

## Reflection 2:

While the children were creating characters, they decided that they should have names. One of my colleagues printed out actual census records from New York City in 1703 so that we would have a list of "typical names." My plan had been to hand out the records, discuss the set up of the forms, and have each student select a name. I began the discussion by asking the class what they noticed about the forms. They immediately noticed the way the records were set up and what information it showed, and then, to my surprise, instead of trying to pronounce the unusual names, or claim the names for themselves, they started to discuss what information was *not shown*. For example, there are few women's names that are given. Many households had more than two adults. There are racial designations for some of the people on the chart, but not for others. These observations led to questions, which led to several days of rich conversation and insights about what these documents tell us about the social structure of colonial New York.

This experience reminded me why authentic documents are so important to share with children. It also made me think about the importance of being flexible about the directions that students want to take the class.

In the end, I think the class as a whole, and certain struggling students in particular, were more comfortable with their grasp of the time period. This helped later in the study when children were asked to think through the ways that they depended on England and their fellow colonists to survive. Kids had a much more concrete sense of what it meant that everything was made by hand and that if they disagreed with the politics of the silversmith, they couldn't just go to another one or go without the supplies they required. It made needing to convince each other to band together or to compromise feel that much more essential.