

The Competitive Edge

Do you want to help your researcher do their best? Here is a list of things you can do to help your student get ready for the upcoming competitions:

1. We all know that first impressions are very important. Help your researcher plan their outfit now. Help them find that tie or purchase those things they need. Give them time to break in a new pair of shoes before the event or adjust to a new haircut/style. Students may wear the same outfit for all the fair competitions. Competition dress is business professional. Boys must wear a shirt with a collar, tie, dress pants and appropriate belt and shoes. No jeans or T-shirts. Coat/jacket is optional. Girls may wear a business appropriate dress, a blouse and skirt/slacks or a suit.
2. Read the research paper. Help find those spelling errors and sentences that don't make sense. They are continually updating their papers and mistakes are easy to miss as they add results and conclusions.
3. If you can, provide a few hours of time in the public library. It always helps to read as much background on a subject or technique as possible. The more copies of articles and the longer the bibliography the better.
4. When you bring your researcher in or pick them up, take a minute and look at what they are doing. If your researcher has organisms or equipment they are using to conduct their experiment ask to see them. You are always welcome - come inside and look around.

For safety reasons, you must come inside to pick up your student on Saturday workdays.

5. Each student should have the following items at the fair:
 - A. Complete copy of research paper.
 - B. Research Log Book
Take a look at this and see if there is a complete description of results and activities performed in the lab, class, etc.
All data should be recorded here.
 - C. Reprint File -copies of all articles and on-line resources used to

develop their project.

6. To help them perfect their presentation:

A. Listen to it often.

B. Encourage appropriate hand gestures and facial expressions

C. Ask questions about equipment:

How does it work?

What does it measure?

What is its proper name (model & make)?

What units of measurement are you using?

D. If using an organism:

Why did you choose this organism for your experiment?

Explain the life cycle of the organism.

What factors are important in maintaining this organism?

E. Any experiment:

What is your hypothesis or engineering goals?

What is the significance of your study?

What is your independent variable? Dependent variable?

What skills did you have to learn to do this experiment?

What quantitative data did you collect?

How did you analyze your data? (statistics)

What chemicals did you use?

What are the scientific and common names of organisms?

Are there any safety precautions? What are they?

What is an MSDS sheet and what is it for?

Did you encounter problems and need to modify your procedure or make other changes? How? Why?

F. Help your researcher design an outline of their presentation, using their backboard as a visual aid.

Please help them to remember: Winning is great, but the satisfaction of learning something new and doing a job well is even greater!