



2019-2020

**NEWSPAPER/
NEWS MAGAZINE
EVALUATION**

May 2019 update
By the NHSPA Board of Directors

NHSPA

Nebraska High School Press Association

Judges,

We hope our NHSPA newspaper judges find this digital evaluation guide user friendly. We want our guides to be easily used as learning tools. Although awards are nice, helping our advisers and students gain knowledge 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 future 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 evaluations to advisers. The full evaluation – comments and ratings – will be distributed at the NHSPA Fall Conference at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

Please send evaluations back by the deadline or sooner.

Please save your file using the name of the newspaper/news magazine and school name: (Ex: Rambler – Lancaster)

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise with the students of Nebraska.

Begin your evaluation below:

Newspaper/
News Magazine: _____

Year: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

Adviser: _____

Explanation of Evaluation System

- This evaluation is divided into four parts:
 1. **Coverage:** How well the newspaper covers all areas of school and community
 2. **Writing:** How well students use journalistic style as it applies to newspaper copy and captions
 3. **Design:** How well students follow design guidelines and utilize design to communicate coverage
 4. **Photos/ Graphics:** How well students produce photos/artwork/graphics of technical quality and dynamic content
- Each of the above sections is rated as Superior (Always), Excellent (Frequently), Good (Usually), Average (Sometimes), or Needs Improvement (Never).
- Judges will disregard evaluations which relate to advertising if the publication does not include ads or, and will not reduce a publication's score.
- Judges will annotate both positive and negative elements of the publication in red so that the staff can easily recognize the remarks. Therefore, judges will write on/in the publications.
- Judges may note that some schools have a tabloid or magazine-style newspaper. Scores should not be affected by their choice of format.
- Judges will include comments relevant to each division and therefore each section in the space on the page provided. In addition, they will include supplementary comments explaining their overall impressions.
- 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 evaluation.
- Publications will be awarded one of the following class ratings:
 - Cornhusker
 - Superior
 - Distinction
 - Merit
- If a publication receives no official rating, the judge will provide specific recommendations along with a detailed evaluation.

PART I: COVERAGE

BASIC:

- Staff has covered as many areas of school/student/community life as deemed appropriate for the size of staff and frequency of the newspaper.
- The coverage seems well-rounded.
- All segments of the student body are adequately represented.
- There is a text/visual balance to all coverage areas, so reader can understand stories through both visual and verbal means.
- Staff developed coverage areas that reflected the culture of their students.
- Staff emphasized coverage of students over faculty, administrators and school staff.

NEWS:

- Each issue includes a variety of topics: 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 all statistical information is attributed.
- 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.
- Local, state and national news is covered as it is applied to the student body through coverage of local reaction or ramifications.

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.
- Staff 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 labeled 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.

IN-DEPTH:

- Stories include 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 the 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.

FEATURE:

- 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.
- 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.

SPORTS:

- Section strives to include coverage of all levels of athletics, and not just varsity level sports.
- Section includes coverage of various facets of athletics, including coaches, managers, trainers, videographers, injured players, rule changes, athletic eligibility, etc.
- Stories highlight accomplishments and/or challenges of each team that are unique to this year.
- Coverage includes accurate records of team 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

ENTERTAINMENT:

- Section includes a variety of reviews: movies, music, food, student performances, local concerts, plays, festivals, museum events, etc.
- Coverage of topics is diverse, and not reflective of one or two staff members’ tastes.
- Section includes news of upcoming events.
- Reviews are labeled as such, thus indicating that the article is one writer’s opinion.

ADVERTISING (a publication will not be penalized for the lack of ads):

- The ads emphasize services and products of interest to students.
- Ads are displayed in a professional manner.
- Staff has avoided too many “business card” ads.
- Ads are appropriately designed.

OVERALL SCORE FOR COVERAGE

0-100	150	175	200	
Needs Improvement	Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

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

GENERAL COMMENTS FOR COVERAGE

PART II: WRITING

BASICS:

HEADLINES

- Headlines are clear summaries of the content and angle of the stories to which they refer.
- Language is dynamic so that headlines grab reader attention.
- All headlines have a subject and a verb, whether by themselves or in conjunction with a secondary head and are active rather than passive.
- Headline style is consistent regarding which words are capitalized.
- Headlines are written in present tense.
- Headlines are clever, appropriate, interesting and accurate. Label headlines are avoided.
- Primary and secondary headline work together effectively.
- The headline style is consistent throughout the section.
- Headlines are carefully proofread to avoid unclear language, misspellings and grammatical errors.
- Headlines avoid overuse of school name, abbreviations, repetitions, split-infinitives, separation of adverbs and adjectives from verbs and nouns, separation of preposition from subject.

COPY

- Leads are dynamic and concise, grabbing readers' attention and pulling them into the story.
- AP style is followed, and stories are carefully edited for spelling and grammatical mistakes.
- Paragraphs are short to enhance readability.
- Stories include answers to all key questions (who, where, why, what, when, and how).
- Stories feature quotes from multiple sources.
- Stories feature unique angles to necessary topics: homecoming, theater productions, team and club coverage, etc.

- Students are identified by first and last name, and grade, and faculty and administrators are identified by first and last name, and subject taught (English teacher Tom Jones); sources are identified by last name only in the second reference.
- Proper attribution is given in quotes: 'source said' rather than 'said source' as used.
- Stories make logical use of transitions to avoid stacking quotes on top of each other.
- Writers quoted authoritative subjects, so coverage is thorough and credible.

CAPTIONS

- Each photo should have a caption that includes a headline that serves as an entry point for the reader.
- Captions are usually more than one sentence and should be written in present tense when describing the photo specifically, and in past tense in subsequent sentences providing valuable supplementary or background information for the photo.
- Captions do not merely state the obvious (John Smith catches the football), but instead tell what isn't in the photo, such as details about the environment in which the photo was shot, the outcome of the event in the photo, background information leading up to the picture, or anything else that adds to the story of the photo without editorializing.
- Captions identify every recognizable person in the photo from left to right except when impractical; usually four or fewer.
- People in a photo need to all be identified by first and last names and by grade.
- Group captions are consistent in their designation of the location of students (front row, back row, etc.)
- Captions attempt to answer who, what, where, when, why, and how.
- Joke/gag captions should be avoided.
- Photos include a complete caption with rare exceptions.
- Sports captions tell the outcome of the event pictured, but do not repeat the scoreboard.
- Individual photo credits recognize student photographers for their work.
- Captions have impact with challenging words, phrases. The first sentence in present tense and the remaining sentences in past tense. They avoid clichéd phrases. All people are identified. A cutline appears with each photo.

SECTIONS:

NEWS

- All facts, especially those obtained through research, are clearly attributed.
- Sources are clearly identified, especially official sources outside of 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.

OPINION

- All facts, especially those obtained through research, are clearly attributed.
- Sources are clearly identified, especially official sources outside of the school community.
- Editorials take a definite stand. Editorials include logical reasons to support their stand, and address opposition concerns when appropriate.
- Editorials make suggestions or offer solutions, rather than merely pointing out a problem.
- Columns exhibit originality, good taste, reader appeal and quality of writing.
- Standing columns have appropriate and consistent headlines.

IN-DEPTH

- All facts, especially those obtained through research, are clearly attributed.
- Sources are clearly identified, especially official sources outside of the school community.

- In-Depth exhibits originality, good taste, reader appeal and quality of writing.

FEATURE

- 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.

SPORTS

- All facts, especially those obtained through research, are clearly attributed.
- Sources are clearly identified, especially official sources outside of the school community.
- Stories include opinions from key players, coaches, and when appropriate, members of opposing teams.
- Important statistics and/or scores are included, especially to demonstrate a team’s progress or lack thereof.

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 include menu items and price ranges, as well as appropriate attire.
- All reviews 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.

OVERALL SCORE FOR WRITING

0-100

150

175

200

Needs Improvement

Average/Good

Very Good

Excellent

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

GENERAL COMMENTS FOR WRITING

PART III: DESIGN

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.
- 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.
- Most pages 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 used for their related stories.
- Graphics are modern and pleasing.
- Captions 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.
- Inside and outside margins are consistent throughout the newspaper.
- Bylines are placed a consistent unit of space below headlines and above the starts of their respective stories.
- Leading/spacing between lines of type is consistent within stories and in all text elements which include multiple lines: headlines, captions, etc.
- If a graphic technique is used on a particular design element, such as lines above and below a pull quote, it is used consistently throughout the newspaper.
- Captions are visually linked to their respective photographs.
- Designers avoid stacking same-size headlines on a page.
- All graphic elements enhance readability instead of hindering it.

NAMEPLATE

- The paper's name is designed in a specialized type that adds uniqueness to the design of the nameplate.
- The paper's name, name of school, complete school address, complete city and state listing, issue and volume numbers and the date of publication should also be included.
- 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.

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 is listed: school address, phone, email
- Advertising information is given.
- Staff position titles are clearly noted.
- Adviser's name is also noted in masthead, preferably at the bottom of the list.
- An abbreviated staff policy is included in the masthead
- The placement of the masthead is appropriate based on the overall format of the newspaper.

FOLIOS

- All pages, with the exception of the front page, have 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.

CONTENT LISTING AND/OR TEASERS

- If staff has decided to do a listing of what’s on inside pages, it is placed effectively.
- 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.

TYPOGRAPHY

- Staff successfully used regular and boldface type for contrast and limits in the number of font families.
- The typography is effective for the overall design of the paper. Type choices are appropriate and work well together.
- Distracting typography is avoided.

GRAPHICS

- Graphics are used effectively and do not take away from the readability of a layout.
- Theme/concept-related graphic elements are used.
- Graphics are used to supplement the words and photographs.
- Graphic elements are repeated within a section or throughout the publication to achieve unity rather than to decorate and fill the space.

OVERALL SCORE FOR DESIGN

0-100	150	175	200	
Needs Improvement	Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

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

GENERAL COMMENTS FOR DESIGN

PART IV: PHOTOGRAPHY/GRAPHICS

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Photographs with strong composition are used as dominant elements on a spread.
- Photographs are cropped to show the most important elements.
- The number of posed photographs is limited.
- Photographs are in sharp focus, not pixelated and are free from distortion, being stretched, flipped, or other imperfections.
- No photos are unethically manipulated (ex. Photoshop treatment that changes content of photo).
- Photo content emphasizes faces, action, emotion and a strong center of interest.
- All photos are credited and consistently placed. If outside photography is used courtesy credits are given. No copywritten images are used without written permissions.
- Photographs are used as important design elements on the page.
- If portraits are used, they are displayed small and tightly cropped.

INFOGRAPHICS

- Infographics tell a complete story and add to the article on the page.
- 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 appropriately sized.
- The explainer summarizes the purpose of the infographics.
- The chart/graph is easy to understand and appropriate for the subject.

ARTWORK/GRAPHICS

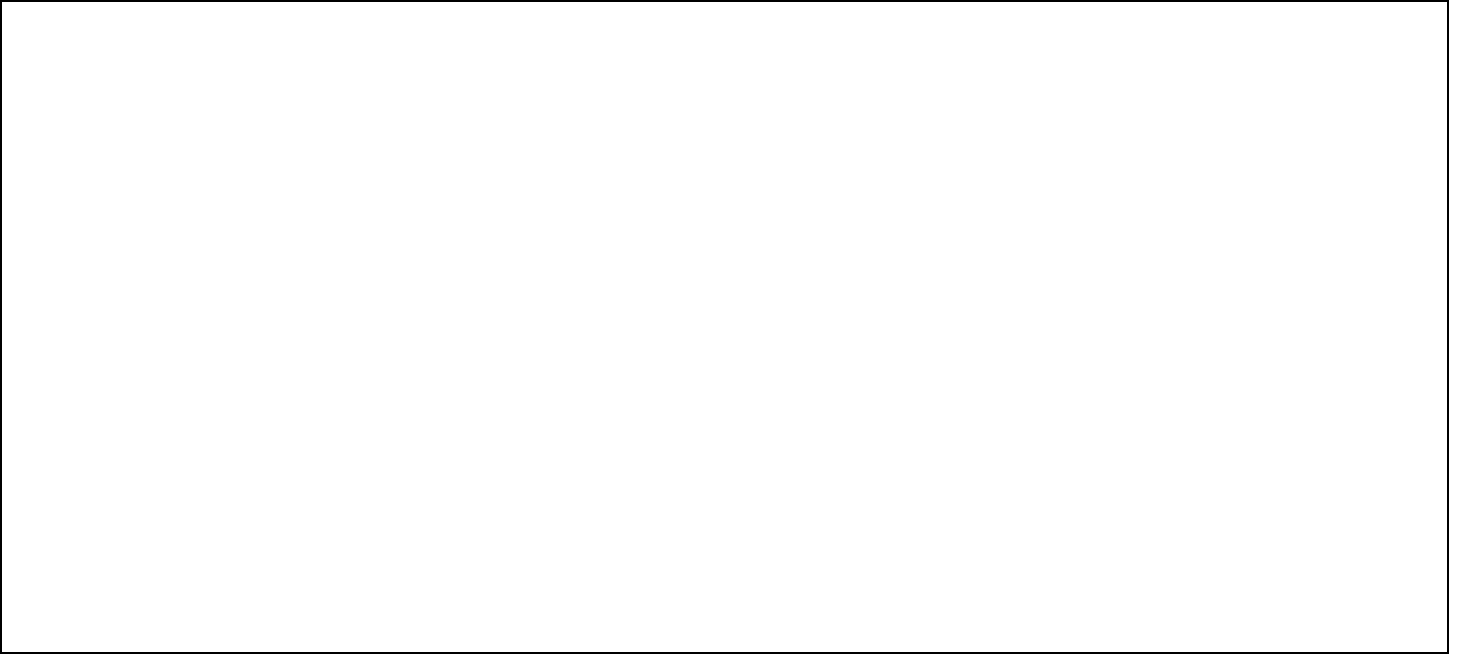
- Graphic elements, such as screens, shadowing, artwork, infographics, boldface type, rule lines, secondary colors, graduated screens, specialized typefaces, large initial letters and angled elements, are used effectively throughout the newspaper.
- Designers are consistent on their use and placement of artist/photographer credits, on rule lines with their pull quotes and on specialized lead-in type styles.
- If editorial cartoons or comic strips use hand-lettering, it is legible and compatible with the quality of artwork.
- Artwork/graphics are in sharp focus, not pixelated and are free from distortion, being stretched, flipped, or other imperfections.

OVERALL SCORE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY/GRAPHICS

0-100	150	175	200	<input type="text"/>
Needs Improvement	Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

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

GENERAL COMMENTS FOR PHOTOGRAPHY/GRAPHICS



FINAL RATINGS

PARTS	RATING
COVERAGE*	_____/200
WRITING	_____/200
DESIGN	_____/200
PHOTOGRAPHY	_____/200
TOTAL	_____/800

***JUDGES WILL NOT SCORE SECTION FOR ADVERTISING AS NOT ALL PUBLICATIONS WILL INCLUDE THIS SECTION. PLEASE GIVE GENERAL COMMENTS FOR THIS SECTION IF INCLUDED.**

CORNHUSKER (701-800)
SUPERIOR (601-700)
DISTINCTION (501-600)
MERIT (401-500)

OVERALL RATING

Cornhusker: This is the NHSPA's highest evaluation rating. Newspapers receiving this rating demonstrate excellence in all areas of scholastic journalism production. These newspapers effectively integrate all five areas of emphasis to give readers an excellent record of the year.

Superior: Newspapers receiving this rating demonstrate excellence in most areas of scholastic journalism production. While they consistently integrate all five areas of emphasis into the publication, they are lacking in at least one area of overall execution.

Distinction: Newspapers receiving this rating demonstrate a basic understanding of general scholastic journalism standards. These newspapers consistently integrate all five areas of emphasis into their publication, but they are lacking in at least two areas of overall execution that make for a superior publication.

Merit: Newspapers receiving this rating demonstrate some general journalistic standards but lack necessary depth in the five areas of emphasis.

*If a publication receives no official rating, the judge will provide specific recommendations along with a detailed 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 areas of emphasis.

Golden Kernel #1

Golden Kernel #2

ADDITIONAL EVALUATION COMMENTS: