

## Empowering Student Voice

### Students are now at the center of education transformation

*By Jennifer Snelling*

Four years ago, while a senior in high school, Zak Malamed noticed that the education community had one of the most active conversations on Twitter. Since students were not allowed to use social media while at school, he decided to engage in the conversation on his own time. Malamed tweeted a thought about school equity and awoke the next morning to find former Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch and Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, debating his tweet.

At least they were listening.

Turns out, there were lots of adults listening. As students from around the world participated in the #StuVoice Twitter chats, politicians, education corporations, reporters, teachers and parents all joined the conversation. From a hashtag, a new nonprofit organization called Student Voice ([stuvoice.org](http://stuvoice.org)) emerged, the main purpose of which is to integrate student voices into the conversation about education.

Other organizations, education leaders and individuals—both students and adults—have joined Student Voice in its efforts, and the result has been an outright social movement. Last March, Student Voice held the first-ever national conversation about student rights in Austin, Texas. In November, the White House held a summit on Next Generation High Schools and asked Student Voice's National Field Director Andrew Brennen, a sophomore at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; and Dawnya Johnson, a freshman at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, to speak.

The nation seems ready to listen.

### **A novel idea?**

Giving students a voice in their education seems like a no-brainer. After all, who



spends more time in school than students?

Of course, there are some traditional places where students are given representation, such as student councils. And some school boards include a student representative. But most of the time, these opportunities are symbolic and while a student may be at the table, they are rarely given a vote.

The founder of another student-created organization, TakingITGlobal ([tigweb.org](http://tigweb.org)), Michael Furdyk, says the problem is partly cultural. As a society, we believe that adolescents need structure and instruction. We are accustomed to seeing the teacher as the holder of knowledge.

Furdyk, an ISTE member who created TakingITGlobal in 1999 when he was a senior in high school, turned that idea on its head. He found himself concerned about many of the world's problems at a time when technology was just entering the classroom and decided to use that technology to create a student-led global response to these problems.

"It struck me when you connect people together, they feel like they're part of something much bigger," says Furdyk. Through connecting students online who are passionate about a particular problem, TakingIT-Global empowers students to understand and act on the issues.

Furdyk says that thanks to the internet, knowledge has been decentralized. Now, a resourceful student can gather just as much as the teacher. Fifteen years ago it was more difficult for a student to become an authority on a subject. This makes for a relatively recent cultural shift.

In this new age, it's important to remember the potential young people have always had to create change. Some of our biggest inventions have come from youth (including television, which was invented by a 14-year-old, and the grain reaper, invented by 15-year-old), yet the traditional educational system still places caps on students by limiting their power over their own education.

"How are we going to create the next Google, YouTube or other economic engine," he says. "Not from structure, but from creativity. Give students the opportunity to dream and explore and create the next big ideas."

Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate, is one example of a student who was a powerful agent of change, says Student Voice's Malamed. "We don't expect enough of our young people," he says. "Even though there's evidence across the world and the course of history that students have a great ability to impact global issues."

### **Why student voices matter**

There's a reason, continues Malamed, that so many education policies don't work. "We're not engaging a major stakeholder," he says. "If students know what's working and what's not working before anyone else, why aren't we at the table?"

Angela Maiers has spent her career listening to students. She started out as a kindergarten teacher and says 5-year-olds taught her a lot about the human need to be heard. "We are born to make an impact," she says, "to be a 5 year old who says, 'Hi, I'm Jack and I'm a dinosaur expert.'"

She is the author of a Ted Talk, "You Matter," and the founder of Choose2Matter ([choose2matter.org](http://choose2matter.org)), a group that promotes the idea that when people believe they are counted on, their actions and conse-

## **Two schools in Salt Lake City School District Receive the ConnectEd Grant with Apple.**

*Author - Leslie Lewis; SLCSO Educational Technology Specialist*

Jackson Elementary enjoyed a visit from Apple personnel and Governor Herbert on Tuesday, 4/26/16, when the students opened their new iPads. Teachers delved into their own Apple products in February in order to be ready to help lead the students in this new learning journey. See the video from Governor Herbert's visit here. <http://fox13now.com/2016/04/26/utah-school-first-to-get-ipads-apple-products-for-whole-elementary/>

Glendale Middle School students jumped on the iPad bandwagon on Wednesday, 4/27/16, when Apple representatives visited each classroom to help the kids and their teachers get started. Teachers got a head-start in February when they received their Apple products. It was a good thing they got that head start because the students are very savvy.

Speaker of the House, Gregory Hughes, USOE's Rick Gaisford, Educational Technology Specialist, Chris Gestland, Principal, and Alex Rowe, SLCSO Educational Technology Specialist, attended the event.

Many thanks to the SLCSO Informational Technology team for their support. Many thanks to Apple for making this grant possible and all the Apple hands who assisted in the rollout.

quently, their lives, change. Choose2Matter has developed a curriculum that helps schools instill a culture of mattering and presents live events in school districts all over the country. Maiers' free ebook, *Liberating Genius in the Classroom* ([choose2matter.org/liberatinggenius](http://choose2matter.org/liberatinggenius)), is a toolkit for teachers who want to empower students.

"The greatest gap in American education," says Maiers, "is the underestimation of student genius and their capacity to contribute. We don't see students as agents of impact."

When Maiers works with students, she asks them to remember what it was that made them run to school when they were younger. "They don't say, 'I would run to school if they had iPads.' They say, 'I used to run to school because someone noticed me, said my name, challenged me.' This is not about self-esteem. This is about a deep human need to be recognized."

Tamir Harper, a sophomore at the Science Leadership Academy (SLA) in Philadelphia (led founding principal and longtime ISTE member Chris Lehmann), agrees. "Whenever lawmakers are discussing education, they should have a seat at the table for the youth," says Tamir. "The decisions don't affect the lawmakers, they affect the students in the classroom."

Tamir and his fellow SLA classmate, senior Stephanie Dyson, attended the Lead & Transform Town Hall, a leadership forum at ISTE 2015. When another debater fell ill, Stephanie was pulled in to represent the student viewpoint in a debate about including computer science in schools. She says the room was "ginormous" and at first she was, "Mic'd up and freaked out!" But she rose to the challenge and left feeling that she had been part of an important event.

"It was monumental that [ISTE] included students in a discussion about students," she says. "We are told and asked to do so many things. Expectations are created for us, but we don't get to weigh in."

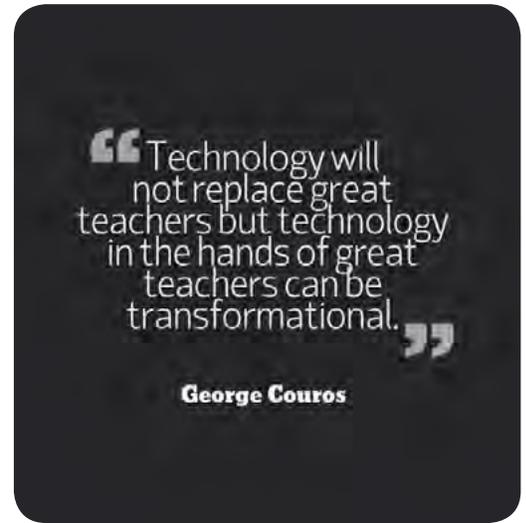
Stephanie points out that students have firsthand knowledge about what they need in school. Data can tell you some things, she says, "but when you hear a personal voice about how students feel about their own curriculum, teachers and adults get a very different picture."

TakingITGlobal's Furdyk says his own research has shown that if students feel shared ownership over learning, they are more likely to pursue it vigorously. "When we see education systems fail, it's where that system hasn't been developed in consultation with people," he says. "The best systems foster a sense of purpose and ownership."

### **Promoting student voice**

Maiers reminds us that listening to students doesn't have to be a big deal. In fact, it's better if it's just standard operating procedure in big ways and small ways. For instance, give students a say in how the classroom desks are arranged or truly listen and respond to student feedback. "It doesn't have to be some big, White House-level thing," she says. "The possibility for revolution already exists in our classroom."

For schools who want to actively promote their commitment to student voice, Furdyk and TakingITGlobal have created a certification program called Future Friendly Schools ([futurefriendlyschools.org](http://futurefriendlyschools.org)). The program, which offers e-courses ([goo.gl/OquURM](http://goo.gl/OquURM)) for educators, asks schools to demonstrate their commitment to global citizenship, environmental stewardship and student voice. The student voice portion requires demonstration in five areas:



## 10 Free Reading Websites for Kids

Source: <http://blog.reallygoodstuff.com/11-free-reading-websites-for-kids/2/>

Storyline Online

Read to Me

We Give Books

Starfall

TumbleBooks (Alternate)

International Children's Digital Library

ABCya!

Storynory

National Geographic Young Explorers

Oxford Owl

- Learning Environment. Do students have a voice in shaping and designing the environment they learn in?
- School Culture. How do students evolve the school's culture?
- School Policy. Are students at the table and allowed a vote on policy?
- Student Leadership. Are students given leadership opportunities?
- Student-Directed Learning. How does the average educator in the school allow the student to shape what they're learning?

Furdyk is working with almost 20 schools all over the world, including in Canada, Uzbekistan and Mexico, and hopes to grow to more than 100 schools this year.

In the U.S., Student Voice has launched a tour to coincide with the presidential election. Representatives are visiting schools across the country to promote a Student Bill of Rights (sturights.org).

SLA's Tamir Harper was part of the Philadelphia event in February. Students are asked to vote online for their top three choices out of eight rights, including free expression, right to technology, right to safety and well-being, due process and more. Schools will certify the results of their students' votes and will set goals based on those results. In cooperation with Student Voice, the administrators, teachers and students will work together to implement the goals. Student Voice is currently looking for schools to visit and engage during the tour.

"The power of this project," says Malamed, "is that we're building the student voice narrative while also helping schools figure out how they can involve students. Ideally, this platform won't be needed in 10 years because students will be a part of every single committee that makes decisions regarding schools and learning environment."

### Standards refresh recognizes student voice

Student voice is also impacting the refresh of the ISTE Standards for Students. For the first time, students were asked to provide input as part of the public comment period that ended March 31. The refreshed student standards, which will be unveiled during ISTE 2016 in Denver, will reflect student viewpoints.

"What's emerging in the new standards is an empowered learner," notes Carolyn Sykora, senior director, ISTE Standards. "For a very long time, knowledge was filtered through teachers and textbooks. Now students have access to experts, data, others who share their passions and ways to engage. Learning and opportunity are at their fingertips. The refreshed standards give students the skills to take advantage of these opportunities."

Students need the skills, knowledge and dispositions to enable them to process and properly capitalize on the vast amount of information they have access to, Sykora adds. "With great opportunity comes a need for skills and the responsibility to take advantage of it."

### Leaders of today

Activism and social justice have always inspired students to take on leadership roles. Furdyk sees this every day through TakingITGlobal.

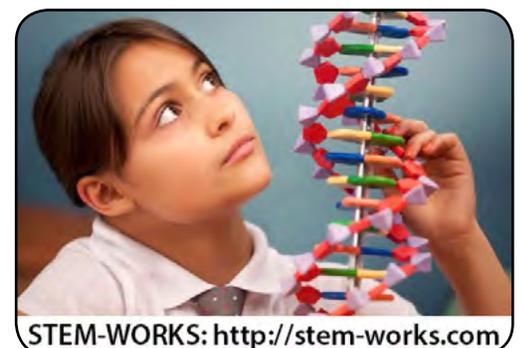
Likewise, SLA's Stephanie Dyson has been using her voice for change since she was a freshman in high school. She and other students at SLA got together to protest budget cuts in their district. During a school day, they walked to the district to strike in support of their teachers. The district listened and a budget was approved.



## 22 Useful Google Forms for Teachers and Principals



### How to turn an old laptop into a Chromebook



STEM-WORKS: <http://stem-works.com>

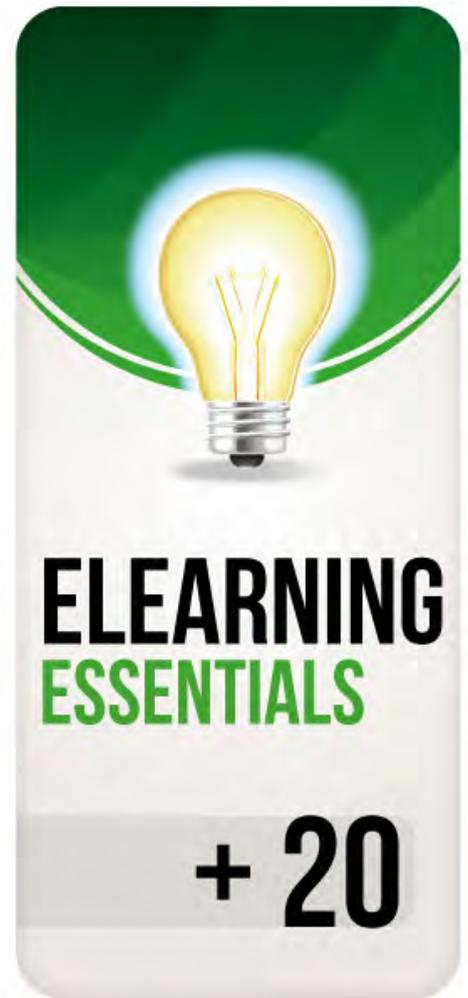
Stephanie's experience at the ISTE conference reinforced her belief that students deserve to be heard. "While our voice is often dampened, it's important we continue to speak up," she says. "ISTE has people from ... all over the world who want the same goal, a better future for people my age. ISTE builds a pathway for that kind of change to happen."

Through Choose2Matter, Maiers sees students take up the call to leadership with great success. The organization offers opportunities for students to participate in community board meetings so constituencies can see old problems with new eyes. Recently, students participated in a hospital board meeting and listened to some of the issues doctors and nurses were struggling with. The students came up with four pages of insights and ideas in an hour whereas the board had been asking these questions for years. Students are not just leaders in waiting, she says. They are ready to lead.

"The underlying success of student voice is that it changes the way people think about students," she says. "So many people, including teachers, think students are future problem solvers. This diminishes their full capacity to contribute today. Kids know the difference when they're being treated as token voices. I see them as leaders, innovators, makers of impact. 'You are a genius and the world needs your contribution.' When that is an actionable statement, not an inspirational statement, it is profound what students are able to accomplish."

*Jennifer Snelling is a freelance writer who writes for a variety of publications and institutions, including the University of Oregon. As a mother to elementary and middle school-aged children, she's a frequent classroom volunteer and is active in Oregon schools.*

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## How to Split a Long MP3 Audio Files Into MP3 Subfiles Automatically!

by Nathan Smith

Have you ever wanted to split a long audio file into smaller MP3 files? For example, you recorded that old Vinyl LP as an MP3 audio file, and now you want to split it into its individual tracks, or you recorded a lecture and you want to split the audio into modules? Here's how to do it! You'll need **Audacity** - a free, open-source audio recorder and editing software available for Mac, Windows, and Linux. You'll also need the free download that allows Audacity to work with MP3 format files. Let's walk through this process step-by-step.



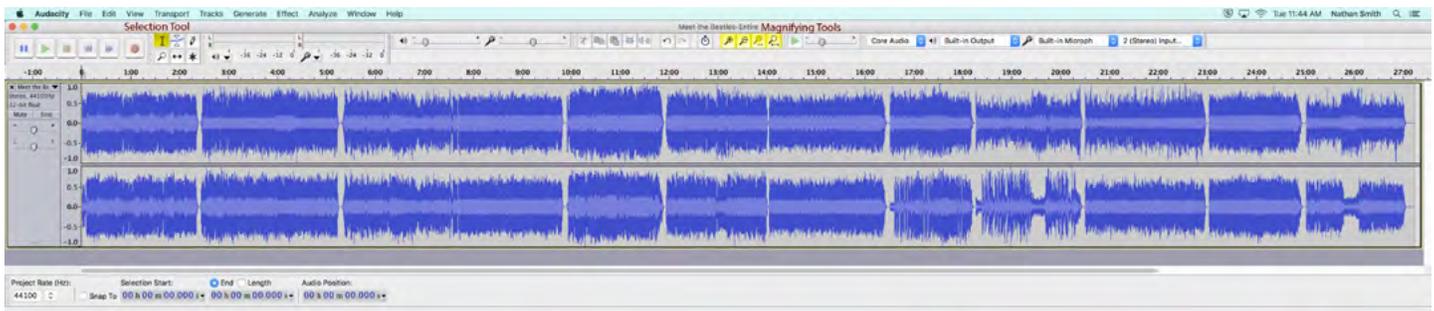
**Step 1:** Go to the **Audacity** website - <http://www.audacityteam.org>. Download the version of Audacity you'll need for your operating system. On the downloads page you'll also see links to other plug-ins that you can use with Audacity. For MP3 files, you'll need the LAME MP3 encoder - which allows Audacity to export MP3 files.

**Step 2:** Install Audacity on your computer.

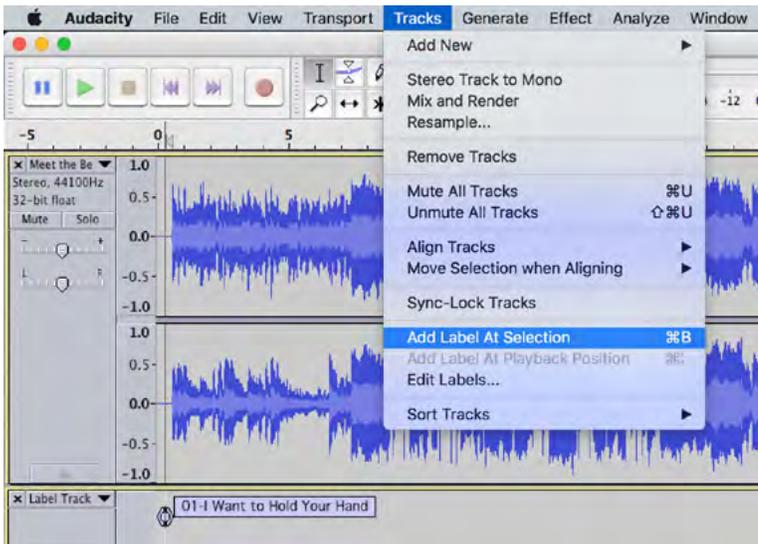
**Step 3:** Install the LAME MP3 encoder. Instructions are given on the **LAME download page in the Audacity site**.

You've accomplished the hardest part! The rest is pretty easy. Audacity is a very powerful audio tool. *(Continued on the next page)*

#### Step 4: Import your long audio file by going to the FILE menu, IMPORT, and choose Audio...

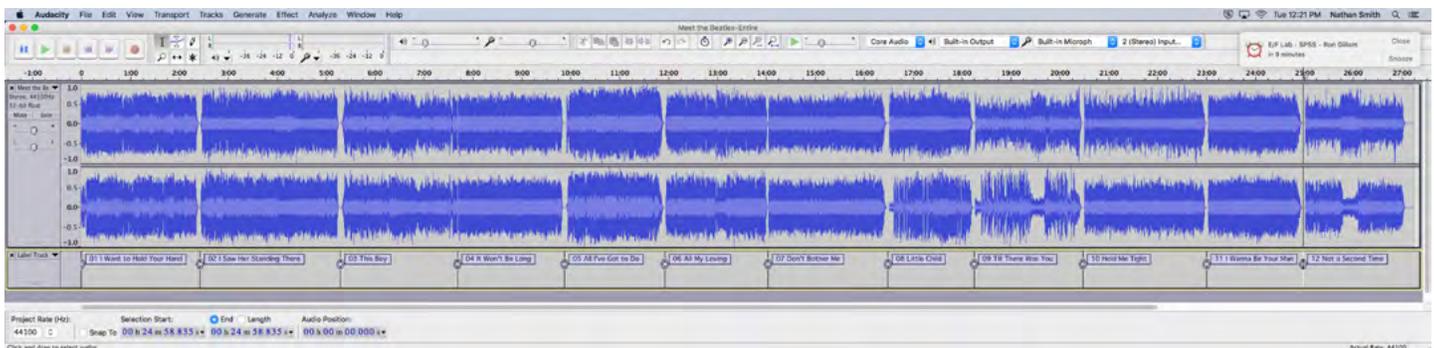


In the example above, I have imported a Beatles Album, Meet the Beatles. You can easily tell from the waveform where the song breaks are. So, what I need to do is to tell Audacity where these breaks are. I'm going to zoom in closer so I can see them better. There are magnifying glass tools up in the toolbar that allow you to zoom in or out.

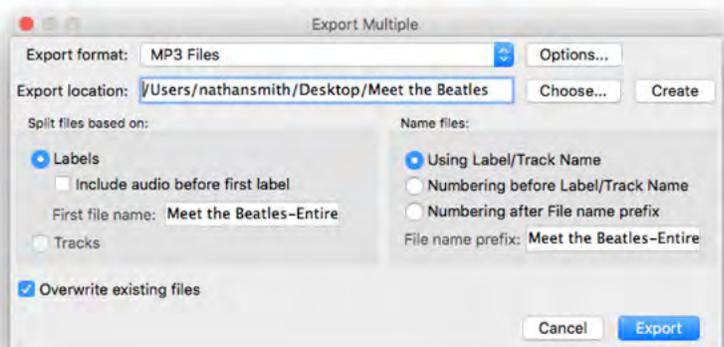


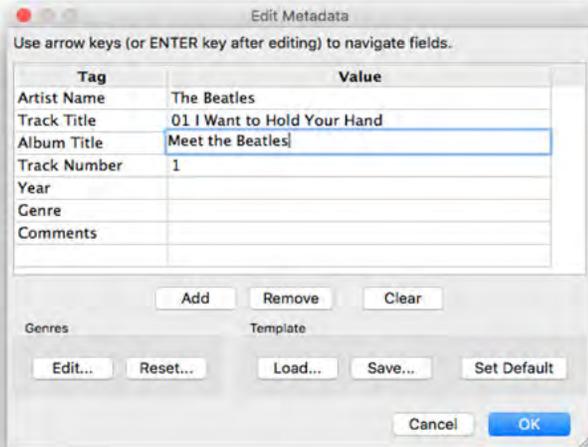
Step 5: Using the selection tool, Insert the break points. You do this by clicking on the timeline where the song begins - this will insert a selection cursor at that point. Then go to the TRACKS menu, and ADD LABEL AT SELECTION (Command-B on Mac, CTRL-B on PC). A label track will appear, where you can type the Break point information. That break point should be perfectly aligned with the selection cursor. If not, you can click on the break point and drag it to the right or left to perfectly align it.

Repeat step 5 for all the other break points you wish to insert. Hint: You can use the spacebar to start or stop play from the selection cursor point. This helps me precisely place the selection cursor for the break point. When finished, your timeline will look something like the one below...

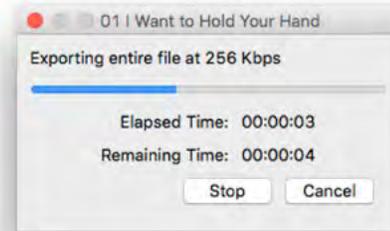


Step 6: We are now ready to have Audacity break this long MP3 album into individual MP3 tracks. You do this by going to the FILE menu and selecting EXPORT MULTIPLE... You will see this dialog box. Since I numbered my songs in the break points already, I'm going to choose Using Label/Track Name. If you didn't number your break points and want to, you can do so with the other two options. Choose or create a folder you want to save your files in. Choose MP3 files then click the OPTIONS... button to set the audio quality. Then click EXPORT!

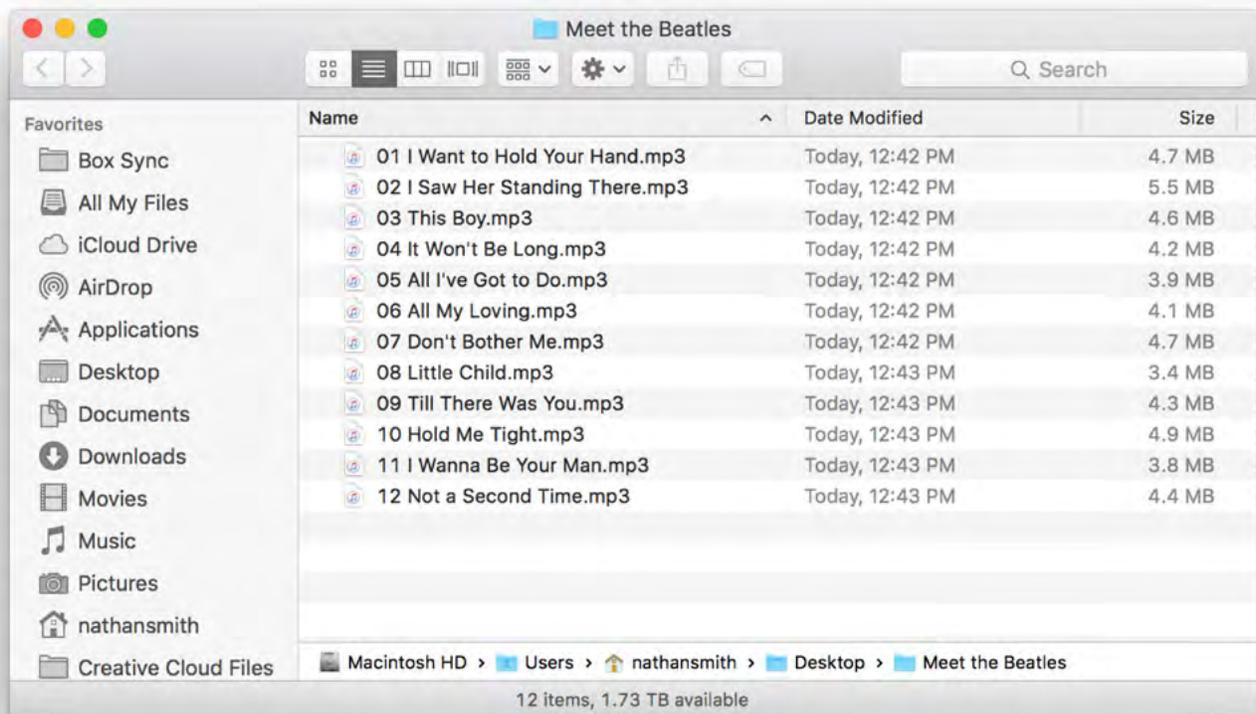




Audacity will then show you the MP3 Information dialog for each song or break point. This would be the information that your MP3 player will show - Artist Name, Track Title, Album Title, Track number, etc. Fill these in if you desire, or click OK without filling in the information. After these dialogs are finished, Audacity will go to work for you!



And that's it! Audacity is going to do all the hard work for you, and split your long file into smaller MP3 files at each break point you set. Here's what I ended up with...



If you're interested in doing this with your old vinyl LP records, many stores now sell **record players that connect directly to your computer and convert the audio to MP3**. The one I purchased uses Audacity to record the LP. As I mentioned, Audacity is an extremely powerful audio recorder/editor. You can do multi-track recording, create Podcasts, and so much more. I use Audacity to add audio annotations to my PowerPoint presentations, because I have complete editing control over the audio. Audacity can remove noise from the background of a recording. You can amplify recordings that were too soft - or reduce amplification on recordings that are too noisy. It comes with many built-in effects, such as changing pitch, or changing speed without affecting pitch. There are many more effects available on the Audacity website.

Audacity is a tool that every teacher should have in their toolchest. I hope you've found this tutorial to be helpful.

Nathan Smith, UCET Board Member

## Apply Now for the 2016 Annenberg- Newseum Summer Teacher Institute! (Due May 8)

In partnership with Annenberg Learner, Newseum Education is excited to host the third annual free teacher institute in Washington, D.C. July 18-20. This year's theme is "Primarily Digital." This unique professional development opportunity will explore the power of freedom of expression and cutting-edge blended learning techniques through workshops, exhibit exploration, collaborative sharing, and creative thinking. Applications due May 8.

<http://annenberglearner.com/t/i-l-hiiuydl-kutltukjh-d/>

## NASA Teacher Professional Development Opportunities

### Space Launch System 'Engineering Is Out of This World'

Audience: Pre-service, In-service, Home School and Informal Educators of Grades 2-5

Event Date: May 4, 2016, at 6:30 p.m. EDT

Participants will be introduced to the "NASA Engineering Is Out of This World" activity resources. Discussion will focus on using the resources to introduce engineering concepts. The activities presented in this webinar address the Next Generation Science Standards ETS1. Register online to participate. <https://www.etches.com/166387>

### Join Us on the Journey to Mars: Looking for Life

Audience: Pre-service, In-service, Home School and Informal Educators of Grades 4-9

Event Date: May 5, 2016, at 6 p.m. EDT

Is there life beyond our Earth? If so, how can we verify its existence? Using NASA STEM curriculum, participants will explore the possibility of life on Mars using their definition of "life" to determine whether anything is alive in three different simulated Mars soil samples. Participants will experiment, record observations and draw pictures as they collect data from the samples to determine if life may exist in any of them. The activities presented in this webinar address Next Generation Science Standards 4-LS1-1, 5-LS1-1, MS-LS2-1, and HS-LS2-3. Register online to participate. <https://www.etches.com/170333>

## Welcome, Spring! Photos by Nathan Smith

