



2016 All-Newspaper & Newsmagazine Contest Evaluation

Ohio Scholastic Media Association

Category _____ Date _____

School name _____

Publication name _____

City _____

Overall Marks

● Coverage

- News _____
- Features _____
- Opinion _____
- Sports _____
- AVERAGE: _____

● Writing/Editing

- The Basics _____
- News _____
- Features _____
- Opinion _____
- Sports _____
- Headlines _____
- Cutlines _____
- AVERAGE: _____

● Photography

- Content _____
- Technical Quality _____
- AVERAGE: _____

● Art/Graphics

- Illustrations _____
- Cartoons _____
- Infographics _____
- Ads _____
- AVERAGE: _____

● Design

- Page One _____
- News/Features _____
- Opinion _____
- Sports _____
- Typography _____
- AVERAGE: _____

● Leadership

- Editorial _____
- Law & Ethics _____
- Business _____
- AVERAGE: _____

OVERALL _____

Judge's Instructions

1. Please read the OSMA contest "publication information" form with the school's three issues. Take into account any special problems such as budget, production difficulties, etc. assign a score of 1, 2 or 3 to that section (Plus or minus is OK for the average.)
2. Next to each statement in this book, mark 3 for strong work in that area, 2 for adequate work, 1 for needing improvement and (NA) for not applicable.
3. Then, for each section (i.e. Coverage/News, Photography/Content, etc.) make a holistic appraisal of how the publication conforms to the norms of that section and 4. Enter and average these scores on the front. OSMA Headquarters will use these scores to rate this publication **All-Ohio** — reserved for top publications strong in most categories — or **First, Second, Third Place** or **Honorable Mention**.
5. Through citing strengths and weaknesses and offering specific suggestions in this booklet, we help students improve as journalists. They appreciate your time and input, and so does OSMA. Thank you.

Entrants' Instructions

Yes, you get instructions, too. In fact, they're more important than the judge's. What you do right now will determine if you wasted money submitting your publication to be evaluated or if this will be worth more than the piece of paper with your rating on it. Follow these steps:

1. Don't look at your rating yet. (Okay, it's too late, but try to keep an open mind. This is only one judge's opinion, BUT he/she is very

- All-Ohio
- First Place
- Second Place
- Third Place
- Honorable Mention

- knowledgeable and trying to help you.)
2. Read the evaluation thoroughly and calmly from front to back, using your newspaper/newsmagazine for reference.

3. Find three things the judge thinks you could improve and discuss how you might make these changes.
4. Find three things the judge liked and feel proud. These are things to continue. Good luck!

Coverage /average

News

- _____ 1. Stories cover a variety of topics with impact on most students' lives, both inside and outside the school.
- _____ 2. Stories are handled both in depth and in briefs as appropriate.
- _____ 3. Stories emphasize significance, interest and, if possible, timeliness. Many are oriented toward the future and not the past.
- _____ 4. Stories show evidence of in-depth reporting through a variety of sources. Such stories have authoritative sources who can offer new insight and information, not just another opinion.

Features

- _____ 1. Stories show a range of styles and tones.
- _____ 2. When possible, stories contain a news peg.
- _____ 3. Personality profiles give insight into newsworthy faculty, students and community members.
- _____ 4. Horoscopes, puzzles, jokes, gossip columns and articles that reflect little real reporting are avoided.
- _____ 5. First person is avoided unless it's absolutely the best angle for the story.

Opinion

- _____ 1. Each issue contains at least one unsigned editorial that represents the editorial board or staff opinion.
- _____ 2. Editorials are pertinent to the school and make a direct appeal to the reader.
- _____ 3. Editorials are generally based on and linked to objective coverage elsewhere in the publication.
- _____ 4. Editorials avoid trite subjects and ones about which nothing can be done; the publication also balances laudatory and analysis pieces, critical and lighter pieces.
- _____ 5. Editorial page also contains other opinion pieces, including letters to the editor, commentary and cartoons.
- _____ 6. It also regularly publishes a policy about letters and content.

Comments:

Sports

- _____ 1. Focus is on the future and feature angles, not on the past or on play-by-play coverage.
- _____ 2. Sports coverage is comprehensive -- intramural programs, community recreation, life sports, college or pro sports -- always with a student angle and “expert” sources.
- _____ 3. Final score, opponent and sport involved are mentioned early in coverage stories.
- _____ 4. Stories are balanced, not simply cheerleading for the school’s athletic program.
- _____ 5. Sports pages include some labeled sports opinion pieces as well as objective material.

Writing/Editing _____ /average

The Basics

- _____ 1. Stories contain correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, avoid typos and use consistent style (AP or comparable).
- _____ 2. Writing is clear, easy to understand, generally in active voice.
- _____ 3. Copy is tightly written and avoids clichés, triteness and “blah words” such as “there is/are/was/were.”
- _____ 4. Sentences are short and readable; paragraphs are a manageable length. (usually two or three sentences)
- _____ 5. Fairness and balance are top priorities.

News

- _____ 1. Stories are complete and answer all questions.
- _____ 2. Stories are objective; editorializing and first person are not used.
- _____ 3. Stories reflect sound interviewing techniques, and sources are properly identified.
- _____ 4. Leads emphasize the most important and timely element of the story and don’t rehash old information.
- _____ 5. Leads don’t begin with “a,” “an” or “the” or other dull words. Leads MAY begin with description or narration, followed by a “nut graph.”

Comments:

Features

- _____ 1. Leads pull reader into the story, avoiding questions or quotes.
- _____ 2. Feature leads have transitional flow into the “nut” graph.
- _____ 3. Stories mix direct and indirect quotes, emphasizing expert sources when possible and avoiding previously published material.
- _____ 4. Stories are logically organized, using transition to move the reader from one idea to the next throughout the story.
- _____ 5. Words are used to give life and color to stories without bringing in reporter opinion.

Opinion

- _____ 1. Editorials show early the staff’s stand on an issue.
- _____ 2. Editorials present logical support for their stand and offer solutions if at all possible.
- _____ 3. Editorials are written in terms of the understood “we,” not “I.”
- _____ 4. Editorials are short and tightly written, about 350 - 400 words.
- _____ 5. Opinion writing avoids the use of rhetorical questions. Changing rhetorical questions to statements makes stronger writing.
- _____ 6. Columns or commentaries are focused and make a point.
- _____ 7. Columns run regularly, if at all, and have a unifying tone or topic.
- _____ 8. Reviews are supported, illustrating why something is good or not; they don’t just retell a plot or list songs performed.

Sports

- _____ 1. Stories avoid clichés and unnecessary sports jargon.
- _____ 2. Stories emphasize the why and how and avoid retelling old events in chronological order.
- _____ 3. Stories avoid editorializing (i.e. Our great Bulldogs...).
- _____ 4. Creditable sources like coaches, athletic director and players are interviewed, and their quotes used.
- _____ 5. Stats are not overdone, but they are used with quotes to support points the reporter is making.

Comments:

Headlines

- _____ 1. In general headlines are active voice and contain subject and verb.
- _____ 2. Headlines highlight the story and attract the reader's attention.
- _____ 3. Headlines are written to fit. Traditional headlines fit across the allotted columns and display/feature headlines balance graphically with the rest of the page.

Cutlines

- _____ 1. Cutlines identify all people essential to understanding the context of the photo and give proper titles for each.
- _____ 2. Cutlines start with interesting words -- not just nouns -- and give additional information so they do not just state the obvious.

Photography _____ /average Content

- _____ 1. Photos help tell the story effectively.
- _____ 2. Candid photos predominate. Posed pictures are avoided.
- _____ 3. Photos generally contain people and action.
- _____ 4. Photos reflect a variety of angles and distances from subjects. Feature photos in particular use creative framing and approach.
- _____ 5. Photos vary throughout the publication in size and topic.
- _____ 6. Photos are properly credited. Those from the Internet indicate USED WITH PERMISSION. (These should not say "Photo compliments of the Internet." The Internet doesn't own them.)

Technical quality

- _____ 1. Photos are generally free of excess grain, dust or distortion in digital shots and other such problems.
- _____ 2. Photos are in focus.
- _____ 3. Photos have proper contrast, neither too gray nor too high contrast. Blacks are appropriately black, whites are white and a range of grays exists.
- _____ 4. Photos are cropped effectively and not used in odd, unnatural shapes.

Comments:

Art /Graphics _____/average

Illustrations

- _____ 1. Artwork communicates and adds to the message of the copy.
- _____ 2. Illustrations, hand-drawn or computer-assisted, have a professional touch with artists utilizing a variety of line widths, screens and graphic devices. Any words are typeset or neatly lettered.
- _____ 3. Illustrations are properly credited.

Cartoons

- _____ 1. A cartoon's message is readily clear to the reader.
- _____ 2. Artists use shading or screening and neat lettering so the cartoon looks polished.
- _____ 3. Cartoons are properly credited.

Infographics

- _____ 1. Publication uses charts, graphs, maps or diagrams when these will give the reader information attractively at a glance.
- _____ 2. Such graphic devices are properly attributed with source of the information and artist included.

Ads

- _____ 1. Ads contain photos, graphics and logos that help convey the client's message; number of fonts is limited.
- _____ 2. Ads show readers the benefit of the product or service to them and avoid "compliments of" type of ads.
- _____ 3. Ads are arranged attractively on the page, either pyramided up from the bottom or grouped in a block.

***NOTE:** Schools should be encouraged to use advertising. It supplies necessary funding but also gives staffers good experience interacting with community member advertisers and designing ad layouts.*

Design _____/average

Page one

- _____ 1. Whether a newspaper or newsmagazine, the first page/cover attractively conveys the tone of the publication.
- _____ 2. Significant stories are prominently displayed.

Comments:

Inside news/features pages

- _____ 1. Pages all have a visual center of interest with content organized so readers can find things easily.
- _____ 2. Pages each contain a folio with publication name, date and page number.

Opinion

- _____ 1. Regular features of the page -- editorial, columns, cartoon -- are easy to find and usually in approximately the same spot.
- _____ 2. Page is clearly marked as opinion, has no ads and contains the masthead with staff and policy statement.

Sports

- _____ 1. Action photos add to the excitement and interest of the page(s).
- _____ 2. Stat boxes, photos, column headings/logos and other graphic touches prevent the pages from looking gray.

Typography

- _____ 1. Grays are broken up effectively with headlines and graphic devices such as subheads, pulled quotes and lead-ins.
- _____ 2. Headline typefaces are limited and mix well with each other; display faces are used sparingly and only when appropriate. (NOTE: Newsmagazines may use a greater variety of fonts effectively.)

Leadership _____ /average

(Judge: see school info sheet for some of these categories)

Editorial content _____

- _____ 1. The publication shows its concern for bettering the lives of its readers through its coverage and content and especially through its staff editorials.
- _____ 2. The staff makes its readers aware of how the world around them impacts their lives with local angles and sources in articles on topics not directly related to school.

Law and Ethics _____

- _____ 1. The publication has a published policy that designates it as an open forum or a forum for student opinion. *(Although some districts will not agree to this, OSMA officials believe this is the best option for student media.)*

Comments:

- _____ 2. Student staff members make all final content decisions.
- _____ 3. Advisers do not perform regular tasks (i.e. editing, photography, proofreading, etc.) and do not make final content decisions.
- _____ 4. No administrators, faculty members other than the adviser or anyone outside the school reviews the newspaper or newsmagazine before it is published.
- _____ 5. The publication does not violate copyright regulations.

Business _____

- _____ 1. The publication prints at least eight issues a year. (Sometimes that isn't possible, but it should be a goal.)

Comments:

Overall comments: