



National History Day Fact Sheet

National History Day (NHD) is a yearlong, nonprofit education program dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of history in elementary and secondary schools. The program makes history every day by giving young Americans an appreciation of their heritage and teaching them essential skills that will help them succeed in college and the workplace. The program received the Charles Frankel Prize for public programming from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

National History Day makes history come alive for participating students. The NHD student competition is the nation's oldest and most highly regarded history program for students in grades 6-12. This academic challenge engages more than half a million students annually.

National History Day is one of the rare programs that helps students refine critical thinking and research skills used in all subject areas. For more than 25 years, NHD has promoted systemic educational reform related to teaching and learning in America's schools.

National History Day provides teachers with leading-edge training and curriculum materials to help educators exceed education standards. The NHD program rewards innovation and interdisciplinary approaches in the classroom.

Millions of students have participated in NHD and have gone on to careers in business, law, medicine, teaching and countless other disciplines where they are putting into practice the skills and knowledge gained through NHD.

National History Day joined with the White House and the National Archives to create Our Documents, a history, civics and service education initiative. The initiative revolves around 100 milestone documents in American history, from the Lee Resolution of 1776 to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and it encourages all Americans to participate in our democracy.

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I eligible to participate in National History Day?

The National History Day contest is open to all students in grades 6-12. All types of students participate in NHD—public, private, parochial and home-school students; urban, suburban and rural students; academically gifted and average students, and students with special needs.

There are two divisions of competition: junior and senior. There are seven categories of entries for each division: individual exhibit, group exhibit, individual documentary, group documentary, individual performance, group performance, and individual paper.

Winning students in district competitions may move on to state competition, and the top two entries in each category and division at state contests are eligible to participate in the national contest.

What am I required to do to participate in NHD?

Students choose a history topic related to NHD's annual contest theme, conduct extensive research over the course of the school year, and create performances, documentaries, papers or exhibits which they may enter in competition at the district, state and national level. Visit www.nhd.org for further information.

How many students and teachers participate in National History Day?

Nationwide, 700,000 students and 40,000 teachers annually participate in National History Day programs. More than 2,000 students from across the country attend the national contest (from 48 states, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense Schools and American Samoa).

Who supports National History Day?

At the state level, NHD programs are sponsored by historical societies, university departments of history or education, humanities councils and other state agencies. In some cases corporate sponsors provide additional funding to support state History Day programs.

At the national level, NHD is supported by private foundations, state organization fees and by corporate sponsors, including major contributors. Visit www.nhd.org for further information.

When is National History Day?

Every day is National History Day. NHD is a year-long program that culminates in a national contest in June in College Park, Md.

Why call it National History Day?

NHD started as a small contest in Cleveland in 1974. Members of the history department at Case Western Reserve University developed the initial idea for a history contest to make teaching and learning history a fun and exciting experience. Students gathered on campus to devote one day to history. They called it "National History Day." Although the name has remained the same, NHD has grown into a national organization with year-round programs and a week-long national contest.

Is National History Day just a contest?

NHD is more than a contest; it is reforming the way history is taught and learned. The contest provides teachers with an innovative teaching tool and fosters students' enthusiasm for learning. In addition to the contest, NHD offers teacher workshops, summer student academies, summer teacher institutes, curricular materials and other resources for educators.

How long has National History Day been around?

NHD began in Cleveland in 1974 and expanded throughout Ohio and into surrounding Midwestern states before becoming a national organization in 1980. In 1992 NHD moved its headquarters to the Washington, D.C., area.



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Teacher Programs

Annual summer institutes

State teacher workshops

Curriculum materials

Materials to meet education standards

Recognition for outstanding teaching in history

