



NEWSPAPER EVALUATION

Name of School: _____

EXPLANATION OF EVALUATION SYSTEM

The NHSPA Newspaper Evaluation is designed to provide a framework for the judge in evaluating the newspaper, to reward the staff for creativity and accomplishments and to provide suggestions for improvement for future issues. We have tried to make this guide as open-ended as possible to allow the judge to consider all aspects of the student newspaper and its audience.

We want to allow staffs as much latitude as possible in producing newspapers that fit their school and community -- whether that be in a more traditional format or one that reflects modern trends and approaches. All of this must, of course, be built around sound journalism practices. This evaluation is designed to provide meaningful feedback and to recognize and reward excellence.

We hope our NHSPA judges find this digital evaluation guide user friendly. We want our evaluations to be easily used as learning tools. Although awards are nice, helping educate our advisers and students in scholastic journalism is the primary goal of our evaluation service.

By using this digital format, judges will be able to communicate with newspaper advisers and their students both strengths and weaknesses to make their next newspapers better in a format that advisers can readily share with their staffs. They can simply project the evaluations from a computer in their classroom and teach from them.

So that our awards ceremony will still have an element of surprise, the actual ratings will be removed before forwarding the evaluation to advisers. The full evaluation - comments and ratings - will be distributed at the fall conference.

Please send evaluations back by the deadline or sooner.

Please save your file using the name of the paper and school. (EX:Prowler-OmahaHS)

Begin your evaluation below:

Newspaper/Year: _____

School Name: _____

School Address _____

Adviser: _____

Part I - READER AIDS

Section A: Reader Aids

A. NAMEPLATE

- The nameplate includes paper's name, name of school, complete school address, complete city and state listing, issue and volume numbers and the date of publication
- The paper's name is designed in a specialized type that adds uniqueness to design of the nameplate.
- The nameplate establishes the personality of the paper
- Appropriate type sizes are used so nameplate information is easy to read, as well as functional for overall design of the nameplate area.

B. MASTHEAD

- The name of the paper is used as the heading of the masthead
- The same or similar design is used as the nameplate, so the nameplate and masthead are visually tied together.
- All necessary contact information -- school address, phone, e-mail Web-site - is listed
- Advertising information is given
- Staff position titles are noted clearly
- Adviser's name is also noted in masthead, preferably at the bottom of the list.
- An abbreviated staff policy is included in the masthead
- If names and titles are done in relatively small type (9 pt. or less), boldface type is used to make them easy to read.
- The placement of the masthead is appropriate based on the overall format of the newspaper.

C. FOLIOS

- All pages, with the exception of the front page, has a complete folio.
- The folio visually ties back into the design of the nameplate.
- Staff has titled pages appropriately, so reader quickly knows what general content will be covered on the page.
- Folios do not over-dominate the overall design of a page.

D. CONTENT LISTING and/or TEASERS

- If staff has decided to do a listing of what's on inside pages, it is placed effectively on the front page.
- If teasers are used, they help to entice the reader into the upcoming stories/pages.
- Design of the listing is tied in to the design of the rest of the front page.

E. LOGOS

- Column boxes and other standing graphics are clean and consistently designed
- Logos do not dominate design, but enhance it

SECTION A Commendations and Recommendations

Section B: Reader Aids

COVERAGE

- Staff has covered as many areas of school/student/community life as deemed appropriate for the size and frequency of the newspaper.
- The coverage seems well-rounded, with appropriate space given to news, opinion, features, reviews and sports.
- All segments of the student body are adequately represented, so one group doesn't appear to be getting special focus throughout the year.
- There is a text/visual balance to all coverage areas, so reader can understand stories through both visual and verbal means.
- Obvious coverage areas are omitted.
- Stories are told through words and visuals.
- Staff is careful not to over-cover themselves.
- Staff tried to develop coverage areas that reflect the culture or multi-culture of their students.

- Staff emphasized coverage of students over faculty, administrators and school staff.
- Writers quoted authoritative subjects, so coverage is thorough and credible.
- Writers presented events, situations and topics journalistically.
- Staff obviously tried to have broad coverage in each issue, as well as broad coverage for the entire year.

EDITING

- All news, feature, opinion and sports stories are properly edited and proofed to ensure easy readability.
- An acceptable editing stylebook, such as Associated Press, is used consistently.
- Copy editors have tightened all writing effectively.
- Headlines and secondary headlines are edited effectively.
- Pulled quotes or quote outs are edited appropriately.
- Cutlines are edited according to the prescribed style developed by the newspaper's designers.
- Bylines are handled consistently throughout the paper.
- Artist/photographer credits are handled consistently throughout the paper.
- Appropriate editing of design elements is made for consistent appearance to the entire newspaper.
- It is obvious to the evaluator that a design editor has been designated, so consistency noted above has been maintained throughout the newspaper.

Section B Commendations and Recommendations:

Section C: Reader Aids

GENERAL DESIGN

- All pages and spreads are designed appropriately, balancing copy to photographs and artwork/graphics to white space.
- Design techniques are consistent throughout a section or throughout the entire newspaper.
- Large areas of grayness are avoided.
- Modular design is adhered to consistently.
- Column widths are varied throughout the paper and on individual pages to add some variety to the overall design.
- Consistent type faces are used appropriately throughout the newspaper.
- Nameplate visually relates to masthead.
- Folios visually relate to nameplate or to one another.
- The front page sets the style tone for the rest of the newspaper.
- Most stories are anchored by a lead story and a large headline.
- Graphic elements are used effectively, so they don't over-dominate a particular page.
- The eye-flow on individual pages leads the reader effectively from design element to design element.
- Photographs of appropriate sizes are for their related stories.
- Unimaginative stacking of headlines is limited or avoided.
- All pages are numbered correctly for easy reference by reader.
- Graphics are modern and pleasing.
- Typography, graphics, photographs and layouts work together effectively to create a total visual package.
- Standing columns have appropriate and consistent headlines.
- Cutlines are set in a different typeface from the regular copy text.
- Secondary headlines, if used, contrast effectively with their respective headlines.
- Staff selected readable typefaces and type sizes for all pages.
- Staff is cost effective in designing their newspaper in multiples of four.
- Staff is cost effective in using color appropriately on natural spreads or printer pages.
- If centerspread concept is used, designers crossed the gutter of the paper to tie the two facing pages together visually.

SCORE FOR READER AIDS

0	100	140	170	200	
Needs improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

OVERALL VISUALS GENERAL COMMENTS:

PART II: OVERALL VISUALS

OVERALL VISUALS: SECTION A

DESIGN CONCEPTS

- Individual pages use column designs effectively.
- Inside and outside margins are consistent throughout the newspaper.
- Bylines are placed a consistent unit or space below headlines.
- Bylines are placed a consistent unit of space above the starts of their respective stories.
- Leading/spacing between lines of type is consistent within stories.
- If a graphic technique is used on a particular design element, such as lines above and below a quote out, it is used consistently throughout the newspaper.
- Cutlines are visually linked to their respective photographs.
- If two or more photos are used on a page, they are of varying shapes and sizes.
- Designers avoided stacking same-size headlines on a page.
- All graphic elements enhance readability instead of hindering it.

TYPOGRAPHY

- A stylized type is used for the nameplate and masthead.
- Modern type faces are used throughout the newspaper.
- All typefaces are easy to read.
- Staff avoided mixing uncomplementary type faces.
- Boldface type is used effectively in headlines and cutlines and on most small (8 or 9 pt.) type.
- Staff successfully used regular and boldface type for contrast.
- Staff avoided using small (8 or 9 pt.) italic type that is hard to read.
- A variety of type sizes are used in headlines, so page designers give varying weights to stories.

- The overall use of type enhanced the appearance of the newspaper.
- Hand-lettering is avoided.
- Dated, unimaginative type, such as Bodoni, is avoided.
- The leading/spacing between the lines of type is consistent within a story and consistent in like areas, such as news or features, throughout the newspaper.
- If specialized type is used, it is obvious to the evaluator that it is done with a specific purpose in mind.

Section A Commendations and Recommendations:

OVERALL VISUALS: SECTION B PHOTOGRAPHY

- All photographs are sized and cropped appropriately.
- All photographs are in focus.
- Photographers display effective knowledge of photo composition.
- Candid photographs dominate pages.
- All photographs have in-depth cutlines that relate information beyond the obvious.
- Photographer credits are consistently placed in cutline or near the photograph.
- Eye-flow of individual photographs leads the reader into the page or back into a related story.
- If two or more photographs appear on a page, a variety of shapes and sizes of photographs are used.
- Photographs are used as an important design element on a page.
- A variety of shooting distances are used, so reader doesn't see all close-ups, medium shots or long-distance photographs.
- Photographer and page designer worked together to design a page that is primarily photographs.
- Staff considered visually linking words of a headline to the major compositional item in a related photograph.
- If portraits are used, they are displayed small and tightly cropped.
- If group or team photographs are used, they are displayed small and tightly cropped.
- All photographs are rectangular unless a particular shape enhances the design of a page.

ARTWORK/GRAPHICS

- Graphic elements, such as screens, shadowing, artwork, infographics, boldface type, rule lines, secondary colors, graduated screens, specialized typefaces, large initial letters and angled elements, are used effectively throughout the newspaper.
- Designers are consistent on their use and placement of artist/photographer credits, on rule lines with their quote outs and on specialized lead-in type styles.
- Hand-lettering is avoided in most artwork.
- If editorial cartoons or comic strips use hand-lettering, it is legible and compatible with the quality of the artwork.

Section B Commendations and Recommendations:

OVERALL VISUALS: SECTION C

INFOGRAPHICS

- Stand-alone infographics tell a complete story without relying on related stories.
- All infographics include a headline, an explainer, a pertinent chart or graph, a source line noting where information came from and a graphic producer's/creator's name.
- Headline is of appropriate size.
- The explainer summarizes the purpose of the infographic.
- The chart or graph is easy to understand.
- The choice of chart or graph style, such as pie chart or bar graph, is appropriate for the subject.
- Producer used appropriate rule line sizes on the infographic.
- If shading, shadowing or screening is done, it adds to the visual interest of the infographic.

GENERAL GRAPHICS

- Staff included graphic elements, such as screens, infographics, shadowing, angled elements, graduated screens, rule lines, large initial letters and/or stylized type, to create attractive and functional layouts.
- If color is used, it is used as a graphic element that adds visual interest to a page or to an area of a page.
- Staff is consistent in their use of graphics in like areas of the newspaper, such as in folios, bylines, quote outs and regular or standard columns.
- In general, graphics enhance the overall appearance of the newspaper.

RULE LINES

- Rule lines effectively add to the visual interest of a page or spread by not drawing too much attention.
- Rule lines do not distract from the total design of a page.
- Lines are placed appropriately around photographs and infographics
- Staff used a limited number of rule lines, so that the overall design of a page doesn't appear to have several segmented boxed-in areas.

Section C Commendations and Recommendations

ADVERTISING :SECTION D

SPECIAL NOTE: If newspaper does not include any advertising or patron ads, the evaluator will only make suggestions that relate to the importance of integrating ads into the paper. The evaluator will not penalize staffs for not including ads in their newspapers.

RELEVANCY

- Ads are solicited and designed with the student audience in mind.
- If coupon ads are used, they are relevant and timely.
- If classified ads are used, students take advantage of the offerings, or they are not pertinent enough to include in the newspaper.
- Since ads are an integral part of the newspaper profession, the staff also considers their importance to their scholastic newspaper.

PRINCIPLES

- Most principles of advertising are adhered to in the organization of the business side of the newspaper.
- Advertising and newspaper sales meet your projected costs each year.
- If business ads can't be used because of district or school policies, staff considered using patron ads as a means of increasing their budget.

PROFESSIONALISM

- Staff has a written policy on the acceptance of various types of ads for the newspaper.
- Ads are tasteful, legal and directed toward student audience.
- Staff ensured proper reproduction of camera-ready ads, so advertisers will approve of the quality of their ad.
- Staff has a designated business manager to handle all advertising concerns.
- An ad campaign is in place, so businesses are approached in a professional manner.

INDIVIDUAL AD DESIGNS

- The copy and design of each ad are directed to a student audience.
- Each ad displays a service or a product.
- Complimentary ads – those saying “compliments of...” – are avoided.
- Appropriate photographs, headlines and graphic elements are used in each ad.
- An official company logo is used if appropriate.
- Simple borders are used, so that the contents of the ad are dominant.
- Attractive typefaces are used on ads.
- Type sizes are appropriate for the overall size of the ad.
- Staff avoided the use of handwritten ads.
- Small business-card ads are avoided.
- Small one-column, one-inch ads are avoided.
- Specialized type or a graphic/photograph/artwork dominates the ad.
- It is apparent that business staff members have studied the designs of professionally produced ads so, they, too, can produce eye-catching ads.
- If reversed type is used, the type is large enough so the reader can easily read the message.
- If price of an item is critical to the ad’s message, it is set in type that stands out from the rest of the ad.
- If quality of an item is critical to the ad’s message, it is set in a type or placed on the ad in an area that stands out from the rest of the copy in the ad.

PLACEMENT ON PAGES

- Ads are placed appropriately at bottoms of most pages.
- Staff tried to adhere to modular design when placing the ads.
- Staff avoided placing competing company/product ads on the same page, or at least have not placed them side by side.
- If not in a rectangular module at bottom of the page, ads are consistently placed to the inside or to the outside of page throughout the newspaper.
- All ads are a consistent unit of space apart.
- Designers tended to place larger ads toward the gutter or inside of pages.

Commendations and Recommendations

SCORE FOR OVERALL VISUALS

0	100	200	250	300	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div>
Needs improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 300.

OVERALL VISUALS GENERAL COMMENTS:

PART III: COVERAGE

Front Page

- grabs reader attention through its coverage, and makes reader want to explore the newspaper more
- if news-oriented, it includes news that most specifically applies to the greatest number of students
- if feature oriented, its features are engaging and well-written, and are directed toward a diverse audience
- if magazine style, with dominant graphic or photo instead of stories, graphic is sharp and attention grabbing, justifying its prominent position
- if page is a combination of news and feature, one story is dominant, and its content, audience appeal, and quality of writing justify that dominance
- page utilizes highest quality graphics and stories, and its design is clean and consistent, not jumbled and confusing
- if an index is used, references to stories throughout the paper are clear and complete, and accompanying graphics are high quality

Commendations and Recommendations

News

- each issue includes a variety of topics, and issues throughout the year cover all areas of the school, including academics, clubs, individual student accomplishments, faculty and administration, school policy changes, school board decisions affecting students, local and national news with a localized school angle, etc.
- stories are well-researched and make use of statistical information when appropriate, making sure to attribute all statistical or student survey information
- stories include quotes from official sources when appropriate as well as student reactions
- section includes brief stories which expand coverage parameters when space does not permit extensive stories
- coverage shows evidence of staff's familiarity with the school and its diverse student population through variety of story topics that reflect that diversity, and especially through stories whose subject matter required investigation to uncover
- local, state, and national news is covered as it is applied to the student body through coverage of local reaction or ramifications

Commendations and Recommendations

Entertainment

- section includes reviews not only of movies or music, but of other cultural events which could include student performances, local concerts, plays, festivals, museum events, etc.
- coverage of topics is diverse, and not reflective of one or two staff member's tastes
- section includes news of upcoming events
- reviews are labelled as such, thus indicating that the article is one writer's opinion

Commendations and Recommendations

Opinion

- topics are primarily focused on issues within the school, or on local issues whose outcome directly affects students; commentary on national events is secondary to discussion of school issues
- editorials suggest solutions or alternatives, rather than just criticizing
- lead editorials are not signed indicating that they are the opinion of the entire staff
- editorials include well-researched facts and statistics, and reasoning is primarily logical, utilizing emotional appeals occasionally where effective
- columns are clearly labelled as one writer's opinion, and reflect universal topics of interest to high school students
- opinionated pieces other than staff editorials are bylined
- if letters to the editor are printed, letters critical of the newspaper are printed as well as those which are complimentary

Commendations and Recommendations

Features

- stories highlight individual student achievement or struggle in or out of school, as well as covering aspects of teacher, administrative, or staff lives that offer readers insight
- stories cover timely issues of interest to readers, such as relationships, planning their futures, smoking and/or drug or alcohol abuse, etc.
- stories are characterized by creative, engaging leads, and are filled with source quotes that reflect emotion, insight, etc.
- coverage in this section is diverse and reflective of all types of subjects, yet is geared primarily toward student audience

Commendations and Recommendations

In-Depth

- this category includes centerspreads, special package pages, in-depth magazines, or special focuses, all which examine one issue in depth with several stories, photos, graphics, artwork, etc.
- theme of section is clear, and all elements relate to central theme
- coverage is innovative and investigative, with evidence of thorough research
- stories reflect different aspects of the subject, and use quotes from both informed/involved students and official sources

Commendations and Recommendations

Sports

- section strives to include coverage of all levels of athletics, and not just varsity sports
- section includes coverage of all facets of athletics, including coaches, managers, trainers, videographers, injured players, rule changes, athletic eligibility, etc.
- coverage highlights accomplishments and/or challenges of each team that are unique to this year
- coverage includes accurate records of teams' performances, including scores, season records, post-season honors, and significant competitions, as well as contributing factors such as a change in level of participation, a change in coaching staff, injuries, etc.
- section includes sports features as well as sports news, including features about individual athletes who deserve the coverage either because of extraordinary accomplishments, or because of unusual struggle
- coverage does not shy away from teams that are losing, or that do not receive as much spectator coverage as other teams
- captions not only identify the player, but say which game it was, and any significant result of the action in the photo
- stories include coach and athlete quotes, and avoid cliches like "We're hoping to go to state," or "It's a rebuilding year," or "We've been working really hard..."

Commendations and Recommendations

SCORE FOR COVERAGE

0	100	140	170	200	
Needs improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

OVERALL COVERAGE COMMENTS:

PART IV: WRITING

WRITING: SECTION A.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- leads are dynamic and concise, grabbing readers' attention and pulling them into the story
- quotes are anecdotal; they're "feeling" rather than "fact" quotes
- source names are carefully proofread to avoid spelling errors
- AP style is followed, and stories are carefully edited for spelling and grammatical mistakes
- paragraphs are short to enhance readability
- topics are not mundane and overused, and coverage shows, and doesn't merely tell
- stories include answers to all key questions (who, where, why, what, when, and how), but even more importantly answer "So what?"
- stories feature quotes from all different kinds of students: students of both genders, all grade levels, ethnic groups, social groups, intellectual levels, etc.
- stories feature unique angles to necessary topics such as homecoming, dramatic productions, and team and club coverage
- students are identified by first name, last name, and grade, and faculty and administrators are identified by first and last name, and subject taught (English teacher Tom Jones)
- 'source said' rather than 'said source' construction is maintained, and 'said' is the only word used in attribution unless the situation demands another verb
- placement of attribution (before quote, after quote, or within quote) is varied and appropriate to placement of quote within framework of story and length of quote
- stories make logical use of transitions to avoid stacking quotes on top of each other

Commendations and Recommendations

B. Features

- style makes extensive use of sensory description in an attempt to "show, not tell"
- quotes are insightful and substantial, and are a significant element in the story
- creativity is the trademark of these stories, especially when developing the story's angle

Commendations and Recommendations

C. News

- all facts, especially those obtained through research, are clearly attributed
- sources are clearly identified, especially official sources outside the school community
- story construction is tight and concise, with that which is most newsworthy and applicable at the beginning of the story
- leads are direct and to the point

Commendations and Recommendations

D. Opinion

- all facts, especially those obtained through research, are clearly attributed
- sources are clearly identified, especially official sources outside the school community
- editorial takes a definite stand
- editorial includes logical reasons to support its stand, and addresses opposition concerns when appropriate
- editorial makes suggestions or offers solutions, rather than merely pointing out a problem
- editorial avoids use of first person pronouns
- columns exhibit originality, good taste, reader appeal and quality writing

Commendations and Recommendations

E. Entertainment

- movie reviews, book reviews, and other reviews involving discussion of plot are careful not to give away too much so that the reader can still enjoy what is being reviewed
- restaurant reviews should include menu items and price ranges, as well as appropriate attire
- all reviews should attempt to make comparisons to other more familiar examples in that genre so that readers may get a better idea of the nature of what is being reviewed
- coverage of coming events should be sure to include date, time, location and price

Commendations and Recommendations

F. Sports

- “team” is always subsequently referred to as “it” rather than “they”
- stories include opinions from key players, coaches, and when appropriate, members of opposing teams
- stories are more focused on overall trends and issues rather than play-by-play, since infrequency of publication makes detailed game coverage impractical and unnecessary
- important statistics and/or scores are included as key sports facts, especially to demonstrate a team’s progress or lack thereof

Commendations and Recommendations

G. Headlines/Cutlines

- Headlines attract reader attention, reflect information
- Headlines avoid overuse of school name, abbreviations, repetitions, split-infinitives, separation of adverbs and adjectives from verbs and nouns, separation of preposition from subject
- Varied styles of headlines can be used
- Cutlines have impact with challenging words, phrases. The first sentence in present tense and the remaining sentences in past tense. They avoid cliched phrases. All people are identified. A cutline appears with each photo.
- All photos and art are credited.

Commendations and Recommendations

SCORE FOR WRITING

0 100 200 250 300

Needs improvement Average/Good Very Good Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 300.

OVERALL WRITING COMMENTS:

FINAL RATINGS

Part One: Reader Aids _____/200

Part Two: Overall Visuals _____/300

Part Three: Coverage _____/200

Part Four: Writing _____/300

***Judges will disregard the section which relates to advertising if the publication does not include ads, and will not reduce a publications score. Please adjust ratings accordingly.*

TOTAL _____/1000

Cornhusker (850-1000)

Superior (700-849)

Distinction (550-699)

Merit (400-549)

_____ Cornhusker

This is NHSPAs highest evaluation rating. Newspaper receiving this rating demonstrate and exceed excellence in all areas of scholastic journalism production. These newspapers effectively integrate writing, design and photography/art to give readers an excellent record of the school

_____ Superior

Newspaper receiving this rating demonstrate excellence in most areas of scholastic journalism production. While they consistently integrate writing, design and photography/art into publications, they are lacking in at least one area of overall execution.

_____ Distinction

Newspaper receiving this rating have a basic understanding of general scholastic journalism standards. These newspapers consistently integrate writing, design and photography/art into their publications, but they are lacking in at least two areas of overall execution that makes for an award of distinction newspaper.

_____ Merit

Newspaper receiving this rating may meet some general journalist standards but lack necessary depth in writing, and excellence in design or photography/art to assure readers accurate and appropriate coverage of the year/events.

*** If a publication receives no official rating, the judge will provide specific recommendations along with a detail evaluation.**

Golden Kernel Award

Judges will award one or two Golden Kernel Awards to a staff for any special strength they see in any one or two bulleted items of the evalutaion

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ADDITIONAL EVALUATION COMMENTS:

Name of School: _____

School Size/Number of Students: _____