

Hello to this year's science fair judges, both old and new,

If you're a really experienced judge, this information won't be new but I thought I'd send this to everyone anyway. The fair will be Thursday, March 7th at the La Plata County Fairgrounds.

First I'd like to say thank you for volunteering to judge. This fair couldn't happen without the 90 judges and volunteers who so generously donate their time each year. You've volunteered to judge which means the projects must be ranked. Some will win awards and nominations to the state and international fairs. Others will only take home the experience of competing at the regional fair. You are a big part of that experience. If judges are positive and encouraging, the finalists will leave feeling like they've done a good job and their interest in science will be nurtured. That really is the goal of science fair.

At orientation, there will be a quick review of the scientific method and what to expect to see on a board. There will also be tips on being a good science fair judge. Here are a few:

- Smile, listen, be friendly, act interested, listen more and make positive comments.
- If you want to make a comment, don't say "why didn't you...?", say "what do you think would have happened if you had....."
- It's perfectly alright to disprove the hypothesis.
- The student should be able to explain any aspect of their project. Sometimes they are lacking general knowledge of the science. For example, if they use a meter to measure volts, they should know how the meter works and what a volt is.
- It's OK to ask for clarification.
- It's OK to keep the interview moving. You have about 15 minutes. If they're still talking about their hypothesis after five minutes, say, "let's move on to your procedure"

I'd like to expand on the schedule. The day moves so quickly it's hard to keep track of what happens next. I haven't changed anything from last year.

7:00 – 7:45 - Arrive and breakfast

- Judges check in upstairs in the exhibit hall. You will be told your division/category and where to sit. Your name tag and paperwork will be at your table.
- Judges' breakfast starts at 7:00 am and you should arrive by 7:30.
- 7:30 - High School judges' orientation. This is a special team of judges. You'll know if you're a high school judge.
- Finalists are setting up their projects.

7:45 – 8:45 - Judges' Orientation

- The orientation doesn't take an hour (promise) and you'll have time at the end to organize your teams.
- Each team will have at least 3 judges. New judges are placed on teams with returning judges

- You will have a “JUDGING NOTES” sheet for each Division/Category you judge. It’s yours to take with you and there’s a place for notes.
- There’s a “JUDGING SUMMARY” legal size paper which stays at the table. You’ll enter your score tallies on it.
- Each project will be judged at least 3 times. There are 3 preprinted colored JUDGING FORMS for each project to help this process and lots of blank white ones.

8:45 – 10:15 - First Round Judging – ODD numbers

- Half of the projects, those with ODD numbers will be on the floor. You’ll have up to six projects to see in each round. Six projects leaves about 15 minutes per project for the interview and scoring. If you end up with fewer projects (hopefully), you’ll have more time per project.
- When you are done with an interview, put a green sticker on the project’s table tag. Be aware of the projects in your division/category. Each must end up with 3 green stickers. We’ll do a sweep around 9:45 to check.
- Special Awards Judges – If you are only interviewing for special awards, place an orange sticker on the table tag.
- If you come to a project and the student is missing, put a black sticker on the table tag and try to return to it later.
- When you’re done judging, use your time to tally your scores and write them on the summary sheet upstairs.

10:30 – 12:00 – Second Round Judging – EVEN Numbers

- The EVEN numbered projects will be on the floor.
- The process is the same as 8:45 – 10:15.
- When you’re done judging, tally your score sheets and enter the scores on the summary sheet.
- Average the scores on the summary sheet when there are 3 or 4 scores.

12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch and Ranking/Call-Backs

- Lunch has been provided by the Back Porch BBQ. Vegetarian dishes include the salad, a sweet potato dish and dessert.
- During lunch, discuss your projects’ rankings and write down your INITIAL RANKINGS on the legal size score sheet. These can be changed later. If your team is unable to provide INITIAL RANKINGS, it’s alright.
- All of the judges in a category will decide who to send to state. If you’re in a large category, you’ll have seen only one Division. For example, Physics is always large so the 6th grade Physics Category will have a team of judges and the Junior division Physics Category will have its own team. Your team will decide the rankings for your Division/Category, but 6th grade and Junior judges for Physics will work together to nominate projects to attend the state fair. So, first and second placed projects should be called back along with third place or any other projects you might want to see again. If you’re in a very large Category, you may not have seen all the projects in your own Division/Category. Feel free to call back as many as you’d like. I’ll explain this again during orientation.

- If you are in a very small category where the entire judging team has seen both the 6th Grade and Junior Division projects, you don't have to call any back as long as you're sure of your rankings.
- If you are judging for a special award and want to see a project again, call it back too.
- Once you have your call-backs and INITIAL RANKINGS done, turn in your summary sheet to the front desk. They will be returned to you. The call-back list needs to be posted by 1:00 so turn in your call-backs ASAP.

1:15 – 2:30 – Call-Back Judging

- During call-back judging, all judges in a category (both 6th Grade and Junior judges) will review all the called back projects. For example, The 1st, 2nd and possibly 3rd place projects will be called back in both the 6th Grade and Junior division Chemistry category. The Junior division judges will not only interview their Junior projects, they will interview the 6th Grade projects as well.
- Place a blue sticker on the table tags when you are done with a call-back interview.
- Filling in a score sheet during call-back judging is optional. If you've seen a project before, you can review your old sheet.
- All call-back projects should be seen 3 times. This isn't as organized as the ODD and EVEN judging periods, so interview all projects in your Category then take a look at other projects if you have time. All projects need to end up with three blue stickers.

2:30 – 3:30 – Public Viewing & Final Ranking/Sate Nominations

- This is public viewing for the projects and final decision time for judges. You can run downstairs for last minute viewing if needed. All of the students will be at their projects.
- Your table will have a computer copy of your team's INITIAL RANKINGS if they were turned in during lunch.
- You will confirm or change your projects' INITIAL RANKINGS. Tell the score table you still like your initial rankings or change them.
- Honorable Mentions – 1st, 2nd and 3rd are assigned for each Division/Category. There are 40 Honorable Mention (HM) ribbons too. HM's can be 4th or 5th place or an HM can be assigned to a project you want to recognize. For example, a student who didn't have the best project but who was very enthusiastic about their project and learned a lot. There are approximately 2 ribbons for each Division/Category. I want to use them all.
- As a Category (both 6th Grade and Junior), discuss the merits of the top projects. You will nominate projects to attend the state science fair. 11 – 6th Grade and Junior projects will go which means not all 1st place projects can go. In addition, 2nd place projects can go if the first place project is also going. In the past, 3rd place projects have even gone from big categories like Physics.
- STARS – You'll nominate projects and mark them with stars. Draw the stars on your INITIAL RANKINGS sheet
 - 3 Stars = This project MUST go to state. It's excellent!!!!
 - 2 Stars = Very nice project. Not a 3 star but consider it if there's room.
 - 1 Star = Not a 2 star project but still deserves to go to state if there's room.

- Turn in your INITIAL RANKINGS sheet to the judging table with confirmed rankings and Honorable Mentions in the left side column along with your STATE NOMINATIONS (denoted with stars)
- Once your FINAL RANKINGS and STATE NOMINATIONS are turned in, you may leave, or stay for the awards ceremony which starts at 3:30.
- SPECIAL AWARDS – JILL will be in charge of special awards this year. Once you've chosen the projects to receive your awards, visit Jill and she'll enter them in her database and fill in the student and project names on the certificates for you.

I think this is getting long enough. If you have specific questions, feel free to email or call me. Once again, thank you so much for volunteering and I'll see you March 7th at the La Plata County Fairgrounds..

Lynn Schneider
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