

Annual Evaluation Report for Period: 7/1/2011 to 6/30/2012

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External Evaluator: Education Development Center, Inc.

Organization: Brooklyn Historical Society

Title: Students and Faculty in the Archives

## Introduction

*Students and Faculty in the Archive* (SAFA) is a FIPSE-funded project led by Brooklyn Historical Society. In the project, 18 faculty in three Brooklyn colleges are collaborating with BHS staff to create archival research experiences that enhance engagement and learning for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduates. Participating campuses are St. Francis College, Long Island University, and New York City Technical College (City Tech). Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) is the project evaluator. The three-year project began in January 2011.

Table 1 shows the project's key goals.

**Table 1: Project Goals**

<b>Goal 1:</b> Improve student retention and academic success for 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year college students.
<b>Goal 2:</b> Build collaborative network of three Brooklyn campuses and the Brooklyn Historical Society aimed at enhancing student engagement and learning through archival research projects.
<b>Goal 3:</b> Develop and implement college humanities, art, and technology courses for 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> year students enriched by significant archival research projects.
<b>Goal 4:</b> Improve faculty ability to integrate archival research into 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> year humanities courses in support deeper and more engaged student learning experiences.
<b>Goal 5:</b> Improve student learning of key inquiry and archival literacy skills

This evaluation report, covering the period from July 2011 to June 2012, summarizes progress toward the key project goals in Table 1. In each section, we will provide the methodology utilized for gathering evidence of progress toward the goal, and provide evaluative recommendations for subsequent program activities as appropriate.

**Goal 1: Improve student retention and academic success for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year college students.**

### ***Evidence of Progress***

***Question A:*** Do students in SAFA courses show higher retention rates than students in comparable non-SAFA courses?

*Data for this question will be available Fall 2012.* To answer this question, campus Institutional Research staff have agreed to share 1-year retention rates for the Fall 2011 SAFA student cohorts, and the comparison data for equivalent cohorts. Retention data will be available from all three campuses by October 31, 2012, after their respective 'census days' (when campuses count the number of 'full-time, first-time' students for federal reporting purposes.)

**Question B:** Do students in SAFA courses show higher rates of course completion, higher passing rates, and higher course grades, than students in comparable non-SAFA courses?

**Methodology.** To examine whether SAFA courses were associated with improved academic success for first and second year students, EDC worked with campus IR staff to gather data on course completion, passing, and grade distributions for the Fall 2011 SAFA cohort and students in comparable non-SAFA sections. To identify comparable sections we first asked for non-SAFA sections of the same class taught by the same faculty member in Fall 2011 or Fall 2010. If these were not available we asked for sections of the same course taught by other faculty members with a similar academic rank as the SAFA faculty member (i.e., assistant or associate professor). If these were unavailable we asked for courses that were the closest departmental match in terms of subject matter and student prerequisites. Two of three campuses – LIU and St. Francis College – were able to get us matching data in time for this report; City Tech data will be provided in an addendum by August 31.

**Table 2: SAFA vs Non-SAFA Completion Rates, Passing Rates and Grades Earned: LIU**

LIU Courses	SAFA	Non-SAFA
	<i>ENG 16C Freshman Seminar 3 Sections (N = 59)</i>	<i>ENG 16C Freshman Seminar 2 Sections (N=43)</i>
Completion Rate	96.9 %	76.7 %
Passing Rate	91.9 %	48.5 %
Grade of B or Better	60.7%	30.3%
	<i>HHE 171 Honors Humanities Sem. 1 Section (N = 14)</i>	<i>HEG 21 Honors Humanities Sem. All Sections (N=99)</i>
Completion Rate	100 %	91.8 %
Passing Rate	100 %	93.9 %
Grade of B or Better	100 %	74.7 %
	<i>ENG 14 English Composition Berninger - Fall 2011 (N=19)</i>	<i>ENG 14 English Composition Berninger- Fall 2010 (N=22)</i>
Completion Rate	79 %	90.9 %
Passing Rate	93.3 %	85 %
Grade of B or Better	86.7 %	45 %

*Key Finding: Students in SAFA courses in Fall 2011 had consistently higher rates of course completion, course passing, and most significantly, higher course grades, than students in comparable non-SAFA courses.*

Tables 2 and 3 summarize our analysis of Long Island University and St. Francis data. Table 2 compares SAFA and non-SAFA course sections at LIU for Fall 2011. Students in the three SAFA Freshman Seminars (ENG 16C) had better rates of course completion, better passing rates, and substantially better grades than students in the two non-SAFA ENG 16C sections (taught by instructors at a comparable rank). All 14 students in the Honors Humanities Seminar HHE 171 passed the course earning a “B” or better, a higher rate than in the other Honors Humanities Seminars taught that term. Finally, students in the SAFA English Composition course taught in Fall 2011 by Prof. Berninger had a lower overall completion rate, but a higher passing rate and substantially better grades than those in the same professor’s non-SAFA English Composition course taught in Fall 2010.

Table 3 compares SAFA and non-SAFA course sections at St. Francis College for Fall 2011. 76 students in the five SAFA humanities course sections had slightly higher completion and passing rates, and substantially higher grades, than students in the non-SAFA humanities sections (principally the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year US History course).

**Table 3: SAFA vs Non-SAFA Completion Rates, Passing Rates and Grades Earned: SFC**

St. Francis Courses	SAFA	Non-SAFA
	American Art FA-1420 American Religious Experience American Studies AMS-1001 US History 1896-Present HIS-1201 (2 Sections) N = 76	American Art FA-1420 US History 1896-Present HIS-1201 (13 Sections) N=438
Completion Rate	98.7 %	94.3 %
Passing Rate	94.8 %	87.4%
Grade of B or Better	69.7%	53.4%

As our analysis shows, students in SAFA courses in Fall 2011 in two participating campuses had consistently higher rates of course completion and course passing, and higher course grades, than students in comparable non-SAFA courses and sections. Differences in course completion were smallest, largely because course complete rates were fairly high across the board (our analysis excluded students who registered and ‘dropped’ classes before the Add/Drop date). Differences in passing rates were slightly higher.

Across schools and courses, the most dramatic difference between SAFA and non-SAFA sections in Fall 2011 were in the grades students earned. For example, students earning a “B”

or better (3.0 or higher) increased from 30% to 60% in LIU's Freshman Seminars ENG 16C, from 45% to 86% in LIU's English Composition ENG 14, and from 53% to 69% in the humanities courses taught at St. Francis College.

*Discussion:* Higher grades in SAFA courses may mean several things. Students may be more engaged and motivated by their SAFA projects and by visits to BHS, may be putting in more effort, and may therefore do stronger work, earning higher grades. Because the relationship between student engagement, academic effort and success, and student retention is well established, early indications of academic success in SAFA courses may mean we can expect positive trends in these directions. On the other hand, other variables may also account for higher grades in SAFA courses. Among these are: a) smaller class sizes – faculty report that student enrollment in their SAFA course sections is often capped at a lower rate than usual, with the possibility that students are getting more time, attention and support, perhaps leading to higher achievement; b) rewards for effort – faculty report that their SAFA courses in Fall 2011 were highly experimental and often asked more of students than usual, with the possibility that higher grades were an acknowledgement of greater effort rather than higher quality work. EDC will attempt to control for class size in our upcoming analyses in order to mitigate this variable.

*Question C.* *For students who are active SAFA participants, how does participation influence course-taking choices, choice of major, and career plans?*

To examine this question EDC interviewed two students from each campus in May 2012 -- part of what will be an intentional sample of 15 students (5 from each campus) who will help us understand the extent to which their SAFA experiences influence course-taking, choice of major, and academic & job interests over the project.

*A new, and far more interesting, experience of 'research'*

Though none of the six students interviewed said that, based on their one SAFA course, they were determined to major in a related humanities or social science field, four of six students said they 'definitely' wanted to take another course like it. Several themes in the interviews suggest that SAFA may, with other experiences, have an influence on students' course-taking and later choice of major.

Across the campuses students said their SAFA courses had given them a very different experience of research than they had had in high school and other college courses, and one they found much more interesting. Key to this were five themes they mentioned:

- a) Grappling with original source documents at BHS, a 'real archive';
- b) Having to come up with their own, quite narrow thesis around a small number of documents, and use evidence from the documents to support it;
- c) Getting feedback from faculty, incrementally, on their interpretations and thesis;
- d) Working with BHS staff, who they said gave them both help and respect; and
- e) Interacting with peers -- whether collaborating on the research or just reading

and commenting on blog entries.

Students said these things were a stark contrast with what they had previously understood as research – which typically involved having a topic, looking for information on the Internet or sometimes in library books, and then somehow connecting it all in a ‘research paper,’ with a bibliography. They liked the new research experience much more.

Student quotes:

*“I have a whole other idea of research. At first...I thought this was research like in my other courses. [After] the first assignment... the professor explained to me that that wasn’t what we were doing here – we were investigating these documents and their contexts. It really took me a while to get that, but I did.”*

-- St. Francis sophomore, male, communications & acting

*“When I finally figured out how to make a thesis around [the Brooklyn CORE papers on the March on Washington] I was so happy. Because when it was like a big topic, and I was just writing... I was really confused.”*

-- LIU freshman, female, undeclared

*“Going there [the Brooklyn HS] made the whole [course]. I probably would have dropped [the class] if it was just reading and writing papers.... You do what historians do – go there and like, look for clues, look for patterns...”*

-- City Tech freshman, architecture

*Recommendation: Gather additional data.* Based on discussions with faculty and campus IR staff, we think it is worth supplementing the student interviews by examining data on SAFA and non-SAFA students’ declared majors for St. Francis College and LIU – the two campuses in which students do not declare majors as freshmen, and whose major choices may be influenced by SAFA experiences in their first three semesters. In Spring 2013, we will see if SAFA students and comparable students have a differing rates of declared majors in humanities and social sciences disciplines including history, English, architecture, art history, anthropology, sociology, geography and urban studies.

**Goal 2: Build a collaborative network of three Brooklyn campuses and the Brooklyn Historical Society aimed at deepening student engagement and learning through archival research projects.**

### ***Evidence of Progress***

In its first full year SAFA asked a great deal of faculty, and of BHS staff. Faculty had to substantially revise a course to incorporate student archival work and BHS site visits. Doing so required: meeting with BHS staff repeatedly; spending large amounts of time sifting through

BHS materials for appropriate sources; designing assignments and then redesigning them based on feedback from BHS; learning the practical requirements of archival research and conveying them to students; modeling document analysis skills for students while they are learning them themselves; learning and incorporating new technology skills (web authoring, blogs, wikis, etc.) into their courses; and giving added feedback to students on these new kinds of products.

BHS staff, in turn, had to provide support to 18 faculty on three campuses, and their students, as each of them implemented unique archival projects in their courses. Doing so required, for each course: meeting with faculty to understand the course goals and objectives and begin to shape a project; helping faculty find and narrow appropriate BHS sources for a student investigation; offering feedback and guidance on the assignments; collection management in prepping for each visit (including pulling materials and assessing fragility of materials and risks in care and handling), designing and scheduling the BHS visit and preparing the resources and staff needed for visits; introducing students (and often faculty) to archives and archival literacy, and modeling these with documents during the BHS visit; and meeting with faculty to debrief, offer feedback, and plan improvements and refinements.

Given these pressures on both sides, collaborative work on SAFA sometimes showed strains in the first full year. A few faculty felt that BHS staff could be too demanding about schedules preparation for visits, did not always understand their course requirements and pedagogies well enough, and could sometimes be overly critical of the assignments and projects they were designing and enacting. BHS staff, in turn, sometimes found that busy faculty were not responsive to emails, failed to get call slips and other critical preparation for visits in on time, did not adequately prepare students for the visit, lacked research experience and knowledge of how to support students in doing it, sometimes left important gaps in their assignments for students, and often failed to effectively conclude or 'wrap-up' visits by drawing out and summarizing student knowledge and questions. On both sides, there was significant 'reach' into new institutional contexts, new formats of student interaction, and new professional norms and needs.

This said, by all measures the SAFA collaboration was a remarkable success in Year 2. Evidence for this can be seen in the following:

- Faculty and BHS staff delivered more SAFA courses in Spring 2012 than expected – 13 in total.
- Faculty describe SAFA (in unsolicited comments) as “high-quality professional development” and “some of the best PD I’ve had.”
- Faculty exit interviews indicate that the two 2011-12 faculty who are not continuing next year would have liked to, but for scheduling and curricular conflicts.
- Faculty reviews of BHS staff Julie Golia and Robin Katz, project co-directors, are consistently glowing; they are praised for their collegiality, responsiveness, energy, archival and scholarly knowledge, and pedagogical creativity.

- High faculty collegiality – faculty say they would like even more time with their cross-campus colleagues, that they want to “bring their friends,” and that they are engaging other faculty on their campus as partners in SAFA and SAFA-like projects.
- Widespread perception -- and jealousy -- among National Partners about the ‘interdisciplinary community’ and ‘collegial sharing’ within and across campuses that was evident to them in the 2012 summer institute.

*National Partners.* The SAFA community widened substantially in Year 2 to include National Partners from four regions who attended the 2012 Summer Institute. They include a group from Burlington, VT (staff of UVM Special Collections and a UVM English professor); from New Bedford, MA (the Whaling Museum); from Philadelphia, PA (staff from the Cliveden National Trust and Historical Society of PA, and two faculty from St. Joseph’s University); and from Providence, RI (staff from the Brown University Library and History faculty from Rhode Island College).

***Recommendations***

- Continue with focus on 2012-13 SAFA work as repetition and refinement of projects, rather than new faculty and new projects.
- Encourage even greater collaboration between faculty across campuses, via small ‘interest group’ meetings, mid-year gatherings, shared writing and dissemination work.

**Goal 3: Develop and implement college humanities, art, and technology courses for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, enriched by significant archival research projects.**

***Evidence of Progress***

Information on this goal includes the number of SAFA courses offered, the number of students served in the courses and by BHS visits, and the course plans, syllabi, assignments, handouts, websites and blog posts created by faculty and students for each course.

Summary:

- SAFA courses offered Fall 2011: 15
- SAFA courses offered Spring 2012: 13
- Total courses offered 2011-12: 28
- Number of courses offered higher than expected: 10
  
- Number of class visits to BHS run by BHS staff & faculty, Fall 2011: 41
- Number of class visits, Spring 2012: 19
  
- Unique students served in SAFA courses/ BHS visits, Fall 2011: 287
- Unique students served in SAFA course / BHS visits, Spring 2012: 201

As these numbers indicate, in its first full year SAFA exceeded expectations for the number of courses offered to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students in partner colleges.

### ***Changes underway, and recommendations***

Based on observation, reflection and discussion, BHS staff and SAFA faculty are already undertaking to focus and revise the SAFA projects in each course. These recommendations reinforce what has already been decided, for the most part:

- Revise number of SAFA visits downward (to 2-3, with fewer documents)
- Retain focus on the core: Student skill-building, developing knowledge, improving engagement/motivation
- Encourage faculty to tackle projects at a scale they can reasonably handle given the time, resources and the scope of the course they're teaching. Keep document analysis at the center, and encourage an iterative blog/reflection model. This can be thought of as a series of "recursive encounters" that model the ongoing practice of archival research:
  - Observation of document(s) and small document sets, repeated
  - Interim reflections on documents in light of course readings
  - Interim reflections on documents in light of additional research
  - Final interpretation/project/paper, with a thesis.
- Continue to model how experts look at archival documents – e.g., with curiosity and confidence to speculate and guess. SAFA is more about building foundational skills (observation, reflection, careful reading, analysis, sense-making across items, expressing, citation) than about content knowledge or the ability to do 'an independent research project.'

**Goal 4: Improve faculty ability to integrate archival research into 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year humanities courses in support deeper and more engaged student learning experiences.**

### **Evidence of Progress**

Faculty learning was substantial in Year 2. EDC saw evidence of faculty learning in: a) the mid-year faculty reflections (an online survey and interviews); b) the Spring 2012 course plans and syllabi; and c) the 2012 Summer Institute presentations and discussions.

#### ***A. Faculty Learning evident in mid-year reflections***

Mid-year faculty reflections showed evidence of a) greater awareness of what SAFA meant for students and student skills; b) the value of group work and student collaboration; c) the value of coming to BHS.

- *Clarity about skill goals for students.* Faculty coalesced around the idea that SAFA offered students an *authentic experience of research*. This was understood in three ways, as the ability to:

- Distinguish primary & secondary materials

- Analyze primary sources– including via careful observation
- Begin to build contexts for documents, using secondary sources.

Faculty quotes:

“I think the experience taught [students], very clearly, about the difference between primary and secondary material.”

“The exposure to and work with primary documents dovetailed nicely with the course goals. Analyzing documents and experiencing the research process are critical to my course.”

“I like to introduce my students to a fair amount of primary sources during the course of the semester, and the opportunity to have them work with actual documents, photos, etc., was terrific.”

“SAFA required students to dig deep into primary sources to make sense of them and go beyond the often meager information they provided to seek answers to their questions in secondary sources.”

- *The value of group work and student collaboration.* Many faculty described how, while they were watching students work with archival sources at BHS the way Julie and Robin had set them up, they were deeply impressed with students ability to read, analyze, and talk together.

Faculty quotes:

“I had the students work much more closely together, sharing instructions, and photos of the documents with each other. I want to integrate more activities where students take more of a role with other students.”

“The interactions that occurred between students as they analyzed the documents [was great]. This is a great exercise in interactive learning.”

“The collaboration we engaged in at every level--with BHS staff, other faculty participating in SAFA....and then in the course among the students--was transformative.”

- *The value of coming to BHS.* Like students, faculty clearly felt the power of students coming to BHS to work – as a class, and as individuals.

Faculty quotes:

“The BHS library visits [were most important for students]. They were so enthusiastic, and loved being in the library. Students were amazed and flattered that they could decipher the documents.”

“Students are getting a different view of their borough and neighborhood [by coming to BHS]. They are so respected by the staff, and they feel it. That’s not something that happens for them much. This is their place to come do research, in their neighborhood, and it can be transformative for them.

*B. Evidence of faculty learning in Spring 2012 course plans and syllabi  
and*

*C. Faculty presentations at the 2012 Summer Institute*

Both the Spring 2012 course syllabi and faculty presentations at the Summer Institute reflected a number of important changes from Fall 2011, as faculty learned these key lessons:

- *Less is more.* Faculty were more attuned to their students’ need to focus on fewer documents, and in a deeper way. The syllabi call for work with fewer materials; schedule fewer visits; and make more regular classroom time for contextualization, analysis and synthesis.
- *More preparation of students before coming to BHS, and more classroom follow-up after.* With fewer visits to BHS to examine new materials, syllabi appeared to make more room for classroom preparation – including having BHS staff Robin and Julie do a ‘pre-visit’ visit to the classroom to prepare for the visit and model strategies for close reading.
- *Keep writing assignments close to the sources.* Faculty appeared to write more careful prompts and questions for documents, both in syllabi and in blogs – e.g., prompts that were specific to the sources, and not generic.
- *Help students contextualize the materials.* Many professors realized they needed to do more to help their students build links between archival documents and the historical information presented in their course. Many appeared not to know that students had difficulty making these links.

These categories of faculty learning are visible in this excerpt from Melissa Berninger’s syllabus for her English Composition course (ENG 16) at St. Francis college:

“We will again be visiting the archives of the Brooklyn Historical Society. I had planned to have you continue working with CORE and/or Brooklyn neighborhood histories, but in talking with the librarians, I realized that this was far too big of a project for an already-packed semester. So we’ll be embarking on a new—and very interesting—project dealing with letters from a Civil War soldier named Alfred Cranston to his fiancée in Brooklyn. The letters are a nice blend of the personal (yes, there are moments of romance) and the historical (Cranston was at a number of major battles, including Gettysburg). You’ll “edit” your letter(s)—some are longer than others and so some of you might be dealing with two or three while others will only get one—and your final project will be to publish the letter on the class web site with an introduction and explanatory notes. This isn’t going to be the traditional research paper—you’ll do that in Core Seminar—but I think you’ll learn a lot about the value of research and its applications both in the academy and in “real” life.”

--Melissa Berninger, English 16, St. Francis College, Spring 2012

## Goal 5: Improve student learning of key inquiry and archival literacy skills

EDC probed student learning in SAFA courses using several methodologies:

- A Pre/Post Document Analysis Exercise (administered Sep and Dec, 2011)
- BHS and Classroom Observations (2 courses per campus, Fall 2011, Spring 2012)
- Selected student interviews (2 per campus, Spring 2012)
- Sampled student blog posts (Spring 2012)

### Evidence of Progress

Pre/Post data collected in Year 2 suggests that:

- SAFA courses and projects are helping students learn an important inquiry and analysis skill – the ability to closely observe and examine documents and artifacts. (There is not yet evidence that students are contextualizing documents better as a result.)
- SAFA helps students learn an idea important to historical thinking and ‘archival literacy’– the notion that artifacts are worth preserving because they can help us understand specific aspects of the past.
- SAFA appears to be helping students ‘get beyond Google’ – and develop a more critical view of sources for research.

#### **A. Pre/Post Document Analysis Exercise**

EDC asked the Fall 2011 SAFA faculty to administer a pre/post ‘archival literacy’ exercise in September and December 2011 to students in their classes, as part of their regular classroom work.

The key question we sought to answer with the pre/post test was:

*Do SAFA students show evidence of improvement in their document analysis skills – i.e., in the number, depth and sophistication of observations, inferences, and questions about documents and artifacts?*

The online exercise asked students to analyze an unfamiliar text and an image or other visual artifact, following a protocol roughly laid out in M.G. Krause (2010), Undergraduates in the archive: Using an assessment rubric to measure learning, *American Archivist*, Vol. 73 (Fall/Winter 2010), 507-534. The pre/post assessment can be found in Appendix A.

**Key Finding:** Among 100 sampled pre/post tests, **SAFA students showed improvements in Close Looking / Document Observation.**

**Table 5. Student improvement in Close looking / Document observation**

<b>N = 100 sampled responses</b>	<b>PRE (Brewster letter)</b>	<b>POST (Culyer speech on Lincoln)</b>
<i>Students noting a single feature or giving a vague response</i>	72%	49%
<i>Students noting multiple physical features</i>	28%	51%
<i>Students making a spontaneous inference</i>	8%	9%

As indicated in Table 5, SAFA students improved from Pre to Post in their ability to note *multiple physical features* of the sample documents, from 28% to 51%. Since looking closely, observing the different features of documents, and developing inferences and questions from there is a key skill taught and practiced throughout SAFA, this seemed a worthwhile skill to examine.

For example responses that cite multiple physical details include these:

*“The heading states ‘State of New York Assembly Chamber’ with a nice picture. Two mistakes were crossed out, and [there’s] fading ink.*

*“It is all written in cursive. There are certain sentences underlined and words crossed out. There are rips in the paper and the paper looks worn out. The documents are also written in ink.”*

In contrast, *single or vague responses* include the following, e.g.

*“It has a letterhead”*

*“Old, nice”*

*“The style is unique”*

*“There’s tears in the paper”*

*“Pretty old, aged docs”*

SAFA students did not appear to make significantly more spontaneous inferences based on their observations, from Pre to Post. (That is, they did draw inferences based on the

observations such as “It was handwritten and on paper. It was a letter written to a man's children with the intent that it should be kept.”)

More broadly, it is important to note that close looking and observation are only one element of archival and historical literacy. EDC’s analysis of students’ pre/post responses gave no clear evidence of improvement in what are arguably the more important skills of:

- Interpretation & contextualizing
- Making inferences (e.g. about creator, audience, purpose of a document)

In Winter and Summer faculty meetings, SAFA faculty broadly concurred that while students did well with observation tasks, they had a more difficult time making interpretations grounded in evidence.

Key Finding: Greater Archival Literacy

**Table 6. Why would this document be worth preserving in an archive?**

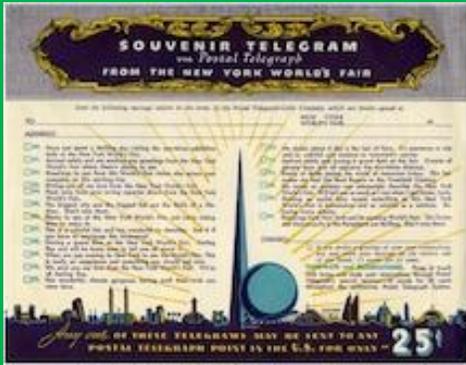
	
Sample PRE Responses	Sample POST Responses
Because it gave and supported historical facts.	To show how the society valued entertainment.
This is a photo from the past.	This document shows how technology was progressing in the U.S
Because it showed what was going on at that moment.	It shows how people were sending postal cards through the telegrams and how it was different than the cards that we have today.
It gives not just historians, but everyone else insight to what life was like during the 1960's.	This document might be worth preserving in an archive to look back at how events like this changed over time.

Table 6 shows sample student pre/post responses to the question: Why would this document be worth preserving in an archive? Answers at Post were more likely to offer specific reasons like those on the right, rather than the general reasons like those on the left. The contrasting answers show students moving away from very *general* rationales for preserving artifacts

(‘because it shows what was going on at that moment’), to an understanding that artifacts can help us understand *specific aspects* of the past (e.g. they ‘show how society valued entertainment’, ‘how technology was progressing in the US,’ etc.). While not definitive -- since they are sampled responses rather than matched pre/posts – this suggests that SAFA experiences may be helping students understand and appreciate the role and value of archives in preserving what historians call ‘a useable past.’

*Key Finding: A more selective approach to sources*

**Table 7: What sources would you go to for more information to verify your guesses about this document?**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRE</b></p> <p><b>(Brooklyn Stoop photo)</b></p>	<p>Showing 25 Most Important Words and Phrases</p> <p>50s and 60s <b>Archives</b> Ask an Archivist <b>BHS</b> Blacks <b>Books</b>  <b>Brooklyn Historical Society</b> Check <b>Database</b> <b>Google</b>  <b>Historian</b> <b>History</b> <b>Idea</b> <b>Internet</b> Late 1800 <b>Library</b>  <b>Museum</b> Newspapers <b>Picture</b> Primary Documents <b>Professor</b>  <b>Slavery</b> <b>Sources</b> Textbooks Urban</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>POST</b></p> <p><b>(World’s Fair Telegram)</b></p>	<p>Showing 18 Most Important Words and Phrases</p> <p>Advertisement <b>Archive</b> Articles <b>BHS</b> <b>Books</b> <b>Brooklyn</b>  <b>Historical Society</b> Designer Documents <b>Fair</b> Guides <b>Internet</b>  <b>Library</b> Museum <b>Newspaper</b> Postal <b>Queens</b>  <b>Source</b> <b>Telegrams</b></p>

The frequency clouds in Table 7 show another pre/post contrast that is suggestive of student learning (though not definitive). In answer to the question “What sources would you go to for more information to verify your guesses about this document?” students at both pre and post mentioned ‘archives’ and the ‘BHS’ prominently. But while students at pre also mentioned ‘Google’ frequently and ‘Textbooks’ somewhat less frequently; ‘Google’ disappears from the post responses, replaced by a more frequent Newspaper and Library. While we cannot make too much of the contrast, it suggests that SAFA may be helping students “get beyond Google” as a key source, and look to a richer and more useful set of sources for research.

This notion was echoed by a sophomore student interviewee who said:

“I actually learned through this [SAFA] course that I can go to the library to get better references, and do better work, than on the Internet. On the Internet, I’m not confident of getting articles that relate to each other. It can be tough to put them together – you can make an awkward comparison. I have more confidence with libraries now that I’ve been through this.” -- SAFA student interviewee