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FEATURE

# Toolkit for Doing History in Buncombe County

Students can learn about local struggles for justice through primary sources. This toolkit will help you collaborate with staff at a local library or archive to locate primary sources that teach your students about their community's history.

[Issue 49, Spring 2015](#)

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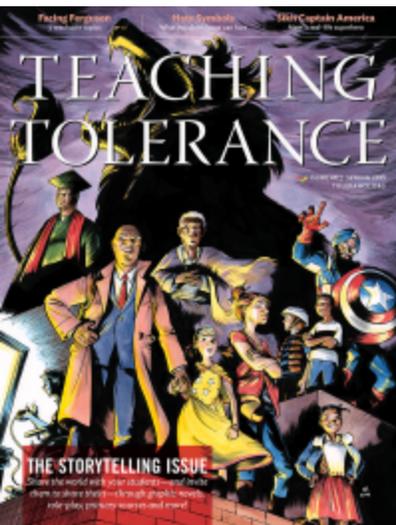
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Trauma shows many faces. Schools that recognize them can be places of healing.

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As “[Doing History in Buncombe County](#)” documents, an investigation of local slave deeds taught students about their community’s social justice history. While not every community has local slave deeds readily available, librarians and archivists can help educators locate primary sources that bring students closer to local history and struggles for justice. This toolkit offers suggestions for how to follow the lead of the educators who designed the Buncombe County Slave Deeds Project, and ultimately engage your students using evidence of the human lives involved in local movements for justice.

## Essential Questions

1. How can primary sources help us learn about our local history?
2. What are some of the major themes of justice and freedom in our community’s history?
3. Where can we go and whom can we ask for help if we have questions about our local history?

## Procedure

1. Consult your school librarian(s) and a local reference librarian or archivist. Explain to them that you are looking for primary sources that will expose your students to local history and struggles for justice. You might want to share “Doing History in Buncombe County” with them so they have a sense of the type of primary sources you are looking for and your overarching objective. Select a set of primary sources together that will be the basis for the project. Set up a time when you can bring your students to look at the primary sources.

2. Prepare your students for the field trip by asking them the following questions:

- What do you know about the history of our community?
- What do you know about the groups of people who lived here over time?
- What questions do you have about our local history?
- What injustices have happened in the history of our community? How are these relevant today?

3. Visit the library or archive with your students. Follow the librarian or archivist's lead in terms of looking at, reading, questioning and discussing the primary sources. Ask the librarian or archivist to explain how he or she found the sources, where they are stored and why they are important to the community's history—and to *all* community members.

3. Ask students to work in pairs and write a list of five things about local history that they learned from studying the sources and five questions they have. Give students an opportunity to discuss these questions with the larger group. Chart students' responses.

4. Once you are back in the classroom, ask your students to consider the idea that present-day documents, objects and so on could be primary sources housed at libraries and archives in the future. Have them share their ideas on which documents and objects would most accurately capture their identities, experiences and community to a future audience. Use the following questions to prompt discussion and reflection:

- How might future generations come to think about our present-day community based on primary sources?
- Do you think every primary source from [*insert year*] would be an accurate reflection our identities and experiences? Why or why not?
- What “silences” might appear in the future historical record of our present-day community? Whose voices might not be preserved?
- What steps can we take to ensure that the primary sources that enter the historical record represent all identity groups in our community?
- How will a future audience—through primary sources—look at social justice issues in our community?

## Related Resources

### ARTICLE

## [Doing History in Buncombe County](#)

A community gets to know its own stories—past and present—through the study of slave deeds.

### ARTICLE

## [Helping Students Get into History](#)

This teacher helped students process a connection to slavery in their community that was engaging and insightful.

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