

Jeanne Dyches, USA

Assistant professor of literacy education, Iowa State University
jdyches@iastate.edu

A critical disciplinary literacy approach to analysing legal decisions in a social studies classroom

Co-author: Judge Mart Pat Gunderson

1) Critical disciplinary literacy (Dyches, 2018) is an approach to literacy instruction that honors the discipline-specific ways in which disciplinary texts must be read in order to notice and understand the forms of power, oppression, and hegemony inherent in texts. This study explores the ways in which secondary students applied critical disciplinary literacies in their social studies classroom.

2) Analysis relies on case study methodology and inductive analysis in order to generate grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

3) Data include pre and post unit surveys and student work samples collected from a unit co-taught with a former district court judge.

4) Findings show that when reading legal opinions issued by the all-male state Supreme Court, applying critical disciplinary literacies helped students to notice and respond to genderised language practices. Moreover, the unit helped students understand that texts are ideologically imbued documents and therefore never neutral. Findings illuminate the degree to which students benefit from applying critical disciplinary literacies in order to come to "read the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987) with discipline-specific critical lenses.