

Giving Age-Appropriate Feedback to Students

As a History Day judge, you truly are the face of the History Day program. These students have spent countless hours working on their projects, and they are excited, nervous, and proud of their efforts. Please realize that your job will result in most of the entries being eliminated. Most of these students won't go home with a medal or a trip to the state contest, but every single one will carry with them *your* words and opinions—written, spoken, and unspoken. Your comments are what make this program unique and educational at every level, and they are especially important for those students who will not win a prize.

You must inform the students—in a constructive and positive manner—how they can improve; what they need to do next time to be more successful. The nature of your interaction with the students, both in the judging room and on the judging forms, will form their most lasting memory of their History Day experience. We are counting on you to do all you can to make it both educational *and* positive. This is one of the best ways you can help plant and nurture the seeds for a lifelong love of history in our young people!

Please...

- Write plenty of comments on the judging forms in addition to filling out the grids.
- Be sure to explain your ranking of the entry. If you write only positive comments on a judging form, the students will wonder why their entry did not advance.
- Be sure that your comments on the judging forms include both constructive criticism and positive remarks.
- Do not make negative comments on the judging forms or in the judging room.
- Be careful to phrase your comments in positive, age-appropriate language. For those of you who don't often work with middle-school and high-school students, here are some ideas to get you started...

Examples of Age-Appropriate Language

Strengths:

- Great/fascinating/interesting topic!
- Your passion for this topic shows through!
- Very creative use of primary sources/quotations/pictures.

Improvements:

- You might think about doing X this way.
- Another source you might find helpful is Y.
- Moving the section on consequences to the last panel would make your exhibit more logical.
- Adding a timeline or map (or having fewer quotations or pictures) would make your exhibit more visually appealing.
- You could highlight your main points by using a bigger font or a different color (or by moving your thesis statement to the center).
- It was clear from the interview that you understood the historical significance of your entry, but you could convey that more clearly in your project.