

Judging Criteria for Newspaper Competition

Layout and Design: The design should reflect the personality of the publication. Its appearance should be clean, uncluttered and orderly. Consistent internal and external margins should be maintained. White space should be used effectively. Publication should be departmentalized as a reader service. Folios should be used on inside pages and include name of publication, page number and date. Art and photos are placed adjacent to relative stories. Column width variety should be used with sophisticated restraint and balance maintained.

Headline Writing/Masthead: Headlines are used as an element of design to communicate specific messages. The headline should attract the reader's attention. Action verbs and vivid nouns should predominate. They create a mood. Secondary headlines are used effectively in communicating a message as well as fulfilling design. As a general rule, headlines are placed flush left. Spacing between primary and secondary headlines and between headlines and body text should be consistent. The masthead/nameplate should be clean emphasizing the name of publication. It is placed at the top of the page and is generally between 2-2½ inches in depth. Masthead should include name of the school, city, state, zip code, date, and volume numbers in Arabic rather than Roman numerals.

Story Content/Leads: News coverage should be objective, written in third person with a student perspective, showing how issues, trends, and events affect students. Articles are based on direct quotes from sources and are balanced. Research should be an integral part of coverage. Coverage should not rehash previously published matter, but should be significant and appropriate for space allotted. Coverage should include academic as well as extracurricular and social activities. Features are journalistic based on interviews and theme development. Sports coverage is balanced between past and future games and events. Cliches should be avoided. Editorials stimulate readers to act, as they can criticize or attack, defend, endorse, compliment, instigate, advocate or appeal, entertain, or predict. Editorials are positive, well-researched and logical. The tone of the editorial is fair, calm, rational and mature. It is generally written in first person. A specific audience is generally targeted. Personal opinion columns include cartoons, responses to letters, and reviews. Leads generally have the basic inverted pyramid style. "A", "an" and "the" as well as time reference, "Last week" should be avoided.

Grammar/Punctuation: Type should be clean, elegant and readable. Type differentiates text, headlines, captions and other elements. A single typeface is used in display elements, such as nameplate folios, and standing heads. Newspaper stylebook rules are incorporated, including proper grammar and punctuation as well as reference to name identification (ex. Senior John Smith on first reference. Smith on second reference.)and school abbreviations. Writing is precise and concise.

Photography/Captions: Photos should be cropped to the center of action. Subject matter is in good taste and relevant to the reader. Attention is given to framing, contrast and focus. Graphics are well-planned and used to enhance communication rather than for their own sake. White space is used as an element of design. Persons essential to the action are identified, especially in sports. Caption does not state the obvious, but provides information. News questions are answered.