

**MEDIA AND
INFORMATION
LITERACY
AT MARK
DAY SCHOOL
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE
2013-2014**



**A REPORT BY THE MEDIA EDUCATION LAB
JULY 25, 2014**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Media and information literacy are essential competencies that can be activated and developed through a variety of innovative forms of learning and teaching. This report describes a year-long professional development program developed and implemented by Mark Day School faculty during the 2013 – 2014 academic year in collaboration with the [Media Education Lab](#) at the Harrington School of Communication and Media, University of Rhode Island. The goal of the initiative was designed to build coherence, quality, effectiveness and vision around media and information literacy integration at Mark Day School across subjects and grade levels. The process was informed by faculty development work previously described in Hobbs and Moore's *Discovering Media Literacy* but it also included elements unique to the context of Mark Day School. The professional development program included a 6-stage process that activated faculty as learners in a dynamic inquiry process.

Key elements of the professional development program included: (1) reflecting on faculty motivations and values in using digital media and technology; (2) expanding the concept of literacy and identifying learning targets; (3) considering the value of both formal and informal media and information literacy (MIL) learning; (4) conducting teaching-partner interviews as a paradigm for collaborative professional development; (5) using MIL tagging to support a professional development learning community; (6) sharing with the whole school community. Using a seminar-style approach to professional development, faculty worked collaboratively to develop shared knowledge and understanding of how children develop MIL competencies within the current context of curriculum and instruction at Mark Day School. This process also enabled the faculty to imagine potential future directions for the program.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Mark Day School has a long history of developing and supporting media and information literacy (MIL) integration into student learning and professional development. For over a decade, the approach to professional development at Mark Day School has consisted of experts providing definitions and frameworks for MIL that capture the variety of theoretical and pedagogical approaches in the practice of media literacy education and digital learning.

In 2012-2013, Mark Day School commissioned a program review from Project Look Sharp at Ithaca College, whose report noted that Mark Day School has “potential to be a groundbreaking model [in media and information literacy] for the U.S.” The report identified certain gaps in teacher knowledge of and approaches to media and information literacy as it pertained to instruction and learning at Mark Day School. Some confusion around MIL among faculty was due to lack of pedagogical or technological knowledge, but more was simply a result of faculty isolation— many were simply unaware of the high-quality lessons and projects that other faculty were using with their students.

This history of diffuse progress—often enacted differently by different faculty according to their understanding of the field and their particular values—and a lack of a shared definition of media and information literacy led Mark Day School to enlist the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island in a year-long professional development program. The Media Education Lab advances digital and media literacy education through scholarship and community service.

This report describes and analyzes the professional development program that was implemented in 2013 – 2014 at Mark Day School. **The goal of the initiative was designed to build coherence, quality, effectiveness and vision around media and information literacy integration at Mark Day School across subjects and grade levels.** Evidence presented in this report was collected from extensive field notes developed by the Media Education Lab team, interviews with participating faculty, review of online materials created during the program, and observation.

Professional Development Partners in Inquiry

Media and information literacy has been a significant and distinctive feature of Mark Day School under the leadership of Bonnie Nishihara, Assistant Head for Educational Design and Innovation, who has helped cultivate a deep awareness of media and information literacy through professional development that includes leaders in the field who provide engaging workshops on a variety of topics, including critical analysis of advertising, participatory culture and connected learning. While these programs were highly effective in introducing new ideas and deepening teacher knowledge, they were not specifically designed to sustain faculty collaboration and cultivate ongoing creativity among faculty over time.

The approach used by the Media Education Lab is characterized by a **longer-term collaborative engagement, the co-construction of inquiry, and the use of modeling and other creative tactical strategies to accomplish practical goals for faculty development.** This approach was developed by Renee Hobbs and David Cooper Moore in the K-6 media literacy program, *Powerful Voices for Kids* (www.powerfulvoicesforkids.com) and described in the book, *Discovering Media Literacy: Teaching Digital Media and Popular Culture in Elementary School* (Corwin/Sage, 2013). These elements were key components of the program:

Co-constructed goals, structure, process and outcomes

Because faculty took an active role in defining the vision, direction, and goals of MIL professional development from the very beginning of our engagement, the entire structure of the professional experience was effectively co-constructed between Media Education Lab facilitators and Mark Day School MIL Committee members. Given her leadership role in media and information literacy development at Mark Day School, it was natural for Bonnie Nishihara to be a key connection between the Media Education Lab and Mark Day School faculty. However, it became clear early in the professional development process that Nishihara was more than just a facilitator. She was a partner whose ideas and knowledge of the Mark Day School culture fundamentally informed both the structure and implementation process of professional development at Mark Day School. As this report shows, important shifts occurred in the planning and implementation process, including the movement away from our intended plan of curriculum mapping and identification of learning targets to **a more fluid, flexible and generative approach** that used the identification of MIL in existing curriculum, lesson plan tagging, the blending of MIL with other competencies and literacies essential to learning at Mark Day School, and a committee-led share-out of ideas as a professional development program for the full faculty.

The use of creative tactical strategies to accomplish practical goals through blended learning

Rather than simply drop knowledge on Mark Day School faculty, the Media Education Lab team worked to identify a clear and specific goal for the engagement, adjusting our own approaches to support collaboration. To sustain a six-month, bi-coastal partnership, this professional development program used **blended learning** that included two intensive face-to-face meetings and several forms of intense online engagement, including teleconferencing, cloud-based collaboration, and the use of online tagging taxonomies to extend learning outside the walls of Mark Day School and continue learning consistently between face-to-face sessions.

Our challenge was to support the Mark Day School faculty, enabling them to converge on a suitable definition of media and information literacy, activate their creative, collaborative development of lessons and projects informed by media and information literacy, and extend any professional development insights into an ongoing process of building and sharing MIL practices across subjects and grade levels.

Media and information literacy is an expanded conceptualization of literacy that includes the ability to access, analyze, compose, reflect and take action using media texts, tools and technologies in a wide variety of forms.

—Renee Hobbs

In the process, we discovered the faculty's existing understandings of media and information literacy and pushed them further within their own contexts. This process of discovery and flexibility required several key shifts from standard top-down professional development models and through a process Hobbs and Moore have called **messy engagement**. When staff development (like other forms of teaching and learning) activates engagement, collaboration, creativity, innovation, and risk-taking, it can be messy at times. Rather than focusing on a product to be completed after a predetermined and linear course of learning and synthesis, messy engagement is exploratory and iterative. We believe that messy engagement is the only way to truly honor the individual motivations and passions that expert faculty in independent school settings exhibit.

This approach to professional development seemed to meet the needs of Mark Day School faculty. By taking ownership of the professional development process and being amenable to adjustments and new approaches as needed, the Mark Day School faculty ended up with a **more customized and expansive vision for MIL integration** that paved the way for collaborative development in the future. As one member of the MIL committee put it, "This is not something we could do anywhere. It worked with this community. It was possible because of [our] sophisticated, experienced team members."

Mark Day School MIL Committee

Because the MIL Committee at Mark Day School brought their individual perspectives to the process of imagining the future for media and information literacy as a key dimension of achieving the school's strategic goals, the professional development experience was a reflection of their talents and sensibilities.

The Media, Information, and Technology Team

Mark Day School has a team of media, information, and technology professionals who have been leading efforts to better integrate MIL for many years. Bonnie Nishihara, Tatian Greenleaf and Chad Forrester teach lessons in media analysis and production, computer programming, and other areas of multimedia composition that provide a foundation for student understanding of MIL concepts and foster student creativity in video, programming, and web projects. Librarian Alli Decker teaches library skills to students and works in partnership with faculty to incorporate resources, information literacy and the research process across the school.

Upper School

Dave Hickman, seventh grade history teacher, is a thought leader whose insight into the culture of Mark Day School informed how we proceeded with professional development planning. He formally collaborated with Media Education Lab visiting scholar Sait Tüzel on an online, cross-cultural project with students from Turkey, which we profile below. Fourth grade teacher Dan Noble and sixth grade humanities teacher Dana Kirk used the professional development experience as an opportunity to enrich their work, which already incorporated information literacy and assessment of credibility.

Lower School

Although technology use has intentionally not been a priority for Mark Day School faculty in kindergarten through second grade, media and information literacy is a part of the Lower School curriculum. Second grade teacher Cathy Sedlock and third grade teacher Julie Fritz both contributed ideas, lessons, and insights to our emerging understanding of how young children can ask critical questions about their media worlds, create media thoughtfully, and develop ethically responsible attitudes that promote responsible use of digital media tools.

Subject Specialists

Math specialist Norm Lyons recognizes the need to develop students who critically analyze messages that include data, numbers and statistics. He sees great potential for the database tool being piloted by the committee for documenting how MIL is incorporated across the curriculum at Mark Day School. Richard Navarrete, a music specialist, connected concepts in MIL from the professional development

program to his own work in the music classroom. Often, fine arts have an uneasy relationship to media arts and MIL frameworks—but by exploring motivations that include honoring the cultural heritage of fine arts and music, this professional development collaboration revealed how music and the fine arts are deeply connected to MIL integration.

SPOTLIGHT Tatian Greenleaf



Tatian Greenleaf is a technology integration specialist and game developer who helps teachers at Mark Day School use technology to support student learning. Before this professional development program, Tatian defined media as "popular culture" and media and information literacy as "deconstruction and analysis." In the past, Tatian would be more likely to help teachers integrate media and information literacy by developing entirely new lessons, but now, he sees media and information literacy through a wider, more integrated lens that includes the pedagogy of inquiry and a focus on helping students access, analyze, create, reflect and take social or civic action in the context of existing work. "Everything fits together a lot better now," he said after the professional development ended.

SPOTLIGHT Dana Kirk



Sixth grade teacher Dana Kirk shifted her thinking on media and information literacy to include the ability to access, analyze, compose, reflect and take action using media texts, tools and technologies in a wide variety of forms. She explained that when she began the year, "Media and information literacy have always been about deconstruction and analysis; media texts have all been print or visual." The process of participating on the media and information literacy committee has changed the way that Dana plans lessons. Now, she is always looking for a way to layer media and information literacy on top of traditional reading comprehension activities. As every teacher knows, oftentimes, lessons don't exactly go as planned, and teachers have to make adjustments. Now, Dana views these times for adjustments as "opportunities for additional media and information literacy layers to come in."

SPOTLIGHT Richard Navarrete



Richard Navarrete says the process of participating on the media and information literacy committee made him more cognizant of media and information literacy in general, which he now sees as relevant to his work as a music teacher. "Sometimes now when I am doing a lesson, like deconstructing song lyrics, I think, 'Ah! That's media literacy!'" In addition to making him more aware of media and information literacy in general, Richard found that the process helped him better understand the need for kids to communicate well in a variety of forms.

Key Elements of the Professional Development Program

This professional development program included a 6-stage process that activated faculty as learners in a dynamic inquiry process. The process is informed by faculty development work previously described in Hobbs and Moore's *Discovering Media Literacy* but it also included elements unique to the context of Mark Day School. Key elements of the professional development program include:









- (1) reflecting on faculty motivations and values in using digital media and technology;
- (2) expanding the concept of literacy and identifying learning targets;
- (3) considering the value of both formal and informal MIL learning;
- (4) conducting teaching-partner interviews as a paradigm for collaborative professional development;
- (5) Using MIL tagging to support a professional development learning community;
- (6) sharing with the whole school community.

Using a seminar-style approach to professional development, we worked collaboratively to increase our shared knowledge and understanding of how children develop MIL competencies within the current context of curriculum and instruction at Mark Day School. This process also enabled the faculty to imagine potential future directions for the program.



1 Reflecting on Faculty Motivations and Values in Using Digital Media and Technology

In our first face-to-face professional development session on October 18, 2013, the Media Education Lab team invited the faculty to reflect on their own values and motivations for using print, visual, sound and digital media as tools for learning. Participants completed the "Digital Learning Horoscope," a diagnostic "personality test" that promotes reflection and dialogue among diverse faculty who bring different approaches to the integration of MIL into teaching and learning. Traditionally, this exercise is useful for pointing out how all of twelve motivations—which encompass motivations that variously value novelty, student voice, systems thinking, participation, professionalization, and cultural transmission—can spread out more or less equally among a diverse group of people. Our usual take-away from this exercise is that, like the Zodiac horoscope, MIL motivations are inflected equally across a diverse group. On the following page you will find a list of motivations drawn from the **Powerful Voices for Kids** program:

	<p>TRENDSETTER</p> <p>You meet students "where they live" by connecting the classroom to contemporary popular culture.</p>		<p>TECHIE</p> <p>You know that digital media technology and tools engage students more deeply in authentic learning.</p>
	<p>WATCHDOG</p> <p>You want students to think about economic and political contexts of media and technology as systems that shape our lives.</p>		<p>DEMYSTIFIER</p> <p>You want students to develop critical thinking skills by "pulling back the curtain" on how media is constructed.</p>
	<p>TASTE-MAKER</p> <p>You want students to appreciate culturally important media in history, art, literature, and sciences.</p>		<p>ACTIVIST</p> <p>You support students' civic engagement by engaging with media and technology to address real-world issues.</p>
	<p>ALT</p> <p>You challenge students with alternative ways of finding, using, thinking about, and creating media off the beaten path.</p>		<p>MOTIVATOR</p> <p>You cultivate students' autonomy as independent learners who go where their creativity takes them.</p>
	<p>SPIRIT GUIDE</p> <p>You are dedicated to helping students use media to support their social and emotional well-being.</p>		<p>PROFESSIONAL</p> <p>You develop students' creative competencies and practical skills as future authors, artists, writers, or media professionals.</p>
	<p>PROFESSOR</p> <p>You want students to gain content knowledge by using media and technology to advance learning goals.</p>		<p>TEACHER 2.0</p> <p>You help students use media and technology to connect with and learn from others as networked digital citizens.</p>

At Mark Day School, the strong tradition of social and emotional learning, global education, and MIL integration was in evidence when **three motivations were expressed consistently among participants**. By identifying and discussing these three motivations, we were better able to clarify how MIL might have its own unique “personality” at Mark Day School, shared widely by faculty across subjects and grade levels. We refer to these three motivations as the Demystifier, the Watchdog, and the Spirit Guide. Hobbs and Moore have defined these motivations as follows:

DEMYSIFIER

You “pull back the curtain” to help students see how all forms of information and knowledge are constructed. You emphasize the practice of critical thinking, helping students ask good “how” and “why” questions.

WATCHDOG

You are a natural critical thinker, aware of how economic systems and institutions influence our everyday lives, particularly through the media and technology we use. You want your students and your peers to be more mindful of the ways that things are bought and sold. Who owns and controls the media content that we see, hear, read, and play with? You feel responsible for giving your students a “wake-up call” about the economic and institutional inner-workings of the technology tools and the world that surrounds them.

SPIRIT GUIDE

You are a listener. You have a dedication to the social and emotional well-being of your students, and do everything you can to help students understand themselves and their lives. Students likely find you trustworthy, and may even confide in you in ways that they do not with other people. You know media is just one facet of student life, and you want to engage with it to help them through the highs and lows of life.

What is notable about the focus on these three motivations is not only what they say about what does motivate Mark Day School faculty, but also what does not motivate faculty. Here are a few of the motivations that do not appear to have as much traction with Mark Day School faculty:

“Cool tools” and “hot texts”

There are many novel uses of technology and popular culture at Mark Day School, but **the use of technology tools and popular culture texts are not in themselves motivating forces** among the MIL Committee. All classrooms at Mark Day School are equipped with Smartboards, which teachers use to varying degrees. Some, like third grade teacher Julie Fritz, use theirs consistently throughout the school day, while others choose to use them more sparingly. All students receive iPads starting in third grade for classroom use. In sixth grade, students receive laptops, which can be taken home. Student cell phone use is not allowed during the school day. Individual faculty members differ in their degrees of in-class iPad and laptop use. Sixth grade teacher Dana uses a red/yellow/green system for in-class laptop use: Red means that laptops must be closed, yellow means that laptop usage is optional, and green means that laptops are integral for the activity at hand. Seventh grade history teacher Dave Hickman, who integrates laptops into class work, instructs students to “45 their laptops” (leave them open at a 45 degree angle) when they are not part of the current activity. In general, **educational technology apps, devices, and software are seen as subordinate to larger learning goals**. Similarly, engagement with contemporary popular culture and children’s home uses of media and technology was not a high priority for most teachers.

Professionalism and academic standards

One of the biggest gaps between the faculty at Mark Day School and other schools who have participated in MIL professional development was their relative unconcern with workforce development or academic standards, currently exemplified by connections between MIL and the Common Core State Standards. This may simply reflect the insulation of independent school faculty from the curricular restrictions and mandates including the Common Core, which is the current focus of many public and charter schools.

Participatory culture

Although distinguished scholars and leaders of the Web 2.0 inflections of MIL in theoretical fields like connected learning and digital media and learning (DML) have presented workshops at Mark Day School, most teachers were not particularly motivated by ideas about **online participation and engagement in how students navigate their interactions and identities online.**

Cultural transmission and “cultural literacy”

The faculty at MDS frequently draw on both canonical and multicultural or alternative texts of various types in their instruction, but the selection of these texts does not have a particularly motivating effect on faculty choices.

Understanding the motivations and values of Mark Day School faculty was an important part of the foundation for developing what would eventually become our capstone product—an MIL tagging system and taxonomy—which took into consideration the Mark Day School conceptualization of MIL. **The Mark Day School faculty are student-centered and informed by a deep respect for socio-emotional considerations, global consciousness, and a significant emphasis on analysis and deconstruction of media texts in relation to their institutional and economic contexts.**

The distinctiveness of this approach is important to underline. At the national level, among K-8 faculty, there is now a focus on the use of educational technology for its own sake, with e-books, smart boards and engagement in school-sanctioned social networking platforms and cloud computing. We see a similar trend in the scholarly literature and descriptions of practice in the field: teachers are increasingly shying away from analysis of media texts and personal reflection, and focusing instead on the use of digital media tools to connect and share, without asking critical questions of how and why these tools come to shape our lives. This is an area of distinctiveness where Mark Day School continues to excel and lead the way.

2 Expand the Concept of Literacy and Identify Learning Targets

After better understanding faculty motivations for pursuing media and information literacy in their own practice, we introduced a framework for media and information literacy informed by the 2013 Hobbs and Moore book, *Discovering Media Literacy*, which was used as a foundational text for the professional development experience.

Expanding the concept of literacy puts a **special focus on the sharing of meaning through texts that come in an ever-expanding array of forms.** While decoding and comprehending print symbols and written expression are foundational competencies, information and entertainment now circulate in a wide variety of forms including visual, sound, interactive and digital forms. By redefining the concept of “text” to include all works created by people to share meaning, we include fiction and non-fiction books, movies, websites, photos, apps, tweets, games, text messages and many other forms of expression and communication. Expanding the concept of literacy also puts **focus on the inquiry process**, situating it within a contemporary social context. The book introduces a five-point model (AACRA) for understanding media and information literacy as both a pedagogical philosophy of inquiry and a set of communication competencies:

Access, Analyze, Create, Reflect, and Act (AACRA)

ACCESS	Comprehending, finding, using, and applying information with appropriate media texts or technology tools
ANALYZE	Understanding and evaluating media messages for quality, credibility, and constructedness
CREATE	Composing, producing, and performing through media in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences
REFLECT	Connecting media use and media messages to personal identity and social relationships through self-advocacy, sharing feedback, and reflecting on ethics
ACT	Connecting media and media messages to community and global issues through collaboration, community engagement, and civic participation

Mark Day School faculty noted that there were many connections between these five concepts to other areas of focus at the school. Of particular interest were intersections between REFLECT and the tenets of social and emotional learning, as well as between ACT and the emphasis on global education. But because the AACRA model aligned with existing schema for MIL, teachers did not feel overwhelmed. **Instead of feeling pressure to add on or create new lessons and projects, faculty saw the synergy inherent in this model, seeing MIL as an additional layer or dimension of existing work.** As Dave Hickman noted, “[We’re] talking about what we do in a different way—being more integrative and interdisciplinary. We’re helping others recognize how media and information literacy concepts can map onto a wide variety of projects.”

To more deeply understand the multi-dimensional nature of MIL as an expanded conceptualization of literacy, faculty also explored a set of over one hundred **learning targets** drawn from *Discovering Media Literacy*. Working together in small groups, we explored how student-centered learning targets—everything from the functional “I can use a mouse or track pad” to “I can understand how different people might interpret a video in different ways”—reinforced connections between MIL, social and emotional learning, and global education. Dialogue about the wide variety of MIL learning targets led to the realization among the faculty that simply mapping the MIL curriculum would not meet the needs for creativity, inquiry, and risk-taking that Mark Day School faculty wished to pursue.

Media and Information Literacy Learning Targets

I generate questions when I learn new information.
I can be intentional in using camera angles, color and framing when I create a photo.
I understand that that things I see and do using a computer have been made by different people.
I distinguish between messages designed to inform, persuade and entertain, and between fiction and nonfiction.
I know the difference between remix and plagiarism and I do not use cut-and-paste as a substitute for my own writing.
I recognize advertising in everyday life, including in my home, school, and neighborhood.
I make good choices about how I share information about myself when I am online.
I create messages that inspire people to make changes that improve my school and my neighborhood.

As a result of faculty dialogue on expanding the concept of literacy and identifying student learning targets, we were able to recognize that the broader goal of this professional development experience—to enhance the clarity, coherence, effectiveness, and vision of MIL at Mark Day School—would require us to envision a fresh approach that reflected the more dynamic, interconnected, and interdisciplinary nature of lesson planning at Mark Day School.

3 Consider the Value of Both Formal and Informal MIL Learning

Mark Day School faculty see themselves as lifelong learners and they regularly share their intellectual curiosity with students. But they are much more ambivalent about making connections between the academic curriculum and children's daily experiences with the world of mass media and popular culture. On December 5, 2013, in a meeting that we conducted using Google Hangouts, participants began by reflecting on their reading of the Hobbs and Moore book, which looks explicitly at making connections between the classroom and contemporary media and popular culture. Through dialogue, faculty shared their thoughts about the organic nature of MIL and the ACCRA model in relation to dynamic classroom processes of improvisation and connecting academic goals to students' lived experience.

Mark Day School faculty aim to make learning relevant. Dana Kirk expressed it this way, "Although I do not want to come across as trying to connect to kids' popular culture, I do try to make references to characters they might know outside of the classroom. What's most important to me is to not let moments go when there is a place for great discussion." For that to occur, Kirk regularly asks students to share what is really meaningful to them. Bonnie Nishihara noted that if we are only critically thinking about novels and poetry inside the classroom we have to wonder if students will think critically about pop culture when they leave the classroom.

Norm Lyons explained the importance of taking an opportunity "to step away from planned curriculum" to discuss current events, news and other issues that are important and timely. While Mark Day School encourages students to take risks, explore, try new things and learn from failure, faculty agreed that being responsive to teachable moments and incorporating a spirit of risk-taking among the faculty is equally important. **Faculty must model the ability to be flexible, to improvise, and to be a learner in front of our students.**

What kind of formal and informal MIL learning experiences occur at Mark Day School?

To share experiences, we developed a Google Form for members of the MIL Committee to document examples of informal and formal learning in MIL. Some examples include:

- Students used an iPad app in a reputation lesson to generate words describing how they want to be seen. They took photos of themselves and created images with the words they came up with.
- We are using Brain Pop to introduce the layers of the Earth. We view the video several times: once to just watch for content, once to stop and discuss. During this specific lesson, we watched a third time to stop on features that were great to talk about the "drawings" and art. We discussed why the creators picked these features to show. Students discussed the zoom feature of the diagrams and how they are labeled for our better understanding. Students then drew their own diagrams to display in their digital portfolios in Evernote.
- Students were to begin filling in a "Research Ready" sheet using their history textbooks to provide a starting point for keyword generation that would lead them into their own research. It came up that one of the topics was not covered in the textbook: the Salem witch trials. Teachers discussed with students why this topic might be missing from the textbook. The underlying message is that textbooks are constructions. The information that appears is them reflects choices made by the textbook company. Those choices may be motivated by a number of factors.

4

Conduct Teaching-Partner Interviews as a Paradigm for Collaborative PD

Faculty at Mark Day School appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the work of their colleagues and we formalized this process by creating teaching partner dyads. Teachers were asked to **share an example of a lesson that may have a dimension of MIL through a simple interviewing process**. The experience of interviewing a colleague generated new ideas for both partners and helped communicate the idea that MIL is not another "new" thing but deeply integrated into existing practice. At first, tagging emerged from a process of dialogue and information sharing among faculty. Tags are words or phrases that are used to mark ideas, lessons, and materials with a shared vocabulary. These words and phrases are searchable, shareable, and accountable as data. In social media, tags are part of the way we label information to make it more findable. But the process of selecting tags for lessons and activities also draws teachers' attention to MIL and provides a common lexicon.

Documenting and tagging also creates both "safe" and "stretch" opportunities for faculty to consider the dimensions of MIL that are more or less obvious. Tagging also enables the Mark Day School faculty to observe patterns across grade levels and subject areas. For example, the collection of informal MIL moments created by faculty tend to emphasize ACCESS and ANALYZE dimensions of the ACCRA model, while formal lesson plans include more focus on CREATE.

Could tagging lead us into a deeper focus on scope, sequence and whole school mapping, enabling us to make claims about what students can be expected to be able to do at different levels?

When we turned to consider how to share our emerging understanding of MIL at Mark Day School with colleagues, we wondered how we might introduce the concept of MIL tagging to the whole community, by asking teachers to take a representative lesson and tag it with obvious and non-obvious MIL opportunities. With leadership from Bonnie Nishihara, Mark Day School faculty revised the AACRA model to reflect their school's priorities and values and added tags that reflected the school's emerging and more integrated understanding of MIL. Appendix A shows that work.

Over time, we gradually discovered that Mark Day School MIL Committee members **increased their understanding of media and information literacy as they learned how to recognize concepts from the AACRA model and learning targets using tags to identify MIL in ordinary classroom activities**.

An Example of MIL Tagging in Action

When 7th grade students designed and produced a "thank you card" poster for adults from the Marin Parks and Recreation Department, the students had to think about their target audience and what things appealed to them. The students used various materials and collaborated to produce an aesthetically appealing poster that communicated effectively their sentiments.

tags (circle or select all that apply)

online research	library research	educational technology	popular culture texts
video documentation	evaluating credibility	target audience	message construction
aesthetic appreciation	identifying omissions	stereotypes biases	public speaking
multimodal composition	media production	online publishing	graphic design
programming	exploring identity	ethical judgment	media preferences/experiences
peer critique	self critique	making healthy choices	determining appropriateness
cross-cultural learning	community engagement	news and current events	

5

MIL Tagging Supports a Professional Development Learning Community

Discussion among members of the MIL Committee revealed four key ways that the practice of tagging ideas and lessons improved the coherence and quality of lesson plans:

- **Communication.** Tagging served as what MIL Committee member Norm Lyons termed a “developmental campfire,” around which teachers shared their successes, challenges, ideas, concerns, and feedback. Tags were the spark around which teachers could learn more about each other’s practices and push themselves to change or improve the next iteration of a lesson or idea.
- **Accounting.** Tags allowed us to see how faculty understood and accounted for their own lessons, and to aggregate and visualize this data. We began to learn which tags were most valued and most popular among teachers, and where there might be room for change.
- **Sharing.** Tagging encouraged peer-to-peer collaborative brainstorming and built a general knowledge of connections across the K-8 spectrum. Teachers who may not have known or otherwise interacted with colleagues at other grade levels found unexpected connections in ideas and practices.
- **Assessment.** Tagging reveals strengths, redundancies, and omissions or gaps in the integration of media and information literacy. In the everyday development of procedural lessons, it is difficult to take stock of what we have done well, what we may be repeating, or what we may have missed. Tagging makes that identification process much easier.

When teachers were asked to reflect on how MIL was integrated into their practice, they often centered on lessons that focused on technology, deconstruction of popular culture, and identification of textual features, point of view, and representation (such as stereotypes) across a variety of media texts. We came to call this “obvious” MIL. But what surprised us was just **how much good MIL practice fell under what we might call “non-obvious” MIL lessons—lessons that teachers would not consciously define as MIL but nonetheless contained many of the best practices the group identified in accessing, analyzing, creating, reflecting on, and taking action through media and information.**

Tagging Promotes Reflective Practice

The act of tagging draws attention to the various ways in which we are engaging in practices that may have been invisible to us before. The common lexicon allows teachers to think deeply about how their lessons might be MIL rich and moves us more to a MIL mindframe. We may start to see patterns across the school.

—Bonnie Nishihara

In addition, many aspects of teaching practice at Mark Day School reflect an engagement with MIL concepts that is more casual, incidental, and even accidental. When students ask unexpected questions about Google search results, bring in their knowledge of popular culture to an academic problem, or recount a relevant media experience, teachers found incidental but powerful ways to reinforce key concepts in media and information literacy.

Most importantly, **tagging revealed new possibilities for MIL integration**, from grade-level partnerships to cross-subject collaboration. When teachers reflected on how their own practices compared to other teachers’ practices, they found opportunities to refine and improve their own lessons according to grade-level learning goals and on a developmental spectrum with teachers in other grades.

6 Sharing with the Whole School Community: First Steps

The development of a shared framework and tagging process for documenting and reflecting on MIL practices at Mark Day School culminated in a full-faculty professional development session on March 17, 2014. True to the spirit of our professional development sessions, the MIL Committee led this session in accordance with their understanding of the needs of their fellow faculty, with the Media Education Lab team observing the structure or outcomes of the professional development day.

The MIL Committee structured the day with information-sharing in the morning and a group tagging activity in the afternoon to help faculty understand and then implement the system using some of their own lessons and projects. The professional development included a combination of lecture and hands-on activities. Bonnie Nishihara and Dave Hickman presented a theoretical background that introduced concepts of media, media and information literacy, and the AACRA model. In the activity “Is It Media?” committee members complicated faculty understandings of texts as merely print-based, expanding into multiple media forms. Hickman provided a historical overview of literacy beyond print-based decoding, from ancient forms of literacy and communication (rhetoric) to contemporary forms of meaning-making in video, web, computer programming, and other media formats. Next, a group of MIL Committee Members presented an entertaining Masterpiece Theatre-inspired skit that provided an overview of the tagging system. In the afternoon, faculty members sorted lessons into MIL categories, participated in peer interviews and annotated existing lessons with MIL Tags.

Clearly, the coherence and vision of media and information literacy at Mark Day School improved in the course of the professional development experience. MIL Committee members presented a clear, unified, and eloquent synthesis of their reading, lesson planning, and discussions as a vision for MIL at Mark Day School with a long history, a clear theoretical framework, and connections to faculty’s existing practices. Ironically, the process of “dropping knowledge,” in contrast to the design of the preceding six-month program, was highly effective in moving faculty toward a shared definition of MIL that expanded the group’s general conceptualization of literacy, from “texts” to the AACRA model.

It was not clear whether the whole faculty had enough opportunity to explore and practice thinking through their lesson planning with a MIL lens. For example, Mark Day School faculty seemed confused by specific tags, or their applicability to different activities, and may have been overwhelmed with the glut of options that the full list of tags offered without more intensive scaffolding. We collected data to capture teachers’ preliminary understanding of the tags and we were not surprised to discover that the AACRA concepts of ACCESS, REFLECT and ACT were not as well-understood as ANALYZE and CREATE.

By focusing on an organic, Mark Day School-customized professional development model that honors the individualism and high standards of an independent school setting, this collaboration succeeded in sparking a small group of faculty leaders (the MIL Committee) toward a much deeper understanding of MIL than faculty previous exhibited in surveys and program evaluations. Additionally, the shared model of media and information literacy, and its connections to other key areas of the Mark Day School curriculum in social and emotional learning, global education, and environmental literacy, is one that can be replicated and shared more widely.

However, it is also clear that the tagging system, which was only formally introduced to the full faculty at the end of the professional development engagement, takes time and effort to entrench in lesson planning and collaboration among faculty. Its success among the members of the MIL Committee gives us reason to believe that with further engagement of faculty, the MIL tagging system could serve as the beginning of a rich and dynamic planning and collaborative tool that begins to further improve and hone the quality and effectiveness of media and information literacy at Mark Day School, which may well serve as a regional leader in MIL integration.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The seeds of this initial collaboration began with national recognition of the media and information literacy program at Mark Day School at the National Association for Media Literacy Education conference in Los Angeles in 2013. We believe that showcasing the work of faculty can be an effective way to share the innovative pedagogy happening at Mark Day School and to provide a catalyst for new lessons, projects, and collaborations.

Study Group and Leadership Team. The team should continue to develop and share MIL practices as embedded in the curriculum. The practice of interviewing peers, reading and discussing, modeling and deconstructing lessons, and reflecting on “obvious” and “non-obvious” MIL will ensure that the team continues to develop a coherent and coordinated vision that can be communicated to the Mark Day School community.

Presentations at Professional Conferences. Participants in the MIL Committee came from all subject areas and grade levels. Because of this diversity of perspectives, we believe there are many ways to tell the MIL story to different professional communities, from media literacy education experts (e.g. the National Association for Media Literacy Education), to subject-based professional communities (e.g. the National Council of Teachers of English and International Society of Technology Educators), and childhood development communities (e.g. the National Association for the Education of Young Children).

Regional Training for Independent School Faculty. By the end of the professional development collaboration, it was clear that the MIL Committee had gained insight on media and information literacy, from conceptualizing the history and possibilities of MIL to subject-based integration. We believe that members of the Mark Day School faculty could serve as regional ambassadors of media and information literacy practice and offer targeted training for the independent school community.

Research report and scholarly publication. The innovative tagging approach to professional development is relatively unknown and under-theorized in academic and professional education literature. We believe that a research report based on a case study of Mark Day School will advance knowledge about new approaches to collaborative professional development and the power of professional learning communities to both scholarly and professional fields.

Other opportunities. Mark Day School is part of a growing movement for media and information literacy integration in K-12 education, and we believe many opportunities for further professional development, publicity, and collaboration will arise in the future. These might include partnering with the Powerful Voices for Kids website and other online publications to showcase student work online, or participating in face-to-face and online events to showcase the impressive work accomplished by the committee and the whole faculty throughout the professional development experience. Future collaborations might help raise the visibility and profile of Mark Day School as an emerging regional leader in media and information literacy, by empowering the MIL Committee to take a leadership role in designing future MIL integration for all faculty and continuing to deepen their understanding of the field and the range of practices that MIL encompasses.

Appendix A

MARK DAY SCHOOL MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

Category: ACCESS

Finding, Comprehending, using, and applying information with appropriate media texts or technology tools and employing media texts or technology tools to find, comprehend, use or apply information

Tags: listening skills, reading comprehension, using appropriate technology tools, online research, asking questions, learning technology, using educational media, using popular culture, using news & current events, video documentation, keyword searches, browsing, skimming, annotating, formulating questions for one's own learning

TAG	EXAMPLE IN K-3	EXAMPLE IN 4-8
Listening skills		
Reading comprehension		
Using appropriate technology tools		
Asking questions	Imagine questions they might pose to find answers online	Students develop keyword phrases they might use to find answers online
Curating	Selecting images from a collection to tell a story	
Learning technology	Naming the parts of a computer	
Using educational media	Students view a Brain Pop video about a science topic	Students play a game or simulation to learn about soil erosion
Connecting to popular culture		Noting a similarity between a historical event and a popular TV show
Using news & current events	Students explore how headlines are related to photographs	Make predictions about an article based on its headline and photograph
Library research	Where to find a magazine	Learning how to use a database
Video documentation	Digitizing student artwork	

Category: ANALYZE

Understanding and evaluating media messages for quality, credibility, and constructedness or understanding and evaluating media texts for purpose, meaning, credibility and constructedness.

Tags: source credibility/reliability, target audience, message construction and purpose, aesthetic appreciation, identifying omissions, representation of people and events, stereotypes, recognizing bias or perspective, corroboration between sources, noticing discrepancies, connecting relevant previous knowledge, interrogating texts with questions, defining authorship of sources, defining “originality”

TAG	EXAMPLE IN K-3	EXAMPLE IN 4-8
Recognizing genres	Distinguishing between fiction and nonfiction	Focusing/framing story elements in respect to a particular genre during the pre-write stage of story writing
Source credibility		Identifying characteristics of accurate sources
Target audience	Using visual clues to identify whether advertisements are designed for kids or adults	Using information and context to make inferences about the intended audience
Message construction and purpose	Explain whether a short video is meant to inform, entertain, or persuade	Determine what techniques or elements in a video help it to inform, entertain, or persuade
Identifying omissions	Imagine what is outside of a frame of a photograph	Determine what information or points of view are left out of a history lesson
Representation of people and events		
Identifying Stereotypes		

Category: CREATE

Composing, producing, and performing through media in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences

Tags: multimodal composition, public speaking, performance, media production, online publishing, graphic design, programming, communication (generally in all forms), target audience, structure, message construction and purpose, essay/paragraph/sentence

TAG	EXAMPLE IN K-3	EXAMPLE IN 4-8
Expressing a point of view		
Writing in a variety of formats		
Multimodal composition	Use words and pictures to recreate a story or fairy tale	Create a short comic based on assigned reading
Select materials to remix and combine creatively		
Public speaking	Share a preference or opinion at the front of the class	Give a short presentation explaining how to do something
Performance	Improvise and perform a short script on video or in front of the class	Create a short skit to illustrate an idea
Media production	Put photographs in sequence to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end	
Programming	Draw a simple process (make a sandwich) to illustrate a procedural sequence	Use Scratch or other tools to make a simple animation
Graphic design	Select the best images to match with sentences	Use color, font and size to emphasize a message
Online publishing		Compose using a wiki or social media tool

Category: REFLECT

Connecting media use and media messages to personal identity and social relationships through self-advocacy, sharing feedback, and reflecting on ethics

Tags: media awareness, personal identity, ethical judgment, sharing preferences and experiences, making healthy choices, determining appropriateness, considering immediate and delayed consequences, growth mindset, metacognition, learning style, rubrics, standards-based assessment, assignments that require reflection on assessments, ongoing assessment, formative and summative assessment, journaling, process assignments, accompanying projects

TAG	EXAMPLE IN K-3	EXAMPLE IN 4-8
Media awareness	Talk about favorite TV shows and discuss rules for TV use in the family	Keep a media diary
Recognizing and valuing differences between people	Making a chart of favorite flavors	
Using good judgment and social responsibility		Respecting the feelings of family members
Personal identity	Draw a picture of yourself and explain it	Write a short essay about how a favorite song represents them
Offering feedback	Explain to others what they liked about their work	Give warm and cool feedback to other students' work
Ethical judgment		
Making healthy choices	Examine how nutrition and warning labels are written	
Determining what's appropriate		Considering the context, target audience and purpose when evaluating what information to include in a message
Considering immediate and delayed consequences		

Category: ACT

Connecting media use and media texts to community and global issues through collaboration, community engagement, and civic participation.

Tags: participate in a creative community, generate ideas to solve a problem, community engagement, cross-cultural learning, collaboration, discussion skills, inclusive discussion practices (facing history), facilitation, student leadership, group projects graded collectively by participants, “supportiveness” standard as part of grade

TAG	EXAMPLE IN K-3	EXAMPLE IN 4-8
Participate in a creative community	Work with a team to tell a collaborative story	
Generate ideas to solve a problem		List several ways to promote recycling in school
Community engagement		Create a PSA to promote a school event
Cross-cultural learning	Compare their knowledge of another culture to pictures and stories about that culture	Read about another culture from a native or international source
Collaboration	Work together on a multimodal composition	Use online social and sharing tools to collaborate on a project

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Learn more at www.mediaeducationlab.com

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