

Southern Tier Scholastic Science Fair

Guidelines for Judges

- 1) Before the day of the fair, you should have received and reviewed the project summaries for the exhibits you are to judge. In addition, you should have received copies of the rules and judging rubric.
- 2) At check-in, you receive a name badge, judging schedule, and map of the exhibit floor. If there were any missing project summaries, they should be available at this time.
- 3) Familiarize yourself with the layout of the exhibit area, the location of the exhibits you will be judging, and the judges' area in room AT-103. Judges are assigned to groups of projects in pairs or groups of three, so locate your partner(s) and plan your strategies.
- 4) Shortly before judging begins, there will be a brief meeting in AT-103 to answer any questions.
- 5) After judging begins. You are allotted approximately 15 minutes per exhibit, so try to stay on schedule.
- 6) When you arrive at the exhibit, you may find it helpful to use the following steps:
 - a) Step 1: Introductions
 - i) Introduce yourself to the student, adding a few details about your background and interest or experience in science, math, and technology.
 - ii) Ask the student his/her name, grade, school, and a few "get acquainted" questions
 - (1) What got you interested in this project?
 - (2) How long did you work on this project?
 - (3) Tell me what you like most about this project.
 - iii) Take the time to make eye contact during this get-acquainted time. Show exhibitors that you're really interested by your expressions and gestures. When you find out an exhibitor's first name, use it throughout the judging. If you forget the name or you're not sure you heard it correctly, look at the name tag.
 - b) Step 2: Sharing
 - i) The second phase is simply a chance for the student scientist to share information about his/her project. Ask the student to summarize the project, asking questions only to help the student complete the summary.
 - (1) Tell me about this exhibit.

(2) How did you . . . ?

(3) When did you . . . ?

- ii) As part of this sharing phase, make a comment or two about what you're finding in the exhibit, such as, "I can see you really like birds (or insects or rockets). Your interest really shows." "You must have had a good time making this exhibit. It shows."

c) Step 3: Process

- i) Answers to the sharing questions naturally lead you into the third or "Process" phase of judging. This is when you ask the youth to analyze what he/she did. Here are some examples of the types of process questions that you can ask.

(1) What problems did you have?

(2) What worked and didn't work?

(3) What was the most difficult part?

(4) Why is it important to . . . ?

(5) Where did you find the information on . . . ?

(6) Where did you get the idea for . . . ?

(7) Did you have someone at home, school, or elsewhere who gave you advice on your project? (Hint: Try to avoid questions like, "Did someone help you with this exhibit?" It's an awkward question under the circumstances because the youth might think you're implying that it's not his or her work.)

d) Step 4: Significance

- i) This is a time for the exhibitor to more fully explain the significance of what they learned and to connect the learning to other situations. It's also the time when you start to talk about the best things you see in the project and some ways to improve the things that need work.

(1) What did you hope people would notice about your exhibit?

(2) What was the most important thing that you learned?

(3) What are some new things you learned by making these exhibits?

(4) What do you think your results about . . . mean?

(5) I really like . . . because . . .

- (6) I thought you made a good decision when . . .
- (7) I'm not quite sure about . . . Could you explain . . .?
- (8) What if you tried this? What would happen?
- (9) Have you thought about . . .? You might experiment with . . .

e) Step 5: Reflection

- i) This is the time when you want youth to reflect on what they learned today and how to apply it in the future.
 - (1) If you could do this experiment again, how would you change it?
 - (2) What are some new things you could learn in this project in the future? What else would you like to learn?
 - (3) What are you planning to make or learn about in your next project?

f) Step 6: Wrap-Up

- i) **End on a positive note.** A smile, a call for final questions, a thank you and a word of encouragement to enter again next year usually work. They leave the exhibitor feeling good about the judging experience. They also leave you feeling ready to meet and greet the next exhibitor in line.