

Welcome to National History Day

Your students will soon begin an exploration into the power of ownership. As you'll see, National History Day (NHD) is at its best when students take full possession of their learning. It's a challenging opportunity, for both you and your students, but the results can be remarkable. As you begin to consider NHD, remember this: every year thousands of teachers across the country and around the world use NHD in their classrooms. They don't all use it in the same way - and that's ok - adaptability is one of NHD's strengths - but they all use the program to achieve goals they believe are fundamental to their students' success. As a program that focuses on the development of skills it is flexible so use it to meet you and your students' needs in the ways you deem best.

Teachers new to NHD have TONS of questions. Our hope is that this guide will answer many of them. As you begin keep in mind the following:

National History Day isn't just a day -

“National History Day isn't just a day, it's an experience! NHD engages students in the study of history, giving them the opportunity to participate in the research process, develop a historical project, and come to their own conclusions like a professional historian. Students are motivated by their interests, encouraged to select a research topic that interests them and a project medium of their choice. NHD students practice and apply analysis and synthesis skills, can identify credible sources, think critically, ask questions and investigate. Throughout the NHD process, students learn valuable social-emotional life skills along with critical thinking, writing, and research skills that prepare them for college, career, and citizenship.”

- Jess Alden, National History Day Georgia Co-Coordinator, Georgia Humanities Program Coordinator

National History Day offers the best of both worlds (Social Studies and ELA) -

“National History Day is an opportunity to model how reading and writing are invaluable skills used in all content areas, in any grade level, and as lifelong learners. With NHD, students learn how to pull key ideas and details from what they have read and incorporate them into their writing. They learn how authors structure their writings and how to do so themselves. Students develop vital skills such as avoiding plagiarism, assessing the credibility of sources, building a bibliography, organizing ideas, and ongoing revision and editing practices. Moving beyond written text, students learn how to incorporate information gained from sources, including maps, photographs, music, and film. Their analysis of a variety of primary and secondary sources requires students to write argumentative and informational text to support their thesis. The majority of state literacy standards and several English Language-Arts standards, are taught through National History Day.”

- Amanda West, Thomas County Middle School Social Studies Department Chair, National History Day Regional Coordinator

National History Day is all about the skills

“As students begin their journey in NHD, they will see that this project will assist them in developing skills that will apply to them in the real world. These skills that the students will learn will prepare them and assist them in moving forward into higher education and or in their employment.

Since this project is one spaced over an extended period, time management will be one of their top priorities. Planning their project out in advance will allow them to complete their project on time and assist them in meeting deadlines. It will instruct the students not to procrastinate.

Organizational skills will be developed. Students will be working on and from a multitude of materials. Using charts, graphs, and other means to keep the students on track will be utilized. Maintaining their work in an orderly fashion will allow them to quickly access and record the material they need to create their project.

Research skills will allow students to think and act like a historian. Students will learn that research is more than just Googling it from the search engine. Students will be introduced to the world of diving into books, encyclopedias, archives, newspapers, diaries, and databases that have been professionally researched and verified by historians.

Students will grow their skills in language arts. Reading, writing, paraphrasing, analyzing information, deciphering material, and putting it into a format that will allow them to state their understanding of the material as well as write to their audience. Understanding and utilizing the importance of primary and secondary sources and the ability to cite their sources will promote them to be career and college ready.

Students will also grow in their skills based on what type of project they desire to do. Students who make documentaries or website building will boost their technology and computer skills. Performance allows the students to display their playwright and acting skills. The exhibit allows for students to grow in marketing skills as they demonstrate their ability to display their work. The written research paper allows them to grow in journalistic skills.”

Stan Shively, Social Studies Department Chair, Richards Middle School, Columbus GA

National History Day will take TIME! -

“National History Day is a year-long time commitment for both teachers and students that teaches perseverance, the value of deadlines, and creating and fulfilling goals. Setting specific deadlines or utilizing checklists to break up the project into smaller chunks allows students to focus on specific goals and meet their deadlines. NHD teachers need to be willing to commit a few hours each week (even more during contest season). The end result of that investment, however, can be quite remarkable.”

Laura Szymanski

Relationship building is key

“The National History Day experience affords students the opportunity to collaborate with other students and their teachers to foster a natural connection that is important in building effective relationships. National History Day projects are not done in isolation, if done effectively. Students have to trust their teachers to have the knowledge and the resources to support them through the project, and teachers have to trust that students will go the distance to take feedback and reflection to create a final product. Every student that I have supported through this process always highlights the relationships they develop as the reason they love NHD.”

Melanie Kellam, McDonough Middle School, Social Studies Department Chair

The Transformative Power of Ownership

“We know that students learn best and most effectively when they are engaged and active. National History Day can facilitate that kind of empowered learning experience because it encourages students to stake a claim of ownership over their learning. NHD is built upon this premise, and when students fully embrace it, the results can be nothing short of transformative.”

Kevin Shirley, National History Day Georgia co-affiliate Coordinator,
Professor and Chair Humanities & Social Sciences,
LaGrange College

We hope you find NHD as fulfilling and enriching as we have.

This guide is part of a larger system of support tools and services that National History Day Georgia offers teachers and students. Housed primarily at LaGrange College, these resources are available at any point in your program year. Never hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or need any assistance. We're here to help you and your students get the most out of NHD!

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