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The Curriculum Materials Library as a Hub of Resources, Literacy Practices, and Collaboration: Expanding the Role of the Library to Support Foster Youth

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Abstract

This paper describes a three-year case study of collaboration between a university library, a research lab, and an NGO to provide college courses in digital, media, and information literacies to high school foster youth. The library staff and instructors expanded one another's literacy knowledge and explored best practices to teach the at-risk students. Data includes self-reflection based on observations and interviews of each other. Using narrative analysis, the team used four variables to showcase their collaboration: (1) vision and relationship, (2) structure, responsibilities, and communication, (3) authority and accountability, and (4) resources and rewards. Students' achievements reflected an increase in their literacy skills. This was strong evidence for the successful collaboration among the three entities. Each partner contributed by bringing digital, media, and information literacies to students, equipping them with rich skills pertinent in today's society.

Keywords: collaboration, media literacy, digital literacy, information literacy, foster youth, academic library, curriculum materials library, at-risk youth

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Introduction

For the past twenty years, libraries have been modifying the various services they provide to continue to adequately support a shifting society.[i] In order to address the expanding definitions

of literacy and new literacies[ii] along with the social role that libraries play, YALSA's task force developed nine core guiding values in 2015: accountability, collaboration, compassion, excellence, inclusion, innovation, integrity, professional duty, and social responsibility.[iii] YALSA's focus on collaboration, inclusion, innovation, and social responsibility closely align with our work and the research described in this paper.

The Curriculum Materials Library (CML) at the University of Rhode Island (URI) has been designed and has evolved to meet the growing needs of its patrons. Our research describes the benefits of our collaborative partnerships, which combined library resources with expanded literacy frameworks to support high school foster youth with their college readiness. The CML, a facet of the larger university academic library, provides educational materials and resources to pre-service and in-service teachers along with the School of Education faculty. By collaborating with the University's Media Education Lab, which advances media literacy education through research and community service, and First Star, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving foster youths' lives, the CML became a site that offered innovative academic courses for foster youth. As a result of the collaboration and subsequent courses, the library was able to make a positive impact on the youth participants.[iv]

Literature Review

Why Foster Youth?

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, there are over 400,000 children in foster care in the United States.[v] These children have been removed from the custody of their parents or guardians by the juvenile court as a result of severe abuse, neglect, abandonment, or family conflict. Teenagers who are under the custody of the state in the foster care system are less likely to succeed academically than any other population in the United States.[vi] Foster youth who were neglected or abused face social and emotional challenges that influence their ability to trust.[vii] Furthermore, the changes in their environments from moving frequently and their subsequent changing school placements manifest negatively with a decrease in their academic performance and skills.[viii]

Research has shown that foster youth have among the poorest educational outcomes of all student populations. Of the nearly 250,000 foster children who are of school age, only 50 percent graduate or earn a general educational development (GED) credential by age eighteen.[ix] That is 20 percent less than the general population.[x] While 84 percent of foster youth want to go to college, only 20 percent actually go, and less than 9 percent obtain a bachelor's degree.[xi]

In 2009 Reardon and Noblet addressed the need for an academic intervention for foster youth by

creating a college-readiness program to increase their academic achievement.[xii] Through the nonprofit First Star, they founded the first academy in 2011 at the University of California, Los Angeles.[xiii] High school foster students from the state lived on campus for a month and took accredited classes to learn about academic disciplines while experiencing college life.

In the summer of 2012, First Star created the second summer academy at the University of Rhode Island (URI).[xiv] The Media Education Lab at URI was asked to create the curriculum and teach the media education courses. As members of the Media Education Lab, we collaborated with the CML staff in carrying out the courses. We decided to conduct research to evaluate the effects of our curriculum and pedagogy.

Academic Summer Camps as Resources for Foster Youth Needs

Current literature presents some promising collaborative models between education and community leaders, social organizations, and programs that aim to support foster youth in graduating from high school and going on to college or the workplace.[xv] One notable model, the California Academy, is believed to be the nation's first comprehensive residential education program created specifically for foster youth.[xvi] Another exemplary collaboration at Michigan State University entailed a summer program designed to assist transitioning foster youth pursuing a college education. Led by the School of Social Work in collaboration with other colleges and disciplines, the program provided peer support, mentoring, and active learning sessions that helped foster youth increase their understanding of college life, scholarship, and admissions procedures while also providing models for life purpose and resilience.[xvii]

Addressing the needs of youth who aged out of foster care, other researchers have examined campus support programs designed to provide financial, academic, and other types of assistance to help foster students graduate from college. Focusing on resiliency among former foster youth can promote their healthy functioning.[xviii] Moreover, Dworsky and Pérez called for exploration of "the ways in which the relationship between program participation and educational outcomes varies depending on the characteristics of the former foster youth and the types of services and supports students receive."[xix] While we found different programs that addressed the academic, social, and emotional needs of foster youth, we were not able to find examples of college or university libraries as partners in these collaborations.

The Public Library as a Resource for Foster Youth Needs

Libraries can play an essential role in furthering support for foster students because they are spaces that can provide access to books, literacy materials, and services not always available to

disadvantaged youth.[xx] The public library is seen as a neighborhood resource center that offers a sense of community, where foster youth can benefit from social services and take part in literacy activities, college clubs, and career programs that empower them to transition to young adulthood.[xxi] We were able to find only two studies that mentioned a public library in relation to foster youth services. The first one was a quantitative survey that Courtney, Lee, and Pérez administrated with 732 foster youth in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.[xxii] They were looking to see if the foster youth received the services they needed, including one item about job searches at the library. Only 28.8 percent felt that they were given the necessary services to live independently. The second one, a qualitative study by Snow, described how an Oakland (CA) public library provided the author and a ten-year-old foster child she mentored a place to meet weekly.[xxiii] She listed her recommendations for librarians who want to support their patrons who are in foster care. One of these recommendations was to collaborate with agencies, schools, and online resources. When we looked at school or academic libraries, we did not find any information

about the role of any on-campus libraries in assisting high school foster youth with acquiring new literacies.
This article addresses this gap in the literature and provides an original model of collaboration between the CML and the Media Education Lab at URI to teach information, digital, and media literacies to high school foster youth.

The Library as a Hub for Information, Digital, and Media Literacy

The American Library Association defines information literacy as the ability to recognize when information is needed and the ability to locate, evaluate, and use the needed information effectively.[xxiv] The digital tools and online media provided by libraries have expanded the literacy practices of the patrons. Thus, libraries need to add digital and media literacy to information literacy because such a framework more directly acknowledges this span of resources and services their patrons' needs.

Adding on to this, digital and media literacy emphasize the connection between analyzing and producing media messages as well as the social responsibility and civic engagement of consuming and composing media. The two literacies combined advance the multiliteracies advocated by the New London Group.[xxv] However, as stated before, not many programs provide this combination, especially for underprivileged and at-risk youth. Many nonprofit organizations offer media literacy programs to underprivileged and at-risk youth, but these programs focus on providing agency to participants and can neglect the academic side of media literacy.[xxvi]

Many scholars combined information and media literacy, as pointed out by Martens' meta-analysis.[xxvii] In 2010 Hobbs published a white paper reframing the different literacies into the access, analyze, create, reflect, and act (AACRA) model. She explained how in the digital age, everyone should be able to *access* information, *analyze* information, *create* messages, *reflect* on media influences, and *act* in a socially responsible way.[xxviii] In this paper, we will address information, digital, and media literacy according to the five media literacy competencies listed above that our collaboration addressed at the CML.

Cultivating information, digital, and media literacy is a high priority in today's educational policy of the Common Core State Standards.[xxix] At the same time, underprivileged and at-risk students such as foster youth do not receive equal experiences as students who attend influential formal schools. More and more media literacy programs advance social justice with underprivileged populations.[xxx] The YOUMedia initiative combines practices of information, media, and digital literacy for urban adolescents in public libraries and community centers across the country by providing open, flexible, and highly creative spaces where young people can "hang out, mess around, and geek out" with the support of mentors and community partners.[xxxi]

When it comes to academic libraries, little is known about the transcendence of library services beyond the institutions they are located within. In our work, we looked at the opportunity to combine the advantages of academic libraries with other partners to benefit high school students in the foster care system. Teenagers who are in the foster care system frequently change locations and schools, and they are often in unstable emotional and behavioral situations. It is

usually too challenging for them to keep coming on a regular basis to a program within the library.
For these reasons, Reardon and Noblet advocated to organize a month-long summer academy followed by a monthly meeting to assure sustainability.[xxxii] When we were approached in 2012 to provide the college-level media classes, we wanted to collaborate in order to bring media literacy to the most underprivileged population in the United States. We were interested in exploring the following question: How could the available resources and our collaborative work at the Curriculum Materials Library enhance the foster students' information, digital, and media literacy skills?

Method

The purpose of this case study[xxxiii] is to explore the collaboration between First Star, the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island (URI), and the Curriculum Materials Library (CML) at URI to enhance high school foster students' information, digital, and media literacies

during a month-long summer academy spanning three years. Each partner took responsibility for different aspects of program design and delivery, and together we collaborated to enhance the students' information and media literacies. We applied Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey's constructs of collaboration to define our own: (1) vision and relationship, (2) structure, responsibilities, and communication, (3) authority and accountability, and (4) resources and rewards.[xxxiv] Students' information, digital, and media literacy competencies were defined as the ability to access, analyze, create, reflect, and act.[xxxv] As we saw the impact on the students, we wanted to examine how our resources and collaboration were part of the successful program.

Participants

The three authors, Yonty Friesem, Kelsey Greene, and Mona A. Niedbala, collaborated for three years during the summers of 2012–2014 to provide an information and media literacy program to foster youth. Both Yonty and Kelsey worked at the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island, doing research and providing community service via media literacy education and specifically media production activities. Yonty and Kelsey have experience in media production as professionals and educators. Yonty was pursuing his PhD in education at URI at the time with an emphasis on media literacy education, and Kelsey had just finished her BA in documentary studies and production. After the third year of the program, Kelsey completed her MA in educational technology and new literacies, from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Mona, the head of the CML since 2007, created the resource collection to serve the instructional and research needs of students and faculty in the School of Education. Dr. Julie Coiro from the School of Education connected the three authors during initial preparation for the first summer academy.

The first cohort of twenty-two students came to campus in the summer of 2012. All the students were under the guardianship of the Rhode Island foster care system. The students had to apply and went through a set of interviews for enrollment. The following year, a new cohort of eight students joined the continuing seventeen students. In 2014 there were twenty returning students. In total, we looked at the media literacy practices of thirty students (N = 30). The managing team

included one program director and two assistants, who were working on the program logistics and discipline. In addition, the program mentors were undergraduate students who provided support for the students' academic, behavioral, and emotional challenges. For every five students, there was one mentor. During the three years, the staff changed. In total, programmatic collaboration was between eight adults (N = 8).

Context of the Study

The program was offered each July on URI's campus for four weeks. Besides the media classes, the students had intensive classes in English and math along with field trips and physical activities. Once we established the CML as our place of instruction, the students identified the URI academic library as a comfortable, safe space for media production and academic learning.

The CML had many resources to offer the students, including interactive whiteboards, tablets, laptops, and cameras. Each year we extended the access to different CML resources, as seen in table 1. The collaboration grew as we learned to identify the needs of the students and the depth of support we could get. Mona provided guided tutorials on online resources for us as the instructors using the university server and for the students using free resources beyond class time. In the third year, the CML became the month-long classroom for English and math classes.

The collaboration evolved as we developed our programs to better meet the students' needs and better understand what resources were available to us.

Table 1. Yearly Use of the CML Resources

	Technology	Tech support	Instructional support
2012	Smartboards Internet Flip cameras Desktop computers	Mona helped address tech malfunctions.	CML staff were actors in the videos.
2013	Smartboards Internet Flip cameras Desktop computers Individual laptops	Mona addressed tech malfunctions, gave software tutorials, and pointed to online resources.	Mona gave a session on evaluating online information and using online resources.
2014	Smartboards Internet Flip cameras Desktop computers Individual laptops Canon Vixia cameras	Mona addressed tech malfunctions, gave software tutorials, and pointed to online resources.	CML used for other classes (math); Mona provided support during the media sessions.

Procedure and Data Collection

The planning for the first program started in the spring of 2012. Yonty and Kelsey worked on the lesson plans using Hobbs' digital and media literacy framework, which included information literacy.[xxxvi] Mona provided the technology-rich environment at the CML, and also the option to incorporate information literacy with her support. As Yonty, Kelsey, and Mona planned the program, they met with the organizers to make arrangements for the particular characteristics of the first summer academy cohort.

Each interview consisted of reflective questions about the students' experience of the program. We used AudioNote on an iPad to record and write notes for the interviews and observations. Each interview took between ten and twenty-five minutes, according to the answers of the staff members.

Yonty made most of the observations, as Kelsey was the main instructor for the second and third years. Research assistants from the Media Education Lab made additional observations when available as well. Each year the final class held a group reflection that was videotaped. Additionally, at the end of each summer program, we had a public screening of the students' projects. As we reflected after each year on our work and analyzed the observation notes, interviews transcripts, and the student artifacts, we modified the variables and our data collection technique.

For ethical issues, and upon IRB approval, all adult participants, legal guardians of the youth participants, and youth participants signed consent forms on a yearly basis. All staff members agreed to participate. However, some students did not want to participate (four students asked not to be included). They were not interviewed and their artifacts were not included.

Variables of Interests

Our research explored the nature of our collaboration as it related to the students' information, digital, and media literacy skills. For the purpose of analyzing the data, we choose to use Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey's definition of collaboration:

> Collaboration connotes a more durable and pervasive relationship. Collaboration brings previously separated organizations into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Such relationships require comprehensive planning and well-defined communication channels operating on many levels. Authority is determined by the collaborative structure.[xxxvii]

Further, they distinguish collaboration from cooperation and coordination by four variables: (1) vision and relationship, (2) structure, responsibilities, and communication, (3) authority and accountability, and (4) resources and rewards.

Data Analysis

As recommended by Merriam, we used a narrative analysis to analyze our case study.[xxxviii] We looked at the three years of collaboration between First Star, the Media Education Lab, and the CML using a narrative analysis of our observations, interviews, and reflections. We were able to capture the process and human experience that we had in those three years. Our analysis evolved during that time frame. As we analyzed our collaboration, we looked at students' outcomes as evidence of the success of our mutual work. In our narrative analysis, we were looking to connect our collaboration with the students' learning outcomes. Previous publications[xxxix] have explored and described the development of the information, digital, and media literacy skills of the students in each year (see table 3.). In order to analyze the nature of our collaboration, we looked at Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba's participatory method to ensure trustworthiness.[xl]

Lincoln and Guba used the term *trustworthiness* instead of *validity* for naturalistic inquiry.[xli] Looking at each variable for each year, we examined three different data sources (self-reflection, interviews, and observations) to make sure our data was showing a connection between the students' development of literacy skills and our collaboration. Our case study findings are context based and cannot be generalized. However, according to Creswell, data can be transferable to other settings; therefore, our findings can help other libraries see the value of this collaboration and how it can advance the media literacy skills of at-risk and underprivileged students, and especially foster students.[xlii]

Findings

The three of us, Yonty, Kelsey, and Mona, worked together to introduce information, digital, and media literacy to our students as part of the First Star summer academy. Working in collaboration with the nonprofit organization's administration staff members were Yonty and Kelsey, as instructors and researchers from the Media Education Lab, and Mona, as the CML head. Using Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey's definition of collaboration, we describe our personal process as it unfolded during the three years of the summer academy.[xliii] We looked at four variables: (1) vision and relationship, (2) structure, responsibilities, and communication, (3) authority and accountability, and (4) resources and rewards. As discussed below, we collaborated on different levels to support the information, digital, and media literacies of the foster youth students.

Vision and Relationship

Each partner applied its mission to the shared goals of promoting college and career readiness for foster youth students. First Star's mission is to improve the lives of America's abused and neglected children.[xliv] The Media Education Lab's mission is to advance media literacy education through research and community service.[xlv] The CML's mission is to support the URI School of Education and the university curriculum by assisting education majors in the development of lesson plans, instructional materials, and activities through the provision of appropriate resources, technologies, and library services.[xlvi]

Yonty and Kelsey were the instructors and researchers of the media classes. In their academic courses, they applied educational practices to promote the students' digital and media literacy competencies in order for them to experience college-level classes in communication. Mona provided the space, equipment, and support to teach the digital and media literacy courses to the foster students. First Star staff were in charge of students' discipline and providing emotional support. Having the courses at the university library allowed the foster youth to explore and experience college-level studies and resources.

The relationship of the three organizations—the Media Education Lab, the CML, and First Star—was established on the basis of their shared goal. The vision of the First Star URI Academy combined the three missions by providing a year-long program that aimed to provide some of Rhode Island's foster youth with improved access to college through education and exposure.[xlvii] First Star was the initiator of the academy and the organization that partnered with the University of Rhode Island and local agencies to provide the summer academy for the foster youth. First Star and the University of Rhode Island founded the First Star URI Academy by combining donations and sponsorship from local organizations and the university's funding.

Being part of the university's Media Education Lab, Yonty and Kelsey were hired by the university to provide the digital and media literacy classes. They reached out to Mona as the CML director to ask for space, equipment, and support. As part of the CML mission to support the university's educational initiatives, all of those were provided for free. Yonty, Kelsey, and Mona were in daily contact with the program director to coordinate the times and the organization of classes, and to address issues if necessary. The structure of the courses allowed for shared responsibilities as we communicated on a daily basis.

Structure, Responsibilities, and Communication

The structure of the digital and media literacy course evolved each year. As seen in table 2, each year had a different emphasis as we built upon the previous year.[xlviii] Each year Yonty and Kelsey conducted research on the students' information, digital, and media literacies competencies. The number of students changed from year to year as did the students who volunteered to participate in the research. The first year we taught for thirty-six hours while in the following two years only eighteen hours. The outcomes varied as we practiced different types of media production. First Star URI Academy had one administrative director and two assistants who were in charge of the whole summer academy. Yonty and Kelsey were hired to provide the digital and media literacy class. The CML was the place where the class took place. In the third year of the program, the CML became the place for all academic classes.

Table 2. Structure of First Start URI Academy Class in Digital and Media Literacy

Year	Students	Participants	Course Hours	Analysis	Production
2012	20 (2*)	20	36	Videos, social networks	Video production: 7 ads, 6 music videos, 7 manifestos (PSAs), 4 video games—total of 24
2013	25	22	18	Online resources	Website design: 15 websites, 7 blogs—total of 22 web design projects
2014	16 (1*)	13	18	Multimedia messages	Digital campaign: 5 PSAs, 1 song

Note: Adapted from Yonty Friesem and Kelsey Greene, "Tuned In: The Importance of Peer Empathic Feedback in a Media Literacy Class with Foster Youth" (Washington, DC, 2016).

*Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of students who started the program but did not finish.

The responsibilities of each partner overlapped since the definitions of their roles were not always clear. While the Media Education Lab provided the content of the digital and media literacy course along with the pedagogy and research, the CML provided the space, equipment, and support. And First Star provided the logistics and funding for the program. The

responsibilities were established back in 2012 when the Media Education Lab staff were hired and provided a report to capture the nature of the different partners' responsibilities.[xlix]

In order to address students' emotional and behavioral issues, we established communication through in-person follow-ups, e-mails, text messages, and phone calls over the years. Before starting the summer academy, we conducted interviews with the staff to ensure we had shared goals, responsibilities, and ways of communicating. And yet the communication between each partner was challenging, due to tight schedules and many responsibilities outside of classes. The students needed personal attention that was difficult to give when they were in a group of sixteen to twenty-five students. Yonty, Kelsey, Mona, and First Star mentors were in classes most of the time. However, Yonty did research on other classes of the academy, Kelsey had responsibilities in the School of Communication and Media, and Mona had other patrons at the CML. In order to address these challenges, we had daily reflection sessions. Though as instructors, Yonty and Kelsey were not always informed of sensitive information that led to emotional breakdowns in class. Eventually, due to our communication with First Star staff, we were able to understand how occurrences outside of class influenced students' learning and behavior.

Authority and Accountability

Each one of us had different responsibilities, and therefore we also had various authorities over

the content and research (Yonty and Kelsey), the space and equipment (Mona), and discipline and emotional support (First Star staff). Yet the authority over students' behavior was ambiguous and sometimes led to misunderstandings. For example, when one student started to answer rudely to our instruction, we asked her to calm down. When that did not work and she continued to interrupt the instruction, one of the academy staff members accompanied her outside. It was only the next day with the intervention of the First Star program director that we all got together. The student apologized for her behavior, and we created ground rules to address behavioral issues. The ambiguity of who had authority over the student's behavior led to confusion and indecisiveness in coping with her interruptions and misbehavior.

Our accountability was measured by students' performances. First Star staff made sure to address any behavioral and emotional issues, while Yonty, Kelsey, and Mona used Hobbs's AACRA model to develop students' competencies.[l] We were able to assess their development in information, digital, and media literacy. We used activities that enhanced the students' five digital and media literacy competencies in each class, for each year. Table 3 shows the evolution of our tools to be accountable for the students' learning.

Table 3. Information, Digital and Media Literacy Competencies in Our Classes

	Access	Analyze	Create	Reflect	Act
2012	Using laptop and cameras, Internet and desktop, iMovie, social networks	Media messages: 3 times (ad, music video, documentary)	Ad, music video, manifesto	Peer feedback	Facebook group, State House screening
2013	E-mails and website design platforms	Websites	Personal websites	Peer feedback and group discussion	Websites used as high school credits
2014	E-mail, social network marketing	Campaigns	Digital campaign	Peer feedback and group discussion	Videos and public screening

In the first year, we taught students to access computers and cameras that were donated to each of them. Using editing software such as iMovie and social network sites such as Facebook, the students learned to access and curate information. Via instruction and interactive work in media analysis, students learned to interpret and evaluate commercials, music videos, and online personal videos that we called manifestos. As they were analyzing these genres, they also created their own versions of ads, music videos, and manifestos. They used peer empathic feedback to share their praise of and suggestions for their peers' work.[li] Their work was shared publicly at the closing night and at a special event at the Rhode Island State House.

In the second year, students learned to use their computers for finding and assessing information online along with learning web design. They analyzed other websites and learned how to gather and summarize information as well as how to deconstruct online interfaces. They created personal blogs and web pages to address personal concerns or interests. They used the peer empathic feedback and group discussion to reflect and modify their work. The websites were shared in their exhibit in the closing ceremony and also were used as high school credits.

In the third year, we accessed the technology to look at marketing techniques and information literacy. We analyzed digital campaigns using videos, websites, and social networks to convey a message. In groups, students created their own campaigns for their social workers and the foster care system. Building upon suggestions they had written in their first year of the program, they chose to focus on one issue to create an online campaign. They practiced once again the peer empathic feedback in groups and had a discussion about it. The videos were shared in the closing ceremony but were not published online since the administration was afraid of the social workers' reactions to it. It was only after one of the students received an award that the video was released online to share with others.

Resources and Rewards

One of the biggest draws to the first-year summer academy for the foster youth was the computer and flip camera that each one received upon arrival to the campus. With a generous donation from Hasbro (a play company in Rhode Island), students could film and edit with their own cameras and laptops. Students were able to use their devices in and out of the class due to the collaboration between the CML, the Media Education Lab, and First Star. Nonetheless, some technical issues made it very challenging, such as the university's Wi-Fi connection, students' inability to retrieve their own passwords, and the fact that the low-quality PC computers were not able to connect to the high-quality cameras. We were fortunate to have Mona as the CML director; she offered her high-end resources and allowed the students to profit from this equipment in the month-long academy. Yonty was hesitant to use the CML Apple computers since the students would not have them at home, but Kelsey convinced him that it was for the best so that the students would not be frustrated that their cameras did not work with their new PC computers.

Our professional rewards included the students' growth during our program and the acknowledgment of program success by the greater community. In the first year, the media courses had their own screening to showcase the students' work and progress. In the following years, the screening was consolidated into one graduation ceremony of the whole academy. In addition, Rhode Island state senators and representatives celebrated the accomplishment of the summer academy by inviting the students and us to the State House and showcasing one of the videos the students had produced during the program. Our personal rewards from our collaboration revolved around seeing see how important our work was. With social networks, we easily stayed in touch and learned from the students about the impact we had made on them. They received school credits, improved their grades, and demonstrated their information, digital, and media literacies skills growth every year as they came back.

Discussion

"[An] expanded definition of literacy impacts the types of services, programs, and collections that libraries provide, as well as the nature of the work that library staff perform."[lii] Indeed, our three-year experience of working with the First Star URI Academy taught us how our collaboration could advance the foster youth students' information, digital, and media literacies. Each partner had a significant role in the collaboration. While Yonty and Kelsey alternated between being instructors and researchers, Mona supported the classes with her CML space and equipment, and the First Star staff were in charge of both the logistics of the program and providing behavioral and emotional support for the students. The students experienced the CML as their summer learning home and would run into the academic library with excitement, eager to enter the CML section. The students enjoyed working on media production and analyzing media messages. Each year the class was rated high in their preferred activities during the month-long summer academy.

For us, having a sense of shared vision that combined our mission together with a clear structure and relationship allowed us to explore our pedagogy of digital and media literacy. Our authority, accountability, resources, and communication evolved during the years to positively impact the cognitive, but mostly social and emotional, needs of the foster youth.

Though we had challenges to address, including the students' behavioral issues, we were able to use the creative format of production to have them express their emotions and voice. Combining AACRA as a model to acquire information and media literacy allowed us to overcome the communication challenges, the technical malfunctions, and overlapping responsibilities over students' behavior.

Together, we were able to make a safe space at the library for the students to learn and enhance their various literacy skills. Having a daily debriefing of the staff after each class helped us to better communicate and modify our next day's lesson plans in order to reach our educational goals and be more accountable. Over the years, our authority was established in regards to our instruction, but we still had no authority over the sharing of the students' artifacts. For us, we would like the collaboration with the administration to be better, especially around understanding how our shared vision contributes to each separate mission. Further research should explore how an organization can collaborate with other contributors for having foster youth students on campus for a college- and career-readiness summer academy.

Conclusion

With the growing number of foster youth[liii] and their challenges to being accepted to or graduating from college, the First Star URI Academy offered a unique opportunity for these at-risk students. Our collaboration with the NGO First Star and the University of Rhode Island's Media Education Lab and Curriculum Materials Library allowed us to promote the students' information, digital, and media literacy competencies. The significance of our collaborative effort can be seen in their artifacts (videos, websites, digital campaign), but mainly in the fact that three of the five academy graduates started their first year in college. Having a positive

experience at the CML allowed them to see themselves at a university as they took college-level classes in information, digital, and media literacy.

Notes

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