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Coaches' Bulletin

One League's Experience with Virtual Tournaments

The New Orleans Academic Games League is one of the most diverse in the nation. The schools in the league are spread across four contiguous parishes, and this does not include the separate Jefferson Parish and St. Bernard Parish leagues that consist of only public schools.

NOAGL's Elementary, Middle, Junior and Senior Divisions consist of public schools, Catholic schools, Episcopal schools, and private non-denominational schools. Some are small; some are large.

We hold our tournaments at 4 PM on school days. All four games – *Propaganda*, *Presidents*, *Equations*, and *On-Sets* – are conducted in two sessions. We just had our Propaganda Sections B and C rounds for EI/Mid and Jr/Sr. I'd like to share our procedures and how it went. And I'd very much **like to hear how your league conducts its virtual rounds** and your evaluation of your process. I'll share your feedback in future Coaches' Bulletins.

These were the instructions for the coach/monitors at the various schools.

1. Submit the entry form listing your players by teams with any extras at the end. Any change in your lineup must be sent in by the start of the first round (Section B).
2. Seat players at desks or tables so that each player is at least 3' from other players in every direction.
3. Run off a copy of the AGLOA answer sheet for each player for each round. Also provide each with the AGLOA Technique List. The Technique Sheet may have no marks on it.

4. Since no answers will be called out, a player who raises a hand after the second reading of an example should be ignored because play will not stop as it would when everyone is together in the same room.
5. A player who must leave the room for an emergency will miss whatever examples are read during his/her absence.
6. If you have an emergency technical issue that prevents your players from continuing in the round, email, call, or text <Name of contact who is in the same location as the reader>.

During the ten-minute break between rounds, monitors collected the answer sheets and distributed new ones for the second round.

The answer sheets had to be delivered to the assigned person/location by 5 PM the next day in either of two ways:

1. Scan them and attach to an email.
2. Deliver them in person.

A committee of four persons met two days after the tournament to score the answer sheets. Two people did each round for each division. One person scored Section B while the other scored Section C. Then the pair exchanged papers and checked each other's work. The process took an hour and a half for Elementary Division which is by far our largest group. The results were posted later that day on the NOAGL web site and sent via email to each coach.

As it turned out, the Jr/Sr rounds took longer than the EI/Mid rounds. EI/Mid started promptly at 4 PM. Both rounds were finished by 4:32.

could have done all four sections in less time than it usually takes to do two sections in person. The difference? *We didn't have to wait after each answer was revealed to deal with raised hands* as is the case for at least half the examples in EI/Mid especially.

The Jr/Sr round started ten minutes late waiting for one player at one school. This mirrored what usually happens when we gather at one site. Because of school groups coming from varying distances from schools with varying dismissal times, we rarely start in-person rounds before 4:10, 4:15, or even 4:20.

Once we started the Jr/Sr rounds, we finished in a half hour – same as EI/Mid.

Presidents rounds will take longer because there are 12 questions with three clues each. However, there is no second round on the same day. On the other hand, *Presidents* has the added burden of checking that each player marked 6, 4, or 2 correctly as the wager. One possibility is players exchanging answer sheets just to initial each other's wagers. But monitors will have to be more alert for *Presidents* than for *Propaganda*. Time may have to be allotted for monitors to check that each player marked his wager correctly. Perhaps each player can be provided with a 6-4-2 sheet or each pair of players, who must social distance but stay close enough to exchange.

My feeling after conducting the *Propaganda* rounds is, "I think I like this better than in-person rounds." Coaches don't have to arrange transportation to the tournament site, and parents can pick up their children at their school rather than at the tournament site. We'll decide as a league at the end of this school year whether we want to continue this way in 2021-22 when – hopefully – restrictions on gatherings will be lifted.

Please share how your league organizes your virtual reading games tournaments and report on how it went. bngolden1@cox.net



Submit questions to:
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Presidents

Q1 What suggestions do you have for preparing players for *Presidents*?

A1 The *Presidents* themes for 2020-21 are:

All Divisions: Occupations and Posts

Junior/Senior: Immigration

Worksheets are provided for these themes on the *Presidents* disk (as revised for the new groupings in 2019), and many questions will include information of the themes topics.

However, other worksheets should also be used to prepare players for this year's rounds. Many clues refer to the First Ladies, the Vice Presidents, and major events in the president's term.

One practice session can start with distributing a worksheet to all players. Let's say it's the Vice Presidents worksheet for a certain range. Instead of taking the vice presidents in order and matching them with the president, give players time to write any answers that they know. After a few minutes, ask the players to give one of their answers. If an answer is correct, everyone enters it on their worksheet. As players give answers, process of elimination helps determine other answers. When only a handful of vice presidents remain unmatched, players can guess the remaining answers. Players remember answers better this way than if you give them the worksheet with the answers printed on it. If you have enough practices, you can later – close to the tournament day - give out the blank Vice Presidents worksheet again and repeat the process described above. Hopefully, everyone does better on the second review than they did on the first.

You can also encourage players to pair up with a study buddy outside of practice time and take turns peppering each other with questions from a worksheet, especially the worksheets on this year's themes.