



The New York State Archives Student Research Awards provides an opportunity for individual, small group or whole class project-based learning. Students do in depth research using primary sources in order to create a project with a goal and a real-world audience. The judges feedback is encouraging and honest, helping students to grow as researchers.

Getting Started – Small Group

- 1 Choose a topic that fits your group.**
Finding a topic for your group that has strong primary sources can take a bit of work. Connecting with your town historian, local historical society or other repositories in your area is a great way to find sources and topics of local interest. For a small group project, finding an idea that has enough parts (i.e. researching many people connected to a particular event in your local cemetery) provides enough material for all students to participate in the research. This resource includes a list of online resources for your use.
- 2 Organize Your Research**
For your small group, will students work together on all aspects of the project, or will you divide them in teams? Think about how the students will work together. Will you do heterogeneous teams so that stronger students can model and support struggling students? Will you do homogeneous teams and differentiate the research questions and materials to accommodate different student abilities? Divide your topic into the needed parts so that students get their own documents. For elementary, providing the primary sources will likely be needed (most repositories will not allow elementary students to dig through their documents). Organize the documents for each group into paper and/or digital folders. Provide students with one copy of the Bibliography Note Catcher page for each document they will be using.
- 3 Choose a Project to Present Your Research**
Through group meetings, work to decide how students will present their research. A book, a play, a research paper, a podcast with interviews? The sky is the limit. Just be sure to check back to the requirements. As long as your project has the required pieces, it is possible. If you have any questions, email ARCHEDU@nysed.gov.
As the students work through the research, periodic group meetings to make further decisions will be helpful. Have students decide who will be responsible for different aspects of the project, and help them follow through.
- 4 Introduce the Project**
Kick off your project with an engaging introduction. For example, if your topic is about a local building, group or people, take a field trip to get a firsthand introduction. Cemeteries make great field trips! Ask your local historian to come in and do a presentation as an overview of the topic. As part of the introduction, introduce primary and secondary sources and do some lessons on what each is, as well as lessons on observing versus inferring. The New York State Archives Partnership Trust *Jr!* Magazine is a great resource for this.

5 The Hard Work Begins!

Now it is time to get down to the hard work! While the students do this research, you will need to guide them and keep track of each group.

Introducing the Bibliography Note Catcher beforehand will save you and your students much frustration. Use a document not related to your project to guide your students through this process. The Bibliography Note Catcher will save time and frustration when it comes time to put together the Annotated Bibliography that is required for contest entries.

6 Keeping Track

One of the most difficult parts of a small group project is keeping track of all the parts. For example, if you're going to present your research in book format, keeping track of each team's research, written work, illustrations and annotated bibliography takes a bit of work. Creating a spread sheet listing each group and the parts they need to complete can be a big help!

7 Putting It All Together

Once students have finished their research and created the parts needed for their project, it is time to put it all together. At the elementary level it is appropriate for teachers to help students with some aspects, such as uploading text and images, securing and using a video camera or having items copied or printed. Students need to create all the content.

8 Annotated Bibliography

All entries must include an annotated bibliography. Each source (primary or secondary) must be listed in correct APA or Chicago style, and include an annotation. In the annotation students must explain how the source was useful in their research. Judges will be looking for deeper level thinking. For example, stating "This document talked about the trip John Doe took," would not be as favorable as "This document explained the trip John Doe took. On that trip he saw how the factories were polluting the rivers. Joe Doe wrote a letter to the editor of his local paper protesting the pollution. We used this document to support our ideas about why John Doe became an environmentalist."

Online Sources for Primary Documents

- Consider the Source New York - <https://www.considerthesourceny.org>
- New York Public Library Digital Collections - <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org>
- New York Heritage - <https://nyheritage.org>
- Library of Congress Digital Collections - <https://www.loc.gov/research-centers/main/collections/digital-collections/>
- Fulton History Historic Newspapers - <https://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>
- Ancestry.com -New York Records are free to those who live in New York. This site explains how: <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog/how-get-free-access-select-ancestrycom-new-york-records>