**Ranking and Voting Systems for SFHS Prize and Award Committees**

The Executive Committee recommends that prize and award committees use a Borda Count[[1]](#footnote-1) system to determine prize and awards winners and nominees to prize and award committees. This voting system takes intensity of preference into account. It aims to select winners who are most broadly acceptable to all voting members (consensus winner) rather than those preferred by the majority.

Recommended procedure:

1. The chair distributes items to be evaluated (books, articles, applications) among members of the committee based on areas of expertise for preliminary evaluation. Each member then determines a short list of semi-finalists from their subfield;
2. The chair shares the materials from all semi-finalists with the whole committee for a full read by all members;
3. The members discuss the various semi-finalists;
4. Each member ranks all semi-finalists in order of preference and sends these rankings to the Chair;
5. The Chair determines the winner according to a Borda Count.

**Example**

The Chair decides how many ranked preferences each committee member should submit. Imagine that in the following example, the Chair asks each of four committee members to rank their top three preferences. Let’s say that the members ranked their top three finalists in the following ways:

Reviewer 1: Reviewer 2: Reviewer 3: Reviewer 4:

Voltaire Diderot Voltaire Diderot

D’Holbach Sade Rousseau Voltaire

Diderot Rousseau Condorcet Montesquieu

The chair assigns points based on how many rankings were requested. Because in this case there were three rankings, the points are distributed as follows: 3 points for every first place, 2 points for every second place, and 1 point for every third place.

Tally:

Voltaire=3+0+3+2=8

Diderot = 1+3+0+3= 7

Rousseau=0+1+2+0=3

D’Holbach= 2+0+0+0=2

Sade=0+2+0+0=2

Montesquieu = 0+0+0+1= 1

According to the Borda Count, then, Voltaire would be declared the winner.

In contrast, the traditional plurality winner (most first place votes) in this example would have yielded a tie.

Tally:

Diderot = 2

Voltaire = 2

The Borda count hereby avoided a tie and revealed a stronger consensus that Voltaire should win. Should the committee be authorized to award an honorable mention, Diderot would be accorded that honor.

1. Named after Jean-Charles, chevalier de Borda (4 May 1733 – 19 February 1799), mathematician and naval engineer. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)