What is implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work? in English Language Arts?

Each discipline has norms and routines that reflect the ways people in the field construct and share knowledge. These norms and routines vary across subjects, but often include establishing hypotheses, providing evidence for claims, and showing one's thinking in detail. Teaching students what they are, why they are important, and how to use them is crucial to building understanding and capacity in a given subject. Teachers may use explicit explanation, modeling, and repeated practice to do this.

Disciplinary norms, or what we will refer to as "subject-specific" or academic norms to prevent confusion with procedural or behavioral norms, define and maintain shared standards of work across a broad community of practitioners. In the context of classroom work, norms are drawn from a given discipline to guide the study of a given subject. English language arts, uniquely, encompasses multiple disciplines including literary, rhetorical, communication and media studies as well as composition and linguistics. The norms of each discipline in ELA don’t necessarily overlap, demanding that teachers guide students in learning to recognize the norms of different genres and fields as they read, write and discuss. Take, for instance, norms about tone in various kinds of writing: Informational text typically takes an objective tone, where the expected tone in memoir writing is subjective. In order to be widely recognized as competent practitioners of each kind of writing, students need to be able to hew to these norms or, in deviating from them, to do so purposefully.

Routines, as we think of them, are specific ways a norm is regularly practiced in a particular context or setting such as a classroom. For instance, where a norm of composition is to extensively revise drafts, a routine that supports students to understand and practice that norm may be using a particular revision checklist. Where a norm of literary studies is making and supporting claims about a text, a close reading routine would be one way to support students in learning and refining that practice. Worth noting is that unlike norms, routines vary from one setting or practitioner to another: Different classrooms will approach close reading (among many other examples) using different routines.

How can implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work in English language arts advance justice?

As academic disciplines are defined and governed by shared norms, students must be able to use and navigate these norms in order to actively participate in the construction and critique of knowledge. In other words, norms and routines are part of initiating students into the disciplines of English language arts by offering them tools to participate as insiders in making, evaluating, and communicating meaning.

Teachers of literature, for instance, who empower students do more than ensure they understand literary elements and the plots or themes of individual works. They offer the “keys to the kingdom” that enable students to unlock texts themselves. Those “keys” consist in large part of the norms of literary study: the things that experts understand about how to read, think, and communicate about literary works. When left unnamed or implicit, students are left to deduce them on their own, leaving many without access to them, left to believe that literary interpretation is a magic trick that is beyond their capability. Students who are explicitly taught the norms and routines of literary studies, however, use them to engage with literature, making meaning for themselves that they can then develop and enrich in conversation with others.

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1 Note that this cycle of work focuses on norms and routines related to the ways of reading, writing, thinking and communicating in the disciplines of English language arts—not on behavior or classroom management. The words “norms” and “routines” are often associated with the latter concepts, but the focus here is on specifically academic norms and routines. Work related to behavior and classroom management is addressed in two other high-leverage practices: Specifying and reinforcing productive student behavior often includes establishing “class norms” in the sense of agreements about conduct, and implementing organizational routines would include procedures for such things as handling materials, moving around the classroom, etc.
At the same time, we recognize that norms privilege certain ways of knowing and thinking and exclude others. They represent modes of discourse developed and sanctioned over time by those with the power and privilege to determine what is recognized as competence in a disciplinary domain. Teachers must remain mindful of these inescapable dynamics, introducing norms and routines not as replacements for students’ funds of knowledge and ways of reading the world, but as additions to their already rich repertoires.

Also of special importance to teachers of English language arts are the norms of language—more often referred to as conventions. When conventions of academic English are viewed as sacrosanct, other varieties of English -- particularly those that have been deemed “low prestige” such Appalachian, Chicano and varieties of African American and Caribbean English -- may be pathologized, further marginalizing students who speak them. In order to responsibly teach conventions of language, teachers must have a linguistic perspective by which they understand the power dynamics which underlie language variety and change.

**How do we decompose the practice into learnable parts?**

The decomposition below represents the practice of *implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work*, broken into areas of work that novices can learn and practice with coaching from a teacher educator. Teacher educators can zero in on specific areas for additional support as needed, before novices recompose them in the P12 classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREPARE</th>
<th>IMPLEMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investigate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analyze</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine professional norms essential to the discourse and work of the field</td>
<td>Understand the relationship between disciplinary norms and social and political power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify norms and routines necessary for classroom discourse and work</td>
<td>Consider the social and power implications of establishing specific norms/routines in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate other established norms and routines in the larger school context for connections</td>
<td>Prioritize, sequence, and pace the introduction of norms and routines across the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicit students’ prior knowledge of norms and routines</td>
<td>Anticipate challenges students might have enacting the norm/routine</td>
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The practice is divided into two broad parts: the **preparation** that teachers do outside of class prior to teaching a new norm or routine, and the **implementation** that takes place with students. Preparation involves investigation and analysis by which teachers determine which subject-specific norms and routines to teach and consider how particular norms and routines fit into the context of the academic discipline as well as the school and community in which the teacher works. Work with students is divided into three areas: teachers **introduce** the norms and/or routines, give students opportunities to **practice** them with feedback, and then **maintain** their use over time through prompting, reteaching, and revision based on students’ development and needs. This implementation work involves ongoing refinement, maintenance, and revision, making it more cyclical than linear.
What is challenging about learning to implement norms and routines for classroom discourse and work?

In addition to the challenge of critical consciousness described above, it can be difficult for novice teachers to raise to the level of conscious awareness the disciplinary norms and routines on which they draw to make sense of and compose text. As disciplinary insiders themselves, novice teachers have likely read, discussed, and written about a wide variety of texts and topics; their deep understanding of those processes leads to the enjoyment and appreciation that likely motivated many of them to want to teach the subject in the first place. In most cases, however, their understanding of the ways readers make meaning with text is tacit; they feel like second nature. Thus, even as they skilfully engage in disciplinary work, novices may not be able to conceptualize it in enough detail to be able to unpack it for learners. This challenge can be addressed by supporting novice teachers to develop their metacognitive awareness of their own disciplinary processes, offering them opportunities to practice articulating those processes.

The final area of work, “maintain/revise,” is easy to overlook. Teachers may view practice as linear, forgetting the ongoing and cyclical nature of it and approaching it with a belief that once students have been introduced to a norm or routine and had opportunities to practice it, they should require no further support. This misconception can result in norms and routines falling out of use over time, or may lead teachers to interpret students’ need for reminders or reinforcement as a shortcoming, when it is in fact an essential part of implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work. While the ongoing part of the work cannot be practiced in a single field task, it can be emphasized and normalized by teacher educators as they introduce, prepare novices for, and analyze novices’ enactment of the high-leverage practice.
The Learning Cycle: A deliberate progression of work on Implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work

This learning cycle is a sequence of activities that develop novice teachers’ understanding and skill with the high-leverage practice implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work. The cycle zeroes in on one of the four areas of work for this high-leverage practice, namely introducing new norms or routines, as well as incorporating multiple opportunities to develop content knowledge for teaching literature. Teacher education pedagogies have been selected to fit novices’ likely level of experience as they are introduced to a new practice, then prepare to enact it, then enact it, and finally analyze their enactment (McDonald, Kazemi, and Kavanagh, 2013). It is designed as a first experience with the practice of implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work. In the culminating activity, novice teachers introduce students to a routine for close reading in a co-planned mini-lesson.

The activities listed in this cycle need not be enacted in order, though it may make sense to go through the four quadrants sequentially. The most time-consuming of these for novices will be the field assignment where novices model for small groups in their classrooms.

High leverage English language arts content: Close reading
The cycle includes substantial work on content knowledge for teaching norms and routines of literary studies — specifically, close analytical reading of literature. The activities are built around two norms that structure close reading: seeking patterns and seeking moments of strangeness in texts (Rainey, 2017). In these materials, those will often be collapsed into one norm: “seeking patterns and moments of strangeness.”

The focal routine, Notice and Focus (Rosenwasser and Stephen, 2012) addresses both norms, though it can be adapted to zero in more specifically on either patterns or moments of strangeness if novice teachers’ level of experience merits more focused attention. An in-depth description of the focal norm and routine is included with Activity #2 (“Overview of Focal Norm and Routine”).

We consider the practice of close reading high leverage English language arts content because it is emphasized in many curricula and standards, and it is often difficult for novice teachers to unpack and teach it, perhaps especially for those to whom this kind of reading comes easily. Moreover, it offers P12 students access to complex texts without the mediation of teachers or other “experts.” It invites them to make meaning directly with a text, and to do so in evidence-based ways that are recognized in the
Implementing norms and routines – October 2018

In the discipline of literary studies. In that sense, routines for close reading such as Notice and Focus enable students to access a wide range of texts in ways that are intellectually rewarding while becoming and see themselves as insiders in the discourse of literary studies.

**Texts**
- The teacher educator will choose a text for the literary discussion (activity #1).
- Novices choose a text for the field task, which they begin planning after activity #4.
- Excerpts from the prologue of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* are used in the model lesson (activity #3) and the transcript (activity #4). Ellison’s text is complex, rich with symbolism and irony, and it rewards close reading with varied interpretive possibilities and compelling literary puzzles.

**Note:** The text used in these activities is not included here for copyright reasons, but should be readily available. It is the first two paragraphs of the prologue of *Invisible Man*, beginning “I am an invisible man” and ending with “And, alas, it’s seldom successful.”

**INTRODUCE**

**Overview:**
Skilled readers of literature read with an understanding of unspoken assumptions and norms of the discipline of literary studies. More often than not, they are unaware of many of the most fundamental norms that they have long since internalized. And yet, in order to teach those norms, novice teachers must bring them back to the level of conscious awareness (Rainey and Moje 2012; Lee, 2001). With that in mind, activities #1-4 introduce the practice of implementing norms and routines first by engaging novices in a discussion with the purpose of surfacing the norms and routines that tacitly inform their thinking. From there, they consider a wide range of academic norms and routines and how they operate to structure classroom discourse and work in varying ways. Having developed language around academic norms and routines, novices then experience the focal norm and routine for the unit as learners via a model lesson. Finally, they analyze classroom video and transcript to notice the finer points of the work that teachers do to introduce, justify and explain academic norms and routines to students.

**Activity #1: Literary discussion**
This activity engages novice teachers in the familiar practice of literary discussion. Their discussion will then serve as a kind of text for collective analysis, inviting metacognitive reflection on the norms by which they made decisions about how to approach the text, what to notice in it, and what to language to use during discussion. In a concluding debrief, novices will critically consider the origins and functions of literary norms and routines alongside questions of equity and access.

- **Resources provided:** Observation template
  - Norms of literary studies list and recommended reading
  - Detailed lesson plan
  - Slide deck for debrief discussion

- **Resources not provided:** Short literary text of teacher educator’s choice
  - Copies of homework reading (see below)

**Homework in preparation for activity #2:** Read two articles (Delpit, “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children” and Rainey, “Disciplinary Literacy in English Language Arts”).

**Activity #2: Sorting norms and routines**
This activity bolsters novice teachers’ awareness of the norms that operate in the disciplines of English language arts. In small groups, they sort a list of norms and routines of different kinds into categories as they are introduced and explained by the teacher educator. In the course of the activity, they distinguish between academic norms and routines on the one hand, and those for behavior or classroom
management on the other; identify the difference between norms and routines and consider how they can be used in tandem; and continue to consider the function of academic norms and routines in the service of equity.

Resources provided: Sets of norms and routines slips (one set per group)
Slide deck

**Activity #3: Close reading model lesson**
Novice teachers will engage as students in a lesson introducing the focal close reading routine, Notice and Focus. The teacher educator will introduce and model the routine using a passage from the prologue of *Invisible Man*, after which novices will practice the routine themselves. In addition to offering a model of the teaching practice, it also presents an opportunity for novices to develop content knowledge for teaching in preparation for the field task (activity #7). After this class meeting and in preparation for Activity #4, novices will read a detailed explanation of Notice and Focus as well as the literary norm seeking patterns and moments of strangeness.

**Adaptation:** The specific close reading routine and/or the text could be replaced with others. In that case, attention should be given to choosing a routine that supports broader literary norms and selecting a text that yields a variety of rich interpretive possibilities when read using the particular routine.

Resources provided: Sample lesson plan
“Overview of focal literary norms and routines” handout

Resources not provided: Excerpts from the prologue of *Invisible Man* (par. 1-2 and 5-6)
Poster, Notice and Focus routine

**Homework in preparation for activity #4:** Read “Overview of focal literary norms and routines” handout

**Activity #4: Video and transcript analysis**
Teacher candidates will be introduced to the decomposition of implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work, using it to briefly reflect on the model lesson and then compare two video clips of teachers introducing norms and routines. While both videos are exemplars, in one example the routine is made more explicit than the other, raising the question of how a variety of students are likely to be served by more or less explicit modeling of new norms and routines. Finally, novices will analyze a transcript of a teacher modeling the specific routine they will teach in the field task, offering a second opportunity to develop their understanding of the content and learn from a model.

After this activity, novices will independently complete a field task pre-planning template prior to engaging in activity #5. If possible, the completed pre-planning template should be submitted to the teacher educator for feedback.

Resources provided: Observation tool
Transcript, Modeling Notice and Focus
Slide deck
Mini-lesson pre-planning template

Video: “Alcott/Grade 2/Partner Reading.”
“McGraw (class 2)/Grade 9-12/Theme and characterization (clip 1).”
“McGraw (class 2)/Grade 9-12/Theme and characterization (clip 2).”

All video clips are from the HLP Video Examples Collection (Implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse). Teaching and Learning Exploratory.

**Homework in preparation for activity #5:** Complete the mini-lesson pre-planning template
PREPARE

Overview: In this stage of the cycle, comprised of Activities #5 and #6, novices prepare for the field task (Activity #7, a close reading mini-lesson). This preparation offers significant scaffolding and practice with both implementing norms and routines and the English language arts content they will teach. While the specific routine they will teach is predetermined, novices will select the text they will use. They will use a template to guide their lesson planning, optionally film themselves practicing the lesson, and then engage (as teacher, student, and/or observer) in a coached rehearsal.

Activity #5: Co-planning a Notice and Focus mini-lesson
Novice teachers will plan the field task lesson in two stages: pre-planning and planning. Having independently engaged in pre-planning prior to this activity, novices will have synthesized their learning and reading thus far in the unit. Teacher educators should review completed pre-planning templates as a formative assessment.

In this activity, novices will use a planning template to guide them through the design of each feature of a skillful introduction to a norm or routine. Scripting elements of their introduction will allow for careful attention to language with the goal of clear, concise, and student-friendly explanations.

Adaptations: Scaffolds can be removed from the planning template if novices have enough experience to warrant more independence in planning the mini lesson. The scope of the lesson could also be expanded to include more guided and independent practice for students.

Resources provided:  
“Overview of Focal Literary Norms and Routines” from activity #3  
Planning template  
Peer run-through protocol

Activity #6: Rehearsal
Novices will run through their introductions with a partner, after which the class will engage in coached rehearsal(s) of the full mini-lessons they have planned. During the rehearsal, the teacher educator will pause to coach or raise questions or dilemmas for the group to discuss. After the rehearsal, the group will debrief and apply learning from the rehearsal to their mini-lesson plans.

Resources provided:  
Rehearsal handout  
Observation tool

Resources not provided:  
Rehearsing novices’ chosen texts

ENACT

Activity #7: Field task
Novice teachers implement and film a mini-lesson on the Notice and Focus routine for close reading. This field task is scaffolded to focus on one area of work, namely introducing norms and routines. Bracketing off some of the considerations of preparation and follow-up, allows novices to focus intently on becoming skillful at introducing new routines.

Resources provided:  
Field task assignment sheet

Resources not provided:  
Video sharing platform  
Novices’ lesson plans, copies of their chosen text, a poster or handout they have created, and a camera or phone to film.
ANALYZE

Activity #8: Analysis, debrief, and conclusion
Novice teachers analyze the video of their Notice and Focus mini-lesson, first using the familiar criteria from the observation tool, then using the video to check their predictions from the pre-planning template against evidence of students’ response to the content and the lesson. The cycle comes to a close with a debrief that asks novice teachers to reflect on their learning and anticipate next steps in learning the high-leverage practice implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work.

Resources provided:
- Slide deck
- Analysis template

Resources not provided:
- Novices’ completed analysis templates (part I)
- Equipment for novices to view their videos in class

Looking ahead:
This cycle of instruction offered novice teachers a first experience of the practice of implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work, focusing on one area of work along with content knowledge for teaching close reading. At this point, novices will have developed their understanding of norms and routines of the disciplines of English language arts and they will have practiced introducing, explaining, justifying and modeling those norms and routines. A natural next step in the trajectory of learning the full high leverage practice would include work on:

- Selecting norms and routines to teach and matching them to texts or other materials.
- Providing feedback and guidance as P12 students practice new norms and routines.
- Maintaining a class’ use of norms and routines they have learned, including making revisions to them as needed.
- Implementing norms and routines in English language arts disciplines other than literary studies, including writing, language and research.

A note on possible adaptations
While specific norms, routines, and texts for the cycle are included, teacher educators can replace them with preferred approaches or texts. The cycle can be adapted to various levels of experience, skill, and need for support. For instance:

- If they are at the beginning of their own learning of literary norms and routines, the teacher educator may decide to facilitate the discussion in activity #1 and/or provide a model of literary discussion such as a video.
- If novices need support selecting a text to close read in the field task, a list of suggested texts might be provided (see, for example, the suggested texts for activity #1). Alternately, a session on the topic of text selection, offering novice teachers a chance to test a variety of short texts for fit with the selected routine, could be added after activity #4.
- If novices are likely to need support enacting the mini-lesson, live coaching or huddling might be implemented during the field task (activity #7), with the coach or mentor teacher providing feedback in addition to novice teachers’ self-assessment (activity #8).

On the other hand, if the group is relatively advanced in their study of disciplinary literacy and instructional planning, activities can be condensed and combined:

- If the class has already identified specific literary norms and routines, the discussion in activity #1 could be replaced by reflective writing about novice teachers’ experience as participants in a discussion and combined into a single class period with activity #2.
- Novices may be asked to choose a close reading routine to teach in the field task rather than using the predetermined Notice and Focus routine.
- If novices have already developed their skill explaining and modeling content, practices and strategies, the transcript analysis can be omitted from activity #4.
• If novices are skilled in instructional planning, they might plan the mini-lesson independently, allowing activities #5 and 6 to be combined into a single class period.

References and recommended reading


