

Chicago Metro History Fair



Volunteering as a Judge

Chicagoland students need you! Volunteering as a judge for the Chicago Metro History Fair (CMHF) is an easy and fun way to help students, and you don't need to be a professional educator or historian to judge student projects (although both are most welcome)! All you need are an interest in history, a desire to support students and careful attention to student work. Below, you'll find some helpful information about the annual theme, the judging process and how to provide constructive feedback. Enjoy your time at the contest!



WHAT IS HISTORY FAIR?

The Chicago Metro History Fair empowers students to Become Historians who conduct research and share their conclusions. Guided by their teachers, Chicagoland students in grades six through twelve choose their own topics connected to an annual theme, conduct research, analyze sources, develop an argument, and finally produce a project to show their work. Students make websites, performances, documentaries, papers, and exhibits which are evaluated by community volunteers like you at online competitions in February and March. This rigorous and rewarding program prepares youth for college, career, and civic life as they gain historical content knowledge and skills.

To learn more about the History Fair program visit us on the web at www.chicagohistoryfair.org.

WHAT DO JUDGES DO?

Volunteer judges are a critical part of the History Fair process. Judges are placed into teams of 2-3 and assigned a number of student projects to evaluate. Using provided evaluation forms, judges consult with their teammates to rank and provide written feedback for each of their assigned projects. The time commitment is generally around 3-4 hours per session and CMHF provides all necessary materials and a full orientation at each judging session.

JUDGING A VIRTUAL HISTORY FAIR CONTEST – WHAT TO EXPECT

Judges will sign up on the online virtual judging system, zFairs. During this sign-up process, you will be able to select from several judging opportunities on different dates. These opportunities include LIVE and OFFLINE judging:

- **LIVE** judging sessions take place via a Zoom call on Saturday mornings. History Fair staff will provide a live orientation and then will separate judges into breakout rooms with their judge teams where judge teams will evaluate their projects together.
- **OFFLINE** judging happens on your own time. Judges are placed onto a judge team and given a week to judge their assigned projects and come to a consensus with the team. Judges may communicate in whatever way works best for their group.



Students are free to choose their own research topics, so judges can expect a variety of interesting projects from local to national to world history. Student topics must relate to an annual theme; this year's theme is **Communication in History: The Key to Understanding**. A History Fair project is more than just a report. In your judge orientation you will learn to identify the projects that go beyond stating the facts to:

- Consider multiple perspectives. Communication is a two-way street and it takes multiple parties to successfully communicate something!
- Address the theme of Communication in History. Remember, there are lots of different forms of communication! Just make sure that the student is creating a well-rounded argument about the form of communication they are exploring.
- State the significance of the topic. A student should think critically about the impact that their selected topic has had on history locally, nationally and globally.

DIVISIONS AND PROJECT CATEGORIES:

History Fair is made up of two student **divisions**: Junior (grades six through eight), and Senior (grades nine through twelve). When you register as a CMHF judge, you will be able to select which division(s) you wish to judge.

There are five project **categories**. Students may enter each category individually or in groups of 2-5 students*. We will do our best to match you with the project categories you indicate when you register as a judge:

- Documentary
- Exhibit
- Performance
- Website
- *Paper (individual only, no group projects)

JUDGING HISTORY PROJECTS FAIRLY

As a volunteer judge, you are directly impacting a young student's learning experience. While you're judging:

- Political, religious or personal opinions should not influence your judging decisions.
- Remain impartial. Even if you don't agree with the argument, take note of how well they back up their argument with facts and sources.
- You are evaluating the work of young students. Expect quality, but do not hold them to college standards or beyond.
- Look for what the student did well. Mistakes are important to note, but celebrate the accomplishments of the student as well.
- Be very clear in your comments, especially where you have ranked lower. A student or teacher should be able to refer to those comments and know exactly why they got the ranking they did. More commentary is always best!
- During the contest, the students are the experts. They shouldn't be expected to know everything, but they do know a lot about their topic. If you know some additional information that would aid them, mention it in their feedback.

PROVIDING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

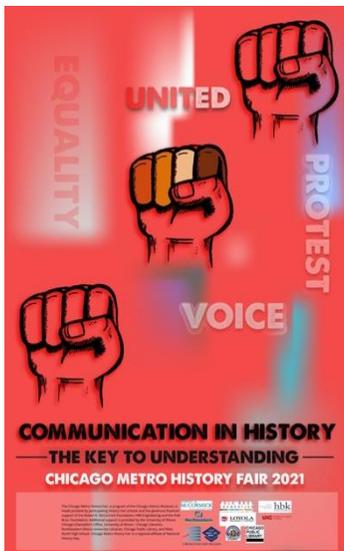
History Fair judges provide written feedback for each and every project. Constructive feedback critiques a project and is expressed in a helpful manner. This criticism is meant to help improve a student's work based on their work alone and not on personal opinions. Good criticism is a blend of positive and negative comments and all negative comments should be accompanied with a comment about how to improve. Point out issues in their project by using descriptive language as opposed to judgmental language. Think of this type of feedback as a compliment sandwich:



Positive Comment – "I think you did a great job on your performance!"

Constructive Criticism – "To improve, try expanding on some of your research."

Positive Comment – "Your passion for your topic is clear!"



HOW TO SIGN UP

Visit our [zFairs contest page](#) to begin the process of signing up as a volunteer History Fair judge today!

For questions, contact CMHF Staff at historyfair@chicagohistory.org. Thank you for helping Chicagoland students Make History!



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM