

SCIENCE DAY PROGRAM UPDATE 2026-2027

To all State Science Day Officials, Regional Councils, Teachers, Mentors, Judges, and Students,
The Ohio Academy of Science (OAS) and Junior Academy Council (JAC) continue seeking ways to provide students with the Science Day Program. This year, ProjectBoard will be implemented to provide students with expanded guidance and resources for research projects. The enclosed *Science Day Standards* apply to the 2027 State and Regional Science Days. Please review them carefully.

Plans for 2026-2027 include:

State Science Day (SSD) – The 2027 SSD will be held in person at The Ohio State University on May 15, 2027. All State Science Day participants must attend the in-person event, although a portion of judging is conducted virtually in advance. Reasonable accommodations for participation at the in-person event may be provided in accordance with the Disability Accommodation Policy; however, accommodations do not waive the in-person attendance requirement. For more information, please visit <https://ssd.ohiosci.org/>.

Regional Science Days (RSDs): 10 will be in-person, and 1 will be held virtually. Regional Science Days will require the use of ProjectBoard for event registrations. Project registration requirements will be detailed in the ProjectBoard information provided and must be completed to participate. If a Region cannot provide an in-person Regional Science Day, students from that Region may participate in a separate, virtual judged Regional Science Day administered by the OAS office, known as Virtual Regional Science Day.

Judging Scorecards: The unified judge scorecard (rubric) will be used by all OAS Judges at all Regional Science Days. It is advisable that Regional Councils also distribute the judging scorecard to all local and county science day administrators within their respective Regions to provide the best possible state-wide continuity of judging.

State Science Day will use two different scorecards (rubrics). Two virtual judges will focus on the written report and the uploaded visual items. Two in-person judges will focus on the oral presentation and visual display at the event. The two scores from each judging mode (virtual and in-person) will be averaged, and those averages will be summed to obtain the final score.

An engineering design project is any project where a prototype is designed, built, and tested. Not all Engineering projects are considered engineering design, and not all engineering design projects fall under an Engineering topic category. Regardless of the topic category, engineering design projects should be identified in students' Final Project Reports. Likewise, the student needs to identify meta-analysis projects.

These projects must be correctly identified so that judges can assess each accordingly. Definitions for both are included in the Science Day Standards.

Topic Categories: 2026-2027 topic categories will follow the ISEF list found here: <https://www.societyforscience.org/isef/categories-and-subcategories/all-categories/>.

Sincerely,



Michael Woytek, CEO

Rev. 8/2026

THE OHIO ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

2026-2027 SCIENCE DAY STANDARDS

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I. Introduction to Student Participants

Participation in a Science Day should be a rewarding experience. It offers an opportunity: 1) to learn and practice the principles of scientific research, 2) to meet others interested in scientific study, and 3) to earn recognition for academic excellence. Thus, those involved should not be limited to a particular type of student, as predicting a student's potential is impossible until they have attempted a project several times. Most will not achieve perfection on the first attempt, but proficiency will come to those who are persistent.

When issues not covered in these standards arise, the student or teacher should seek guidance from the latest edition of the Rules for the International Science and Engineering Fair. (See <https://www.societyforscience.org/isef/international-rules/>).

Teachers, other professionals, scientific organizations, industries, and parents can and will give valuable aid if the request is made correctly. Reasonable response time, courtesy, consideration, and sincere expressions of appreciation will eliminate many rough spots for a young scientist. Others may advise and give aid, but they must not do any work for the participants.

II. Hypothesis-based Research, Meta-analysis Research, and Engineering Design Projects

Not all scientific inquiry projects require a physical experiment to be completed by the student researcher. Meta-analysis research projects, or more precisely, "Statistical Meta-analyses," are projects that collect, process, or produce statistical data from multiple publicly available scientific studies or data reports, combining and using the information to explore a relationship that had not previously been investigated, or to evaluate the combined data in a broader scope. Meta-analysis projects are a special type of hypothesis-based project and require a well-documented Project Data Book with background and research notes; source data and graphs; and a research report including relevant background, research question, hypothesis, and how it relates to the background; discussion of experimental design and procedures used by source researchers; data analysis and interpretation, conclusion, and references. Meta-analysis projects do NOT require the researcher to perform first-hand physical experiments.

Just as hypothesis-based projects require 1) the identification of a problem or question and 2) a proposed hypothesis that might offer a solution to the problem or answer the question, so too, technological or engineering design projects (further referred to as "engineering design projects") require 1) a problem or needs statement and 2) a design statement that identifies such limiting factors and criteria for success or meeting the design as cost or affordability, reliability (mean time between failure MTBF), material limits (strength, weight, resistance to corrosion, color, surface texture, ease of manufacture or reproducibility), operating environment or conditions (temperature, humidity, barometric pressure, caustic condition), ergonomics (human factors), health and safety and general ease of use or operation.

As with the development of methods for testing a hypothesis, engineering design projects must test the "design statement" to determine how closely the prototype, for example, meets the design criteria. An engineering design project prototype must meet the stated design objectives

and satisfy the specified constraints. Generally, the results of an engineering design project will describe the extent to which the prototype met the design criteria.

A hypothesis-research project shall state the extent to which the results derived from experimentation validate or invalidate a hypothesis. In all cases, the students must present the results of repeated trials. Use the figure below to determine whether your project tests a hypothesis or is an engineering or technological design.

Scientific inquiry vs. technological or engineering design projects

The Scientific Method	The Technological or Engineering Design Process
State a question or problem	Define a problem or need
Gather background information	Gather background information
Formulate hypothesis; identify variables	Establish design statement or criteria for success
Design experiment; establish procedure(s)	Prepare preliminary designs
Test hypothesis multiple times by an experiment	Build a prototype and test multiple times
Analyze results & draw conclusions	Analyze results; verify, test & redesign as necessary
Present results.	Present results

III. General Information

A. Grade Levels

Each Junior Academy Council (JAC) Regional Science Day (RSD) accepts participants in grades 5-12. There is no requirement for a local fair “Superior” rating to qualify for a Regional Science Day. A teacher or mentor should review projects before registration. Projects requiring Scientific Review Committee (SRC) review must be reviewed either by the Regional SRC or by an OAS-designated SRC when regional review is unavailable. Any project that has received all required approvals and completed all required paperwork will be eligible for participation in a Regional Science Day.

B. Adherence to the Standards by Teachers

Teachers who promote local student research projects and prepare students for Regional and State Science Days are expected to have their students follow the official Science Day Standards outlined here. These Standards include the Judging Criteria for all projects that teachers should use locally and must be used at all Regional Science Days. **The Ohio Academy of Science (OAS) discourages assigning or using special points or a scoring rubric unique to local science days. It does not permit their use by Regional or State Science Days.**

C. Project Duration

A student research project shall be used for only one year. It must not be repeated nor given to another person to represent their work. Each student may enter only one project that covers research conducted over a maximum of twelve (12) continuous months between January of the year before Science Day and May of the year of State

Science Day. A project may not be re-entered in subsequent years unchanged; continuation studies are permitted only if they involve new or revised objectives, hypotheses, or methods and present substantially new or different results for each succeeding year.

D. Sampling and the Use of Statistical Analysis

Projects must provide adequate sampling and analyze results using statistics. This may require a great deal of time and many trials. Due to the nature of the projects, it is impossible to state minimum sample sizes. Science or mathematics teachers, mentors, or advisors should be consulted to determine an adequate number.

Almost all scientific research involves statistics. A scientist should not draw a conclusion based on a single measurement or observation. Scientists typically repeat measurements multiple times; the appropriate number of trials depends on the project and should be sufficient to support a valid statistical analysis of the data's reproducibility or significance. If the term "significant" is used, then the actual statistical test of significance must be stated. Other scientists may repeat the research to see if they can replicate the stated results. Subject sampling is of utmost importance. Students doing behavioral studies with vertebrates should determine the minimum number of subjects required for adequate sampling. Project abstracts and reports always state the number of trials or the population samples as (N = number).

E. Team Projects

- A team shall consist of no more than three students. Those students cannot be separated by more than a single grade level in grades 5-8. Students from any combination of grades 9-12 can form a team. Teams may not have more than three members at a local science day, and then eliminate members to qualify for the Regional or State Science Day. In a subsequent academic year, a continuing team project may be converted to an individual project or vice versa.
- Team projects shall be accepted at all Science Days.
- All currently active team members must participate using the same judging format (in-person or virtual) and be present at the time of the project presentation during judging to receive an official recorded score at all in-person and virtual Science Days. Team projects with a missing participant at an in-person, judged event will receive comments but will not receive a final score or be eligible for sponsored awards. Team projects with a missing participant in the video presentation during a virtual judged competition will not be scored and will not be eligible for awards. Reasonable accommodations related to how a team member participates or presents may be approved in accordance with the Disability Accommodation Policy upon authorization from the OAS; however, accommodations do not waive the requirement that all active team members participate in the applicable Science Day event.
- Each team shall appoint a leader to coordinate the work and act as the primary spokesperson. However, each team member should be able to serve as a spokesperson, be fully involved in the project, and be familiar with all aspects of it.

- The final work should reflect the coordinated efforts of all team members.
- The full names of all team members must appear on the abstract and registration forms. At in-person events, the Judges will be instructed to ask each team member for a one- or two-sentence description of what they consider to be their most important contribution.

F. **Expectations of Display: Present Results**

Each Regional Council may determine which option(s) may be used in its respective Region.

- Trifold boards and printed posters must be no larger than 36" x 48". An optional 10" high x 36" wide topper for the project title, student name(s), and grade may be attached to the top of the trifold or printed poster. There shall not be any lettering or display materials extending more than 1 cm from the vertical front surface of a display board, nor shall anything extend beyond the perimeter of the trifold or poster display.
- No tabletop laptop presentations of digital posters, slideshows, simulations, models, animations, or screen-projected presentations of digital posters, ProjectBoard slideshows, simulations, modeling, animation, or data displays will be allowed at in-person Regional or State Science Days unless required for a disability accommodation. Students must request this accommodation from the Regional Director no less than 48 hours before the event.

Students are expected to **present their original research and the results of their experimental or design plan**. They **are not expected** to perform, demonstrate, or repeat an experiment for judges or visitors.

Students should have already completed an experiment or conducted many research trials and thus have adequate results in charts, graphs, data tables, and possibly a Project Data Book — all recorded with dates — which can be displayed with the project. Equipment used in research is not required for a presentation, but it may be used to explain a procedure to the judges, provided it complies with all display and safety restrictions contained in these Standards. Use photographs or drawings of equipment on the trifold, poster, Final Research Report, Project Data Book, or video presentation to document and explain the equipment used. Items on the display trifold or poster should serve as visual cues to keep students' oral presentations to the judges on track or to refer to when responding to questions. The whole project, in simple form, should be visible on the trifold or poster. Abstracts, a Project Data Book, Final Research Report, and additional data should be in folders for immediate reference. At in-person events with physical displays, **the student's project score may be affected by violations of either the physical dimensions or the physical items rules**.

Displays for virtual judged Science Days are provided via ProjectBoard, including the Abstract, the Final Research Report, a slideshow, and a video that may include a PowerPoint (or similar software program) presentation of the same visual information required of poster presentations and an oral presentation as would have been provided to judges at an in-person Science Day.

Logos or references to organizations, schools, mentors, grant providers, etc., are not permitted on any Project Displays, including physical and virtual displays, or in photographs or graphics included in the displays.

G. Safe Project Displays at In-Person Events

Project displays at in-person events shall not include materials or elements that might pose a danger to exhibitors, judges, or onlookers. However, it is understood that some hazardous materials or devices may be necessary in a research project. The experimenter should always exercise the greatest care, conduct these phases of the work under qualified supervision, and follow all protocols as required and listed by the Rules of the International Science and Engineering Fair. **Hazardous materials or elements cannot be on the display poster, the display table, or under the table at an in-person Science Day.**

H. Items ALLOWED at the Project at In-Person Events, with Restrictions Indicated

For in-person Science Days, trifold and posters should display abstracts, data tables, charts, photographs, and graphs that summarize the results. Project Data Books, Final Research Reports, research plans, and documentation of research protocols may be in physical notebooks or folders on the table or provided digitally in ProjectBoard for use by Science Day officials and judges.

Information such as postal, web, and e-mail addresses and telephone and fax numbers is allowed only for the student presenter(s). The only photographs or visual depictions of identifiable or recognizable people allowed are photographs of the exhibitor, photographs taken by the student presenter(s) (with displayed individuals' documented permission), or photographs/graphics for which credit is displayed (such as from magazines, newspapers, journals, websites, or other electronic media).

The specific list of allowed items at any in-person Science Day may vary depending on the event site's rules.

List of Items Permitted at Project Display at In-Person Events

- Printed copies of the Abstract (1-2 copies are sufficient)
- Printed copies of the Final Research Report (1-2 copies are sufficient)
- Visual Presentation (trifold or poster), including:
 - Name(s) of student presenter(s)
 - Grade of student presenter(s)
 - Abstract, as per Section IV, Part A
 - Project information and cited graphics, as per Section III, Parts F-H
- Project Data Book
- Printed copies of ISEF Forms 2C and 7
- Equipment or materials used or developed as part of this project may be displayed if:

- It is not listed in Section III, Part I; and
- It meets the Safety Regulations in Section III, Part J, and is deemed safe by the Display and Safety Committee upon inspection.
- Permitted items may include engineering design prototypes and equipment designed and built to conduct scientific research and collect data for a project, assuming they meet the criteria above.

I. Items NOT ALLOWED at the Project Display at In-Person Events

- Living organisms, including plants.
- Soil, sand, rock, cement, and waste samples.
- Taxidermy specimens or parts.
- Preserved vertebrate or invertebrate animals.
- Human or animal food is part of the exhibitor's demonstration of the project.
- Human/animal parts or body fluids (e.g., blood, urine). NO exceptions for teeth, hair, nails, dried animal bones, histological dry mount sections, and completely sealed wet mount tissue slides.
- Petri dishes or culture tubes with living or dead cultures.
- Plant materials (living, dead, or preserved) that are in their raw, unprocessed, or non-manufactured state (Exception: manufactured construction materials used in building the project or display).
- All chemicals, including water (Exception: Sealed bottled water for human consumption).
- All hazardous substances or devices (e.g., poisons, drugs, firearms, weapons, ammunition, reloading devices).
- Large vacuum tubes or dangerous ray-generation devices (Exception: Computer monitor on battery-operated notebook computers when used for computer modeling projects).
- Items that may have contained or been in contact with hazardous chemicals (Exception: Item may be permitted if professionally cleaned and a document for such cleaning is available).
- 3-D printers.
- Dry ice or other sublimating solids.
- Sharp items (e.g., syringes, needles, pipettes, knives).
- Flames or highly flammable materials (including magnified light sources). A Fresnel Lens cannot be used with a light source – it becomes an open flame.
- Any apparatus producing heat above room temperature (e.g., heat lamp, hot plates, Bunsen burner).
- Batteries with open-top cells or wet cells.
- Glass, or glass objects (including mirrors in hologram or laser apparatus), unless deemed by the Display and Safety Committee to be an integral and necessary part of the project (e.g., glass that is an integral part of a commercial product such as a computer screen).
- Any apparatus deemed unsafe by the SRC or the Display and Safety Committee (e.g., empty tanks that previously contained combustible liquids or gases, pressurized tanks, etc.).

- Awards, medals, flags, etc. (Exception: OAS membership or Science Day lapel pins).
- The Display and Safety Committee reserves the right to remove any project for safety reasons or to protect the integrity of the Science Day and its rules and regulations.

J. Other Display Safety Regulations at In-Person Events

- Any inadequately insulated apparatus producing extreme temperatures that may cause physical burns is not allowed.
- Any apparatus with unshielded belts, pulleys, chains, or moving parts with tension or pinch points must be for display only.
- Project sounds, lights, odors, or other display items must not be distracting. Exceptions to this rule may be permitted for judging demonstrations. Approval must be given before judging. Exhibitors must endeavor to minimize distractions. Extended distraction(s) may cause the exception to be revoked by the Safety and Display Committee.

Electrical Regulations at In-Person Events

- No AC electrical power will be provided or shall be used.
- Battery-powered devices must be protectively enclosed. Any enclosure must be non-combustible. All external non-current-carrying metal parts must be grounded.
- Energized wiring, switches, and metal parts must have adequate insulation and overcurrent protection (such as fuses). They must be accessible only to the student(s) for the project.

Laser Requirements at In-Person Events

Any Class 1 or Class 2 lasers, along with only Class 3A or 3R lasers, are allowed to be used, provided a finalist avoids indiscriminate exposure to other finalists, judges, or visitors (except if passed through magnifying optics such as microscopes and telescopes, in which case they may not be used). No other lasers may be used or displayed. Laser classifications defined: <https://www.rli.com/resources/articles/classification.aspx>.

- Any laser must be labeled by the manufacturer so that the power output can be inspected. Lasers without labels will NOT be "cleared."
- LEDs that consume over 1 watt, unless they are in a commercial light bulb/fixture or otherwise shielded, will not be allowed.
- Lasers will be confiscated with no warning if not used safely. Serious offenses may fail to qualify.

K. Eligibility for Regional Science Days

Students shall be admitted to only one Regional Science Day per year. Regional Science Days shall not accept duplicate projects from the same school.

Under unusual circumstances, the Director of the home region may request the Director of the temporary region's permission for one or more students from the home region to

participate in the temporary region for one year only. The Director of the home region must contact the Director of the temporary region directly to make the request and obtain permission. Specifically, the Director of the temporary region will NOT accept transfer requests from any representative other than the Director of the home region. If permission is granted, the accommodated student will 1) pay their fees to the temporary region and 2) be eligible for prizes from the temporary region at the discretion of the temporary region's Director.

Any student unable to participate in their respective Regional Science Day may instead register for the OAS-administered Virtual Regional Science Day. Those students may not be eligible for awards at in-person Regional Science Days; however, a Superior rating will make the project eligible for State Science Day.

L. Regional Procedures for Registering Students for State Science Day

Students selected to enter State Science Day following an in-person Regional Science Day are expected to be present for the announcement of their eligibility for State Science Day. If a student anticipates that they will not be present for the announcement and receipt of registration instructions and materials, they must designate in advance of the event and in writing an adult to be responsible for obtaining the registration materials and promptly delivering them to the absent student. Absence from the announcement does not relieve the student of the responsibility to meet the registration deadline. The Regional Science Day Director shall have final authority for the selection of State Science Day registrants who are certified as eligible to the executive office of the OAS by noon on the first Monday after the Regional Science Day. Students selected to enter the State Science Day following the Virtual Regional Science Day will be notified via email. This notice will include registration instructions and deadlines.

M. Eligibility for State Science Day

All Superior-rated projects from a Regional Science Day may register to be judged at the State Science Day competition, provided all participation requirements are satisfied.

N. Preparation for State Science Day

Science Day Directors may meet with all eligible students, parents, teachers, or mentors before the State Science Day judging to coach and prepare students for participation. Eligible students may make appropriate changes or updates to any materials used for their Regional Science Day. All forms submitted during Regional Science Day registration can be carried over to State Science Day registration. Additional materials may be required for State Science Day, as described in Section IV, depending on the Regional Science Day the student participated in.

O. Provision of Judges by Participating Schools

It is recommended that schools that have students participating in Regional and State Science Days provide one (1) judge for every four (4) projects from their school.

P. Recording and Photographing During Project Judging

No one will be allowed to videotape, record, photograph, or create audio recordings during project judging at any Science Day event without prior permission from the OAS.

IV. Required Material

A. Abstract – Required for all Student Participants of all Science Days

All Regional and State Science Day students are required to submit an abstract of 250 words or fewer summarizing relevant literature, the question, the hypothesis, the technological design statement, experiments, results, and conclusions. The abstract must contain a heading with a project title and the name(s) of the author(s). The heading does not contribute to the word count. The purpose of an abstract is to provide a summary of the project that will inform interested individuals of the contents. The wording must be clear enough that any scientifically minded individual unfamiliar with the topic can quickly grasp the project's essential points. Keep the wording brief and concise and use complete sentences. Summarize in a few sentences:

- Background information necessary to understand the project and its importance
- The problem that was investigated and the hypothesis or technological design statement
- Outline the materials and methods used in the project
- Summary of the results obtained while carrying out the project
- The conclusions drawn from the results
- The importance or potential applications that the research offers

B. Final Research Report – Required for all Student Participants of all Science Days

All students at all Regional and State Science Days are required to submit a written research report that documents that the student has researched relevant literature, stated a question, tested a hypothesis or technological design statement, collected and analyzed data, and drawn conclusions. The research report should detail all the work, references consulted, and acknowledgment of assistance received. Experimental data, statistics, notes, and computations should be recorded in a Project Data Book. The report should describe the work, the results, and the conclusions. This report should follow an accepted form of technical reporting and be checked for correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar, preferably by an English teacher. The report should include illustrations, such as photographs, sketches, graphs, and data tables or charts, to enhance the material presented. The OAS recommends the following format for sections of the research report:

- Title Page, including the name(s) of the student(s)
- Table of Contents (optional for reports fewer than ten pages)
- Abstract
- Background Information
- Problem and hypothesis, or problem and design statement
- Methods and Materials used to study the problem
- Results, including an analysis of collected data with graphs, tables, photographs, and diagrams to illustrate the investigation

- Conclusions and Implications for Further Research
- References or Literature Cited, following an accepted form of technical writing such as MLA, APA, or others

C. Visual Presentation – Required for all Student Participants of all Science Days

Display options for in-person Regional Science Days include a trifold board or a printed poster. For the Virtual Regional Science Day, students are required to submit a file containing a minimum of four (4) and a maximum of ten (10) slides of the information they would typically have on their trifold board or poster. Refer to the Regional Science Day Map for your requirements. Refer to Section III, Parts F-J, for display rules.

For State Science Day virtual judging, students must submit either (a) a slideshow consisting of a minimum of four (4) and a maximum of ten (10) slides of the information they would typically have on their trifold board or poster, or (b) a digital scientific poster. Students are required to have a trifold board or a printed poster for the in-person judging. To compete in State Science Day, students must submit the virtual presentation and bring the physical board in person.

D. Forms – Required for all Student Participants of all Science Days

To register for all Regional and State Science Days, all students and their parents or legal guardians must read and sign the OAS Consent and Release Form.

The International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) Forms

To register for all Regional and State Science Days, all students are required to complete and submit appropriate ISEF forms, as described herein. The ISEF forms are available at <https://www.societyforscience.org/isef/forms/>. All students participating in Regional and State Science Days of the same year must follow the procedures for that year. These rules require adherence to special student research protocols and supervision, which may include **prior approval of student research projects** by local SRCs or, in the case of human subjects, by institutional review boards (IRB), which review the research plan before experimentation begins. Local schools or counties may appoint and manage these committees.

Alternatively, the OAS may provide an SRC for students to use. Depending on the project(s), committee members must have sufficient professional expertise, through education and experience, to review human subjects and non-human vertebrate projects. **For a detailed explanation of each ISEF form, please refer to the [ISEF Forms Help](#).** At the time of project submission, a completed OAS Combined Approval Form may be submitted in place of the ISEF Forms 1, 1A, and 1B. The final research report may be submitted with the forms in place of the research plan that is required in ISEF Form 1A. Students with a Form 2C and/or 7 are required to have them on hand at State Science Day and are strongly recommended to have them on hand at Regional Science Day.

E. Video – Required for Student Participants of Virtual Regional Science Day

This brief presentation should completely summarize the project. The quality and

quantity of knowledge attained by the student will be evaluated from this Oral Presentation. Students should not memorize a formal speech. An outline (notecards) that lists variables, procedures, data collection, results, conclusions, references, and the project's implications may assist the student during the presentation. The video shall not exceed fifteen (15) minutes.

What to include in your video:

- Introduce Yourself. State your full name and current grade. Rather than reciting your project title, consider explaining your project in a single sentence.
- Explain Your Project. Summarize your research into main points. What did you do? What did you find? What conclusions did you draw?

V. Judging Information

A. Instructions to Judges

The judges' attitude and conduct determine the success of any Science Day activity. Therefore, each judge must thoroughly understand their duties and obligations. All judges need a genuine interest in young people, combined with a desire to offer encouragement and guidance as they pursue learning across various scientific fields.

For in-person and virtual Science Days, students shall have the opportunity to present their project to two judges (in-person or via online video, respectively), one of whom (where possible) should be a K-12 teacher. This may be achieved as a team of judges or separately, with the scores averaged. Although judges should discuss the student's performance, each judge shall score independently and shall not reveal their score to other judges or the student. Only Science Day officials may inform the student of the scores and ratings after judging.

For in-person Science Days:

- Judges should be familiar with all the OAS's requirements and expectations for Science Day participants.
- Judges should introduce themselves when approaching a student and attempt to establish a friendly rapport to help reduce the participant's tension. Judges are expected to be exceptionally courteous to all students.
- The student should first give their oral presentation of the project while the Judges listen carefully to the entire presentation. Secondly, Students are expected to answer questions about their work on the specific problem. It is also proper for Judges to ask questions within the discipline or subject matter involved at the student's level of learning.
- Judges should feel free to question the participant about the materials and tools used, the methods of construction, the terms used, the sources of information, and the amount and type of assistance enlisted in preparing the project.
- Judges should actively participate in the evaluation; silence may be interpreted as disinterest or boredom, which can be very discouraging to the participant.
- Judges must review the Abstract and Final Research Report to assess their quality. A check of the references will assist in making a fair determination of the

scope and depth of the literature search. The quality and quantity of references should be considered when evaluating the student's research methodology.

- Judges should determine the span of sustained interest in the particular field of science and the approximate time spent developing the evaluated project. Some premiums should be granted for considerable effort and time invested to encourage this quality of persistence.
- Judges are to review the Project Data Book for the project, if the student has one. Note the number of entries, the dates, and the number of subjects or specimens used. Is the number adequate to generalize to the larger group the sample intends to represent?
- Judges are expected to write statements to the student(s) professionally on the back of each scorecard. The scorecard will be returned to the student; thus, the comments should explain the rating and offer suggestions for improvement.
- Judges are expected to discuss the final scoring of the project at a considerable distance from the participant(s), as scores are not disclosed until judging is completed.

For virtual judged Science Days:

- Judges will independently review each project's Abstract, Final Research Report, slideshow, and video presentation through the online platform.
- Judges are expected to write professional statements to the student(s) in the space provided on the online platform. The scores and comments will be provided to the student; therefore, the comments should explain the rating and offer constructive suggestions for improving the project and its presentation.

The OAS is committed to providing an equitable and inclusive judging experience for every student. Participants come from a wide variety of backgrounds and may communicate, process information, or interact differently. Some students may be neurodivergent (e.g., autistic, have ADHD, dyslexia, or other learning differences), have speech or language impairments, hearing or vision impairments, physical disabilities, anxiety, or other disabilities that affect how they present information during judging.

A student's communication style, eye contact, body language, response time, speech pattern, use of assistive technology, or other individual characteristics should not be interpreted as indicators of their scientific ability, preparation, interest, or understanding of their project. Judges should evaluate students based on the established judging criteria.

Judges are encouraged to be flexible in how they receive information while maintaining consistent scoring standards for all participants. This may include:

- Allowing additional time for a student to formulate and provide responses.
- Rephrasing or clarifying a question if the student does not initially understand.
- Accepting responses delivered through alternative communication methods, assistive technology, communication devices, or other approved accommodations.
- Exercising patience and allowing students to communicate in the manner that

best supports their abilities.

Judges should not lower scores because a student:

- Speaks differently or has a speech impediment.
- Avoids eye contact or exhibits different social interactions.
- Takes longer to respond to questions.
- Uses assistive devices or approved accommodations.
- Displays behaviors associated with neurodivergence or a disability.
- Experiences anxiety or communicates in a manner that differs from other students.

The goal of judging is to evaluate the science, not the student's presentation style or disability. If a judge believes they are unable to fairly and objectively evaluate a student because they are unfamiliar with a particular disability, communication style, or accommodation, the judge should not attempt to compensate by altering the scoring criteria. Instead, the judge should immediately notify the event staff so appropriate assistance or reassignment can be arranged. Judges should never allow uncertainty, personal bias, or discomfort to negatively affect a student's evaluation. If a judge has questions about accommodations or how to proceed during an interview, they should pause the interview, if necessary, and seek guidance from event staff before continuing. Event staff is available to ensure both the integrity of the judging process and an equitable experience for every participant.

B. The Judging Process

At Regional Science Days, a project's score is the average of the two judges' scores. Fractional average scores should be rounded up.

At State Science Day, a project's score is the sum of its average virtual and average in-person scores. Each project will have two virtual judges and two in-person judges.

All projects at Regional and State Science Days shall be judged on the criteria of 1) Oral, Written, and Visual Communication, 2) Originality, 3) Experimental Design, and 4) Depth of Understanding.

All re-judging will follow the criteria and process outlined in Section V, Part G.

Only the scorecards used to determine a project's rating will be returned to the students at the end of a Science Day event.

C. Judging Criteria

Projects will be judged on the following criteria for all Regional Science Days:

	<u>Max. Points</u>
Oral, Written, and Visual Communication	10
Originality	5
Research or Design Methodology	15
Depth of Understanding (considering the student's age and grade level)	10

Each project is rated with a cumulative maximum of 40 points at the Regional Science Days.

- The *Superior* range is 36-40 points.
- The *Excellent* range is 24-35 points.
- The *Good* range is 0-23 points.

Projects will be judged on the following criteria for State Science Day:

<u>In-Person Rubric</u>	<u>Max. Points</u>
Oral and Visual Communication	10
Originality	5
Research or Design Methodology	15
Depth of Understanding (considering the student's age and grade level)	10

<u>Virtual Rubric</u>	<u>Max. Points</u>
Written and Visual Communication	10
Originality	5
Research or Design Methodology	15
Depth of Understanding (considering the student's age and grade level)	10

Each project is rated with a cumulative maximum of 80 points at State Science Day.

- The *Superior* range is 72-80 points.
- The *Excellent* range is 48-71 points.
- The *Good* range is 0-47 points.

D. The Criteria Interpreted for Regional Science Days

The following explanations interpret the criteria for judging the student's project or exhibit. The bullets do not have pre-determined numerical values.

Written, Oral, and Visual Communication

Written

- For science projects, Final Research Report includes relevant background information, research question, testable hypothesis, experimental design and procedures, data acquisition techniques, data analysis, conclusion, and works cited.
- For engineering design projects, include an engineering design statement, a design plan, and a discussion of prototype development and testing.

Oral

- Correct and concise explanation of project, design, and analysis.
- Responses reflect an accurate understanding of project outcomes and limitations, expansions of, and project impact.

Visual

- Logical organization of material, neatly displayed, graphics and legends appropriate to the project, easy to read and understand. Photos and graphics cited.

Originality

- The project demonstrates originality in its concept relative to grade level (i.e., not "cookbook," not a classroom lab, not a simple extension of a "found" idea).
- The project is a new idea, concept, principle, insight, or non-obvious approach.
- There is a novel association with prior knowledge, and particularly rigorous analyses reveal previously unknown relationships, etc.

Research or Design Methodology

- For science projects, the project addresses a clear, focused problem or question with a testable hypothesis.
- For meta-analysis projects, the hypothesis can be tested using data from multiple peer-reviewed research papers.
- The project addresses a clear, focused engineering design problem or need; criteria for success are identified; preliminary designs are prepared; and a prototype is created and tested, with results clearly communicated, if it is an engineering design project.
- The project plan and data collection methodology identify variables and controls and are not a summary of already-known science.
- In an engineering design project, the student identifies and applies established engineering design principles.
- Reproducible and sufficient data are collected, or, in a meta-analysis project, sufficient scientific data are synthesized from other sources to address a question/problem. The data used were collected using appropriate and safe scientific protocols.
- If an engineering design project, then the student used materials and processes effectively to build a prototype or model correctly.
- Data are properly analyzed. Appropriate graphs and tables illustrate the data. Statistics appropriate to the student's age are correctly used.
- If it is an engineering design project, sufficient testing of the prototype or model has been completed, and the data have been properly measured, presented, and analyzed.
- Discussion of results is included, and valid conclusions are formed from the data obtained, with sources of error identified.
- In an engineering design project, the prototype is assessed against the project's established criteria.

Depth of Understanding (considering the student's age and grade level)

- Adequate age-appropriate background research (e.g., journals, textbooks, websites, etc.) relevant to the project, which provides a basis for the hypothesis, and age-appropriate use of terms and principles.
- Supplements answer with relevant information reflecting knowledge gained during the project.
- Describes how the project applies to the student, the community, and the natural world (i.e., the "why" would this project be important for people to know).

- Age-appropriate exploration of science in subject, depth of investigation, and project sophistication.

E. The Criteria Interpreted for State Science Day

The following explanations interpret the various criteria for judging the student's project or exhibit. The bullets do not have pre-determined numerical values.

In-Person Rubric

Oral and Visual Communication

Oral:

- Student delivers a well-structured, logical, and concise explanation of their project. The presentation includes a clear introduction, a description of the scientific question or engineering problem, the methodology/design, results, and a conclusion. Transitions between sections are smooth and help guide the listener through the project's progression.
- The explanation accurately represents the scientific principles, experimental design, data collection, analysis, and project limitations. The student uses appropriate terminology and demonstrates a solid grasp of the content.
- The student can discuss possible next steps or expansions for their project, future applications, or broader impacts on science, society, or technology.
- Student responds thoughtfully and accurately to judge questions. Answers reflect critical thinking, insight into the topic, and an ability to explain choices and defend conclusions.

Visual:

- The display is arranged in a clear, logical sequence that reflects the scientific method or engineering design process. Sections such as the title, question or problem, hypothesis, methods, results, and conclusions are clearly labeled and easy to locate.
- Presentation is neat, visually balanced, and free of distracting clutter. Text is legible from a reasonable distance, with consistent font sizes and styles. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct.
- Charts, tables, photographs, and diagrams are used purposefully to illustrate data, methods, or findings. Graphics are appropriate to the project content and enhance the viewer's understanding rather than simply decorating the board. All visuals are clearly labeled, and legends are included where necessary to explain colors, symbols, or data groupings. Axes on graphs are labeled with appropriate units.

Originality

- The project shows strong originality for the student's grade level, featuring independent thought and a unique concept, approach, or solution that goes beyond standard or replicated work.
- There may be a novel combination of concepts or a unique method of analysis that reveals something not previously understood or clearly documented.

- The work reflects independent thinking and problem-solving beyond what is typically expected at this grade level.

Research or Design Methodology

- The project addresses a clear and focused scientific question or engineering problem.
- For science experiments, the hypothesis is specific and testable using scientific methods.
- For meta-analysis projects, the hypothesis is testable using data drawn from multiple peer-reviewed studies.
- For engineering design projects, the problem is clearly defined, and the criteria for success are identified. Preliminary designs are developed, and a prototype is created and tested.
- Sufficient and reproducible data are collected using appropriate, ethical, and safe methods.
- For meta-analyses & science experiments, a meaningful and sufficient body of scientific data is synthesized to address the research question.
- For engineering design projects, materials and tools are used effectively to construct a working prototype or model.
- Conclusions logically follow from the data and are supported by evidence.
- Possible sources of error are acknowledged.
- For engineering design projects, the effectiveness of the prototype is evaluated against the original success criteria.

Depth of Understanding (considering student's grade level)

- Adequate age-appropriate background research (journals, textbooks, websites, etc.), analysis, and references relevant to the project, which provide a basis for the hypothesis and age-appropriate use of terms and principles. *Keep in mind, 5th graders do not have the same knowledge base as 12th graders.
- Age-appropriate sources are used. Sources like Wikipedia are appropriate for younger students but not high school students.
- Information from sources is not merely copied; it is understood, interpreted, and synthesized in the student's own words.

Virtual Rubric

Written and Visual Communication

Written:

- For meta-analyses and scientific experiments, the report includes all required components: background, research question/hypothesis, procedures, data analysis, conclusion, and citations/references.
- For engineering design projects, the report includes an engineering design statement, a design plan, and a discussion of prototype development and testing.
- Information is detailed, accurate, and well-organized.

- Free of grammar or formatting issues.
- In-text citations are provided where appropriate, and all references are listed in a Works Cited or References section.

Visual:

- Visuals are logically organized, neatly formatted, and easy to understand.
- Data presentation (graphs, charts, and/or tables) is appropriate for the student's grade level and may include basic or advanced statistical methods when relevant.
- All images and graphics are cited.

Originality

- The project shows strong originality for the student's grade level, featuring independent thought and a unique concept, approach, or solution that goes beyond standard or replicated work.
- There may be a novel combination of concepts or a unique method of analysis that reveals something not previously understood or clearly documented.
- The work reflects independent thinking and problem-solving beyond what is typically expected at this grade level.

Research or Design Methodology

- The project addresses a clear and focused scientific question or engineering problem.
- For science experiments, the hypothesis is specific and testable using scientific methods.
- For meta-analysis projects, the hypothesis is testable using data drawn from multiple peer-reviewed studies.
- For engineering design projects, the problem is clearly defined, and the criteria for success are identified. Preliminary designs are developed, and a prototype is created and tested.
- Sufficient and reproducible data are collected using appropriate, ethical, and safe methods.
- For meta-analyses & science experiments, a meaningful and sufficient body of scientific data is synthesized to address the research question.
- For engineering design projects, materials and tools are used effectively to construct a working prototype or model.
- Conclusions logically follow from the data and are supported by evidence.
- Possible sources of error are acknowledged.
- For engineering design projects, the effectiveness of the prototype is evaluated against the original success criteria.

Depth of Understanding (considering student's grade level)

- Adequate age-appropriate background research (journals, textbooks, websites, etc.), analysis, and references relevant to the project, which provide a basis for the hypothesis and age-appropriate use of terms and principles. *Keep in mind,

5th graders do not have the same knowledge base as 12th graders.

- Age-appropriate sources are used. Sources like Wikipedia are appropriate for younger students but not high school students.
- Information from sources is not merely copied; it is understood, interpreted, and synthesized in the student's own words.

F. Ranking vs. Criteria

The OAS does not rank students at Regional or State Science Days. Instead, OAS Judges compare students against the judging criteria.

G. Re-judging Criteria to be used at Regional and State Science Days

At all Regional and State Science Days, a project shall automatically be re-judged if all three of the following conditions apply:

- The judges' final ratings differ,
- The average of the judges' scores corresponds to the lower rating, and
- If the judges' total scores differ by six or more points.

At State Science Day, the re-judging policy is applied separately to the virtual and in-person scores; it does not apply to the sum of the virtual and in-person judges' scores. Furthermore, if the difference between the average online judging score and the average in-person judging score is 12 or greater points for a project at State Science Day, an OAS-designated representative will review all aspects of the project to determine if the difference is valid. The OAS-designated representative will conduct any further review of the project on the day of State Science Day if the score difference is deemed invalid. The decision from this representative is final and non-appealable.

A project can be re-judged by one or two different judges, as is practical for the Science Day event. If a project is re-judged by two judges, their scores are averaged to determine the final score and rating. If a project is re-judged by one judge, that judge's score is averaged with the higher of the first two judges' scores to determine the final score and rating for the project.

The OAS emphasizes fairness and integrity in its Science Day programs. All participants in OAS Science Day programs accept the judging results as final. The OAS has an automatic re-judging policy used when all three of the above criteria are met. If all these conditions are satisfied, re-judging is automatic. Otherwise, the initial evaluations stand as final. Students and their guardians acknowledge that:

- Judging is conducted according to standardized criteria established by the OAS (Section V, Part C).
- Re-judging is only initiated under specific conditions outlined in Section V, Part G.
- Requests for re-judging outside of these conditions will not be entertained.

Under exceptional circumstances, a project may be re-judged at a Regional Science Day with the approval of the Regional Science Day Director or designee.

Under exceptional circumstances, a project may be re-judged at State Science Day with the approval of the CEO of the OAS, the Director of the JAC, or the designee.

H. Judging Ethics

Judges shall:

- Return judging cards immediately to Science Day officials if (1) you know the student, (2) the project is out of your area of expertise, or (3) there are language issues that may impair communication.
- Keep in mind that the JAC's mission is to discover and foster students' interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in grades 5-12.
- Have no prior involvement with the participant or project.
- Adhere to all OAS Guidelines.
- Judge students against CRITERIA, not against other students.
- Listen carefully to the student's complete presentation.
- Be constantly attentive and courteous to students.
- Evaluate theoretical and applied projects without bias toward either.
- Provide written, constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement.
- Avoid discussing ratings with others before the public release.

VI. Code of Conduct and Ethics Policies

A. Scientific Fraud & Misconduct

Scientific fraud and misconduct are not condoned at any level of research or competition. This includes plagiarism, forgery, the use or presentation of other researchers' work as one's own, data fabrication, and the inappropriate use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). The project should reflect the student(s) 'independent research and be presented in their own words, with proper citations, particularly if artificial intelligence is used. The project must not include fraudulent data, plagiarism, or inappropriate use of GenAI in presenting work that is not their own. Examples of improper use of GenAI include, but are not limited to, authorship of a research paper by GenAI, fabrication of data to give a false impression, manipulation of images (except when used to improve readability), concealing outliers, and changing, adding to, or omitting data points. Any use of GenAI must be adequately explained and cited (<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>).

Fraudulent projects will not qualify for the competition. The OAS and the JAC reserve the right to revoke recognition of a project subsequently found to be fraudulent. Any claim of scientific fraud and misconduct in a project made before, during, or within one week after State Science Day shall be judged as usual, but all scores, ratings, and awards shall be retained until a review of the project is completed by the OAS office and/or its delegated inspectors. If the project is found to violate the scientific fraud and misconduct policy, the registration fees for State Science Day, as well as awards and ratings, will be forfeited. The school from which the project originated will be contacted. The student's future project(s) must pass a review before being presented at OAS Science Days.

B. Student, Family Member, and Teacher Decorum

All student participants, their family members, and teachers are expected to conduct themselves courteously, respectfully, and constructively at all times during OAS events. These events are academic in nature and are intended to encourage scientific inquiry, learning, and community engagement.

Respect for Judges and Officials

- All decisions made by judges and OAS officials are final unless formally re-evaluated in accordance with the specific criteria outlined in the Science Day Standards.
- Verbal confrontations, arguing, or attempts to influence judges' decisions are strictly prohibited.

Event Etiquette

- Attendees must refrain from disruptive behavior, including loud conversations, disrespectful gestures, or inappropriate language.
- Mobile devices should be silenced, and photography or video recording should be done respectfully and without disturbing participants or judges.

Supportive Behavior

- Family members and teachers are encouraged to support student participants through positive encouragement.
- Derogatory comments about other students, projects, or event outcomes will not be tolerated.
- Students, families, and teachers are expected always to follow the instructions of event staff, volunteers, and OAS officials. Any violations of facility rules, safety protocols, or event schedules may result in removal from the venue.

Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary actions, including, but not limited to:

- Removal from the event venue
- Disqualification of the student's project
- Ineligibility for awards or future participation in OAS programs

C. General Harassment (In-person or Online Communications)

This policy prohibits harassment of any kind against any student, volunteer, or employee by an adult, another student, volunteer, Science Day committee member or employee, or third party for any reason including, but not limited to, age, national origin, race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, ancestry and/or veteran status. Harassment includes but is not limited to slurs, epithets, threats, derogatory comments, unwelcome jokes, and teasing.

Any student or other person who feels that they are a victim of such harassment at an Ohio Science Day program should promptly report the matter to a member of the Event Staff or a Committee member (of the respective State or Regional Science Day

Committee) or other adult authority who must immediately present it to the proper Science Day authority. If a Science Day employee or adult volunteer becomes aware of such a situation, they are responsible for reporting it to the appropriate Science Day event authority (the OAS CEO or the JAC Director for State Science Day, or the Regional Council Chair or a designated council member for each respective Regional Science Day). Upon receipt of an allegation(s), the appropriate representative of the Host Institution will be contacted, and an investigation will be initiated following the established policy and procedure of the Host Institution. All such reports will be handled as confidentially as possible. The Science Day event authority, the Host Institution, or both organizations may take appropriate disciplinary action against anyone who violates the harassment policy. This includes contacting appropriate law enforcement agencies if deemed necessary.

No adverse action or retaliation will be allowed against a person who reports a violation or participates in an investigation of this policy in good faith. Knowingly false accusations are prohibited and will be treated by disciplinary action comparable to that which would be applied to actual misconduct.

D. Sexual Harassment (In-person or Online Communications)

Sexual harassment of or by any person attending any Science Day event (State or Regional level) is prohibited. Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, including, but not limited to, drawings, pictures, jokes, teasing, or uninvited touching.

In accordance with this policy, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexual demands, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature will constitute sexual harassment when:

- The conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an affected person's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment, or in third-party situations, one or more individuals are reasonably offended by the sexual interaction, conduct, or communications between others.
- The conduct creates actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest, favoritism, disruption, or a lack of objectivity. Any student or other person who feels that they are a victim of sexual harassment at an Ohio Science Day program should promptly report the matter to a member of the Event Staff or a Committee member (of the respective State or Regional Science Day Committee) or other adult authority who must immediately present it to the proper Science Day authority. If a Science Day employee or Adult volunteer becomes aware of such a situation, they are under the responsibility to report it to the proper Science Day event authority (OAS CEO or JAC Director for State Science Day, or Regional Council Chair or designated council member for each respective Regional Science Day) Upon receipt of an allegation(s), the appropriate representative of the Host Institution will be contacted and an investigation will be initiated following the established policy & procedure of the Host Institution. All such reports will be handled as confidentially as possible. The Science Day

event authority, the Host Institution, or both organizations may take appropriate disciplinary action against anyone who violates the harassment policy. This includes contacting appropriate law enforcement agencies if deemed necessary.

No adverse action or retaliation will be allowed against a person who reports a violation or participates in an investigation of this policy in good faith. Knowingly false accusations are prohibited and will be treated by disciplinary action comparable to that which would be applied to actual misconduct.

E. Accommodation of Students with Disabilities at Science Days

OAS is committed to providing students with disabilities meaningful access to Science Days. A student or parent/legal guardian may request a reasonable modification to presentation, communication, display, or participation requirements. Requests should be submitted to OAS as early as possible and must be requested at least 48 hours before the event, with enough information to identify the barrier and the requested modification.

Approved modifications may change how a student presents or communicates, but do not waive the requirement to participate in the assigned virtual and in-person judging formats, satisfy research and safety rules, or demonstrate the student's own understanding and contribution. OAS will determine appropriate modifications in consultation with the student and family and will communicate approved arrangements to relevant officials on a need-to-know basis.