

Advice to Judges of Hawai'i History Day

FOSTERING A SENSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY.

- There are three areas of judging: **Historical Quality (60%)**, **Adherence to Theme (20%)** and **Clarity of Presentation (20%)**. Each area covers a different dimension of a student's project and should be considered independently
- **Remember that the primary purpose of Hawai'i History Day is to encourage the thinking skills, communication and research in "doing history"**. The project format is only a means toward that end.
- **Do not overemphasize the presentation.** There is a tendency to want to upgrade the historical quality because of an especially effective/attractive presentation, especially when media or dramatic elements are involved. Try to keep things in proper perspective.

THE MAIN TASK OF THE JUDGE IS TO PROVIDE WRITTEN COMMENTS UNDER "AREAS OF STRENGTH" AND "AREAS OF SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT."

Space on the front of the judging form is limited, so please use the back to continue your comments. Students and teachers want substantive suggestions on how to provide a richer historical interpretation or presentation. Comments such as "good job" or "well done, keep up the good work" are meaningless and extremely disappointing to students, teachers and parents.

RANKING OF THE ENTRIES IS TO BE DONE ON A SEPARATE SHEET,

which will not be made known to the students, teachers or parents. This ranking should reflect discussion among the judges, and all judges must agree upon the first three places.

GENERAL HINTS

Balance negative comments with positive ones. The most important dimension of Hawai'i History Day is historical interpretation and critical thinking. In dealing with the students, be generous with written and oral comments. Be constructive in your criticism. Tell them of their strengths as well as their weaknesses.

Remember that your entry is the work of young people who have invested a great deal of effort in their work, even if they may have missed vital aspects of historical interpretation and research. Although comments should be sincere, let them know you understand and appreciate their intellectual growth. Many students are very sensitive to your moods and attitudes. They feel crushed if you seem bored or indifferent, or if you say only negative things about their work. We have found this especially true for the interviews.

Be sure to write comments on the Judging Form. This is your opportunity to instruct the contestants. At this point you are a partner to teachers and parents in the educational process. This is an important part of the learning process for these young people. We hope that they will use your suggestions to improve their skills in research, writing and presentation. Nothing is so disappointing to students as a ranking sheet with only a few general suggestions written in the comment section. **Be thorough and frank in your comments, but "soften blows" whenever possible** (you might point out how a "good idea" could have been further developed). Any encouragement that can be given to them will be deeply appreciated by the students, their parents and their teachers.

As you evaluate the entry with respect to the various criteria, remember to note the key reasons and advice for improving the entry (a copy of the judging Form will be returned to the student). This allows the student to understand how the evaluation was determined and clarifies the role of historical interpretation.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview should be seen mainly as an opportunity for judges to hear from students, allowing them to say what they have learned and why they selected the topic, and to advise them on how to enhance the process of their historical thinking and original research. Nurture their intellectual excitement for exploring history and interpreting its meaning. Remember their interview is not meant to influence the scoring evaluation of the entry, which should be able to stand on its own. **The sole purpose of the interview is to encourage an active dialogue between historians and students on the process of historical research and interpretation as evidenced in the work they have done for their project.** It is a time to reinforce positive aspects and point out misunderstandings or areas of further exploration. It should demonstrate the value of and promote interest in doing history.

Set the students at ease and let them know that you are interested in them and their work. This expression of interest is very important to them. Encourage them to talk about what interested them in the topic and to elaborate on what they have learned. In particular, ask about their research methods and the bibliography, reinforcing that the skills of historical research and analysis are major objectives of Hawai'i History Day. Demonstrate the ongoing nature of history, pointing out new directions, alternative interpretations or further implications inherent in the topic of the entry. Sample questions are:

- **What was your most important source(s) and why?**
- **What is the most important point you are trying to convey about your topic?**
- **What is the most important thing that you learned from completing this project?**

NOTES ON INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Performance and Documentary Media Judges: There is a ten-minute interval between performances and between documentary media presentations. Following the presentation, judges have up to five minutes to make preliminary written comments or notes and briefly confer with their fellow judges (while students are quietly removing props or equipment). After five minutes have passed, the judges signal the students to approach for their interview. During the interview, the next scheduled presentation will be quietly setting up.

Exhibit Display, Essay and Website Judges: Please follow the announced schedule of interviews as closely as possible. If a student(s) is missing you may move on to the next project scheduled, checking occasionally to see if the missing student(s) has arrived late. Display students should be standing in front of their exhibits/displays just before the scheduled interview. Essay and Website students will wait outside the interview room and may be told by either judge or preceding student to come in for the interview.

Please return to the Judge Workroom immediately after your last interview. Turn in the ranking sheet to the Tally Room as soon as possible. You are encouraged to then take as much time as you like to continue writing suggestions and recommendations on the judge forms.