HANDOUT: HISTORY DAY JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you so much for serving as a History Day judge. You serve an important role in this educational process. Please review the following instructions carefully as they will assist you with the judging at a History Day event.

PURPOSE
The goal of History Day is to provide young learners with a positive learning experience regardless of whether they win a prize. We will ask you to select students who excel within listed criteria to advance to the next level of competition, but more important is your interaction with the students and the written feedback you provide. Maintaining a helpful, positive, and fair demeanor will ensure students walk away with the best possible experience.

JUDGING PROCESS
Begin by attending the judge orientation. There, you will be assigned to a team of two or three judges. You will receive a schedule of projects for evaluation.

As a judge, you become the face of the History Day experience for our young participants. It is important that the interview be positive and meaningful. Despite how you may feel about their overall success, History Day is likely the most difficult project they have completed. Please converse with students in a way that allows them to feel proud of the work they have done.

JUDGING STEPS
1) Introduce yourself (a smile and handshake go a long way!)
2) Request a copy of their paperwork (process paper and bibliography)
3) Skim the written materials and review the project
4) Ask the student(s) questions about their project/research/topic
5) Thank the student(s) and retain a copy of their paperwork for evaluation

THE INTERVIEW
Students may be extremely nervous. They are, however, very excited about the opportunity to talk with you. Please make sure you ask them at least three to five questions, or as many as time allows. You should discuss their research, the historical content, the process of development, and their finished product.

Appropriate questions:
• What was your most helpful source?
• How does this topic fit the theme?
• What was the most challenging part of your History Day experience?
• Is there anything you would like to tell us that we haven’t asked about?

Inappropriate questions:
• Where do you go to school?
• How much money did you spend developing your project?
• Is this topic in line with your own religious/cultural beliefs?

Please keep in mind that this is a student interview. Participants should be given the opportunity to explain and clarify their work. This is NOT a project critique or a captive audience for your insights on the topic.
EVALUATION

Event coordinators will need to know which projects will be advancing to the next level of competition. As a judge team, begin your discussion with the projects you felt were strongest. Using the judging criteria, determine who should advance. Submit the requested forms that outline your contest results. Then, extend the evaluation process to all the projects in your judging set. Make sure that your overall ranking for the individual projects matches your judging partner(s).

HISTORICAL QUALITY (60%) This is the most important criterion in judging students’ overall presentations. Students should have a central thesis that provides analysis and is supported with evidence. They need to consider different perspectives and the historical context. Students’ depth and breadth of research is also measured here—they are to investigate both primary and secondary sources when available.

PRIMARY: First-hand accounts of a given topic, which includes but is not limited to diaries, letters, documents, interviews with witnesses, artifacts, contemporaneous newspaper articles, photographs, and speeches. Quotes removed from their original context, photographs lacking interpretive value, and other excerpts in secondary sources are NOT considered primary.

SECONDARY: Sources that use primary source materials and other research to analyze information and draw their own conclusions.

RELATIONSHIP TO THEME (20%) Students need to clearly state how their selected topic fits the theme. In addition, the theme should play a central role in the thesis.

CLARITY OF PRESENTATION (20%) Regardless of the students’ presentation medium, clarity is a measurement of their ability to organize information and support their central thesis. While you should expect visual appeal, glamour is not as important as how effectively the information is communicated.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

The right column of the judging criteria form is a place for you to communicate your perceptions. Students need to hear both what they did well and what they can do to improve. Those advancing in the competition have the opportunity to revise their work. Participants not advancing need help understanding what they could have done differently and can apply your feedback to future projects.

Please note that these forms are given directly back to the students. Feedback should be phrased in a way that is both constructive and positive. A sample comment form will be available to assist you.

PROGRAM RULES

ALL CATEGORIES:
- Students are responsible for the research, design, and creation of their own entry.
- Students need to provide a process paper and annotated bibliography.
- Process paper is limited to 500 words and should outline the research and development process.
- Sources should be sorted into primary and secondary.
- Students should use MLA or Turabian citation styles.

EXHIBITS:
- Students are limited to no more than 500 student-composed words. This limit does not apply to quotes or other support materials not written by the students.
- Projects should not exceed 72”x40”x30” (traditional 3-paneled exhibits) or 30” in diameter (rotating or walk-around exhibits).

DOCUMENTARIES and PERFORMANCES
- Projects must fit within a 10-minute time frame.

WEBSITES
- 1,200 student compose words. No larger than 100 MB. Media clips total no more than four minutes.