

Teachers: Communication with Parents is Key!

Our annual parent surveys show parents appreciate regular communication from teachers about the project and competitions. Since the state History Day office does not communicate directly with parents, this communication needs to come from teachers. We asked parents *“What do you wish you would have known before starting History Day.”* So...

What do parents want to know?

Introduction to the Project

Give parents a heads up about History Day before it begins. Share the introductory video with them. Let parents know about the theme. Consider hosting a parent kick-off at school. Send home one of our introductory parent letters, available in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali, on our website. Let them know...

- **That History Day is worth the work.** You’ve chosen to bring History Day into your classroom because it meets state standards and teaches valuable college and career skills. Topic and category choice empowers students and motivates learning. Sure, it’s work, but it’s worth it! <https://nhd.org/why-nhd-works>
- **That History Day can extend beyond the classroom.** Some parents weren’t aware of the competitions associated with the project, or that 25,000+ Minnesota students participate in History Day each year!
- **That this is a big project.** Many parents were surprised at the amount of time their son or daughter invested into this project, especially if they advanced to State History Day.

Project Steps and Deadlines

This may be the first time their son or daughter is completing a project as large in scale as History Day. Parents want to know the steps in the process and clear deadlines for completion.

- Our **Project Timeline** page lists the major milestones in the project. Consider creating your own timeline of steps that parents can review with their child: <http://education.mnhs.org/historyday/history-day-timeline>

A Parent’s Role

Parents want to support their child, but also don’t want to cross the line. Remind them that doing well with History Day doesn’t mean spending a lot of money.

- Our **Parent FAQ** outlines the best ways for a parent to help guide students through the process, while making sure the project remains the child’s: <http://education.mnhs.org/historyday/parent-faq>

Where to Get Help

Many parents didn’t feel that they knew who to contact when they had questions. Most importantly, parents said they didn’t know that there was a website of resources from Minnesota History Day until too late in the process.

- **School-level Requirements and Deadlines:** Parents should contact teachers with school-level issues.
- **Regional/District Contest:** We post information about these events on our website, but do not email parents directly. If parents have questions, they can contact the History Day staffer coordinating the event.
- **State History Day:** Contact Sarah Aschbrenner at sarah.aschbrenner@mnhs.org or 651-259-3489.
- **General Questions:** The answers to most general questions are on our website. Parents should start at the **Parents** page: <http://education.mnhs.org/historyday/parents>

Rules and Rubric

Parents want to make sure they are directing their child down the right path. Let them know not only the classroom expectations, but how those requirements might change if their son or daughter’s project advances to a Regional or District competition. Many parents also expressed frustration at the rules “changing” partway through the school year. Be clear that the official rules never change mid-year.

- Direct parents to the complete **NHD Contest Rulebook**: <http://education.mnhs.org/historyday/rules>
- Help parents understand how projects are evaluated with **Understanding the History Day Criteria**: <http://education.mnhs.org/historyday/prepare-competition>

Regional and State Contest Details

Minnesota History Day does not communicate directly with parents or students. Teachers should communicate contest information directly to parents, including general event schedules, student presentation times, and other event logistics. If you do not plan on communicating with parents, please let them know and direct them to our **Competitions** page so they can find details on their own: <http://education.mnhs.org/historyday/competitions>

Communication

Parents appreciate the regular flow of communication via newsletter, email, blog, or other format. They also recognize that their own son or daughter may be the missing link in effective communication, so make sure that parents have other ways to access this information.

- Let them know they can also sign-up for our parent newsletter! <http://www.mnhs.org/enews>