



A future founded on facts

Annual Report

FY20 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020)



“If everyone went through the News Literacy Project’s Checkology virtual classroom, we’d have a more informed society and would be able to decipher all of the information that’s coming at us.”

— Kristen Locker, 2020 graduate, Florida Gulf Coast University
and NLP’s 2020 Gwen Ifill Student of the Year

Photo courtesy of Kristen Locker

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Dear Friends of NLP,

Our world has been shaken and transformed since we shared our first annual report with you. In fact, it often feels like last fall was a decade ago.

We're proud to say that NLP has responded to the myriad challenges wrought by COVID-19 with resourcefulness and determination. As a result, with the second year of our four-year strategic plan completed, we marked numerous important gains.

During the 2019-20 school year we brought news literacy education to 702 educators and 33,894 students through our [Checkology® virtual classroom](#). The student assessments conducted at the end of the school year prove that Checkology works. Far more students were able to recognize the standards of quality journalism and to understand the watchdog role of a free press and the First Amendment in a democracy.

The pandemic and the accompanying "[infodemic](#)" – an overabundance of information, including misinformation – inspired us to step up in new and innovative ways.

In March, in response to schools nationwide transitioning to remote teaching, we decided to provide Checkology at no cost to educators and parents engaged in distance learning or homeschooling. In addition, we created a special page on our website with reliable information about COVID-19, used our weekly newsletter [The Sift®](#) to debunk misinformation about the virus, and developed two educational webinar series that drew 1,768 participants.

We knew we had to invest in additional resources to provide a growing number of educators with the support they needed to teach news literacy. We created an educator outreach and success team to respond to our educators and to help them succeed, providing support to implement Checkology and promoting the platform to school districts. We also brought [Ebonee Rice](#), a community engagement expert, on board to create and mobilize a nationwide network of 20,000 educators committed to news literacy.

Amid a perfect storm of misinformation and disinformation from the pandemic, the protests for racial justice and the 2020 elections, we moved to expand our mission to include you. Our free resources are now available to meet the urgent need for news literacy among people of all ages, and to help everyone become savvy consumers of news and information.

We hope that as you read this annual report, including a special section on the start of this new fiscal year, you will recognize your contributions in making these accomplishments possible.

Thank you for your ongoing support and for helping to preserve a future founded on facts.

Sincerely yours,



Greg McCaffery, Board Chair



Alan C. Miller, Founder and CEO

What is News Literacy?

The ability to determine the credibility of news and other content, to identify different types of information, and to use the standards of authoritative, fact-based journalism to determine what to trust, share and act on.

Our Mission

The News Literacy Project, a nonpartisan national education nonprofit, provides programs and resources for educators and the public to teach, learn and share the abilities needed to be smart, active consumers of news and information and equal and engaged participants in a democracy.

Our Vision

News literacy is embedded in the American education experience, and people of all ages and backgrounds know how to identify credible news and other information, empowering them to have an equal opportunity to participate in the civic life of their communities and the country.



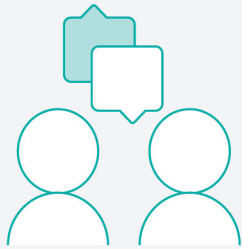
Our Goal

By 2022, the News Literacy Project will build a community of 20,000 educators who, using NLP programs and resources, will teach news literacy skills to 3 million middle and high school students each year. NLP will also lead efforts to increase public awareness of news literacy and to equip people of all ages with the ability to discern fact from fiction.

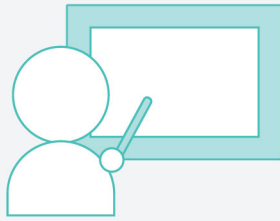


Program Highlights

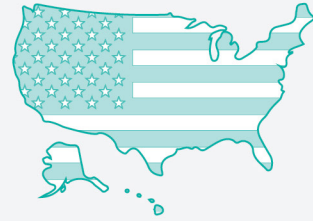
Checkology



33,894
student licenses



702
active educators



44
states

Checkology Metrics for FY20

During the 2019-20 school year, after completing Checkology lessons:



Nearly 9 in 10

students could correctly identify the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment.



Two-thirds

of students could correctly identify the traits of quality journalism.



More than 2x

the number of students could demonstrate an understanding of the watchdog role of the press.



More than 4 in 5

students said in a survey they intend to increase their civic participation.



91%

of active teacher users surveyed felt that Checkology was as good or better than other e-learning tools they've used.



"It makes me have a sense of confidence that I'm looking at the correct post and correct source and can help my family and people around them."

— Afnan Ahmad, high school student, McDonough, Georgia



Professional Development

4,857 teachers

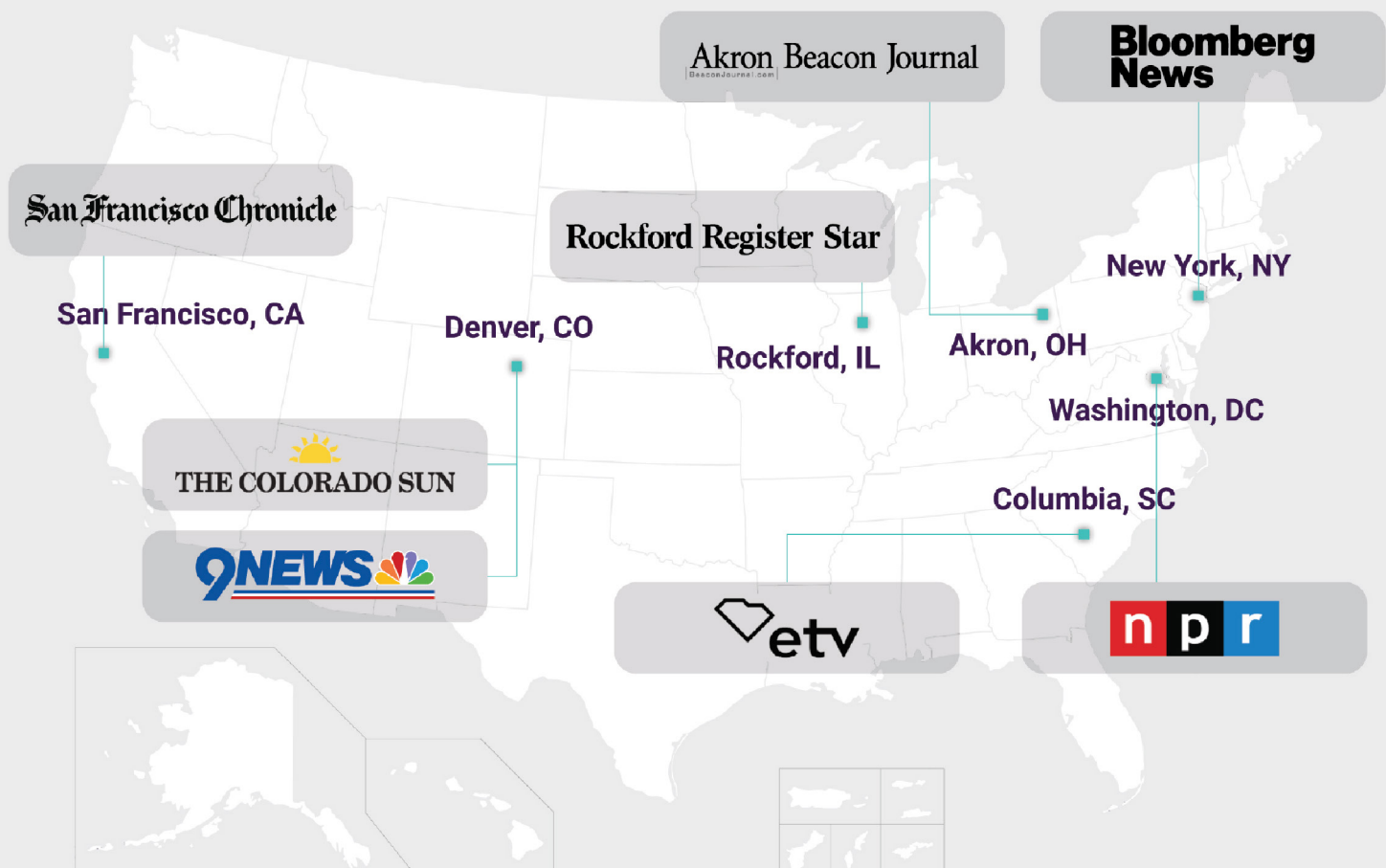
reached through professional development opportunities from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.



NewsLitCamp®

NewsLitCamps hosted across the U.S. in FY20

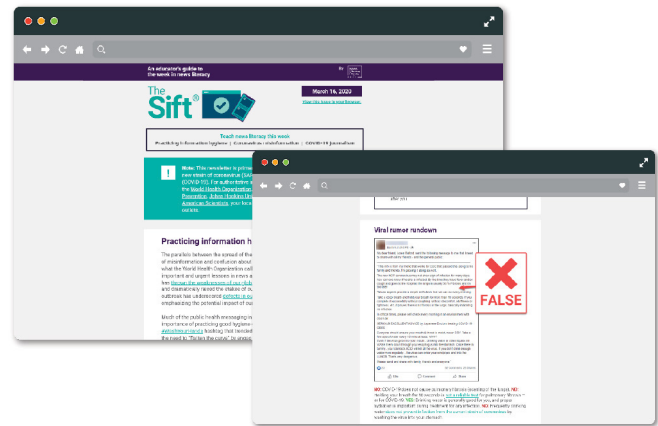
7 events • 473 educators



The Sift®

10,920 subscribers

The Sift is an educator-focused newsletter sent weekly during the school year that explores timely examples of misinformation, addresses media and press freedom topics and discusses social media trends and issues. It includes discussion prompts, classroom activities and links to additional material.



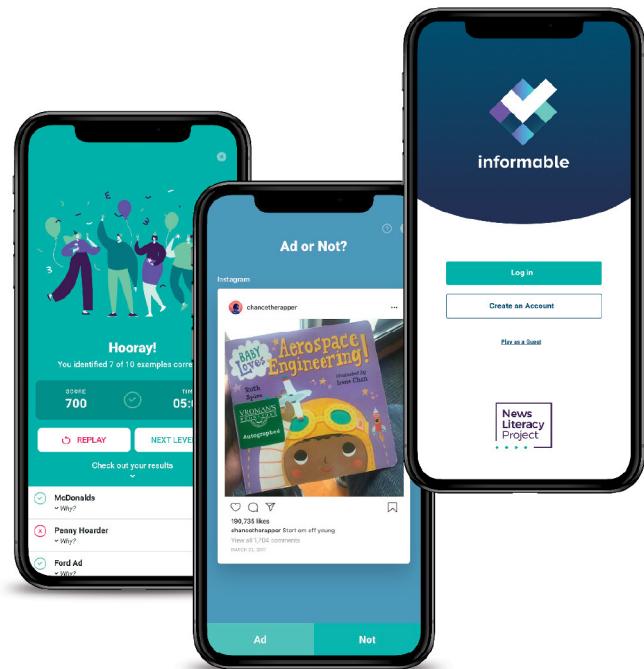
Informable®

15,053 downloads

Our free mobile app, Informable, helps people of all ages practice four distinct news literacy skills using real-world examples in a game-like format.



informable



“Without hesitation or exaggeration, I can say that the News Literacy Project has **completely revamped how, what, and why I teach social studies.**”

— Conor Murphy, high school teacher, Camillus, New York



National News Literacy Week

In January 2020, we launched the first National News Literacy Week in partnership with The E.W. Scripps Company.

This annual event seeks to underscore the vital role of news literacy in a democracy and provides audiences with the knowledge and tools to become more news-literate. The week was timed to take place in the lead-up to the Iowa caucuses and the beginning of the U.S. presidential election primary season.



During our inaugural National News Literacy Week, NLP:

Extended our reach into local Scripps markets with **over 40 of Scripps' 60 newsrooms** participating by co-producing news stories with students in their markets and/or promoting the week.

Counted **47 additional media mentions** in major news organizations, including The San Francisco Chronicle, The Philadelphia Inquirer, CNN's *Reliable Sources* podcast and The Associated Press.

Gained **1,100 mentions** in earned media, reaching up to **444 million people**.

Saw a **2,777% increase** in website traffic from the same period in 2019.



Save the date for
**National News
Literacy Week 2021**
January 25-29

COVID-19 response

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States in early 2020, we recognized that NLP's mission had never been more important.

It underscored both the threat to public health posed by pervasive misinformation and the need for expanded news literacy education to combat it.

We responded quickly in the following ways:

Removed the paywall for Checkology on March 18, 2020; by June 30, we had **377 new educators or parents** and **17,349 new students** use the platform.

Created **a dedicated page on our website** for coronavirus-related material to help everyone learn to discern credible information about the virus.

Partnered with the **data reporting analysis leader SAS** to develop a series of blogs that helped the public understand the data being reported about the pandemic.

Hosted **two webinar series**: one focused on how to teach news literacy skills and one in partnership with the Metcalf Institute at the University of Rhode Island about the urgent science communication challenges presented by the pandemic.

These collectively drew **1,768 attendees**.

Added a **new module in Informable** on COVID-19 misinformation.

"Each and every day of this epidemic has been **rife with teachable moments for drilling down on truth**, whether it be examining the credibility of the sources who are providing guidance, comparing the approaches that different government officials have used locally, nationally and globally or examining the investigations of watchdog reporters who are following the actions of officials."

— Brian Winkel, high school teacher, Cedar Falls, Iowa



2020 awards: NLP honors educator, journalist and student

In recognition of their outstanding achievements during the 2019-20 school year, NLP named the recipients of its 2020 educator, journalist and student of the year awards in June.

Honorees are recognized as having distinguished themselves in their commitment to news literacy in their classrooms, in their professions and in their daily lives. The awards also acknowledge their efforts as leading voices in support of news literacy education. Recipients are selected by a committee of NLP board members and staff.

Click below to watch the presentation of all 2020 awards on our website.



EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR Patricia Hunt

Virginia educator Patricia Hunt was named NLP's inaugural Educator of the Year in recognition of the dedication and innovation she brings to her teaching of news literacy, and for her advocacy of news literacy education.

Hunt, who teaches 12th grade government at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Va., first learned about NLP from a Maryland colleague in 2011, before NLP's classroom program was active in Virginia. Hunt borrowed the NLP classroom guide from her colleague to use in her classroom.

Soon after Hunt began using Checkology, NPR visited her classroom and made it the focus of this piece, [*The Classroom Where Fake News Fails*](#). Hunt has also hosted classroom visits from several other news outlets. These include CNN.com; ABC News.com; HBO; WRC-TV; NHK, Japan's public television station, and Czech public television.

"My goal as an educator is to give students the tools that they need to become lifelong learners," Hunt said. "My hope would be for them to continue listening to the news, to continue checking their news feed against other news feeds, to stop and pause before sharing. Checkology is the best tool I've found to meet that goal."



JOHN S. CARROLL JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR Indira Lakshmanan

Indira Lakshmanan, senior executive editor at National Geographic and a veteran foreign and national correspondent, was named the John S. Carroll Journalist of the Year. Lakshmanan is a frequent TV and radio commentator on journalism and journalistic ethics, served as the first Newmark Chair in Journalism Ethics at the Poynter Institute, and was executive editor at the Pulitzer Center.

In November 2019, at NLP's request, Lakshmanan led a high-profile session on news literacy at the National Council for the Social Studies conference in Austin, Texas, and interviewed Washington Post Executive Editor Marty Baron on a keynote panel.

"It has been such an honor to get this award and a privilege to get to work with you and the next generation in teaching them about news literacy and the importance of reliable journalism to a healthy democracy and society," Lakshmanan said.

The award is named for John S. Carroll, one of [the most revered newspaper editors](#) of his generation and a founding member of NLP's board, who served as board chair for four years until his 2015 death.



GWEN IFILL STUDENT OF THE YEAR Kristen Locker

Kristen Locker, a 2020 graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University, received the Gwen Ifill Student of the Year Award. Locker's professor Lyn Millner, a finalist for NLP's Educator of the Year Award, nominated her.

Locker used Checkology as a student and became a teaching assistant in Millner's news literacy course the following year. In addition, Locker delivered a lecture on verification tools, developed assignments for students and produced a video to promote news literacy to freshmen.

[This award commemorates Ifill](#), the trailblazing journalist — and longtime NLP supporter and board member — who died in 2016. It is presented to female students of color who represent the values Ifill brought to journalism.

"After reading more about Gwen Ifill, I saw how much she did and the weight of her work in corresponding, advocating, reporting, writing, all of that," Locker said. "To see what she's done in her lifetime, it's just so inspiring. I want to follow in that legacy."

Former exchange student's **news literacy skills** bridge continents

As an exchange student at Cedar Falls High School in Iowa, Cătălin Vilae spent his senior year exploring new landscapes — literally and figuratively. Living and studying 5,300 miles away from his home, family and familiar surroundings in Alexandria, Romania, he learned to navigate Iowa's physical landscape and the information landscape with confidence.

Adjusting to a new environment in a strange country can be challenging enough. Vilae went further, venturing into the online information landscape through a 21st Century Media Literacy class in spring 2019. English and journalism teacher Brian Winkel developed the course, introducing students to news literacy using Checkology.

Vilae soon discovered just how easy it is for people to share falsehoods, rumors and misleading or manipulated content on social media. Through Checkology, he also acquired skills that he applies in his daily life. "I learned how to verify pictures. Now I do that every time I am not sure whether a picture is real or fake," he says. "And I really enjoy it, because I can actually be a watchdog when I'm online."

From the United States, to Romania to the United Kingdom (where Vilae is enrolled in college), his experience proves that news literacy skills know no borders.

Photo courtesy of Catalin Vilae



Left: Corrie MacLaggan, managing editor of The Texas Tribune, presents welcoming remarks during a happy hour and panel discussion event in November 2019.

Board of Directors and National Leadership Council*

NLP is grateful for the support and guidance from our Board of Directors and our National Leadership Council. We appreciate their partnership. Without their dedication to news literacy, our work would not be possible.

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 Eva Haller
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Jessica Guff	Amy Weisenbach
Peter Herzberg	Catherine Woodard

**lists reflect members who served for any period during July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020*

Donors

The following individuals and organizations supported our work in FY20. Without their support, our mission to scale our resources could not have moved forward.

Leadership Gifts

Pulitzers (\$1M+)

Anonymous*
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** denotes multi-year contributions
recognized at the level of the total
amount.*

The Visionary Circle is a thriving group of philanthropic leaders who support the mission of the News Literacy Project and enjoy exclusive benefits and access to NLP programs and leadership.

Learn more at newslit.org/vision.

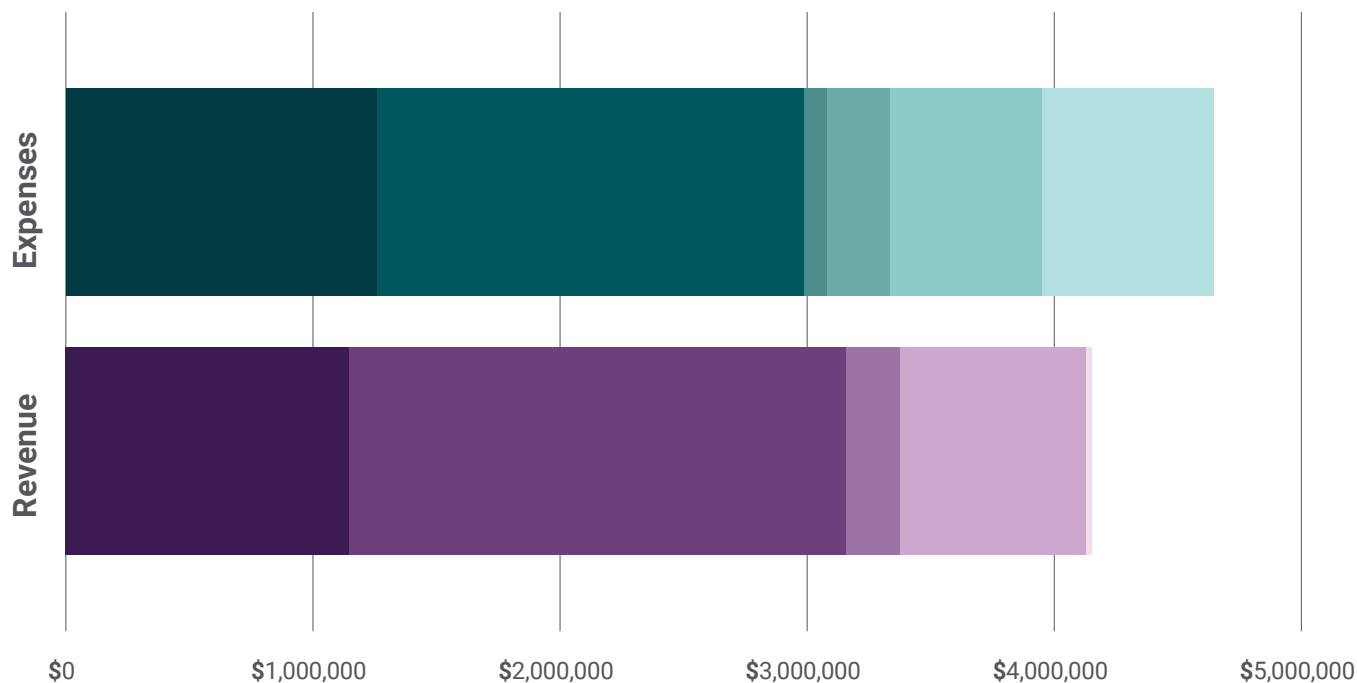
Below: CNN anchors Alisyn Camerota and Anderson Cooper hosted supporters of the News Literacy Project at the network's new headquarters in New York City on Oct. 22, 2019 for a discussion about quality journalism and the importance of news literacy.



Financials

FY20 Expenses and Revenue

FY20 audit performed by GRF CPAs & Advisors



Expenses

Programs

Education:	\$ 1,257,272
Communications:	\$ 1,728,854
Partnerships:	\$ 91,154
Educator Services:	\$ 256,646

Supporting

Management/general:	\$ 616,718
Fundraising:	\$ 693,362

Total expenses: **\$ 4,644,006**

Revenue

Grants and contributions:	\$ 1,145,821
Net assets released from donor restrictions:	\$ 2,007,911
Program income:	\$ 222,553
Contributed services:	\$ 749,713
Investment income (loss):	\$ 25,542
Loss on disposal of asset:	–

Total revenue: **\$ 4,151,540**

Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets

Support and Revenue		Without donor restrictions	With donor restrictions	Total
	Grants and contributions	\$ 1,145,821	\$ 1,061,879	\$ 2,207,700
	Program income	\$ 222,553	—	\$ 222,553
	Contributed services	\$ 749,713	—	\$ 749,713
	Investment income (loss)	\$ 25,542	—	\$ 25,542
	Loss on disposal of asset	—	—	—
	Net assets released from donor restrictions	\$ 2,007,911	- \$ 2,007,911	—
	Total support and revenue	\$ 4,151,540	- \$ 946,032	\$ 3,205,508
Expenses	Program Services			
	Education	\$ 1,257,272		\$ 1,257,272
	Communications	\$ 1,728,854		\$ 1,728,854
	Partnerships	\$ 91,154		\$ 91,154
	Educator Services	\$ 256,646		\$ 256,646
	Total Program Services	\$ 3,333,926		\$ 3,333,926
	Supporting Services			
	Management/general	\$ 616,718		\$ 616,718
	Fundraising	\$ 693,362		\$ 693,362
	Total Supporting Services	\$ 1,310,080		\$ 1,310,080
	Total expenses	\$ 4,644,006		\$ 4,644,006
	Change in net assets	- \$ 492,466	- \$ 946,032	- \$ 1,438,498
	Net assets at beginning of period	\$ 2,759,006	\$ 5,536,813	\$ 8,295,819
	Net assets at end of period	\$ 2,266,540	\$ 4,590,781	\$ 6,857,321

School librarian: Checkology ‘priceless’ for teaching research skills

You might be surprised to learn what has students buzzing in the hallways of The Bolles School, a private school in Jacksonville, Florida.

It’s Jaime Sanborn’s Information Literacy course.

Sanborn, the middle school librarian at Bolles, uses Checkology in a research-driven course for seventh- and eighth-graders. She said that when she learned about the platform from other school librarians last year, she thought: “This is exactly what I want to teach them.”

Checkology speaks the language of librarians; “InfoZones” — one of the platform’s foundational lessons — “is priceless. It is very similar to how librarians would teach source evaluation,” Sanborn said.

“Every child is being influenced by social media as a source of information, not just entertainment, so I have to teach them how to navigate that. They believe everything they see,” she added.

Sanborn rounded out the Checkology component of her course with the “Misinformation,” “Introduction to Algorithms,” “Arguments & Evidence,” “The First Amendment,” “Branded Content” and “Understanding Bias” lessons.

Her students use what they learn from Checkology every day. “They tell me that they have begun applying these skills when they are consuming news outside of the classroom,” Sanborn said.

Photo credit: Mindy Kelly, dean of students, The Bolles School

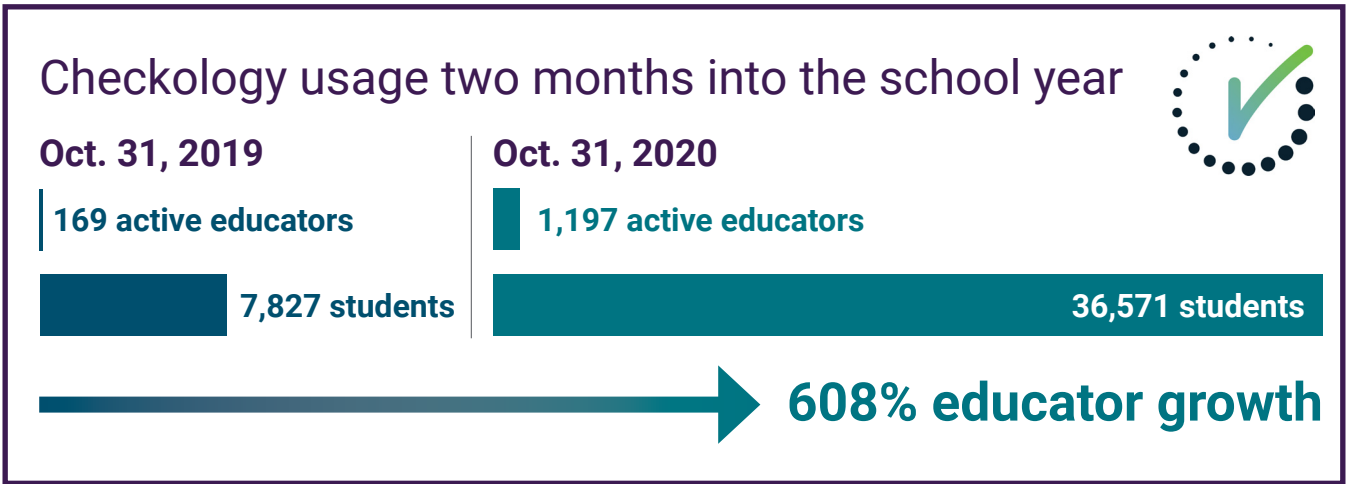
A future founded on facts



Looking ahead

In early 2020, NLP recognized that to achieve our goals of seeing news literacy embedded in the American education system and ensuring equitable access to resources and tools for people of all ages, we had to expand our mission. This prompted several efforts for the second half of our fiscal year, including how to permanently remove the paywall for Checkology (which we implemented sooner than anticipated with the onset of school closures in March), how to create a modified version of Checkology for the general public, and how to identify other resources to create and promote our work across audiences.

Since eliminating the paywall for Checkology on Aug. 10, and with the work of the new educator outreach and success team, we have seen an astounding increase in active users compared to the same time last year. These numbers continue to grow even with the uncertainties that this school year brings.





Contact Us

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For general inquiries:

info@newslit.org

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