more motivated and engaged in their learning.
- **Preparation for future success:** Proficiency in disciplinary literacy and vocabulary empowers students to succeed in higher education and the workforce, where specialized language and knowledge are essential.

## **Real-World Examples**

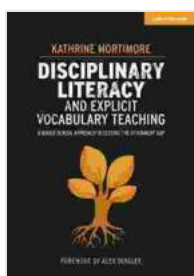
The following examples illustrate the practical application of disciplinary literacy and explicit vocabulary teaching:

- **Science:** In a science classroom, students read a text about the properties of water. The teacher introduces and explains key vocabulary terms such as "cohesion," "adhesion," and "capillary action." Students participate in hands-on experiments that demonstrate these concepts in action.
- **History:** In a history class, students analyze primary source documents from the American Revolution. The teacher highlights discipline-specific terms such as "patriot," "loyalist," and "Articles of Confederation." Students discuss the historical context and significance of these terms through group discussions.
- **Mathematics:** In a math class, students solve complex equations. The teacher provides explicit instruction on algebraic vocabulary, such as "variable," "polynomial," and "equation." Students practice using these terms in solving problems to deepen their understanding.

Disciplinary literacy and explicit vocabulary teaching are indispensable tools for empowering students to succeed in academic life and beyond. By equipping students with the language and concepts of different disciplines, we unlock their potential for comprehension, expression, and overall academic achievement. Through intentional instruction, engaging activities, and supportive feedback, educators can cultivate a generation of learners who are confident and proficient in the language of success.

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