NHSPA
Nebraska High School Press Association

2019-2020
ELECTRONIC MEDIA EVALUATION: WEBSITE

Judges,

We hope our NHSPA online 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 online advisers and their students both strengths and weaknesses to make their future online media 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.

The vast majority of staffs are working to create these sites in addition to the work they are doing with their staff newspaper, yearbook or broadcast.

Please critique content published during the previous calendar school year (August 1 through May 31). Summer content is not required for this critique.

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 website and school name: (Ex: Rambler – Lancaster)

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

Website Name URL: _____

Year: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

Adviser: _____

Explanation of Evaluation System

- This evaluation is divided into four parts:
    1. **Coverage & Content:** How well the website covers all areas of school and community.
    2. **Writing:** How well students use journalistic style as it applies to online copy and captions.
    3. **Design & Navigation:** How well students follow design guidelines and utilize design to communicate coverage and move readers/viewers through the site.
    4. **Rich Media:** How well students utilize and multimedia and graphic 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.

- When providing annotations for both positive and negative elements judges will provide specific examples and locations so the staff can easily recognize the remarks.

- Not all schools require students to publish content during the summer months therefore scores should not be affected.

- 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/CONTENT

BASIC:

Staff has covered as many areas of school/student/community life as deemed appropriate for the size of staff and ability to update the online publication.

Import/breaking news events are reported in a timely manner.

The coverage seems accurate, fair and well balanced.

Staff developed coverage areas that reflected the culture of their students.

Staff emphasized coverage of students over faculty, administrators and school staff.

The site may or may not include web exclusive content such as blogs, interactive elements, video, audio, breaking news and social media maintained by the publication staff.

NEWS:

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.

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 focused on issues whose outcome directly affects students

Editorials suggest solutions or alternatives, rather than just criticizing.

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.

If letters to the editor are published, letters critical of the online site are published as well as those which are complimentary.

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.

Stories highlight accomplishments and/or challenges of each team that are unique to this year.

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 diverse topics: movies, shows, music, food, student performances, local concerts, plays, festivals, technology, community events, etc.

Reviews are clearly labeled as one writer's opinion and reflect universal topics of interest to high school students.

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' us 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.

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 AND NAVIGATION

GENERAL DESIGN

Navigation is easy; readers/viewers can effortlessly find what they are looking for.
Tabs clearly direct readers to different sections of the publication, which could include news, opinion, feature, sports, entertainment and others.
The site is visually appealing, drawing readers into stories.
The home page is simple and uncluttered.
Homepage is anchored by a lead story and a large headline.
Graphic elements are used effectively.
The eye-flow leads the reader/viewer effectively throughout the page and site.
Captions are visually linked to their respective photographs.
All graphic elements enhance readability instead of hindering it.
Links provide access to related content on the site such as hyperlinks and photo galleries.

NAMEPLATE

The paper's name is designed in a specialized type that adds uniqueness to the design of the nameplate.

The nameplate properly identifies the site name and school.

The nameplate establishes the personality of the site.

Appropriate type sizes are used so nameplate information is easy to read, as well as functional for overall design of the nameplate area.

STAFF PAGE

All necessary contact information is listed: school address, phone, email.

Advertising information is given.

Staff names and positions are identified and a bio maybe included.

An abbreviated staff policy is included.

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: RICH MEDIA

MULTIMEDIA

Websites should be utilized to disseminate information in a variety of ways from stories and photos to audio and video.

Multimedia and other non-traditional storytelling components should be utilized to help relay information to readers.

Media are used to enhance and supplement content and help tell stories rather than simply add flashy elements to the site.

The site may or may not include web exclusive content such as blogs, interactive elements, video, audio, and social media maintained by the publication staff.

Site will not be penalized for demonstrating a level of effective experimentation and risk taking.

In audio and video reports, sound quality is clear; voices are easy to understand.

Special projects and packages are well organized and designed to help readers navigate through the content.

Copyright laws are understood and respected; only original content or copyright-free material (music, photos, videos, etc.) is used.

Info graphics tell a complete story and add to the article on the page.

All info graphics 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.

The chart/graph is easy to understand and appropriate for the subject.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographs with strong composition are used as dominant elements.

Photo illustrations are clearly labeled.

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.

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.

Ads are appropriately designed.

INTERACTIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Readers are able to interact with the site in numerous ways. These ways may include comment functions, discussion boards and polls.

Links to communication tools and social media are present.
Interactive tools are used to engage the reader.
Readers are invited to submit story ideas and are provided with instructions on how to do so.
Contact information is provided for readers who want to write a letter to the editor,
buy and ad or contact the adviser and staff.
The site makes use of reader-generated content, which may include stories, photos and videos.

OVERALL SCORE FOR RICH MEDIA

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 PHOTOGRAPHY/GRAPHICS

FINAL RATINGS

PARTS	RATING
COVERAGE & CONTENT	_____/200
WRITING	_____/200
DESIGN & NAVIGATION	_____/200
RICH MEDIA	_____/200
TOTAL	_____/800

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

OVERALL RATING

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

☐ ***Superior:*** Online sites 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:*** Online sites receiving this rating demonstrate a basic understanding of general scholastic journalism standards. These online sites 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:*** Online sites 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: