Reading for Understanding Across Grades 6 through 12:
Evidence-based Argumentation for Disciplinary Learning
Research and Development Core Team: 6-12

Given the nature of what students across grades 6-12 are asked to read, what they must do with the materials they read, as well as what teachers are expected to do to help all students develop disciplinary competency, a definition of *reading for understanding* must make three critical components clear to teachers and students. First, it must detail what counts as *reading for understanding* in a specific discipline. Second, it must convey both the performances and work products that demonstrate the desired outcome. Third, it must capture the kinds of instruction that can engage students in critical literacy processes in a specific content area. We define reading for understanding as the capacity to engage in *evidence-based argumentation* drawing on multiple text sources. Evidence-based argumentation involves making a claim supported by evidence that connects to the claim in a principled way. This definition meets the criteria set forward above, criteria especially important if the IES Reading for Understanding Research Network Initiative is to have a significant impact on America's youth with respect to national and international measures of literacy, and preparedness for success in postsecondary education. A focus on evidence-based argumentation in the disciplines through the close analysis of texts – single and multiple – can provide the kind of powerful scaffolding that students entering middle and high school as struggling readers need to progress rapidly beyond basic skills. This is so because it entails building relevant content knowledge and vocabulary, frameworks through which to filter what is read, a necessity for speaking and writing to convince others, and strategies as well as dispositions for tackling textual detail.

Our Research Core Team proposes a model of evidence-based argumentation that captures the complexity of multi-source disciplinary literacy and attends to the psychological and social challenges of adolescence. We will test aspects of that model to inform the development of interventions that can significantly enhance the capacity of all students across grades 6-12 to engage in *reading for understanding*. Not only do we see the model as a potential theoretical contribution, it also guides the logic and structure of our proposed research and development program. We will engage in the three major lines of interdependent work: (1) research on aspects of cognitive processing relevant to reading for understanding as we have defined it; (2) intervention development and testing, attending to the range of reading levels evidenced by adolescents; and (3) designs for conducting efficacy studies for our interventions. The three lines of work can be linked back to the model we describe and can be understood as interacting elements of a program designed to meet the goal of *developing, implementing, and testing the efficacy of interventions that significantly enhance the capacity of all students across grades 6-12 to engage in reading for understanding, expand their oral language skills, and learn content.*

This work will produce a set of fully tested Evidence-Based Argument Instruction Models (E-B AIMS) that exemplify core design principles and include (1) exemplar curriculum units for each grade level built on developmental progressions in three content areas (history, science, and literature); (2) formative assessments that document student learning and guide instructional planning integral to the units; (3) SenseMaker, a software tool for supporting EBA in the disciplines; and (4) "worked examples" of the units (including videotaped instruction, student work samples, and lesson designs) for professional development and dissemination.

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READI Project Abstract