** National History Day in Nevada **

**Organizing your School History Day Contest**

Once you and your students have done all the hard work of producing your History Day projects, you will want an opportunity to present these projects to the whole school and decide which projects will represent your school at the History Day state contest. At the school contest, keep the spirit of accomplishment high and recognize the students’ achievements. Invite the school and local community to enjoy, learn from, and celebrate the students’ projects too. Planning for the school contest should begin quite some time before the actual event. For a successful school contest, it takes a number of people each handling a portion of the work. As soon as the date for the school contest has been decided this group can designate all the assigned tasks and each person will know their responsibility. This could be a great opportunity to get parents and the Local School Board involved; you may also want to include your school maintenance staff, A/V personnel and someone from the administration who will be necessary to ensure a smooth event.

## Preparation

**Setting the Date**

While looking for a date for your school contest keep in mind that online registration (as well as digital submissions) deadline for the History Day State Contest is due several weeks before the event. You will want at least a couple of days to complete the administrative work for registering students online, try to hold your school contest a few weeks before this deadline so that students have time to update their projects based on feedback from your school contest judges.

**Organizing the Space**

You will probably want to set up the exhibits in the media/library center, gym, cafeteria or a large multipurpose room. Make a floor plan of the exhibition area to determine where exhibits will be placed – allow two exhibits per six-foot table. If students have documentaries or performances try to reserve rooms nearby. Schedule up to 20 minutes for each performance or documentary – 10 minutes for the project and 5 to set-up and dismantle.

## Other Considerations

**Recognition and Awards**

Produce recognition certificates for all participating students. You may want to give ribbons or another type of prize to the top projects in each category; though a class treat might be nice as well. In addition to the projects that will advance to the state contest, consider giving certificates or prizes for other type of strengths: best design, best use of primary sources, best interview, most scholarly summary statement form, most dynamic title, etc. Decide when to hold your recognition ceremony: will it be the same day or later in the week?

**Refreshments**

Offering treats for judges and guests shows you appreciate their extra efforts. If you can afford it, consider having treats for the participating students too. If your school has a culinary arts program, ask the coordinator if she/he is able to supply the refreshments.

**Print a Banner, Make a Program**

A large, colorful banner and programs for the day lets students and guests know they are participating in an important school event. It makes the students feel recognized for their efforts too, and acknowledges all the teacher sponsors and other people who helped make the school History Day successful. The NHD in NV Banner may be available, contact a state or regional coordinators to request it.

**Class Tours**

Make a schedule for teachers to sign up at half-hour intervals or class periods to bring their class to visit the exhibits. History Day students are very proud to show their work and to be recognized by their fellow students and other teachers and school administrators.

**Greeters**

History students, NHS or other service organizations may be willing to help. If you plan to have guests and class tours, you may want to train at least 10 students as tour guides and provide them with a ribbon, name tag or some kind of special identification. If you are a middle school, have the greeters/tour guides escort students from and back to the classroom.

**Invitations and Publicity**

Be a show-off! Invite the principal and other administrators from your school, the PTA or Local School Board members and students’ parents…go into the larger community and invite the district or area officers—particularly those responsible for social studies…. Also, consider enlisting the parents’ support to work on the planning committee, judge, or assist at the school fair. Ask the school newspaper or writer’s club to write your press releases. (Oh, and be sure to get a story in your own school’s newspaper!) Ask the principal to announce the History Day on the school’s public marquee—and to congratulate the students who are advancing to the state contest – just like sports champs! Bring the community into your school too! Send invitations or press releases a few weeks ahead of the date of the school fair. Contact local newspapers, radio and TV stations as well as district newsletters/updates. Put flyers in local stores and posters in the school to create enthusiasm for the fair. Some of this publicity may assist you later with raising funds, sponsorship and/or getting judges.

## Judging Considerations

Decide early how you will select the projects that will advance to the state contest and what role the School History Day will play in that process. Will you set up judging the way it is carried out at the History Day event? Who will judge: the teachers only or the guests? If a combination of both, consider when the actual judging will take place: a certain block of time during the day or after the public event? Will students be interviewed or not? (If the former, take care to advise judges that cuteness is no criteria for advancement!) Do you have many exhibits? It may take several days to judge and then tally the top projects, so leave plenty of room in your schedule before the History Day due date.

Start recruiting judges as soon as possible. The judges’ responsibility will be to evaluate the projects from your school so that you can choose which projects advance to the regional History Day. Good sources for judges are fellow teachers, retired teachers, librarians, alumni, school board or administration, staff and members from local historical societies; student teachers; knowledgeable parents, Local School Council members and community members. Local colleges often have Community Service offices that can be tapped into; also call the chair of the History Department.

Evaluating projects is a subjective process. If you orient your judges and they have all the same information, the procedure can be a little less daunting. We recommend two-three judges for each project and assigning the judges no more than 10 projects per group. This way each project has two-three feedback forms. You also might want to consider having the judges give you their top two to three and you as the teacher make the final choices as to who should be representing your school at the state contest.

Many schools provide an orientation to all the judges beforehand: at the very least, give judges an instruction sheet, scoring rationale, and evaluation form. National History Day in Nevada offers its forms online so you may either use them or adapt them for your own purposes. If only teachers’ evaluations are going to decide which projects advance, but you are inviting the public to see the exhibition, offer comment cards to your guests so that they feel more involved and students get the benefit of receiving praise from a wide range of people. You can find all the judging materials here: <http://nevadanhd.weebly.com/judges-page.html>

**Day of Set Up**

If you are modeling your own School History Day on the national or state model, you will want to give a number to each project. See below for category specific considerations.

**Exhibits**

Number the spots for the exhibits so that judges can easily locate the exhibits they are judging, and keep the projects anonymous (take the list of student projects and assign each a number). You may want to keep students out of exhibit room during the judging, this is mostly for noise. If you want judges to interview students, you can bring the students into the exhibit room for interviews with the judges after they have assessed the project.

**Documentaries and Performances**

Use a large classroom. Schedule no more than 20 minutes for each performance or documentary – 10 minutes for the project and 5 to set-up and dismantle. The documentary upload tool is available for school contests; please contact your state coordinator to organize a folder for your school use.

**Papers & Websites**

We do not allow an audience for interviews for papers, websites we let the judges decided, try to get the judges the papers and URLS in advance, free programs like Google Docs and Drop Box are easy ways to send papers digitally. A spreadsheet of all the URLs is an easy way to get all the website information to judges.

Above all, have a great contest – Enjoy yourselves and celebrate your students’ achievements!

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**School History Day Contest Planning Form**

Date of School History Day: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Task | Who is Doing It | Date Needed | Completed |
| Find & reserve appropriate space |  |  |  |
| Decisions about judging process, food, tours,  awards, etc. |  |  |  |
| Community publicity and invitations to guests |  |  |  |
| Produce banner? Order food? |  |  |  |
| Recruit greeters & hosts |  |  |  |
| Class tour schedule and sign-up |  |  |  |
| Make a program |  |  |  |
| Organize judging materials |  |  |  |
| Set up  --students submit projects day before  --exhibits are organized and possibly  numbered  --times are assigned for performances and  documentaries  --banner  --program  --refreshments |  |  |  |
| Judge orientation |  |  |  |
| Judging and interviewing |  |  |  |
| Tabulate results |  |  |  |
| Announce results and celebrate |  |  |  |
| School registration and digital submissions for  advancing students |  |  |  |
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*This guidance document was produced using the Chicago Metro History Fairs Guidance Document for School Fairs*