

# Chapter 13

## Let It Go: A Journey toward Elementary Student–Driven Media Production Aligned with the CCSS

**Yonty Friesem**

*Central Connecticut State University, USA*

**Brien J. Jennings**

*Narragansett Elementary School, USA*

**Carol Prest**

*Narragansett Elementary School, USA*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This case study introduces a two-year process in which a fourth grade teacher working with a library media specialist experienced a successful integration of digital and media literacy practices. During that time the fourth grade teacher adopted a less protectionist approach by having her students explore different multimedia production projects to enhance their learning in social studies. This book chapter introduces the process of both the fourth grade teacher as she explored new instructional strategies to incorporate media production and the Common Core State Standards and the library media specialist as a support team member. The standards index and its media production application can help educators integrate media production into their classrooms. This case study can help promote media production activities as they foster 21st century skills in elementary students.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

With the increasing use of digital media by children, teachers need to adjust their pedagogy in order to connect with students. More and more, children consume and create media (Perrin, December 2015), which means these children have a different learning experience in and out of school. As public schools implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), learning becomes a multimedia experience, using

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problem solving and project-based learning as instructional strategies. In order to address the home-school gap and promote meaningful learning as advocated by the CCSS, elementary school teachers can incorporate digital literacy into any subject matter in order to engage students and enhance their learning.

This chapter introduces one case study out of a two-year digital literacy implementation at Narragansett Elementary School, a New England K-4 public school. The three authors took part in a whole-school initiative to integrate a digital literacy practice. The two-year process started as Brien Jennings, the library media specialist felt he was teaching in isolation and reached out to the Media Education Lab at the State university. As he brought the new practices to Carol Prest, the 4th grade teachers, they explored it with Yonty Friesem, the Media Education Lab staff, as a collaborative effort. In this chapter, the three authors describe this process as in isolation, reaching out, bringing in, exploring, and collaboration. Prest is a 4th grade teacher at the Narragansett Elementary School who took a leadership role. She volunteered to be a member of the catalysts teacher group - a group of eleven teachers who provided professional development to the school teachers. Jennings is the school library media specialist who brought the idea of integrating digital literacy to the school after attending the State University's Summer Institute in Digital Literacy. Friesem is the associate director of the Media Education Lab who became part of the support team at the school. Using qualitative observations, in-depth interviews, and self-reflection, the data collected showcases the two-year process of successful implementation of digital literacies in a fourth grade level class. With student artifacts such as portfolios, blogs, and videos, we can see how the process of integrating technology is not merely a technical/vocational one, but rather a change in the teacher's state of mind.

Collaboration is a word often heard in schools. It is routinely spoken of as the ideal; something to be sought after. The level and quality of teacher collaboration can be linked to improved student achievement (Ronfeldt, Farmer, Mcqueen & Grissom, 2015). Quality collaboration leads to quality teachers, leads to quality student achievement. Yet, there is rarely any real opportunity for the type of collaboration that goes much beyond the temporary or much deeper than the surface. It tends to be a concept that exists on various professional development days, briefly catches the imaginations of a portion of the faculty, and eventually succumbs to the realities and pressures of working in public education. Great in theory, but not quite feasible. Based upon *Self-Determination Theory* (Pink, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000), teachers should find their intrinsic motivation to implement digital media in order to have a successful learning experience for both them and their students.

## BACKGROUND

Digital media empowers users to access information, analyze and evaluate, create messages, and reflect upon usage (Hobbs, 2010). At the same time, it calls for social responsibility (Gardner & Jenkins, 2011). One of the biggest challenges in adapting media literacy pedagogy is teachers' protectionist approach. Buckingham (1998) explained that the learning process must be student-centered and not a top-down approach where teachers are demystifying media messages to protect students from the negative influence of the media. In other words, instead of seeing the young students as victims of the media that needed to be protected, teachers should engage students' popular culture in order to empower them to critically analyze media messages they consume and even be able to produce their own media messages. This empowering approach is challenging when teachers are in isolation. Sharing the control over the class content and activity with students means that there is a chance of disorder and transgression (Parry, 2013).

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Teachers might find this risk to be too challenging when they are the only adult in the room responsible for the children's learning process.

For this research, the authors decided to adapt Hobbs' (2010) definition of digital and media literacy education as constructed by five competencies: access, analyze, create, reflect, and act. She added to the US canonical definition (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993) the two components of reflection and action. By doing so, it allowed the authors to broaden the scope of media literacy practice and struck a balance between the protectionist and the empowerment approaches. Using inquiry-based learning, media literacy education allows students to develop the skills required to be proficient according to the CCSS (Scheibe & Rogow, 2011).

## **DIGITAL AND MEDIA LITERACY AND THE COMMON CORE**

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) issued a special document in 2014 in order to connect the media literacy core principles with the CCSS (Moore & Bonilla, 2014). In their opening statement they explained the connection between media literacy and the CCSS:

*Media literacy engages in the thoughtful understanding of all texts in our media environment, including print, visual, audio, interactive, and digital texts. Media literate students are able to decode and comprehend texts, which allows them to analyze and evaluate texts for credibility, point of view, values, varying interpretation, and the context in which they are made, including institutional and economic contexts. Incorporating media literacy education into, specifically, English Language Arts (ELA) practices, supports the focus of the CCSS on analysis, digital creation, and the use of nonprint texts. (P.1)*

In the document, Moore and Bonilla connected five principles of media literacy with the CCSS. First, exploring the relationships between authors and audiences is related to reading literature (RL.) and/or Information (RI.) as ideas of analyzing and synthesizing the structure of the text by examining the purpose and message. Second, expanding the concept of literacy promotes the RL and RI key ideas of learning to analyze and synthesize diverse media and formats. It is also relevant to the speaking and listening (SL.) key ideas of comprehension and collaboration as students use multimedia texts. Third, research with information, news, and current events is aligned with the SL key ideas of presenting knowledge and ideas, but mostly writing (W.) key ideas of researching how to build and present knowledge. Fourth, empowering students as critical thinkers through media production and analysis is a strategy to apply the W.6 to use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. This applies to SL practices to demonstrate rhetorical skills in English. Fifth, reflection, ethics, and understanding multiple points of view is connected with the W. and SL. to use rhetorical practices for evaluating multiple perspectives including their own. As our case study will showcase, "the process of teaching how to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and communicate using media in all of its forms supports many of the most challenging goals of the CCSS" (Moore & Bonilla, 2014, p.1).

Although the authors of the CCSS looked at the ability to analyze and produce multimedia text as an essential part of student readiness for a successful career and life (Coleman, 2010), the document does not specify how to use media or how to implement them in each grade (Stotsky, 2013). Moreover, regarding the CCSS and digital literacy, Kaufman (2010) stated "uncertainty about standards and instruction are particularly detrimental to the learning needs of teachers" (p. 564). Looking at the challenges

that a public elementary school teacher faces in implementing the CCSS and digital and media literacy, the authors wondered how this process works and what the steps to promote a successful integration of digital media and the CCSS would be.

Educators across the country had been implementing the CCSS into their classrooms. The standards were more rigorous in many cases, but in Narragansett Elementary School, the Reading and Writing standards were not much different than what had already been taught. In the project that will be featured in this chapter, Writing Standards 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 were pertinent. These standards involve researching and writing a well-organized informational report. Reading standards RI.4.2, RI.4.3, and RI.4.7 were also implemented. These standards as can be seen in Table 1. related to conducting research and working with multimedia technology as students had to read, interpret, and analyze text and information presented visually. Finally, and perhaps most importantly when referring to media literacy, as explained before, the Speaking and Listening standards SL.4.4 and SL.4.5 were implemented when students created their media production. These involve reporting on a topic in an organized manner and adding audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas.

While teachers are gradually integrating the CCSS, it takes a long process of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) to start integrating the CCSS with digital technology. Similarly to Mezirow's ten stages of transformative learning, Carol Prest underwent the five stages to integrate media production as aligned with the CCSS. With the help of Brien Jennings and Yonty Friesem, five stages were identified: in isolation, reaching out, bringing in, exploring, and collaborating. The three authors reflected on the five steps as they applied Mezirow's three dimensions of transformative learning: psychological, convictional and behavioral. Friesem (2015) analyzed the two-year process of Jennings and Prest in relation to their hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) and their path to be self-determined educators (Pink, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This chapter describes the connection between the transformative process of Prest as her needs as educator were met by collaborating with Jennings and Friesem as well as discovering the power of media production to be a student-driven activity.

## **METHOD**

The purpose of this case study (Yin, 2009) was to explore the process of one fourth grade teacher in her struggles to successfully implement digital and media literacy, as aligned with the CCSS, with her students at Narragansett Elementary School. As a collaborative effort to tell the story of Prest and Jennings, the authors incorporated auto-ethnography data into the book chapter.

## **Participants**

The purposive sampling (Creswell, 2014) aimed at targeting leading teachers who successfully implemented media production in their classroom. As part of a larger multiple case study, participants volunteered to take part in a semester long research, including being interviewed and observed multiple times regarding their implementations of media production during the last two years. Upon IRB approval, the 45 full time faculty of Narragansett Elementary School were introduced to the research at a faculty meeting in January 2015. Eight volunteered to be observed and interviewed at their convenience between January and June 2015. This chapter describes the story of two study participants – Carol prest, the fourth grade teacher and Brien Jennings, the library media specialist. The school was a public school using “Race to

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*Table 1. Glogster activity and assessment aligned with CCSS for 4th grade*

	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
RI 4.2	Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.	Students researched their topic by first reading a book provided by the teacher. They took notes and wrote about the most important points about the topic's background and why the person made a difference.	Teacher conferenced with students and later used the fourth grade writing rubric* to assess final writing.
RI 4.3	Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.	Students learned about the significance of a historical figure. They used the information from their research to explain what happened.	Writing rubric*.
RI 4.7	Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.	Students reviewed, analyzed and chose images and videos, and explained why they made their choices.	Teacher observation, Glog's analysis and students' reflection.
W 4.2	Write informative/ explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	Students drafted, edited and revised two paragraphs about their topic on a historical figure who had made a difference.	Writing rubric*.
W 4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	After instruction, students wrote their paragraphs in preparation for sharing with classmates and families.	Writing rubric*.
W 4.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 4 here.)	Students peer-edited with a partner using a checklist. After making revisions the teacher conferenced with each student and more revisions or edits were done if needed.	Teacher observations, checklist of digital literacy skills** and the writing rubric*.
W 4.6	With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.	Students copied and pasted their paragraphs into a Glog on-line poster. Then they reviewed and chose images, videos, backgrounds and other graphics to enhance their words. Students helped each other as needed.	Teacher circulated as students worked, providing assistance when needed. Observations of student peer support.
W 4.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.	Students did research about their topic's background and what they did to make a difference.	Students' presentations of their research outcomes before working on their Glogs.
SL.4.4	Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.	Students learned what good speakers do when they make a presentation. There is a chart in the classroom that explained this. They practiced and then presented their glogs, first to the class and later to parents.	Students offered compliments and suggestions after their peers presented their glogs. Sometimes Glogs were revised. Teacher used a rubric for the Glog presentations***.
SL.4.5	Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.	Students make strategic use of digital media and visual displays as they inserted audio, images, videos, and other graphics to enhance their Glog.	Teacher observation and Glog rubric***.

Note: Definitions are taken from the CCSS site: <http://www.corestandards.org/>

\*Prest applied the writing rubric of the Delaware Department of Education (2013).

\*\* Prest created a rubric for students' digital literacy skills such as locating, evaluating, synthesizing, planning, editing and communicating information.

\*\*\* Prest created a rubric for students' Glog presentation including the development of the historical research, the design and navigation of the poster and the multimedia component.

the Top” funding to implement the CCSS. The school was a high performing school, located in a white upper-middle class suburban community with 8.6% of children living under the poverty line (RI Kids Count, 2016). Ninety percent of the students were white and twenty one percent were eligible for reduced or free lunch (Narragansett Public Schools, 2016). This unique setting allowed Jennings and Prest to implement innovative practices of media literacy. They underwent a gradual process where they learned to empower their students using media production. The description of their work and personal process in this chapter as five stages allow other educators to interpret the process and apply the relevant parts as it relates to their own particular contexts.

## **Context of Study**

The three authors worked at Narragansett Elementary School. Prest was a fourth grade teacher. Jennings was the library media specialist. Friesem was part of the support team that provided professional development and researched the effects of that professional development. This publication is part of a greater research project to explore how to integrate digital literacy in elementary public education. In 2011, the Narragansett School District began a rolling implementation of the CCSS, as part of the State’s Department of Education requirement for receiving the *Race To The Top* grant. The schoolwide work on digital and media literacy at Narragansett Elementary School started when Jennings returned from the Summer Institute in Digital Literacy. Prest was one of the first participants of the group, as she had already been starting to explore the idea of incorporating digital literacies in her classroom. During the 2014-2015 school year, Friesem started to provide support to the digital literacy initiative and collected data later in the spring semester.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data was collected during the Spring semester of 2015. Friesem was conducting observations and interviews with Narragansett Elementary School teachers who volunteered to be part of the research. Friesem conducted observations and was part of the process for a year and a half prior to conducting the interviews. Each participant was videotaped as they were individually interviewed by Friesem, and as part of two focus groups. Jennings and Prest took part in the same two focus groups. Like the other participants, they invited Friesem to their classroom and scheduled time to conduct the individual interviews. In order to include their experience of the process, Jennings and Prest also participated in the analysis of the interviews and observations, and together reflected on their work.

This autoethnographic (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013) writing included data that was collected through interviews and observation, along with a self-reflection from each participant. The Authors decided to collaborate on the writing since the data included a self-reflection from each author discussing their interdependence and collaboration. Each provided their perspective and together they analyzed the data. Their dialogue generated a synthesis of their perspectives into one narrative. Prest and Jennings were interviewed by Friesem on four occasions; twice individually and twice as part of a focus group. Between interviews they were observed by Friesem five times while having a media production activity in their class.

Together, Prest, Jennings, and Friesem collaborated on the narrative analysis (Merriam, 2001). Using a Google Document®, Friesem provided Jennings and Prest with the context for their interpretations of the research data.

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The authors wanted to provide a descriptive narrative to the reader in order to see the different steps that lead to a whole district digital literacy integration as well as Prest's self-reflection on her change in her instructional strategies. The data analysis provided a five stage process that can be transferred to other settings. Although Narragansett Elementary School has its own particular context, the process can be adapted, even partially by other educators who see how media production can be used to promote a student-centered approach aligned with the Common Core Standards.

## **LEARNING TO LET IT GO**

Working together, the three Authors framed the process through a narrative of five stages: in isolation, reaching out, bringing in, exploring, and collaborating. The following section provides the narrative and evidence of the process that Prest, the fourth grade teacher, and Jennings, the library media specialist went through from the summer of 2013 to the summer of 2015.

### **In Isolation: The Library Media Center**

Prior to the 2013/2014 school year, Jennings taught in isolation. It was not an uncommon scenario for school library media specialists at the elementary level. Beyond the occasional research collaboration, there was not much opportunity to extend classroom lessons into the library media center, or vice versa. The library was generally viewed as a place students were sent to learn library skills and to gather materials needed for research projects. There was no real connection to what was being taught in the classroom.

Digital and media literacy of any kind was simply not a part of the classroom teacher's day-to-day vocabulary. And in large part this reflected Jennings's failure to connect with them. He knew how to present the concepts and created a good unit on the topic, but was continually frustrated by the lack of depth that could be achieved. Jennings struggled with ideas about how to bring these concepts to younger students (predominantly second grade, as first grade tended to be almost entirely dedicated to teaching and reinforcing the most basic library skills). Developmentally, these students were not equipped to process much more than the basics of intellectual property. Conversely, with older students (third and fourth grade), the topics went much deeper than Jennings would explore in his limited instructional time. Especially not while still managing to present the basic library and research skills they were required to know by the end of their time at Narragansett Elementary School.

The students were engaged while in the media center, exploring complex concepts of digital and media literacy with active questions and conversation. But it ended at the library doors. "It was a continual frustration" (Jennings, 2015). There was also the need to go beyond basic media literacy and explore the more complex aspects of deeper media analysis and creation, but, as this was traditionally something that was for the middle school and high school levels, "I was not confident that classroom teachers would see this as something that was even relevant to the age level" (Jennings, 2015). By the close of the 2012/2013 Jennings was feeling increasingly isolated and frustrated by the realities of teaching at the elementary school level. He realized that he would have to adapt a deeper media literacy curriculum to the elementary level or risk stagnating, and so began searching for ideas how to do so. A brief internet search resulted in finding information about an upcoming Summer Institute in Digital Literacy organized by the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island.

## Reaching Out: The Summer Institute in Digital Literacy

The 2013 Summer Institute in Digital Literacy was the first week-long professional development offered by Dr. Renee Hobbs and Dr. Julie Coiro at the University of Rhode Island. Friesem was the assistant director of the Media Education Lab at that time. He was in charge of production and logistics, as well as being a faculty member that provided sessions. Each morning a different keynote speaker presented a particular aspect of digital literacy. Dr. Coiro explained how inquiry-based learning benefits students when they work with a peer when learning how to locate information online, analyze different sources, synthesize data, and communicate it to others. Dr. Hobbs showcased how to use the AACRA model to enhance digital and media literacy skills. She demonstrated the importance of students having the ability to access media, analyze the media message, create their own message, reflect upon their use of media and composition, and be socially responsible; thinking about their impact. Later the same day, Friesem, along with other faculty, presented a workshop focusing on the use of video production in schools. One of the workshop participants was Jennings.

Jennings attended large and smaller group sessions outlining the theory and best practices of digital and media literacy. Friesem's session, *Producing Videos on A Small Budget*, provided several strategies for introducing digital literacy. After the session, Jennings reached out to Friesem and they brainstormed about how to bring media production to younger students. Jennings also reached out to Dr. Hobbs who discussed the possibility of forming a partnership between Narragansett Elementary School and the Media Education Lab. After meeting with the administration it was decided that the first steps would be the formation of a "DigiLit" book study group, using *Discovering Media Literacy: Teaching Digital Media and Popular Culture in Elementary School* (Hobbs & Moore, 2013), and a pilot program involving the fourth grade faculty.

## Bringing in: Book Group/Pilot Program

Prest taught at Narragansett Elementary School for over twenty years. Her colleagues included three comparatively recent transfers from the system's middle school and one "newer" teacher who joined the school less than six years before. Prest had always been interested in collaboration opportunities and had had the pleasure of working with colleagues who had often been on the forefront of innovative teaching. At the time of this study, about one-third of her class were considered to be enrichment track students. These students were identified from high test scores as well as recommendations from their third grade teacher regarding daily class performance and motivation to learn. Prest had always been willing to explore ways of integrating technology into her classroom as she believed it could be beneficial to students. However, she remained cautious about the risk of students focusing too much on the technology tools. Over the course of the 2013/2014 school year, Prest often expressed reservations about using technology at the expense of curriculum requirements. She often felt uncertain of her ability to use digital tools and was wary that real learning would be overshadowed by the "bells and whistles." She thought there needed to be a depth to the learning and the focus should not be just on the presentation. She found it helpful to see examples of successful integration projects but sometimes felt apprehensive about being able to keep up with the technology. Things changed so fast for her. Just when she would think that some innovation was great, something newer came along that seemed even better.

After Jennings came back from the Summer Institute in Digital Literacy, he was highly enthused about the experience. His enthusiasm was contagious and Prest was very supportive of a potential partnership

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with the Media Education Lab. She agreed to take part in a fourth grade pilot PD program designed by Friesem in the spring 2014. Along with ten full time teachers, she signed on to the DigiLit book study group that was formed. The group met for several weeks, discussing Hobbs' (2013) book and sharing how it was changing their attitudes about teaching digital literacy in the classroom. Having time to share with colleagues is something Prest found inspiring and supportive as she attempted to improve her teaching practice.

Prest had previously “dabbled” with integrating digital technology in her classroom, but had never been fully satisfied with the results. During the 2012/2013 school year she used the free version of Glogster®, an online platform that allows students to create multimedia posters. Though her experience was frustrating, she tried it again with the support of Jennings, Friesem and the DigiLit group. Her success to implement CCSS with technology in her second experiment with Glogster in the 2013/2014 school year, convinced the school principal to pay for the full version for all grade three and grade four teachers the following two years 2014-2016.

Initially in 2012, Prest used Glogster with her students for a writing/biographical research assignment in history. This was a research report that focused on U.S. heroes. Students chose a topic from a list she provided. Students then researched, took notes, and did a biographical report about the person. The collaboration with Jennings in the 2013/2014 school year at the library media center was limited to research skills lessons taught earlier in the year and arranging a time for students to come to the library media center to select biographies. A list of potential historical figures was provided to Jennings and alternatives were suggested where necessary. In addition to print materials, students were also allowed to utilize 1-2 online resources (not to include Wikipedia). After completing their research, students then were directed to write Word® documents, describing the character traits that made these people heroic. Finally, based upon this writing exercise, they were to create a multimedia “Glog”.

Although unsure of her own skills using Glogster, Prest demonstrated how to create a presentation using Glogster templates to her students. The results of that pilot project were mixed; there were a lot of technology glitches and she was very apprehensive because she did not feel that she had mastery of the program. She could see the potential for using Glogster or some other digital tool in the future, but continued to be concerned about the glitches that would inevitably occur and was intent on finding the most effective way to integrate the technology into her lessons.

## **Exploring Glogster: Incorporating the CCSS**

As a result of professional development with Jennings, Friesem, and the DigiLit book club during the 2013/2014 academic year, Prest decided at the end of March to make another attempt at integrating a digital tool into the lesson. She decided upon Glogster again, but in this case opted to use the paid version. She found that there were fewer glitches with this version. She redesigned the “Hero” project as a three-week unit. This time, with collaboration from the school literacy coach, each step was created with CCSS in mind as seen in Table 1. Reading 4.2 students researched their topic by first reading a book provided by the teacher. They took notes and wrote about the most important points about the topic’s background and why the person made a difference. Reading 4.3 students learned about the significance of an historical figure. They used the information from their research to explain what happened. Reading .4.7 students did research about their topic’s background and what they did to make a difference. Writing .4.2 students drafted, edited and revised two paragraphs about their topic on an historical figure who had made a difference. Writing .4.4 after instruction, students wrote their paragraphs in preparation for

sharing with classmates and families. Writing .4.5 students peer edited with a partner using a checklist. After making revisions the teacher conferenced with each student and more revisions or edits were done if needed. Writing .4.6 students copied and pasted their paragraphs into a Glog on-line poster. Then they reviewed and chose images, videos and other graphics to enhance their words. Students helped each other as needed. Writing .4.7 students did research about their topic's background and what they did to make a difference. Speaking and listening L.4.4 students learned what good speakers do when they make a presentation. There is a chart in the classroom that explained this. They practiced and then presented their glogs, first to the class and later to parents. Speaking and listening L.4.5 students made strategic use of digital media and visual displays as they inserted audio, images, videos, and other graphics to enhance their Glog.

The Glog project "People Who Have Made a Difference" allowed students to meet many of the Grade 4 CCSS and for Prest to be able to assess their learning. Common Core Reading Standard 4.2 is a reading comprehension ability when students can "determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details" (CCSS, 2011). In addition, Reading Standard 4.3 is the ability to "explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text" (CCSS, 2011). The students' first task of this project, after choosing a topic from a list provided by Prest, was to read one book, also provided by Prest, and to take notes from it. After that they could add information to their notes from websites. They were instructed to find details about the topic's childhood and then learn how that person made a difference in the world. Students had to differentiate what was important information from what was "just interesting". This was the research segment of the assignment.

One of the Reading standards that refer to digital literacy with informational text was Reading 4.7 that states that students should be able to interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g. in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears. By locating videos, pictures and informational text online, students were able to analyze and evaluate from various resources the main contributions of the historical figure and how they made a difference.

Writing standard.4.2 is referring to students' ability to "write an informative or explanatory text to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly" (CCSS, 2011). After collecting research notes, students wrote drafts, they were expected to write at least one paragraph about the topic's background and one paragraph explaining how the person made a difference, or, what the person's most important contributions were. Prest had taught writing lessons prior to students doing the research. It was during this step that students produced work demonstrating CCSS W.4.4. This standard states that "students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience" (CCSS, 2011). When students completed their drafts, either in notebooks or on the computer, they signed up for a conference with Prest. At that time, she would meet with the students. It allowed her students to meet CCSS W.4.5 "with guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing" (CCSS, 2011). This is when the major revision and editing would take place. Creation of the Glog followed.

Writing standard 4.6 states that "with guidance and support from adults, students should be able to use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others" (CCSS, 2011). In addition, they should demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting. Both of these standards were addressed with this project. Furthermore, CCSS W.4.7 calls for students to conduct short research projects that build

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knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic. Students are expected to demonstrate understanding of the subject under investigation.

Two of the speaking and listening standards call for students to make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations. Speaking and listening standards 4.4. and 4.5 regarding the *Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas* requires students to add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes. The Glogster platform provided the perfect platform for students to use their creativity to produce a multimedia project. In prior lessons they were taught the importance of choosing backgrounds, images, videos, and graphics that would enhance their subject. Colors and size of fonts mattered, placement of images and other graphics could enhance the topic or make for a cluttered project. Videos had to be chosen for a reason, they had to watch and analyze in order to decide if a video had the best information and the optimum length to improve their presentation. Meanwhile, throughout this process, students were learning more about their topic.

As the projects were completed, they were shared on the Promethean Board<sup>®</sup> in the classroom. Students evaluated their peers work with a rubric. They complimented aspects that they thought were effective, and made suggestions where they felt improvements could be made. This was done with great respect and students were encouraged to revise their work if they chose to do so. The grand finale was our “Glogfest”. Parents were invited to come into the classroom one afternoon to view the students’ presentations.

During the work on the Glogster - historical figure assignment, students were focused and engaged throughout the project, especially when it was time to complete the Glogs. Moreover, they were happy and willing to help each other, teaching each other the features of Glogster and fixing glitches when they occurred. One important outcome for Prest was the realization that some of the children were more confident with the technology than she was. They quickly caught on and were willing to explore all of the tools Glogster offered. Depending on them to help each other and, in some cases, teach her, was empowering for both the students and the teacher. This also allowed her the time needed to conference one-on-one with students.

## **Letting Go: How Digital and Media Literacy with CCSS is Learner-Centered**

At the same time the students would use the research skills learned in the library media center for their Glogster multimedia project, Jennings was supporting their research by teaching them about visual, media, and digital literacy (this occurred in all five fourth grade classrooms). These lessons focused specifically on explaining the importance of design elements in creating a multimedia presentation, and covered topics including sound and layout choice; from use of color, fonts, and backgrounds, to placement of titles and media. After completing the research portion of the assignment, students were introduced to Glogster. Unlike the earlier trial when Prest introduced the online platform, this time, the students were allowed to explore its capabilities independently. They experimented for two to three days, and Prest provided focus and guidance, before beginning to create their final products.

It was liberating for Prest to learn that she did not need to know everything about the technology. This was a significant transformative moment in her teaching. She just “let go”. The students took over, rose to the occasion, and helped each other. In fact, the collaboration that took place between students was just as important as the task they were working on. But, “I had to get over the idea that the teacher needs to know everything, and by letting go of that, the students explored and discovered skills on their

own,” (Prest, 2015). Unlike her first experience with Glogster, this time she stepped back and let students explore it and then teach each other. In the process, she came to realize that she did not need to be fully in control of every aspect of the lesson in order to be effective. The writing was different from the first project because of the structure that followed the CCSS W.4.4., W.4.5., and W.4.7. so, the quality of writing was better to begin with. The students had a great time. “They pulled it all together and the parents came into the classroom to view the final presentations. It was enjoyable learning experience for all” (Prest, 2015).

At the end of the school year 2013-2014, Friesem conducted a focus group to receive feedback for his workshop, and, more importantly, to plan the next year. Prest, Jennings, and four teachers participated and offered their feedback. It was during this feedback session that Friesem learned about Prest’s project and how, ultimately, her students had taught other fourth grade students how to use Glogster. That started a chain reaction when the other grade four teacher approached the classroom next door and offered to teach them. During the next year, the digital literacy initiative took a bigger turn as many teachers at the school started to use media production. Additionally, Jennings was allowed to reallocate a small portion of his budget to create a TV studio with green screen and studio lighting at the library. The studio was used in some capacity by all grade levels, but consistently by the third and fourth graders who were sent by their teachers. Jennings was successful in breaking the isolation.

## **SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Prest’s experience was only one of several transitions that happened at the school. As Jennings reached out and got more teachers to become involved in the digital literacy initiative, not only was the isolation over, but the teaching has transformed into a student driven focus. The collaboration with the Media Education Lab evolved into a year of support of the administration and a group of catalyst teachers that Jennings and Prest took part in. Narragansett Elementary School principal started to use video production for her monthly update for parents. The superintendent supported the initiative and came to one of the professional development days to learn how to use Twitter for research. The teachers who used the digital and media literacy practice presented in statewide and national conferences.

The five stages, from isolation to collaboration, demonstrated how, with the understanding of the connection between digital and media literacy and the CCSS, educators can come together to transform their instructional strategies. Narragansett Elementary School had a long history of technology integration and a long history of being a community of practice. Nevertheless, the two-year initiative to bring digital and media literacy practices connected the two traditions into a comprehensive practice in the classroom. The teachers came together to discuss their shared goals as aligned with the CCSS and started to implement the use of media production in their classes. As a result, not only did the community of practice support their work in the classroom, but their pedagogy also shifted. Prest’s case study demonstrated how with the right support from in- and out-of-school professional development, a teacher can shift from a protectionist approach to using media in the classroom to achieve a more empowering approach.

At each stage, another component was added to support Prest’s practice. First, Jennings reached out to an out-of-school resource - the Media Education Lab. Second, with relevant materials, he brought literature and practices that connected digital and media literacy scholarship and assignments to the CCSS. Third, Prest used the resources provided by Jennings, and the school literacy coach, along with Friesem’s

## **Let It Go**

professional development workshops as an out of school expert in media education. Prest's exploration in her class to let her students take the lead became a transformative experience for her as an educator.

The five stages that were described can be seen as the combination of *Self-Determination Theory* (Pink, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and the *Hierarchy of Human Needs* (Maslow, 1943). As described by Friesem (2015), the hierarchical process of Narragansett Elementary School teachers, and Jennings and has five stages. Jennings's feeling of isolation and frustration from the protectionist approach to media in the school, created an opportunity for him as library media specialist to reach out and find support to integrate an empowering approach. His needs were met once he found a common language with the Media Education Lab members. This relatedness experience motivated him to create a community of practice at Narragansett Elementary School. He brought in the empowering approach using a book club and professional development to introduce the concepts and practice. The book club and professional development met the needs of a group of teachers who decided to explore the empowerment approach using media production. They explored media production in their classroom and started to feel more competent as they gave more control to their students. Learning to "let it go" was not only an empowering practice of digital and media literacy, it met the teachers' need to be updated and develop their students' 21st century skills as required by the Common Core State Standards.

This shift from a protectionism to an empowerment approach regarding media was a two-year process, as teachers supported each other while undergoing a professional development. This interdependence of teacher and learner benefited both Prest and her students. Additionally, the entire school became a place to integrate digital and media literacy, with the library media center as a hub for resources and support. Prest's index of activities aligned with the Common Core State Standards is one of many media production projects that were implemented by a group of devoted teachers at Narragansett Elementary School. Using her index can help other educators to implement parts of it in their particular educational setting.

## **Limitations**

This particular case study has a unique context and cannot be replicated exactly. And yet, it can be transferred to other settings with mild modifications. While our collection and analysis of the data might be seen as biased, this transformative research (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012) aims to advocate for pedagogical change as Prest altered her perspective. We acknowledge that not all settings would be able to implement this method and not all the data can be transferred to other schools. Nevertheless, we want this case study to serve as a showcase to be used as a call for educators to consider giving their students an opportunity to explore their own voice as a practice aligned with the CCSS.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter describes the process of one fourth grade teacher who, with the support of her colleagues, integrated media production into her class. Prest benefited from learning to hand the control of the production over to her students. Her two-year process started with the book club, continued with digital tool experimentation (with the support of the library media specialist, the literacy and math coaches), the university experts mentoring through a weeklong summer institute, and monthly workshops. A significant contribution to Prest's feelings of confidence was due to her engagement with the school community of practice of her fellow teachers. Her students' work is tangible evidence for the school

community of how elementary students can benefit from media production while following the CCSS. Many educators can relate to Prest's journey. Although it is her particular experience, this journey can be transferred to other contexts and educational settings to promote the successful implementation of the CCSS via students' empowerment producing their own media messages.

The process of breaking the isolation by reaching out, bringing in, letting go, and collaborating is a model that can benefit other professional development designers, administrators, media library specialists, and teachers. With the current standardized testing policy, elementary school teachers have to connect their practice to the CCSS. Our case study shows that structuring a systematic lesson plan looking at educational outcomes can help us empower students to take control over their learning process. Students are able to search for the information, evaluate it, compose a report, and present it using different media platforms. If we as educators can learn to let go and let our instruction be student-driven, we will not only use technology to enhance the students' digital and media literacy skills, and meet the educational standards, but more importantly, we will prepare our students to be educated and literate 21st century citizens.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Digital and Media Literacy:** The ability to access, analyze, create, reflect and be socially responsible while consuming, producing, and sharing media messages digitally.

**Empowerment Approach:** Approach that looks at media as a tool to empower individual and/or communities through expressive composition of texts.

**Glogster:** A cloud-based platform used for presentation and interactive learning. Users can mix a variety of media to create multimedia posters.

**Media Library Specialist:** A library media specialist (LMS) is a certified librarian who has also been trained as an educator. Traditionally, the LMS is responsible for teaching library, research, and information literacy skills. They are also responsible for developing the school library's collection of resources.

**Media Production:** Media production describes the creation and recording of digital or analog communication. Media production can take the forms of writing for traditional print and broadcast, as well as the Internet. It can include film and television production, animation, blogging or vlogging, video game authoring, and website and logo design.

**Protectionism Approach:** Approach that looks at the need to be critical media consumers in order to take control of the media messages that we are surrounded by.

**Summer Institute in Digital Literacy:** A week-long professional development for educators who are looking to deepen their understanding and practice of digital literacy. Applying an inquiry-based learning approach, participants learn from leading expert in the field, share their experience and design their own digital literacy curriculum.