



January 8, 2026

To: All Ellis County 5th Grade Teachers & Principals

Greetings!

The Hays Arts Council is proud to present the **30th Annual** Ellis County **FAMOUS FIGURES** project for Fifth Grade students – again culminating in a live final competition in the Beach/Schmidt Performing Arts Center! This project has always been so popular and we are happy to present this educational, cultural and entertaining event through the support of the **Hays Rotary Club**. Included with this letter are the project materials: *rules information, judging form, and question examples*.

“Famous Figures” is a competition open to 5th grade students throughout Ellis County. The contest involves students researching, developing, memorizing and then presenting a favorite character from history. The character can be living or deceased, but **NOT** fictional – and, the “Famous Figure” is to represent character traits of a **POSITIVE** role model. This competition is being offered to promote thinking and writing in a creative manner, the use of research skills, awareness and appreciation of the qualities of positive leadership, as well as nurturing acting and public speaking skills.

Two (2) contestants are allowed per 5th grade classroom. This is an individual competition (no “duet” performances). Order of presentation will be random and, until the awards presentation, students will be identified by character only, not by school or their name. In the case of illness or other emergency, substitutes will be allowed. One sponsor needs to accompany students the day of performance.

The county-wide competition will be held **Friday, May 1 from 8:20 to 11:45am in Beach/Schmidt** (*we will confirm individual performance times no later than noon on Tue, April 28*). Fifth grade classes are not only welcome but are encouraged to attend as the support is important to the competitors and the informational and educational aspects of the event are fantastic, whether the students are finalists or audience members. Of course, it is also a great learning and preparation experience for your 4th graders, some of whom will be taking the stage next year!

The names of the competitors and their characters are to be submitted to me (bmeder1038@aol.com) by no later than **4:00pm, Friday, April 25**. However, we would appreciate it if you or your school would email me by March 25 *with a confirmation* as to whether you plan to participate or not.

Please feel free to contact me if you are new to the project or have any questions after looking over this information. We hope you and your students have a great time with this exciting project and we wish you much success!

Thank you!

Brenda K. Meder
Director of School Programming
785-623-8902

HAYS ARTS COUNCIL FAMOUS FIGURES PROJECT

Ellis County Finals - Friday, May 1, 2026

8:20 to 11:45 AM

FHSU – Beach/Schmidt Performing Arts Center

Project Information:

- "Famous Figures" is a competition open to 5th grade students in Ellis County. Students present themselves in character and costume as a famous person in history. The character can be living or deceased, but NOT fictional – and, the “Famous Figure” is to represent character traits of a **POSITIVE** role model.
- **This program promotes thinking in a creative manner, the use of research skills, creative writing, organization, an awareness & appreciation of the qualities of positive leadership – in addition to developing acting and public speaking skills. *** utilize the included judging form to prepare and direct student skills and development.***
- Schools are allowed two (2) contestants per each 5th grade classroom - to be determined however you choose. Classroom competitions prove rewarding when done as an entire class project. **** An equal number of finalists DO NOT have to come from each 5th grade classroom . . . finalists can indeed be chosen from the collective 5th grade enrollment, as long as the number of finalists is equivalent to 2 contestants per the number of classrooms**
- Students must arrive in general costume and/or makeup - minor accessories or simple details can be finalized in the dressing room. (arrival time will be announced later)
- Each presentation will be made in costume, performing as the character she/he has chosen to portray. Any historical character is eligible - often instructors tie the choices to a particular class project: famous authors; early American history; United States presidents/leaders; religious, military, civil rights, medical & scientific leaders; musicians, actors, artists; etc. Fictional characters are NOT eligible. Encourage students to think creatively and to select someone whose personal attributes, characteristics & accomplishments they admire.
- The performance is to be approximately three (3) minutes (*deduction after 3 ½ minutes*). * Minimal props are allowed if needed. The Hays Arts Council will have available two (2) chairs, a small table and an easel (*students are responsible for anything else*).
- Following each performance, the judges will ask one or two very simple, general "interview" questions of each **"character."** Students need to remember to respond as their character.
- Each entry is to be one person performing as one character - no duet performances are eligible (ex. – the Wright *Brothers* as one entry)
- **Performance videos & images from the 2025 project can be found on our website's Famous Figures page:** <https://haysartscouncil.org/famous-figures>
- Deadline for the submission of the two (2) classroom entries is 4:00pm Friday, April 24. BUT, we also ask that you contact us by March 25 with a confirmation as to whether you plan to participate or not by emailing Brenda Meder, the HAC Director of School Programming at bmeder1038@aol.com. (or cell phone # 785-623-8902)
- Final presentation times will be arranged and confirmed with your school by no later than noon on Tuesday, April 28. Substitutions are allowed in cases of illness or emergency, but we ask that the substitution call be made as soon as possible.
- All contestants performing on May 1 will be awarded engraved medals, with the 1st through 5th place finishers also receiving trophies. The announcements will be made immediately following the competition and the judges' decisions.

project support has been provided by The Hays Rotary Club

2026 HAYS ARTS COUNCIL FAMOUS FIGURES COMPETITION

FINAL RANKING _____
(1st through 7th place)

Contestant #: _____ **Character:** _____

OK

GOOD

GREAT!

Quality & Organization of Information - Script Creativity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

information is accurate and well organized - but the student's "script" is *more* than just dates & names – the scripted material supports an engaging stage "*performance*" rather than it simply being an informative "*speech*"

Acting / Stage Presentation

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

voice projection & diction, pace of delivery (not too rushed nor too slow), stage movement, eye contact with judges & audience, gestures & mannerisms, ability to stay "in character," dialect, costume, etc.

Response to Questions

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

responses are appropriate, spontaneous, and in character

Total (from a possible 50) Points _____

Time _____

5 point deduction if presentation is **under 2 minutes or over 3 ½ minutes**

(_____)

Final Points _____

Judges Notes:

Questions to FAMOUS FIGURES “Characters”

Below are examples of the types of “interview” questions which might be asked by a judge following a student’s Famous Figures performance.

**** Please keep in mind that these are simply examples of the type of questions that might be asked.**

Most often, the judge’s questions are simply a spontaneous response to some aspect of the student’s presentation that the judges found interesting. The judges will NOT be attempting to put students “on the spot” or intend to “quiz” them, but will rather provide them the opportunity to showcase their poise and overall familiarity with their character

One or two questions will be asked of each student. . . often, it’s a just single question from one of the judges. There is NO need for students to prepare answers for these questions. If they are comfortable with their character, they will have no trouble – the questions are NOT meant to be a “test” or about specifics (dates, times, places, etc.) Questions will be appropriate to the character and the student’s presentation.

- What do you consider the highlight of your career/profession?
- Did you have any regrets about your life?
- What do you hope young people (*boys / girls*) might learn from your experiences?
- What do you think you’ll be most remembered for?
- What kind of chores or family responsibility did you have?
- What is your favorite book that you’ve written?
- What impact do you hope your life & experiences have made on others?
- Did you have a favorite subject in school?
- Who do / did you admire and why?
- Why did you choose the profession you did?
- Was there someone important who supported you or helped you in your career?
- What do you think you might have done with your life if you hadn’t become what you are/were?
- How important was your family to what you became?
- If you could be given an award for anything you’ve done in your life, what would it be for?
- What do you wish you could have changed about your life?