



Research Article

History Detectives in Action: Bringing History to Life Using Primary Sources

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Abstract

History Detectives in Action (HDIA), a programme designed to engage students, spark curiosity and prompt historical critical thinking in the social sciences, particularly suited to the new Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum (ANZHC), incorporates the principles of Universal Design for Learning and collaborative practice to expand teacher confidence and capacity to enact a place-based approach through embracing primary source materials. Additionally, HDIA provides the impetus for genuine and personal interactions with local history where engaged learning through active participation provides a more authentic learning experience.

Findings showed teachers' confidence and mindset to employ primary sources as an introduction to local history beyond the classroom increased, and collaborative partnerships with a professional librarian were acknowledged and valued. Moreover, student curiosity, engagement and active participation were noted by all teacher, archivist and teacher-aide participants.

As the ANZHC continues to be embraced by schools and other curriculum areas are refreshed through the Understand-Know-Do framework, there is a presupposition of meaningful local design to learning progressions and the HDIA approach provides a practical and applicable vehicle for teachers in both primary and secondary schools where an integrated, interdisciplinary approach is the expected outcome.

Introduction and Context

History Detectives in Action (HDIA) provides an approach for the inclusion of local history into the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum (ANZHC) by focusing on primary source material, delivered through a Universal Design for Learning framework to critically engage students, promote a curiosity mindset and grow teacher confidence in working collaboratively with other educators to deliver the programme.

In September 2019, the government announced New Zealand history would become a compulsory subject within the New Zealand curriculum and that schools would be expected to be teaching it by 2022 (NZ Govt., 2019), later revised to 2023. While a wealth of rich information exists, there is a lack of crucial resourcing to support local history inclusion as it is neither easy to access nor available at appropriate literacy levels for learner engagement, which has significant implications for teaching history (Sheehan & Ball, 2020).

While a problem, it also presents educators and regional organisations with a mandate to identify, collate and curate relevant information suitable for local schools. The scope of the HDIA project focused on primary source materials as schools rarely consider using them, particularly when not available digitally, and they are perceived as difficult to locate and teach with. If introduced effectively, they are an engaging catalyst for historical curiosity and inquiry, and critical thinking, where engagement is not reliant on student literacy capabilities.

Durie (2015) posits that educators who aren't teachers but understand how to engage and align their practices to learning can impact the whole community. Librarians with the relevant educational knowledge, required expertise and access to archival materials, are ideally positioned to collaborate with teachers. The HDIA approach facilitates flexibly designed learning where teachers and librarians co-construct sessions. This promotes knowledge construction while enabling students to pursue interests and strengths in ways that support personal learning progress and achievement (Robinson, 2016). With measurable success, teachers acknowledge the benefits of collaboration and become confident in using this approach in subsequent lesson planning.

A secondary goal, in line with a heutagogical approach to learning (Kenyon & Hase, 2001), saw the development of a kete of multi-level resources, paving the way for engaged and participatory learning outside of the classroom.

Literature Review

A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework provides tangible ways for educators outside of the school environment to connect with classroom teachers. Hattie (2012) contends that the power exhibited in teachers' learning is through talking to each other and collaborative pre-planning. Meaningful planning is underpinned by flexible design and takes into account diverse strengths and needs while connecting all learners through contextual experiences, regardless of their ability (Barteaux, 2014; Kenyon & Hase, 2001; Marotta, 2018; UDL IRN, 2018). The three UDL networks of affective, recognition and strategic provide a blueprint for creating instructional goals linked to concepts rather than activities (Moore, 2019), and adopting methods,

materials and assessments that can be customised and adjusted to work for everyone (Robinson, 2017).

In this context, UDL allows for scaffolding and understanding complexity (Hattie, 2012; Moore, 2019), providing a necessary connection for teachers that circumvent any specific inquiry approach that individual schools might ascribe to. Libraries and UDL form a natural partnership that, when effectively activated, provides avenues for multiple ways to understand, engage and show learning (Robinson, 2017), while tailoring experiences that permit all learners to express their knowledge and abilities in ways that are meaningful to them (Moore, 2019; UDL IRN, 2018). This offers opportunities to develop sustainable relationships by building trust and respect through ongoing interactions, and flexibility in collaboration. This approach proved successful when using the Information Literacy Skills Framework (ILSF) to initiate targeted and focused learning conversations between classroom teachers and school librarians (White, 2018).

Hattie (2012) states, that when teachers move from a single idea to multiple ideas and then extend these ideas so that learners construct, and reconstruct, knowledge and ideas, it highlights the benefits of using frameworks. It facilitates the design of materials and activities assisting teachers to home in on the affective network while focusing on student learning and engagement rather than preconceiving topics or outcomes. The recognition network allows for students to explore activities and materials through what they see and hear, initiating active learning, rather than defaulting to passive observation or listening. This process leads the relationships built with teachers into the strategic network through creative and active options for expressing learning.

UDL leads students towards a deeper understanding through genuine inquiry when they are active agents in their own knowledge-building, constructing knowledge in their own minds and building an authentic understanding of the content (Bada, 2015; Barteaux, 2014; Talebi, 2015). Hattie (2012) contends that teachers construct meaning and meaningful experiences only when they're aware of what their students are thinking and what they know, so a team-teaching approach provides teachers with the freedom to learn alongside their students and observe what sparks their interest.

UDL meshes with knowledge construction, knowledge-building and guided inquiry. Bada (2015) claims constructivism's central idea is that human learning is constructed, that learners construct new understandings built on what they already know, and that learning is active rather than passive, while Hattie (2012) argues that "it is not the knowledge or ideas, but the learner's construction of this knowledge and ideas that are critical" (p. 19). In the context of this project, the focus is on building

knowledge to support professional learning for the teaching community, leading to capable people able to facilitate capability in others (Kenyon & Hase, 2001).

Learning needs to be more intentional and students require a clear pathway through the inquiry process. Kuhlthau's Information Search Process (ISP) establishes the importance of the UDL's affective network to student inquiry. This shouldn't be underestimated, given its impact on the learner's ability to persist with research when it feels too difficult for them to continue (Kuhlthau et al., 2012). Constructivist views of inquiry learning see students fitting new information into existing knowledge by having learning goals determined from authentic tasks (Bada, 2015; Kuhlthau et al., 2012), while a constructivist learning environment should provide opportunities for active learning (Bada, 2015), with knowledge-building taking place in physical contexts (Gilbert, 2018).

UDL has value when teaching complex skills such as critical thinking (Tam, 2000 cited in Bada, 2015), with critical thinking and reasoning also identified as core skills for future success (ITL, 2012). The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) vision describes lifelong learners as critical and creative thinkers, active seekers, users, and creators of knowledge, and this is reiterated in the key competency of participating and taking action as critical, informed and responsible citizens. Though, it should be noted that while UDL provides a structure to guide decision-making, this will only work in this context if there is mutual regard for distinct professional skill sets and a commitment to the collaborative component. White (2021) contends the Information Literacy Skills Framework bridges such complexity by connecting iterative information literacy skills to learning. This happens contextually and visibly while prompting informed, shared, learning conversations in this sphere.

Building on critical thinking, Sandretto and Klenner (2011) argue that engaging with students as co-investigators leads to dialogue that respects both teachers and students as part of a critical literacy approach. The critical theory emphasises reflection as a knowledge construction tool. Walker et al. (2020) suggest teachers should investigate students' questions the moment they emerge, showing appreciation for their curiosity and encouraging an inquisitive learning environment where students investigate answers for themselves.

The new ANZHC prompts us to consider local history resources and provides the potential for meaningful, mutually beneficial resource development amongst local culture and heritage organisations, as resourcing implications of this new curriculum are considerable (Sheehan & Ball, 2020). McLean (2007) emphasises that local history is not just national history scaled down, and that "Each place has its own special rhythms and themes that may not feature prominently in the national history" (p. 14), which cannot be underestimated. The Understand-Know-Do framework and progression

model (Figure 1) introduced through the ANZHC is now underpinning all areas of the Ministry of Education’s curriculum refresh. The purpose is to provide teachers with the means to design a strong local curriculum focus which now explicitly states “The vision, purpose, and principles will provide a call to action to design responsive local curriculum - to support all ākonga to succeed in their learning” (Ministry of Education, 2022, para. 8).

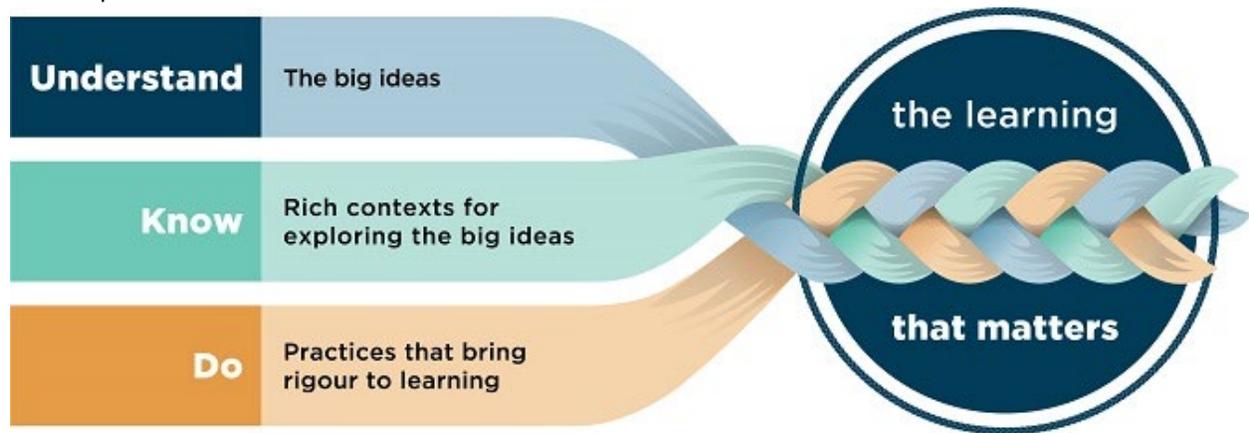


Figure 1. The Understand-Know-Do framework and progression model

It is important that teachers feel confident to engage young people through a local place-based historical context as this immerses students in powerful learning connected to their communities and benefits their academic milestones (Vander et al., 2020). Imbuing learners with the wonder of learning (Penetito, 2009), while designing opportunities to think critically about the past informed by historical evidence, aligns with critical historical thinking and culturally responsive pedagogy (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012; Sheehan & Ball, 2020). Vander et al. (2020) espouse the community as classroom principle, where learning can take place anywhere as long as students have agency and understand the relevance. This has potential to be expanded as students and teachers imagine increasingly complex and novel place-based learning experiences.

Barton (2005) indicates that using primary sources to stimulate curiosity and questions will help students to understand the stories of our local history. The judicious use of primary sources can potentially stimulate curiosity (Barton, 2005), creating a more positive mindset towards historical inquiry. The specific outcomes align with the inclusion and development of critical literacy skills and curiosity mindsets in supporting a journey towards historical thinking situated within a local, culturally responsive framework (Sheehan & Ball, 2020).

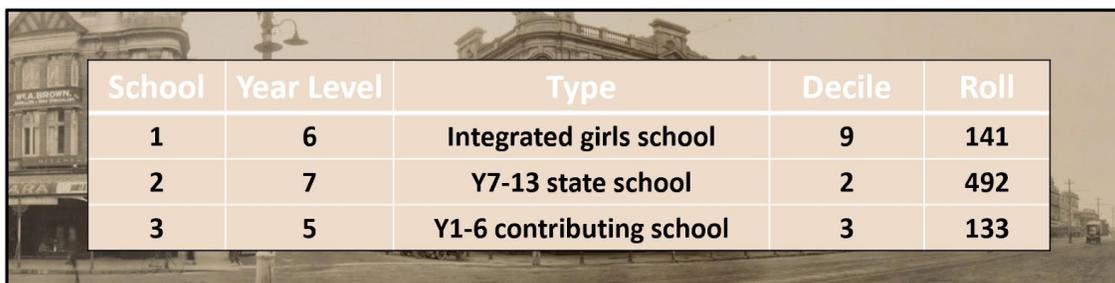
Emerson et al. (2018) discuss the consensus in the literature that teacher, librarian and educator collaboration has a verifiable track record in enhancing cognitive skills resulting in raising student achievement. Todd (2002) emphasises the

role of librarians as leaders of learning through guided inquiry which transforms students from simply reproducing knowledge to generating new ideas and understanding. Hattie (2012) describes collaborative practice within schools as the visible mark of professionalism and a way of driving the profession upwards, and this is equally vital to growing that work beyond the school environment. He posits that teachers shouldn't work in isolation when working together creates a culture that fosters effective educator collaboration, and that planning is most powerful when teachers develop common understandings to evaluate the impact of their planning on student outcomes. However, there is a further layer of complexity when the collaboration takes place between teachers and librarians as attitudes and beliefs are likely to impact their practice (Emerson et al., 2018), exacerbated by working outside a school environment.

Research Data and Methodology

The main goal of the HDIA project was to investigate teacher confidence and capacity to actively use primary source materials to teach local history with resources designed to engage students' curiosity and engagement. The research was conducted using a critical participatory action research methodology (Kemmis, 2011), which aligned with the predominantly qualitative data methods used. Data were collected to provide evidence of the impact of the HDIA project, evaluate to what extent identified goals were realised, and inform future development and alignment of subsequent programmes to support local history teaching. Qualitative data, collected through surveys, interviews, field notes and observations, also allowed for analysis of professional collaborations and mindsets in working with a professional who is not a teacher in order to transform learning.

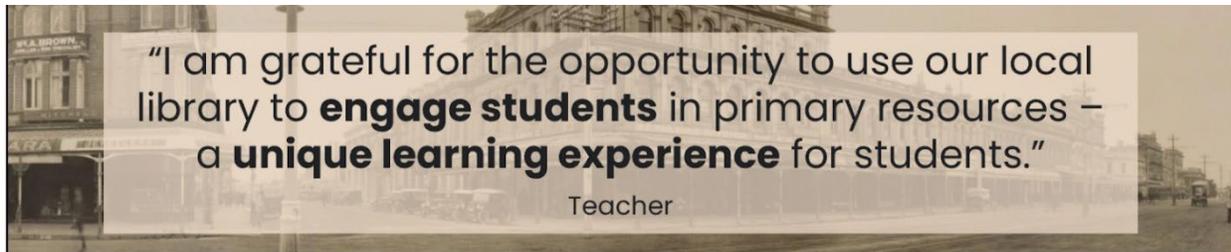
There were three participant groups: six teachers from three schools, teaching classes from Year 5 to Year 7 (Figure 2), three archivists from the Invercargill City Libraries & Archives, and two teacher aides accompanying all Year 7 classes. Each class participated in two visits; the first was a full day of activities based at the public library and the second was a two-hour in-class experience involving a variety of targeted activities.



School	Year Level	Type	Decile	Roll
1	6	Integrated girls school	9	141
2	7	Y7-13 state school	2	492
3	5	Y1-6 contributing school	3	133

Figure 2. Participant groups

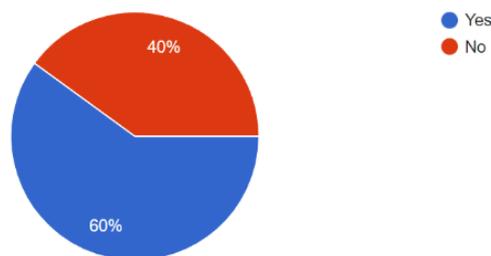
Pre-project surveys set benchmarks and established evidence of prior experience of teaching with primary sources, as well as capturing attitudes to inquiry learning and collaborative practice. Post-project surveys and teacher interviews with two of the teacher participants provided evidence of resulting changes or development. Comments, observations and personal field notes collected during the project informed iterative cycles and provided data for comparisons of approaches and responses from each school.



Five of the six teacher participants responded to both surveys. The non-respondent was part of a team-teaching arrangement and wasn't able to fully participate. All respondents indicated they had previously included elements of local history in their classrooms, but 60% acknowledged they were unsure or not confident to include primary source materials while 40% hadn't previously used or considered using primary sources nor had they collaborated with a librarian (Figure 3).

Have you ever used or considered using primary source material to teach history?

5 responses



Have you ever previously planned or taught collaboratively with a librarian?

5 responses

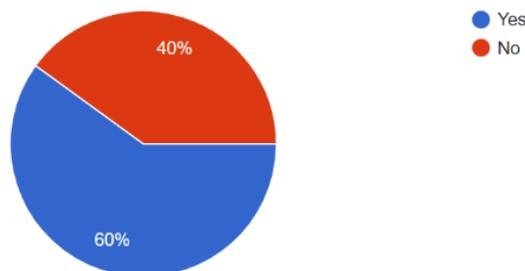
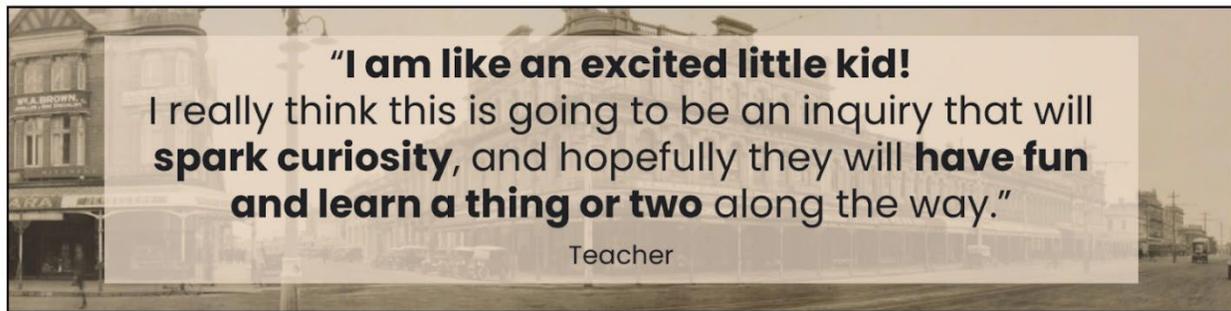
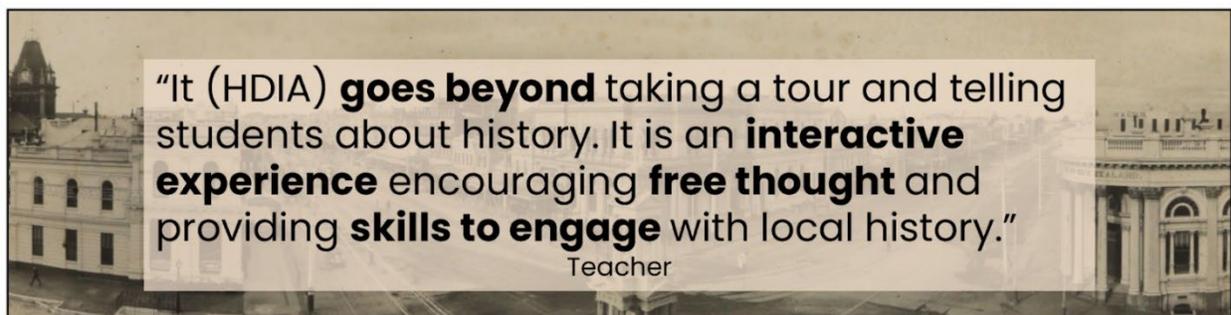


Figure 3. Survey responses



Participating archivists selected and curated suitable archival material while two also shared in leading archive tours and another actively participated in two school visits. All archivists observed benefits from active participation as a result of these tours. Two teacher-aides accompanying all four Year 7 classes readily agreed to participate, presenting an opportunity to seek a new and important perspective on the project.

Results and Analysis



Goal 1: Teacher Confidence and Capability

All teachers indicated they now understood the benefits of incorporating primary sources into their learning programmes, and that this experience had reinforced the need to engage with local community experts to provide enriched learning opportunities. They also acknowledged that schools can sometimes "live in their own bubbles." One teacher described the experience as a learning adventure, while another was impacted by witnessing the depth of student excitement.

Teachers viewed HDIA as an opportunity to ignite interest and teach topics more deeply in context rather than in a siloed manner and recognised that primary sources are an authentically powerful pathway for students to discover information. One respondent remarked that schools are always looking for practical teacher professional learning and believed such an opportunity for staff to incorporate HDIA into their teaching programme would be well received in her school as it aligns with the current focus of developing a place-based, local curriculum.

Time was identified as a barrier to this type of active learning outside of the classroom. One respondent described her expectation of learning outputs as overly ambitious and would simplify it next time, while another was concerned some of the classroom activities were beyond her students. Other respondents noted the need to upskill teachers attempting this approach, but also that engaged, enthusiastic teachers would convey their excitement and that ultimately HDIA would be a beneficial programme for schools. Another respondent indicated that using primary sources made learning accessible for all students and provided a gentle nudge to think more deeply, whereas another admitted to previously thinking they would be at too high a level for her learners, which was not substantiated by the experience.

While teacher-participant confidence to use primary source materials increased and all teachers spoke positively about the experience, only some discussed their next steps in using primary sources. They all described, discussed and demonstrated personal engagement with HDIA, however, evaluating differences in teacher attitudes to the same activities measured against years of teaching experience, age of their students, and the extent to which teachers actively participated could have provided more meaningful and useful long-term evidence related to the sustainability of the programme.

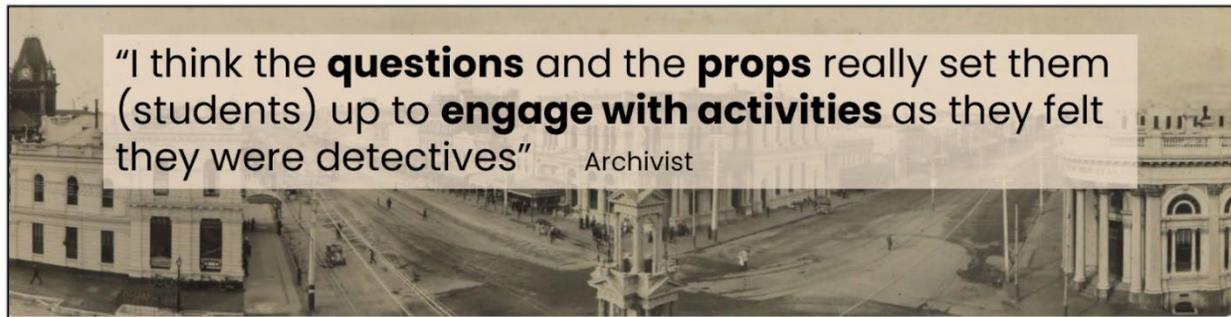
Goal 2: Resources to Engage Student Curiosity

Overall, teachers observed a high level of student engagement or at least a shift towards engagement throughout the day spent at the library. They observed them having fun, that they were intrigued and fascinated with the novel experience, and the tangible elements prolonged engagement and sparked curiosity. In fact, all three participant groups noted that exposing students to primary source materials through active participatory inquiry provided an effective springboard to engagement and curiosity.

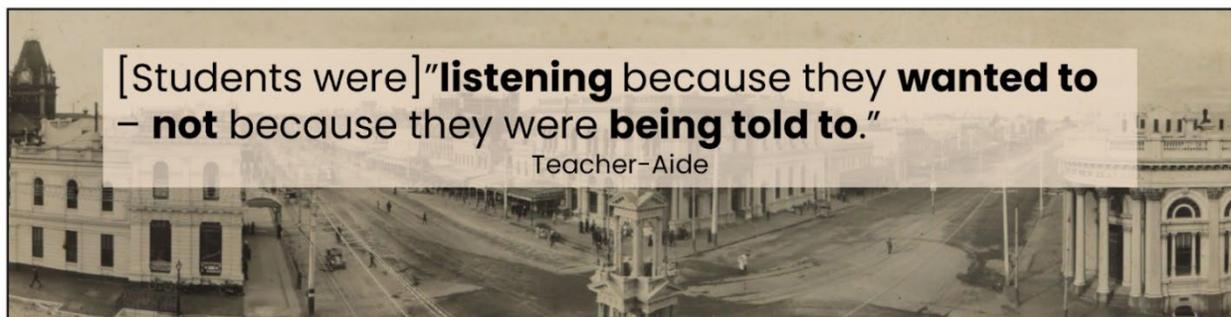
There were multiple examples of how students related to what they saw, heard or discovered throughout the experience. Examples include a Year 6 student engaging with a telephone book activity by linking her investigation directly to her grandparents, a Year 7 student displaying a previously undisclosed interest in historic buildings and architecture by observing during a city walking tour how old buildings were more ornate and attractive to look at than modern constructions, and another Year 7 student animatedly sharing a personal family story, prompted by the introduction of an archival object during an archives tour.

Students across all schools made strong connections during the archives tour to those artefacts that tell stories of their individual schools. This suggests that personal connection is an important context for engagement, and as a result, all three schools

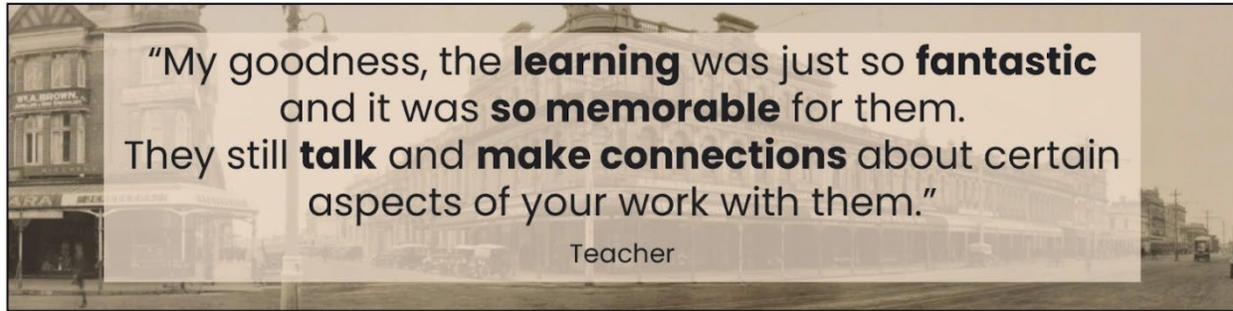
used this interest to provoke further questioning and continued investigations of the history of their schools after the completion of HDIA.



Archivists noted increased engagement when students could relate artefacts to prior learning, something they had noticed during the central business district walking tour or linked to themselves or their families. They also noted curiosity increased with hands-on activities or props and that students were inquisitive about "everyday objects." Teacher aides also observed excitement but significantly, they were the group that remarked on levels of engagement being much higher across the board for their students, particularly amongst those who weren't often overly engaged in their learning.

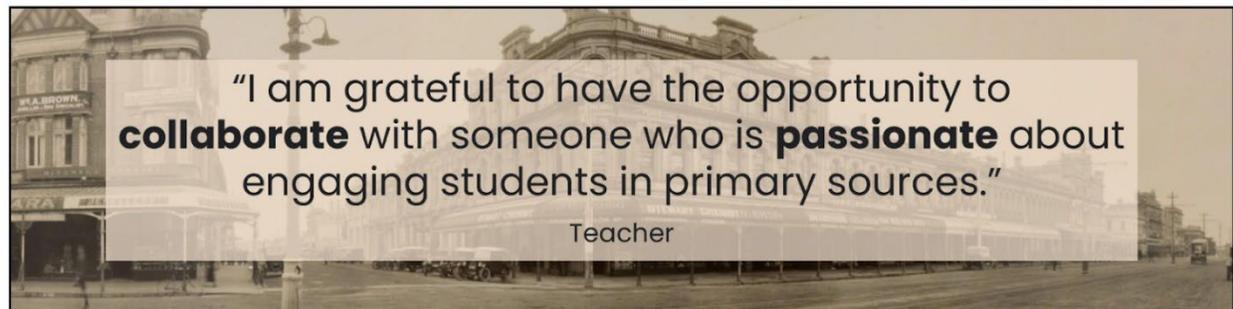


In post-project interviews with two of the teacher-participants, both noted that these activities were the perfect catalyst for engagement, and even more effective when personalised. The Year 7 learning leader commented that all teachers from her school described learning alongside their students as an "intriguing experience."



A final survey, had time allowed, could have provided rich data on how much of the learning experience was retained by students and acted as a catalyst for teachers. There is little in the literature on the kind of learning students retain from site visits or how long they retain it. “That learning takes time makes it difficult to measure, particularly as memories of a visit linger and can contribute to later learning” (Rivers, 2006, p. 13).

Collaborative Practice



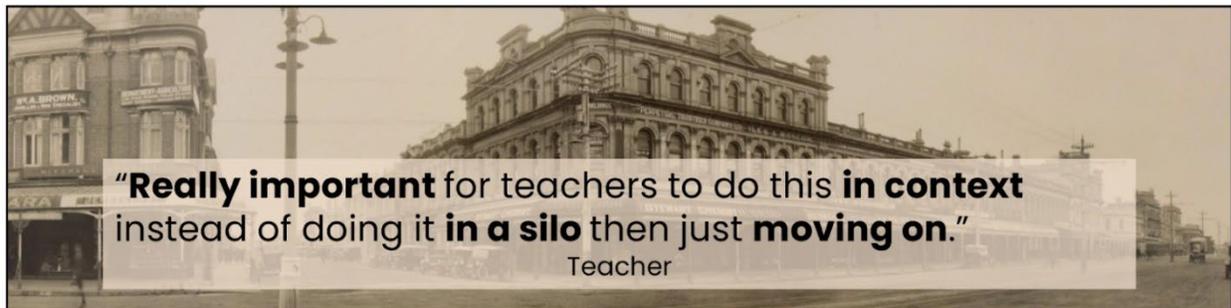
Collaborative practice is an integral element of the project’s goals and aims. 60% of teachers indicated previous experience of teacher-librarian collaboration but only one described collaborating beyond the basic level of accessing information. Teachers who hadn’t experienced teacher-librarian collaboration indicated reasons as either having had no opportunity to or not knowing how to initiate it. All teachers indicated they had enjoyed working with experts in the community and one stated that this confirmed previous experiences of working with librarians.

Two classes had job-sharing teachers, and one commented this experience had deepened her belief in collaborative practice and that sharing knowledge is a remarkable tool that should be utilised. This sentiment was echoed by the teacher aides, who talked of the value they placed in expertise being passed on to everyone. Collaborative learning also happened at the student level through working together in small groups with lots of discussions and successfully solving clues together.

Teachers articulated the value of collaboration for them as being able to work with a librarian and access specific skills and knowledge. One envisioned further

collaborative opportunities with the school librarian, and that future planning could allow space for teachers to become participants alongside their students, aligning to the professional relationships standard of “reciprocal, collaborative learning-focused relationships” (Education Council, 2017, p. 18).

Archivists noted that new approaches such as the HDIA programme could strengthen connections throughout the wider heritage sector locally and that librarians could act as catalysts for cross-sector experiences, benefitting the whole community while aligning these for schools.



UDL Framework

The UDL model proved to be a flexible framework for interdisciplinary learning. Key elements of HDIA were mapped against the UDL framework (Figure 4), which contributed to identifying similarities, differences and fresh themes, and provided visible links for collaboration. While this is determined by the teacher, it can also be influenced by the librarian partner when linked to the framework.

	Engagement WHY	Representation WHAT	Action & Expression HOW
Access	<u>RECRUITING INTEREST</u> Choice Relevance Value Authenticity	<u>PERCEPTION</u> Display of information Alternatives auditory Alternatives visually	<u>PHYSICAL ACTION</u>
Build	<u>SUSTAINING EFFORT & PERSISTENCE</u> Vary resources to optimize challenge Collaboration & Community	<u>LANGUAGE & SYMBOLS</u> Clarify vocab & symbols Decoding of text	<u>EXPRESSION & COMMUNICATION</u>
Internalise	<u>SELF REGULATION</u> Motivation Coping skills & strategies Self-assessment Reflection	<u>COMPREHENSION</u> Activate or supply background knowledge Patterns, critical features, big ideas & relationships Guide info processing & visualisation	<u>EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS</u> Facilitate managing info & resources

Figure 4. Key elements of HDIA mapped against the UDL framework

Discussion and Challenges

Research findings clarified that active, participatory learning has a significant impact on student engagement and curiosity, collaborative partnerships are essential in moving beyond a siloed mentality, and decisive, educational leadership outside of traditional learning environments is almost non-existent but nevertheless important.

Active, participatory learning has a significant impact on student engagement and curiosity, in line with Dewey’s belief that “students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum” (Talebi, 2015, p. 4). What this research shows is that this can be extended beyond conventional schooling environments and encompass the realm of intergenerational and informal learning. The HDIA kete of primary sources not only supports local history in schools but serves as a connector to all generations through stories and questions, provoking a means to learn from one another. By remaining flexible and adapting to changing educational environments there are myriad opportunities to link learning for everyone and to enact a local curriculum while considering the community as a whole.

There is no doubt about the complexities of developing and sustaining collaborative learning communities, however visible learning that is scaffolded, participatory, creative and learner-driven is a powerful combination to spark curiosity, engage learners and provoke critical thinking at any age. There is potential for adoption of this philosophy through engagement with Ministry of Education programmes and groups such as the new Enriching Learning Curriculum, which replaces the previous Learning Experiences Outside of the Classroom, Networks of Expertise professional learning, and Community of Learning-Kāhui Ako.

The UNESCO (2015) Learning City Strategy (Figure 5) signals that “lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important in today’s world and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (p. 3). It provides a bridge for learning to continue beyond formal schooling and a platform for collaboration beyond libraries and schools.

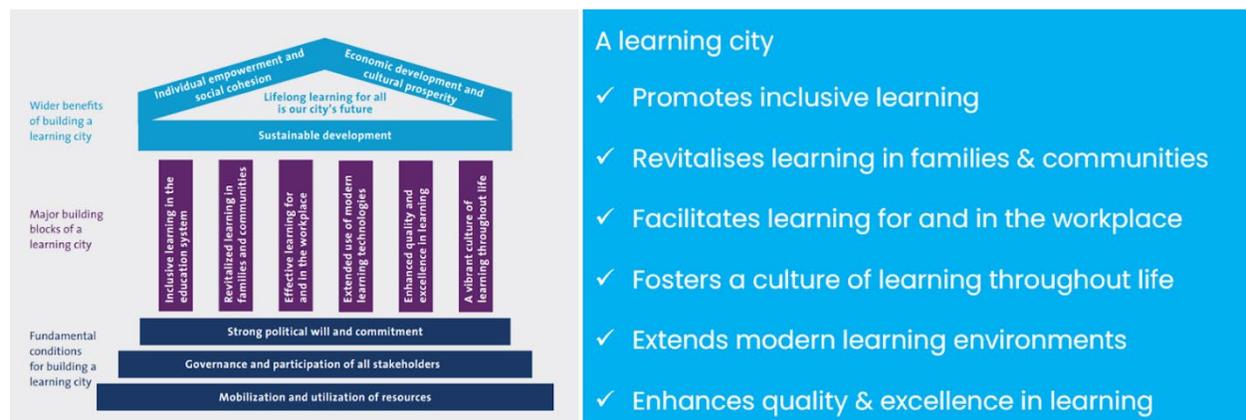


Figure 5. The UNESCO (2015) Learning City Strategy

It also provides exciting opportunities to develop a learning approach within a local community context, recognising that connecting education to other initiatives such as preserving heritage buildings and supporting community well-being is a smart move. The HDIA kete is a tangible example of how schools, retirement villages, and community groups such as the University of the 3rd Age (U3A) can connect intergenerationally and build social capital when young people can interact with adults beyond their normal sphere, developing trust and a mutuality that holds communities together (Smith & Sobel, 2010). By extrapolating this approach through adaptive thinking, multiple partnerships can profit from using such ketes for different purposes.

There is scope for complementary learning experiences that are authentic and interactive, serving to ignite curiosity for local history. An investment should be made in new and exciting technological opportunities to connect people to their heritage,

stories and tāonga in new and exciting ways through virtual interactive history experiences or participation in the writing of local history stories.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Robinson (2016) suggests that there are three options for making changes in education. We can make changes *within* the system, press for changes *to* the system or take initiatives *outside* the system. As educators, we need to recognise our spheres of influence and acknowledge those which are important to us. For most, there will be opportunities at different stages in our careers to interrogate all of these options.

The first step is to personally reflect and then consider the impact this approach could have on our own practice and approaches. The next step is to begin conversations with others, not limited to only those possible within our school communities. Reach out to your school librarian and if there isn't one in your school, ask why not, but then make contact with public librarians with a learning focus or education experience. Discover what local heritage organisations such as museums offer as community experiences for schools and take advantage of those opportunities.

Finally, initiate or build on existing collaborations. Share your successes, challenges and insights with others, as what is obvious to you may just be amazing to someone else (White, 2011). The HDIA project has led to an unexpected and divergent perspective on how and why primary source materials can be used as a catalyst for introducing local history to students and goes some way to addressing Robinson's (2016) fundamental question: "What is education for?"

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Senga White is an information knowledge specialist and educator with a passion for lifelong learning. She is also a library professional with more than 20 years of experience working in the schools sector, including a term as president of SLANZA, the School Library Association of New Zealand.



Through this work, she has created the Tertiary Prep Programme, enabling those seeking academic success to realise their goals, and the Information Literacy Skills Framework, a collaborative learning tool designed to embed information literacy and critical thinking skills iteratively through the Year 7-13 curriculum.

She is passionate about all facets of education, gaining her Master of Contemporary Education in 2021, and she was selected as a NEXT expert teacher finalist in 2019. She is a member of the Information Literacy Spaces research team whose findings culminated in a book about the project, *Literacy Across the Divide: Information Literacy as the Key to Student Transition*, published by NZCER in 2021. She also received a scholarship in 2019, enabling her to travel to the UK to build on her research into collaborative practices between teachers and librarians.

She describes her philosophy for lifelong, life-wide learning as being underpinned by harnessing the power of collaboration, sharing ideas, and growing knowledge, which she enacts through her work as a coach, mentor and presenter at conferences and workshops. To find out more about the History Detectives in Action programme, you can contact her at sengaw@windowslive.com

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