

# Finding a Topic: Brainstorming Activities

## Introducing the Concept of *Investigate*

In the pilot study, I asked students the following questions to introduce the concept of *investigate* – here are some examples of the answers we came up with together, and how I elicited some key research terms.

### **Q: How can we say *investigate* another way?**

A: Discover  
find out  
look for  
look around  
try to figure out

### **Q: Who *investigates*?**

A: Detectives  
Police  
Journalists  
Scientists

### **Q: What would you do if you wanted to *investigate* me?**

A: talk to your family  
ask you questions  
talk to your co-workers  
talk to your friends

### **Q: What if you didn't want to talk to anyone?**

A: We could follow you around or watch you (*observation*)  
Look online at social media or for web articles about you  
Look up newspaper articles or books in a database to see if anything was written by you or about you

### **Q: What if you did some activities with me or tried out some of the work I do with me, or socialize with me and my friends to learn about me?**

I tell students this is called *participant observation*.

## Thinking About Topics

I told the students, “Now we are going to think of topics about New Zealand music that you or our classmates might want to investigate. ”

I prefer not to introduce the topic categories outlined in the standard, so that students will be freer with their ideas – but elicit them later from students after writing their ideas on the board in columns like this:

	kapa haka	APRA		NZ On Air	Joel Little	Sole Mio	KBB Music Festival
	hip-hop				Aaradhna	NZSO	Rhythm and Vines
	classical				Che Fu	Fat Freddy's Drop	ASB Polyfest
					Stan Walker	APO	Raggamuffin
					Kiri Te Kanawa		The Big Sing
							Pacifica Beats

After discussing what the topics in each column had in common, we added the topic headings:

Musical style	Genre or historical period	Music industry	Music advocacy groups	Music funding organisations	NZ musician	NZ performing group	Music Festival
	kapa haka	APRA		NZ On Air	Joel Little	Sole Mio	KBB Music Festival
	hip-hop				Aaradhna	NZSO	Rhythm and Vines
	classical				Che Fu	Fat Freddy's Drop	ASB Polyfest
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## **Using “Reverse Topic Brainstorm” to Expand Ideas**

The students in this pilot study weren't aware of many music industry organisations, music advocacy groups, or music funding agencies. To help fill in those gaps, I used what I call a “reverse topic brainstorm.” Rather than topics, I asked students to think of questions they have about an aspect of New Zealand music.

Examples:

How do you make money from writing a song?

What does a record label do?

How do songs get picked to be in commercials and movies?

How do the judges in the Chamber Music Festival pick the winners?

How do orchestras choose the works of music they play?

## **Scaffolding Inquiry – From What You Know to What you Want to Know**

The tried and true KWHL chart brings together the students' prior knowledge about the topic, their curiosity about the topic and helps them think about the research methods they will need.

Students from Pilot Group C chose the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra as a topic for this exercise (chart on page 4).

Topic *Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra (APO)*

<b>K</b> What I <b>K</b> now	<b>W</b> What I <b>W</b> ant to Know	<b>H</b> <b>H</b> ow will I find information? (Which resources, web pages,	<b>L</b> What I <b>L</b> earned
<i>Based in Auckland</i>	<i>Who are the musicians?</i>	<i>Go to a concert (observation)</i>	
<i>Classical music</i>	<i>When was it formed and by whom?</i>	<i>APO website</i>	
<i>Played with Six60</i>	<i>How can I play in the APO?</i>	<i>Interview a musician, the conductor, other</i>	
<i>Play a lot of concerts</i>	<i>What repertoire do they play?</i>	<i>Search in the library for books and articles</i>	
<i>Play in Town Hall</i>	<i>How much does it cost to see the APO?</i>	<i>Look through old programmes (how to get?)</i>	

Pilot Group A chose “How do you make money from writing a song?” as a “reverse topic” question to work on together. This led to a discussion about APRA and filling in a KWHL chart. Then by looking at the APRA website and the APRA article in the 2015 May Book, they were able to answer a few of their questions.

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