



Chapter Four

Digital Creation

Did you know creating content online helps kids feel connected to the world?

Kids love to create! I don't think I've ever met a kid who didn't have a desire to create cool things reflecting their passions. If kids have the opportunity to use tech tools as part of the creation process, they can share their work in really powerful ways. We need time to create things we love, access to tools that will help us create in interesting ways, and opportunities to share our creations with a global audience. The global part doesn't have to start immediately. Sharing can first start in a classroom partnership, then grow to a small group, then a whole group, then class to class, then class to school, and last but not least, class to world. But from the beginning of the creation process, kids can have the world in their mind's eye.

It's a very empowering feeling to know the world cares about your work. It's like a great big hug that you'll never forget.

If I think about my own family as an example, I can share my ideas about both my big brother, Quinn, and my little sister, Charlotte. Because my mum will be sharing about Charlotte's work for the

Kids are **NATURAL** creators

They NEED:

Time 

Access 

Sharing Opportunities 

world in a later chapter, I'd love to share what I've learned about creation from my brother, Quinn.

Quinn loves to build with LEGOs. In fact, he'll spend hours with a new box that has thousands of little pieces to put together, and he'll barely even move until he's figured everything out. My mum says LEGOs are Quinn's kryptonite; he just can't resist them. If there's a LEGO in the room, it sends a signal to Quinn's brain that it needs to be put together.

A few summers ago, a friend gave Quinn a big tub filled with random LEGO pieces. Quinn has such an incredible brain for seeing how LEGO pieces go together, he looked into the tub and immediately knew it held rare pieces for a Harry Potter Hogwarts castle. Quinn spent days organizing the pieces, putting them together, and making a list of what was missing. Then he and my dad searched through LEGO bins Quinn already had and found similar pieces that would substitute nicely for what was missing from the Hogwarts castle. It was amazing to see Quinn work on this; he was designing and problem-solving and completely dedicated to rebuilding the castle no matter what was missing. He was in full LEGO creation mode, and he was so motivated and happy.

Throughout the building process, Quinn documented his work by taking pictures with an iPad. He loved scrolling through all the pictures and talking about the building process. Even though I'm



not much of a LEGO builder, I enjoyed hearing Quinn talk about his castle because it reminded me of the work I do in Minecraft.

Quinn also did loads of research about his castle design. When he was unsure what was missing, he'd pore over old LEGO guides to see if he could figure out what he needed. He took screenshots and zoomed in on castle photos he found online. He also brought in some of his own ingenuity by considering how to add a few robotic parts into the castle design, like a pulley that carries a water bucket up the side of the tower.

Every bit of his focus was on creating the castle as if it was new out of the box—or better.

That's what using tech to create around your passions can do for you. You can document, design, problem-solve, and connect across platforms in ways that help you develop the creative side of your brain. Once you've experienced this, you begin to wish for more opportunities to create. The tech doesn't have to be fancy either. It can be as simple as having the opportunity to create a picture stream, or researching and studying documents you find online, or using an old robot part from another toy in a new and interesting way.

When I think of Quinn and his castle, I feel like I can see a bit of his future. It's like imagining how his love of designing and building might help him actually build another castle someday, one that he might invite me to for dinner.

And I hope you haven't missed this detail: Quinn's story started out just between us and now it's for the world, because it's here in this book. There are powerful examples of kid creation everywhere if we just take a minute to notice.

Let Passions Drive Creation

Creation that's premised on kid passion can give us a glimpse into a student's future. Liv's apt description of Quinn's purposeful, resourceful, and focused dedication to his castle project reminds me of



Connection to the ISTE Standards

Educator Standard 2: Leader

Educators seek out opportunities for leadership to support student empowerment and success and to improve teaching and learning. Educators:

- a. Shape, advance and accelerate a shared vision for empowered learning with technology by engaging with education stakeholders.
- b. Advocate for equitable access to educational technology, digital content and learning opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all students.
- c. Model for colleagues the identification, exploration, evaluation, curation and adoption of new digital resources and tools for learning.

Educator Standard 4: Collaborator

Educators dedicate time to collaborate with both colleagues and students to improve practice, discover and share resources and ideas, and solve problems. Educators:

- a. Dedicate planning time to collaborate with colleagues to create authentic learning experiences that leverage technology.
- b. Collaborate and co-learn with students to discover and use new digital resources and diagnose and troubleshoot technology issues.
- c. Use collaborative tools to expand students' authentic, real-world learning experiences by engaging virtually with experts, teams and students, locally and globally.
- d. Demonstrate cultural competency when communicating with students, parents and colleagues and interact with them as co-collaborators in student learning.

what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refers to as “flow”—a feeling of intense concentration and enjoyment people experience when they work on a satisfying task. When kids create, they can find their flow much quicker when it comes from a place of passion; it’s what we often refer to as

our “happy place.” This is true for adults too. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) asserts adults need to be mindful of the playful side of creativity; the most creative people tend to be those who can hyper-focus on the task at hand, while also persevering through challenges. For most people, finding your flow is a lifelong pursuit.

Liv’s ability to connect with incredible authors, scientists, ballerinas—experts who extend her passions—helps her contextualize her interests into real-world experiences. November (2012) asserts that we have a responsibility to students to help them develop networks that support their lifelong learning. Just as Liv can imagine Quinn’s pursuits in the future, her own connectedness to a network of experts allows Liv to imagine her own future, too.

This chapter is an invitation for you to consider the content Liv creates as both an example and catalyst for your own classroom. Liv’s creations are original only in the sense that they reflect her own passions and her networks that grow them. Your classroom can serve as a platform for student passions and networking.

Seeing More Clearly

Recently, I’ve had some eye-related issues, which caused me to spend a lot of time with my eye doctor. In my initial visits, I hoped for a simple diagnosis of the problem, or a remedy that would get me quickly out of the office and back into my everyday routine. Unfortunately, my vision issues are quite complicated, so quick visits weren’t always in the cards for me. In order to ease my anxiety, I began to focus on the tools my doctor used in my visits. How did she understand my eye condition? Which tools were most important?

At almost all of my visits, my doctor used the most common tool—the phoropter. This tool measures the way the eyes work together, as well as the refractive errors of the eyes. More than likely, you’ve had experience with this tool if I remind you of the question the doctor asks as she uses it: “What’s clearer . . . one or two?” The doctor uses your feedback to make adjustments to the lenses you are looking through.

The goal is to measure the unique differences in the vision of both eyes and to fine-tune your vision so whatever treatment you need, you enjoy clearer vision.

The thought process I used to ease my own anxiety during my eye appointments can be instructive in easing any anxiety we might feel as we consider tech tools, platforms for sharing, and delving deeper into how to create authentic networks for your students.

Just as the phoropter measures the unique differences in my eyes, I am continually measuring my own understanding of tech tools and experiences with Liv's. I've had to trust myself to follow Liv's lead, and because we've developed such a strong network of capable and caring others—her digital crew—she's learned to make sense of the complexity of the world in ways I would have doubted if I didn't see it happening. Liv simply says her work has helped her “love the world more,” and this is certainly the case. But more specifically, she sees the human side of technology—and this understanding empowers the kinds of decisions she makes online. She creates thinking about “her people,” and this helps her see a bigger purpose for her work. Put simply, people depend on Liv, and she depends on them. It's as if when she's holding the tech, she sees the world right in the palm of her hands.

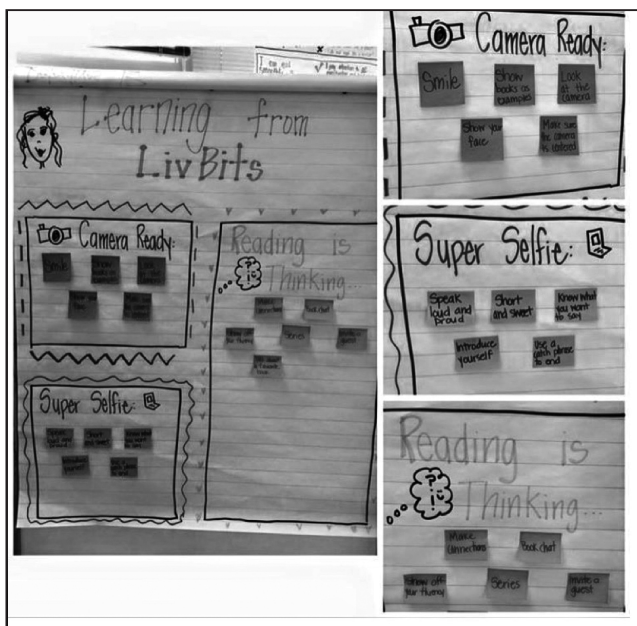
There will always be differences between how you and your students see technology. I've learned the clearest vision requires us to be understanding and open-minded. We must focus on where students' creations can take them and allow for the nuances that their particular journey will contain. I go back to the questions I asked to ease my nerves during my eye doctor visits, though slightly nuanced: How do I understand Liv's experience? Which tools were most important?

As I share Liv's creations here, I hope you imagine first, the general ways she uses technology and that the tech tools are only powerful when they create a clearer picture for thinking and understanding. Next, I hope you consider the value of the nuances in how we envision the work children do online.

Keep Reading! Keep Thinking!

Liv's videos are her most popular piece of content and what started her on this creation journey. Each week, she makes short videos discussing her reading and thinking. They are done in a “selfie” style: She looks straight into the camera, shares her thinking, then leans in and switches off the camera. It's a simple format that doesn't require much practice, and we've found most students feel comfortable and confident trying this style themselves.

Gretchin Aviles's third-grade classroom in New Hampshire analyzed Liv's work and created an anchor chart to help them create their own LivBit-style videos.



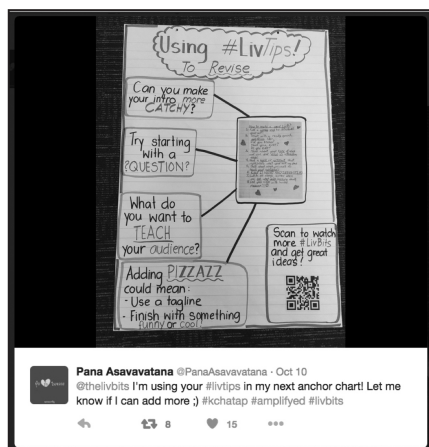
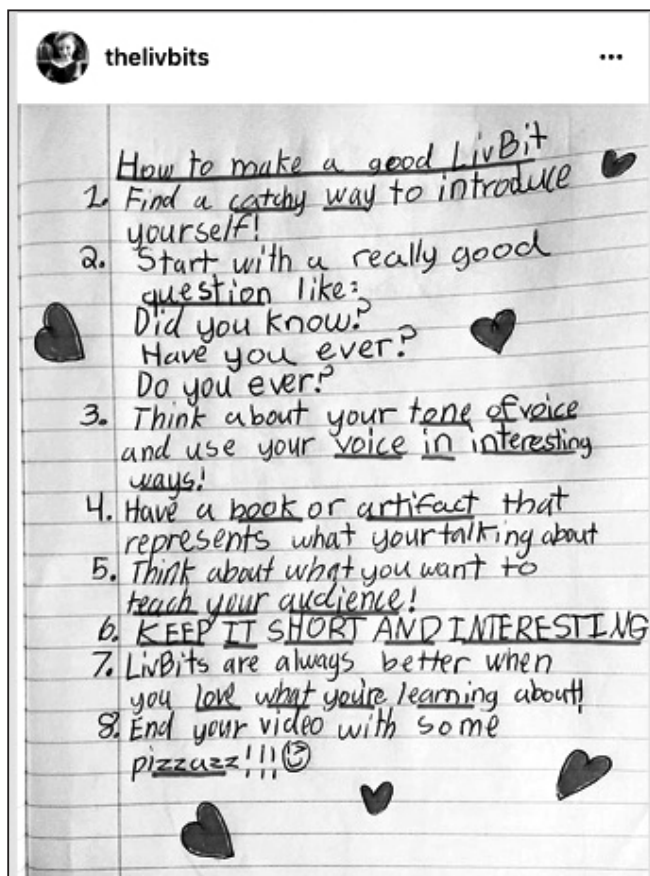
The anchor chart focuses on three categories they noticed in Liv's videos:

- Camera Ready: Smile; show books as examples; look at the camera; show your face; make sure the camera is centered.
- Super Selfie: Introduce yourself; speak loud and proud; know what you want to say; keep it short and sweet; use a catchphrase at the end.
- Reading Is Thinking: Make connections; do a book chat; show off your fluency; invite a guest.

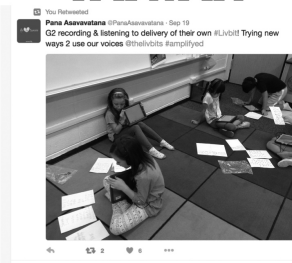
Sticky note tips define the categories (as listed above) and become a powerful reference for students as they get ready to create.

Innovation specialist Pana Asavavatana refers to Liv as a “mentor tech” for her K-2 students in Taiwan because of Liv’s ability to talk about the tech decisions she makes while she creates her videos. Her students also analyzed Liv’s work and created a plan for their own LivBit-style videos. Asavavatana’s anchor chart included an Instagram post of Liv’s how-to list for making a catchy LivBit, then a QR code children could use to access all of Liv’s videos. Once they did this, the students worked to create a plan for how their videos would unfold, including drafting their own questions about their topics, considering how to hook their audience, and crafting unique catchphrases at the end of their videos. Asavavatana was an early adopter of Liv’s work, and her students provided some invaluable feedback that Liv used to strengthen her later videos, most specifically, by slowing down the pace she talked in her videos. Most of Liv’s Taiwan collaborators are second language speakers, so Liv’s fast-talking style sometimes meant they had to listen multiple times before they understood her message. Their feedback helped Liv learn the power of pacing and how an audience needs time to process what you are sharing.

This back-and-forth reflection process creates an incredible amount of analysis and critique in Liv’s creation loop. The empowerment isn’t one-sided. Although Liv’s work generates powerful considerations for



LivBit Collaboration with Kids in TAIWAN





Every kid can be a mentor tech! Let them create, then ask them to talk about their decisions. BOOM! Mentor tech in action!

students and teachers in their own creation loop, Liv receives candid kid-generated perspective on her work, and this motivates her to create more content they will enjoy.

Principles of Feedback

Although the creation loop is a powerful mechanism that empowers the learner to experiment with new learning stances, it also becomes an important tool for feedback. After observing Liv's impact on students and teachers, and their impact on her, I identified four principles of feedback impacting the learner. Unpacking these feedback principles is essential if teachers want to encourage students to be effective givers and receivers of feedback.

The most effective feedback is continuous

In order for students to understand how to use reflection as part of the learning process, feedback has to happen. As Liv considered the feedback from her peers in Taiwan about the speedy pace of her talking, she began to examine other elements of her fluency, like pausing, intonation, rhythm—the prosody of her speech. Nichols (2006) suggests purposeful talk is the motivation for students to construct ideas and “visions of possibility” for themselves and each other. It's clear in Liv's process, the feedback from the purposeful talk became the possible next steps for her as a learner in the creation loop.

Feedback is co-constructed

This positions the learner in a very powerful role. They can either choose to use the feedback or ignore it; choose to refine their ideas or keep them the same; choose to complicate their learning goal or stay consistent with how they initially began the process. In Liv's case, she needed to choose to slow down her talk or to keep being speedy and risk losing the opportunity to develop a more purposeful rhythm to her videos where her audience felt more supported.

Feedback offers us the opportunity to see learning that's positioned between the giver and receiver, and it creates opportunities for next steps for each of them. The conversation around the learner's process becomes a tool to strengthen the learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The giver can think about how she might try what Liv has done, and Liv can consider the giver's feedback and grow a specific aspect of her work. The give and take that can happen when feedback begins with a question shows the potential power of how talk can deepen the work (Nichols, 2006). Questions help strengthen the learning for everyone.

Feedback is intended to build confidence

Students receive large amounts of feedback rapidly every day. They have to learn to sift through the feedback to make better sense of how their learning is being perceived by others, while also deciding what their next steps might be. Students also need to know how to make sense of negative feedback, because this type of feedback happens and is often what breaks the learner down. When some learners receive negative feedback, they can't categorize it in a way that helps them know what their next step might be. Instead, they shut down, and the creation loop ends.

This is especially true on social media platforms. Feedback comes rapid fire, and sometimes with no filter. Ideally the learner will calibrate the feedback sources. For example, Liv asks herself: Is this feedback meant to grow my thinking in a useful way? Is this source someone who uses my work respectfully? Can I count on this person in more than just this instance to grow my work with me?

It is crucial teachers consider how feedback is framed, especially when today's students will always experience feedback in diverse, dynamic learning environments. The most effective feedback Liv receives is in the form of a question. Students and teachers asking about her creation process helps her articulate the decisions she makes as a learner. Most of the time, the questions Liv receives are also incredibly specific: Why are your videos so short? Do you use a script? How did you think of your catchphrase? How do you decide what book you're going to talk about? Why do you always wear a message shirt? The questions give Liv a glimpse into the arc of understanding her work generates—she can understand what stands out to her audience, and maybe these aren't things she considered much while she was creating her LivBit videos.

Helping students deconstruct feedback can help them develop more specific questions as they learn new skills or take risks as learners. So often, children tap out of the feedback process because they feel the feedback doesn't grow who they see themselves to be, creating insecurities in their sense of self that prevents risk-taking. Let's face it, receiving feedback can make us feel insecure, but if teachers help contextualize the feedback and explicitly model the power of a positive stance, then students can emerge more confident in their abilities.

Feedback adds dimensions to your thinking

Feedback should be timely, and it doesn't have to be complicated. Asking questions as the learner is engaged in the creation loop can help students refine and sharpen their thinking. At this phase of the creation loop (see page 20), encouraging self-assessment—even through a simple emoji exit slip—can help the students track their thinking and offer opportunities for them to deepen their understanding.

Teachers who make feedback a priority encourage kids to add dimensions to their thinking, and Liv's work is an excellent example of this. She first began creating videos and from the feedback those videos generated, she saw opportunities for more content creation—eventually becoming a blogger, podcaster, and accomplished public speaker.

EMOJI EXIT SLIP



Circle how you're feeling after today's work

Liv describes her creation process as a series of nesting dolls—the largest representing her LivBit videos, then each smaller doll representing her other creations. If children are encouraged to create from a passion-filled place, the dimensions they add to their thinking are awe-inspiring. The next doll Liv can add to her nesting doll metaphor will include becoming a published author—it's such an incredible accomplishment, I still have to pinch myself. Each step Liv has taken as a creator has shown me how powerful it is when children add dimensions to their thinking by trying out new creation modalities.



Feedback should be inspiring or affirming!
Ask more questions to get more understanding!

The KidLit Show

The LivBit videos have led to some unbelievable opportunities for Liv, including the chance to have her own podcast, called *The KidLit Show*, on Pinna, a subscription-based audio app that streams podcasts, audiobooks, and music for kids.

This is an example of how one creation can lead to another—maybe one you never imagined.



Produced by a company in Brooklyn, New York, the concept for Liv's show was developed around her love of books and talking. Each episode is themed around a big idea drawn from the featured book in the episode, with Liv interviewing the author(s) about their writing process, book connections, and (in true Liv-fashion), thoughts they have about life. The show is lively, fun, and absolutely entertaining for anyone who loves to listen to podcasts.

Liv jumped into this opportunity with no previous experience interviewing; one characteristic of her LivBit videos is that she rarely, if ever, lets anyone featured in the video say more than one small part of her catchphrase “keep thinking.” The person driving all the talk in a LivBit video is Liv, and her audience has come to depend on this certainty—a fact, I think, that endears her more deeply to them.

But a podcast interviewing authors required a whole new set of considerations for Liv as a creator. First, she had to write her own questions, and this meant she had to know the authors' books really well, preferably the entire body of their work, so she could ask deeper, more specific craft questions. Most of the authors Liv interviewed on the

show were from connections she'd already established through her LivBit work, but a few were ones in partnership with Pinna, so this meant Liv had to read their books and create questions around stories, topics, or genres that may not have been on her radar.

One of Liv's absolute strengths is her ability to talk extemporaneously in her LivBit videos. Probably the number one question Liv is asked about her videos is if she writes a script for them. She always answers in a resounding, "NO!" Liv's talk is based on her passion for the book or idea, and because of this, she has so much to say—most of the time too much! Liv verbally rehearses what she wants to say, and she talks out her message. Her videos always follow a predictable structure: 1) greeting, 2) question, 3) synthesis of message, 4) takeaway, and 5) catchphrase ending. Liv is always very mindful of timing, and she knows her best videos are 60 to 80 seconds. After creating more than 200 videos, she understands the power of style, message, and brevity. Most children don't need a script once they gain the confidence around their ideas and the tools used to share them.

Talk on a podcast is a very different kind of talk, and Liv had to learn the art of give and take in a conversation, how to be fully present in the discussion, and how to genuinely build on an idea or thought shared. She worked so hard on this, and her growth astounded me.

Liv also wrote large portions of her scripts before she would begin taping with the author. She created a Liv's List (books grouped around a theme or topic) for each interview and crafted questions for her live interviews with "kids on the street." She had to master the use of equipment she'd never seen or used before and consider the best way to use her voice, because in a podcast, she couldn't use body language, like shaking her head. All of these requirements came in a short six-week taping season, and she pulled it off because her LivBit work had given her such a strong foundation and the confidence to shine.

Not only did she get to speak to such giants of the writing world as Peter Reynolds, Sean Qualls, and Selina Alko, but Liv also experienced some absolutely authentic learning moments and absorbed some incredible life lessons. Kate DiCamillo shared with Liv how she

created her characters by learning how to pay more attention to people and becoming “a careful observer of humanity.” Liv tucked that idea immediately inside her heart. Booki Vivat talked to Liv about how she grew her writing identity and advised, “Do not discredit your creative work.” Liv has clutched that idea all the way through the writing of this book—and I have too!

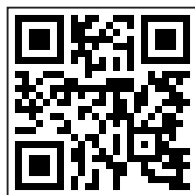
If we give children opportunities to create and hone the skills they feel are meaningful, they can easily transfer these skills from one creative process to the next. The ultimate goal is for the student to be able to apply their knowledge and skills inside and outside of the classroom, specifically to new cases, and most especially for them to carry this knowledge and skill to digital platforms where the transference is critical.

In your classrooms, we hope you’ll consider having students listen to different types of podcasts. Ask them to focus on how the host gets the guest to talk, and then give them the opportunity to listen to their own voices as they interview someone important to them. Free podcasting apps, such as Anchor and Spreaker, make it easy for children to give podcasting a try. Likewise, SoundCloud and other free hosting sites make sharing their podcasts with a wider audience easier.

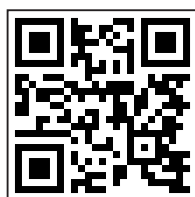
Teaching kids how to produce a podcast around their interests is a powerful way to for them to craft narratives and consider what makes a good story. They can practice and analyze various interviewing techniques and learn the production decisions needed to create an interesting listening experience in the podcast. Preparing students by listening to and analyzing other podcasts, such as *The KidLit Show*, *StoryCorps*, or *The Show About Science*, can help your students



The KidLit Show



The Show About Science



StoryCorps



Favorite Podcasts: *The KidLit Show*, *The Show About Science*, *The Show About Politics*, *Wow in the World*, and *Story Pirates*.

Favorite Free Apps for Creating a Podcast: Anchor and Spreaker.

Host your podcast for free on SoundCloud.

consider the various design elements that come into play when creating their own show.

Liv's podcast work added a new purpose to her creative process and an incredible new dimension to her learning. Without her original LivBit video creation, this opportunity would have never happened.

Liv's Lists

Some of my favorite pieces of content Liv creates are her Liv's Lists. These came about very organically. Teachers and students were constantly asking her for book recommendations, often around themes. As she recognized the value of this content and found herself duplicating it, it dawned on her: A list would be a great way to share

lots of books with students and teachers, and so began Liv's Lists. She has always loved going to the library and taking out piles of books and exploring new genres and themes. Now she does this with her lists in mind. When she shares a new Liv's List online, she gets excited to see an author comment on it or like it. Liv feels proud when she can pair together good books for other children.



Liv's Passions
(in this exact order)

- Books
- Sharks
- Ballet
- Pop-Tarts

Becoming Inspired Through Someone's Story

Several times Liv has posted a Liv's List and received feedback she never expected. This happened recently, when I bought her *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1993). Liv devoured the book in one night, and it inspired her to make a Liv's List in honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



As she read, Liv felt connected to Anne; she was Dutch like Liv and had a powerful story to share with the world. Liv shared that there were times while she was reading the book when she had to remind herself to breathe. She said she felt Anne's words inside her heart so deeply, it gave her a kind of heartbeat she'd never had before. As soon as she finished the book, she wanted to know more about the history of that time, understand other people's perspectives, and explore the new feelings (heartbeats) that came from trying to figure out something so massively tragic. Liv carried that emotion into the work she did reading books for her Liv's List. She felt like Anne was depending on her and guiding her.



Olivia Van Ledtje @thelivbits · Jan 29, 2018

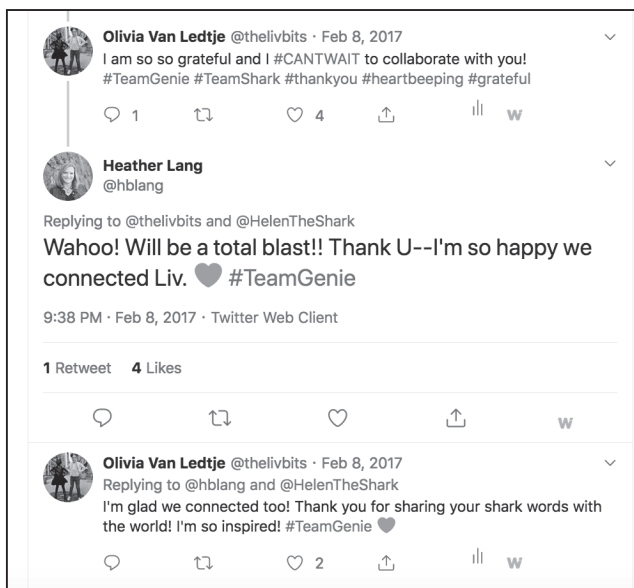
My mum bought me the diary of #AnneFrank. I read it in 1 night. I stayed up thinking about the 🌍 Words can change you. "Although I'm only fourteen, I know quite well what I want, I know who is right and who is wrong. I have my opinions, my own ideas." #KidsCanTeachUs #LivsList

After she posted the list, the series of tweets that followed were so powerful. First, people began sharing it, and then readers commented about how personal this list was for them—how it reminded them of people they loved who had suffered during that time. Liv never knew much about the Holocaust before she read Anne's story, and by creating the list she wanted to show how much a person's story can stay with you, move you, and inspire you to take action. The creation also encouraged people to share moving memories of their lives Liv would have otherwise never known.



You can be carefully prepared but still share your thinking extemporaneously! Try it! You just might love it!

After a year of tweeting about sharks, her friends on Twitter always had their eyes open for interesting opportunities for Liv to expand her knowledge and passion. One day, a teacher tweeted to Liv about Heather Lang’s new picture book biography *Swimming with Sharks: The Daring Discoveries of Eugenie Clark* (2016). From the very first tweet connecting Liv to Lang’s shark book, there was a spark of excitement for what their future collaborations might hold. Liv hashtagged their connection as #TeamGenie—and the project was born.



Have kids hashtag their thinking as a form of synthesis! It doesn't matter the content area, have a place where these hashtags are displayed in your classroom. Each week, have your hashtag crew look for "understanding patterns" across the content areas!



Nate Butkus

@natepodcasts: Knowledge Constructor

I can't think of a better creator for the world than my friend Nate Butkus. Nate's the incredible brain behind *The Show About Science* podcast and his newest podcast, *The Show About Politics*. How cool is that? Nate has TWO podcasts!

Nate loves that he can create something "that sparks change." And it's true Nate's creative process has influenced a lot of important people in the world. He's interviewed lots and lots of scientists about their work, and he's even been on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. According to Nate, he is inspired by "people who listen to my podcasts and how they are so supportive ... and the fact I am really curious."

I like to think of Nate and me as the #KidsCanTeachUs dynamic duo! We both believe in the power of kids teaching and creating for the world. Nate has the same hope as me: "That the world learns that kids can do all the things adults can do, and I hope the world will learn that lesson soon." Me too, Nate! Me too!

I also hope that after reading Nate's Spotlight, you'll get started with a class podcast and even encourage students to create their own podcasts around a passion. Here's what Nate suggests as the best way to get inspiration for your podcast: "I would recommend taking a walk. Yes, a walk. In this walk, look around you. If you see anything you are curious about, then maybe think about making a podcast about it."

Nate's Tip: "The easiest way to start podcasting is to download an app called Spreaker. All you need to do is push this big red button and—bam—you're podcasting!"

So, what are you waiting for? Get out there and see the world!
Take a long walk and take it all in! And then podcast about it!

Nate's hashtags for the world: #KeepAsking #KeepLearning

Without the social media platform connecting Liv to Lang, she would have never had the network of opportunities that resulted from their Team Genie work, including a shark dissection at The New England Aquarium, where Liv worked alongside women scientists to understand and explore various shark parts. Lang's mutual enthusiasm for educating the public about sharks motivated Liv in many ways. Together, Team Genie also hosted an "Art for Sharks" contest online that garnered global student art pieces and ended with them Skyping the winning student's second-grade classroom in Taiwan, as well as sending shark books to the Malaysian student who was runner-up.

I hope this chapter has shown you how one project or person can spark so many others. There's no end to the possible LivBit videos, podcast interviews, Liv's Lists, Team Genie collaborations, or other ways Liv can (and *will*) connect and share. Not knowing what she will come up with next is half the fun of watching Liv grow as a creator.