



Spreading the word- building History at your school

We know the importance of students studying history, so it can be frustrating when we have to fight to have it valued in our crowded curriculum, to be seen as the poor cousin of other learning areas and not funded or given the same timetable space as other subjects.

Below is a list of ideas to help build History programs within your school.

The things you can influence.

In your classroom

As the advocate for History at your school making your classroom as engaging as possible creates an exciting point of difference for your students. This could include having artefacts, ephemera, artefacts, history books (including picture books, novels and nonfiction), posters, interesting teenage appealing history articles on your pinup and historical memes (you can set this as a task for students to find).

Display history language- word walls, word displays.

Create a classroom timeline.

Have images of the key figures you are learning about, thus makes them more real, helps them identify these figures in sources and builds stronger links.

Invite members of your school leadership into your classroom to see students engaging in interesting activities. The engagement and enthusiasm of your students can be your best advertisement for the value of history within and beyond the curriculum.

How you teach History

We know that good teaching makes a difference to our student's outcomes and become the best History teacher you can, will make a difference to the level of student engagement. Pedagogical approaches will vary between teachers, Alternatively, we need to enjoy what we teach, my favourite lessons are those that I walked away with buzzing from the activity and enthusiasm.

- Historical role plays, debates, virtual visits, project based, have students create their own source, have a competition to make meme or a rap for the topic you are studying etc

Some examples of virtual museums

<https://australian.museum/exhibition/virtual-exhibition-tours/>

<https://www.thegeographicalcure.com/post/world-class-museums-to-enjoy-online>

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>

Students making their own virtual museum displays

<https://www.classtools.net/blog/design-a-3d-virtual-museum-exhibition/>

<https://www.thinglink.com/blog/how-to-create-a-virtual-exhibition-the-online-tool-used-by-worlds-leading-museums/>

- Competitions it's okay to start small, with a few students, or one class, once you feel more comfortable and the students start sharing the word it is easier to build on the momentum.

NHC: <https://historychallenge.org.au/>

Simpson Prize: <https://www.simpsonprize.org/>

Aust History Competition: <https://australianhistorycompetition.org.au/>

There are also some state based History competitions.

- Career links

It is important to explicitly link the transferrable skills students learn in History to future careers. HTAV in its student section has a great skills translator: <https://www.htav.asn.au/students/careers-in-history> .

This is most successful when done incidentally across the year- think drip feeding- and when natural links occur.

- Upper school links

When heading to subject selection time get some of your upper school history students to come and speak with the year 10s. Ask them to say what subjects they study (they will have a mixture, but all will say History (thus reinforcing History as the norm) and then ask them to say what their favourite subject is, what they wouldn't pick again etc. This requires you to carefully select your students so you have students saying positive things, but also comes across as fair as they are bound to mention other subjects as well.

History in your school

Be seen.

History dress up/ role plays

Whether it be for HASS or History Week, a class activity (I use to have my Year 11s dress up and have a mock speakeasy – around the same time as Year 10 subject selections....), a mock Vietnam War protest at the front of the school or a Medieval dress up including pool noodle jousting, these events create an opportunity for students to have fun with their history, create wonderful photo opportunities and will what students remember.

History awards

- Establish some History awards/ merit certificates that you hand out at assemblies.
- Enter competitions (like National History Challenge, Simpson Prize, Australian History Competition) so you can recognise students' efforts.

Holding some recess/ lunchtime events

- Castle building Challenge
- Pool Noodle Jousting
- Historical race around the campus
- History food challenge
- Could you be an ANZAC Challenge.
- History Club
- Music morning- set up a corner of your school where you just play historically themed music. You could run it like a competition whereby students get something small if they can guess what historical theme or era it was from.

Historical music

Playing music inspired by historical events shows the link between History and the real world. These could be played during class time, special events, as a breaktime activity etc.

Lists of possible songs

<https://zinginstruments.com/songs-about-war/>

<https://genius.com/Genius-lists-songs-based-on-historical-events-annotated>

<https://www.musicalmum.com/songs-about-history/>

There is also a genre of History songs that can be used in class based on events- my Favourite of these is "Black Plague Song" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZy6XiIXDZQ>

and "Bad Romance- Woman Suffrage" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYQhRCs9IHM>

Library/School displays

Organise for students to create a display relevant to what you are studying, for example creating a class museum display about Medieval Europe a gallery walk of sources from 90s America- with annotations linked to source analysis skills, front office museum display for key events eg the week before ANZAC day etc.

The goal is to get students involved (so they are applying their historical knowledge as well as feeling connected to history).

Learning area pull up banners

These are inexpensive and provide a visual reminder about your subject. They can be displayed in learning area foyers and used at parent events.

Invite admin in

Invite your admin to come and help in classes, listen to student's speeches, to help judge students work to participate in History classes. This helps build their positive connection to the subject and allows them to see why we are important. This is especially important if they originally taught in a different subject area and perhaps have a preconceived idea of what History is.

Assemblies

Be heard at assemblies, always have History certificates to award to students, this reinforces the positive around History and becomes a reason to say a few sentences about why History is important.

Assemblies can be a good forum to play historically based music linked to current events/ reason for the assembly, again giving you the opportunity to say a few words linking the music to the importance of History.

Be read about.

Set up a History pinup board

This could be something that you coordinate or set as a task for students. Having a lower school group coordinates builds interest in History (without them knowing they are doing this!)

Ideas to include

- Pictures of your students enjoying History
- Weird and cool articles
- History memes (Get your students to find or make these)
- On this day, week, month
- Historical context to current events (helps link History and the present)
- History book, movie, game of the month (Again, this can be something you get your students to find.)
- History quotes

Be part of.

It is important for you to have a History 'voice at the table'. Each school is different, but you can do this by joining your state based association (to ensure what you say is current), local area networks and school based committees.

In some schools there is an opportunity to present staff based professional learning. Actively being part of this reinforces History at your school.

History and parents

It can be a bit frustrating, we can work really hard to promote History to our students, for them to really enjoy and value the class but when it comes to selecting their subjects, History is not one of their selections! Sometimes this is because their parents don't see the value of History, thus it is important to ensure that parents also see the value.

One of the easiest ways to do this is by ensuring there are regular articles/ posts about History in your school's communication with parents. Including photos and names of students is important as parents are more likely to keep and show things that have their children involved. Use this opportunity to demonstrate what you are doing in your History classes.

Another approach is to have a regular- History fact/ Did you know type section. Or an article or two that links History to careers eg What do these careers have in common? These can be written in advance and then used when relevant. I would also suggest mapping out a social media/ communications plan so that when things get busy (they always get busy) you are able to utilise pre-prepared ideas.

You could prepare a series of posts based on 'notable weeks or special days'. There are many special days/ weeks, so use this as a basis for a brief reminder of the importance of History. These can be written up prior and used over time (people forget!)

An example of this is World environmental Day (in June)

Happy World Environmental Day! Did you know that Australia had one of the world's first environmental political parties with the Green's forming in Tasmania in the 1970s?

Parent evenings- show of their cherub's work

- Create opportunities to show of student's work. Many schools hold National History Challenge presentation evening, allowing parents to view student's entries whether web based, power point, essays or museum displays. Often these nights include a community vote for best entry and school based awards for those you are forwarding to state judging. You could invite your state President or Coordinator to come along (as well as your Principal/ Executive team.)
- You get your students to develop a gallery walk of historical sources based on their theme and they could guide their parents/ caregivers through this.
- You could create a virtual gallery walk and send this to parents or put on your school website.
- Your students could host an online event, where parents are invited to hear them talk about what they have been studying.

Parent evening boards

Alongside a pull up banner, setting up a History pin up board with images of student's working, quotes from students about the value of History and History careers. Preparing a series of images/ text that is laminated with Velcro on the back can be reused and is an easy way to have a promotional visual whenever you have a parent event or evening. This can be located at the door of the event or in your learning area space during parent interviews. The value of this is often parents are waiting around for events to start or for their interview so will read the material. Photos will grab their attention. By laminating the images and pre velcroing them you can create a bank of relevant material to use.

Letters home

Sending letters home that link student's achievement to History skills is an easy and effective way to promote your subject. By doing this from Year 7 onwards reinforces that their child is good at History.

Link to local community history

Local community history is a great resource!

By linking into local history, history becomes relevant and real. There are any ways you can bring local history into your classroom and history program including:

- Invite people from your local historical society to come and present to your students.
- Invite Elders or local community to talk about how your school's suburb has changed.
- Set up a local history display.
- Talk about local history, do a little research and find out why roads, parks and local landmarks are named as they are or identify any famous people from your area.
- Locate some old photos of your community and get students to compare and contrast how the area has changed. Examples of this can be find in the community snapshot section of HTAWA's resource- WA: Centenary of Change website. <https://htawa.net.au/WA-100-years/>
- Organise a historical race around the school, where students need to find plaques, interview long erm teachers etc.

Careers- life past school.

"Technology alone is not enough. Its technology married with the liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields the results that makes our hearts sing."

Steve Jobs

This is very important.

It is vital to illustrate to students that studying History is relevant to their future careers. As History students we can see the transferrable skills, however many parents struggle to make these links and you need to be quite relentless and explicit in emphasising in making the connection. There are lots of resources available to support making this link, some are included here.

UK History Association

Careers with History

<https://www.history.org.uk/student/categories/493/module/8739/films-careers-with-history>

Short video interviews of people who use History within their careers. Each is approximately 5 minutes long.

<https://www.history.org.uk/student/categories/493/module/8671/careers-with-history>

Links to text which links specific careers and history skills.

American Historical Association

<https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/why-study-history>

Careers in history section- stepping out how skills and knowledge link with employers.

Articles about History degrees.

National Council for History Education

History Habits of Minds

<https://ncheteach.org/conference/history-of-habits-of-mind/>

Steps out the how historical thinking can positively impact in the modern world.

Broader Community

Create a local history museum.

This is similar to library/ school display. Working with your students build a local history museum/ display for your school. You could develop this by inviting in long term local residents for oral history interviews, visiting your local historical society, students interviewing parents about their community, researching street names etc.

Once complete, you have an excellent opportunity to invite parents to come and view, local media coverage, school social media/ newsletters and for students to interview each other about why they chose the artefacts that they did (which of course can also be promoted through school social media.)

The museum can be small like a cabinet and display, a temporary library display or a more permanent display.

This idea can be modified to become a Remembrance Day display, NAIDOC Week display etc.

Link community/ local history events

Have your students involved in local and state events and ensure you link these to history so students see the relevance of History and their real world. You can also capitalise on excursions they do with different learning areas. Eg If students are involved with Clean a Beach activity- link this to Australia's environmental history, importance of coasts to Australian history etc. The link doesn't have to be a formal lesson, rather a planned "incidental conversation". This reinforces how history is connected with History.

Local media

When ever you do anything contact your local media. Send a photo and brief text and push to get your students in the local paper. It may be an old form of news but parents and students love being in the paper, and it will link History with positive feels (and we know people remember how you make them feel.)

Another idea is getting students to write letters to the editor on key historical dates/ events.

Alumni as a teaching tool.

Have your students interview past Alumni. These interviews can then be used for a school history display, articles for the school newsletter/ website etc.

Have them start the interview with the question "Do you think learning about the past is important, why?" Chances are the person who is about to get interviewed about the past will say yes.

Bring them in.

Invite people linked to History into your class- local history associations, past history students, RSL, local First Nation Elders etc. The more you build the explicit connection between broader community history and what you are teaching the easier it will be to convince students and their family that history is relevant.

Plus, every visitor is a chance to promote History on your school social media.

Make sure you introduce the visitor to your Principal, so they see that connection between History and community engagement.