

What is NHD?

According to NHD's evaluation report, "Why NHD Works," National History Day is "a year-long academic program focused on historical research, interpretation and creative expression for 6th- to 12th-grade students. By participating in NHD, students become writers, filmmakers, web designers, playwrights, and artists as they create unique contemporary expressions of history. The experience culminates in a series of contests at the local and affiliate levels and an annual national competition in the nation's capital in June." NHD is a program that empowers students by asking them to take ownership of their learning. By doing so, it develops and strengthens their skills (research, reading, critical thinking, writing, etc.) while simultaneously building their confidence and self-esteem. How does it work?

Every program year is built around a theme. For the 2026-2027 academic year the theme is "Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change." After discussing the theme as a class, students select topics related to that theme. They then embark upon a program of investigation and research, in both secondary and primary sources. They collect and organize their data, analyze it, draw conclusions, and develop an argument. Students decide whether to work on their own or in a group (depending on you) and then decide upon the media (category) they will use to present/defend their thesis. Students can develop a project in one of the following:

- Historical Paper (individual only)
- Website (individual or group)
- Performance (individual or group)
- Exhibit (individual or group)
- Documentary (individual or group)

Because the program culminates in contests (school, region, state, national), there is a rule book in addition to a theme book. You and your students will need to review both carefully as you begin. You will also want to become familiar with the evaluation rubrics used by judges at NHD contests. All these documents, plus a full collection of support materials for you and your students, are available for download at NHD Georgia's program website (www.lagrange.edu/nhd).

A note for your consideration: Teachers engaging in NHD for the first time will find it rewarding and both you and your students will grow as you work through the project together. You will build a working relationship with your students that will allow you to bond and see your students in a different light. Moreover, keep in mind that the program is adaptable, and you are in control. You can choose to mold the program by using portions of it. For example, you may choose to have your students research specific topics, or only allow students to create one or two categories. Remember that the NHD Georgia team has a variety of tools and support services available to help. We are never more than a call (706-880-8033) or an email (nhdhistory@lagrange.edu) away!

A couple of introductory videos you can use in class:

1. [What is NHD?](#) - Produced by NHD.org
2. [Exploring National History Day](#) - Produced by Minnesota History Day