

To: Nebraska Advisers
Re: 2008 Publication Evaluations

From: NHSPA Executive Board

NEWSPAPER

DEADLINE: ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED BY JUNE 9, 2008. Any entries received which are postmarked later than June 9 will not be eligible for competition for a Cornhusker Award, but they may still be critiqued - Late entries will also be billed a late fee in the amount of the original critique cost; entries received without payment will also be ineligible — NO EXCEPTIONS.

Send one copy each of THREE different issues, which need not have been consecutively published. If you have published fewer than three issues, send all issues published with an explanation to judges in the designated area in the booklet. Send the information sheet, labelled "NHSPA Newspaper Evaluation," and attach any notes to the judges that you think would be helpful. Send a school check payable to NHSPA (no purchase orders or personal checks will be accepted) for the correct amount.

Class A1 Newspaper \$50
Class A2 Newspaper \$50
Class B Newspaper \$45
Class C Newspaper \$40
Class D Newspaper \$35

Advisers who are not members of NHSPA who wish to have their publications critiqued must add \$10 to the totals.

YEARBOOK

DEADLINE: REGARDLESS OF SPRING OR FALL DELIVERY, the INFORMATION SHEET labelled "NHSPA Yearbook Evaluation" AND PAYMENT MUST BE POSTMARKED BY JUNE 9, 2008. Any entries (comprised of either the information sheet and a check, or the information sheet, the check and the yearbook) postmarked later than June 9 will not be eligible for competition for a Cornhusker Award. Late entries will also be billed a late fee in the amount of the original critique fee. Entries received without payment will also be ineligible. Send the evaluation booklet with staff information provided on the first page, and make any notes to the judges on the appropriate page. Send a school check payable to NHSPA (no purchase orders or personal checks will be accepted) for the correct amount.

Class A1 Yearbook \$50
Class A2 Yearbook \$50
Class B Yearbook \$45
Class C Yearbook \$40
Class D Yearbook \$35

New schools, which have not been members of NHSPA in the last two years, may receive ONE free evaluation if they pay the \$25 adviser membership fee. Contact John Bender for more information on this limited time offer. 402-472-3053

If your yearbook is spring delivery, send it along with the information sheet and payment. If your yearbook is fall delivery, mail information sheet and payment postmarked by June 9, and the yearbook itself postmarked by Aug. 22, 2008. Any fall yearbooks postmarked later than Aug. 22 will be ineligible for the Cornhusker competition, although they still may receive a critique.

*A special note to yearbook advisers: Each year many advisers struggle to meet yearbook deadlines which jeopardize the book's delivery date, and sometimes it is publisher error that delays a yearbook's shipment. We understand and sympathize, but to be fair to all advisers working under equally challenging conditions, no exceptions to these deadlines can be made (even if the yearbook is shipped to you beyond the evaluation deadline). That is yet another unfortunate consequence of a late ship date.

MAIL ALL FORMS AND ENTRIES TO:

ATTN. JOHN BENDER
147 Andersen Hall
College of Journalism
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588-0479



NEWSPAPER EVALUATION

School Information Sheet 2007-2008

Classification: (circle one) A1 A2 B C D

Name of Newspaper: _____ Adviser: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Size of Newspaper Staff: _____ members How many issues did your newspaper publish this year? _____

Our newspaper is produced using the following software: (ex. InDesign, Pagemaker #, PhotoShop, Illustrator, etc)

Indicate what best describes your situation.

Our newspaper is printed:

- _____ by a local printer
- _____ by an area printer
- _____ by a national company
- _____ other (please explain):

Our newspaper is submitted for print:

- _____ online (via ftp site or Internet submission)
- _____ on CD or disk
- _____ by paste-up
- _____ other (please explain):

The newspaper is produced:

- _____ as part of a regular journalism curriculum
- _____ as part of progressive class structure, example: Journalism I, II, III, IV, etc.
- _____ during the school day by students who are taught a basic journalism course while producing a newspaper
- _____ outside the school day as an extracurricular activity
- _____ other (please explain):

Advertising is:

- _____ not allowed in our publication by school board policy
- _____ sold and ads are student designed
- _____ other (please explain):

Explanation of Evaluation System

- The evaluation of the publication based on any three issues published in the current school year is divided into five sections:
 - Reader Aids** (how reader-friendly the newspaper is)
 - Coverage** (how well the newspaper covers all areas of school and student life)
 - Writing** (how well students use journalistic style as it applies to newspaper stories and captions)
 - Design** (how well students follow design guidelines and utilize design to highlight content)
 - Photography** (how well students produce photos of technical quality and dynamic content)
- Each division in each section is rated as Superior, Excellent, Good, or Weak.
- Judges will disregard divisions which relate to advertising if the publication does not include ads, and will not reduce a publication's score
- Judges will include comments relevant to each division and therefore each section in the space on the pages provided. In addition, they will include supplementary comments explaining their overall impressions. Judges will nominate a staff for any special recognition they deem appropriate in any section(s) of the evaluation. These nominations will be the basis for the Golden Kernel Award.
- Publications will be awarded one of the following class rankings: Cornhusker, Award of Distinction, or Award of Merit. If a publication receives no official ranking it will receive an extensive evaluation.

To the Judge:

This is a place for the newspaper staff to inform the judge of any special circumstances, unusual challenges, or unexpected problems the staff encountered that may help the judge give a more informed evaluation of the publication.



2007 — 2008

NEWSPAPER EVALUATION

Name of School: _____

Classification: (circle one) A1 A2 B C D

Explanation of Evaluation System

- The evaluation is divided into five sections:

Reader Aids (how effectively and extensively standard newspaper devices are used to introduce and emphasize content)

Coverage (how well the newspaper covers all areas of school, student life and community when applicable)

Writing (how clearly and interestingly verbal content is presented)

Design (how effectively type, graphics and layout are used to enhance verbal content)

Photography (how creatively and informatively photos are assigned, composed and reproduced)

- Each division in each section is rated as Superior (Always), Excellent (Frequently), Good Usually, Average (Sometimes), or Needs Improvement (Never).

- Judges will disregard Part IV, Section E, on page 10 which relates to advertising if the publication does not include ads, 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 in your publications.

- Judges will include comments relevant to each division and therefore each section in the space on the pages 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, based on the rankings of each section, be awarded one of the following class ratings:

Cornhusker

Award of Distinction

Award of Merit

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

Part One: Reader Aids

Rating Guide
S - Superior
E - Excellent
G - Good
A - Average
N - Needs Improvement

Average Rating: _____

A. Nameplate

Rating _____

- includes name of newspaper, date, volume number, school name, address, zip code, and perhaps phone number and/or web site or e-mail address
- is clean and clear and does not overpower the page
- if student art is featured, art is clean, clear, and well drawn

B. Masthead

Rating _____

- includes names of all students on staff and their positions, as well as adviser
- explains how readers can contact staff members with letters to the editor or suggestions for stories or other comments
- may explain key points of editorial policy, publishing schedule, and advertising rates, and may cite any awards the newspaper has won

C. Logos

Rating _____

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

D. Page Folios

Rating _____

- pages are clearly labelled by section and page number
- if publication date is used, date is consistent on each page and with flag date
- folios are easily readable but do not dominate the design of the page

E. Organization

Rating _____

- page order is consistent and logical, so that issue to issue, the reader knows where to locate each section of the newspaper
- articles are placed in appropriate sections; for example, opinion belongs on opinion pages, news on news pages, etc.
- typefaces and style for body copy, captions, photo credits and headlines follow a stylebook and do not vary page to page, or issue to issue

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Part Two: Coverage

Rating Guide
S - Superior
E - Excellent
G - Good
A - Average
N - Needs Improvement

Average Rating: _____

A. Front Page

Rating _____

- grabs reader attention through its coverage, and makes reader want to explore the newspaper further
- 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

B. News

Rating _____

- 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

C. Features

Rating _____

- 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

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Part Two: Coverage

(continued)

Average Rating: _____

Rating Guide

S - Superior

E - Excellent

G - Good

A - Average

N - Needs Improvement

- 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

D. Entertainment

Rating _____

- 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

E. Opinion

Rating _____

- 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

F. Sports

Rating _____

- 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

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Part Two: Coverage

(continued)

Average Rating: _____

Rating Guide

S - Superior

E - Excellent

G - Good

A - Average

N - Needs Improvement

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...”

G. In-Depth

Rating _____

- 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**

Part Three: Writing

Rating Guide
S - Superior
E - Excellent
G - Good
A - Average
N - Needs Improvement

Average Rating: _____

A. General Principles

Rating

- _____
- 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

B. Features

Rating

- _____
- 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

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Part Three: Writing

(continued)

Average Rating: _____

Rating Guide

S - Superior

E - Excellent

G - Good

A - Average

N - Needs Improvement

C. News

Rating _____

- 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

D. Opinion

Rating _____

- 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

E. Entertainment

Rating _____

- 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

F. Sports

Rating _____

- "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**

Part Three: Writing

(continued)

Average Rating: _____

Rating Guide

S - Superior

E - Excellent

G - Good

A - Average

N - Needs Improvement

G. Captions

Rating _____

- 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 to the photo
- captions do not merely state the obvious (John Smith catches the football), but instead tell about 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
- captions identify every recognizable person in the photo except when impractical; usually six or fewer people in a photo need to all be identified by first and last name, and by grade
- gag captions are never used
- group captions are consistent in their designation of the location of a student (Front Row, Back Row, etc.)
- captions attempt to answer who, what, where, when, why, how, and so what
- photos include a complete caption with rare exceptions
- names are very carefully checked for proper spelling and accuracy in identification

H. Headlines

Rating _____

- headlines are clear summaries of the content and angle of their stories or opinion of their editorials or commentary
- headlines are carefully proofread to avoid unclear language, misspellings and grammatical errors
- headlines are written in present tense
- all headlines have a subject and a verb, whether alone or in combination with an additional deck or readout, and are active rather than passive
- headline style is consistent regarding which words are capitalized
- language is dynamic so that headlines grab reader attention

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Part Four: Design

Rating Guide
S - Superior
E - Excellent
G - Good
A - Average
N - Needs Improvement

Average Rating: _____

A. Basics

Rating _____

- layouts follow consistent columnar or grid plan
- internal margins are consistent, and external margins are effectively utilized to frame the page
- there is no trapped white space or trapped copy
- design is modular so that elements that belong together are grouped together in rectangular shape
- white space is used effectively
- editors strive, when appropriate, to pair stories with a visual/graphic element such as a pulled quote, a logo, an infographic, mug shot, etc. to pull the reader's eye to the story
- layouts should include a dominant element
- special pages, such as centerspreads, in-depth focuses, etc., can experiment more with typefaces that may not normally appear in the paper, but some consistency must remain

B. Use of Photos

Rating _____

- if a photo accompanies a story, the photo is large enough to make a visual impact and is of high technical quality
- stand-alone photos (photos which do not accompany a story) need to be clearly designated as such, through graphic treatment, teasers, etc.
- subjects of photos are not looking off the page, but rather into the story or spread
- captions touch the photos they describe so there is no need for direction words (like "pictured above")
- photo essay pages should reflect effective design techniques, including use of a dominant photo, consistent internal margins, and effective use of white space to frame photos

C. Graphics

Rating _____

- graphics are used effectively to add additional information or student opinion to coverage, but do not overpower the page; designs are clean and purposeful
- information in graphics is always attributed to appropriate sources
- survey info includes date of survey as well as number of students surveyed
- if spot color or grey screens are used, their use is effective and complementary to the purpose of the page
- white space is used as an effective graphic element to guide readers' attention to the focus of the spread
- staff is not afraid to experiment with designs they've seen in magazines or in other sources, but they adapt these designs to suit their coverage and thematic goals

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Part Four: Design

(continued)

Average Rating: _____

Rating Guide

S - Superior

E - Excellent

G - Good

A - Average

N - Needs Improvement

D. Typography

Rating ____

- body and caption typeface and size should remain consistent throughout the newspaper, and the smaller the type, the more effective a serif type; sans serif type can be difficult to read at sizes smaller than 12 point
- staff members are careful not to mix too many typefaces, especially for headlines, throughout the newspaper; no more than two other typefaces in addition to the body copy typeface is recommended
- pages make appropriate use of reader aids like pulled quotes, large initial letters, and subheads
- type can be used as a graphic element, especially in headlines, but should never be a distraction
- headline size is relative to size and importance of stories; a headline is rarely the dominant graphic on the page, nor does it overwhelm a story

E. Advertising (Optional)

Rating ____

- advertising borders are not distracting and/or overwhelming; instead, they enhance the message of the ad
- ads do not use more than two typefaces
- ads are designed to appeal to a teenage audience and include appropriate creative slogans meant to catch students' attention
- ads may make use of student photos to promote the merchant when requested
- ads use graphics effectively, and ensure that they highlight the purpose of the ad, rather than distract from it
- internal margins are consistent, and external margins are effectively utilized to frame the spread
- ads for similar businesses (like florists or banks) are not placed next to each other, and preferably not even on the same page
- camera-ready ads from businesses are run without distortion

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Part Five: Photography

Rating Guide
S - Superior
E - Excellent
G - Good
A - Average
N - Needs Improvement

Average Rating: _____

A. Technical Quality

Rating _____

- photos have appropriate contrast, where whites are not gray, and there is a definition variation of gradations between gray and black
- photos are free of water spots, dust specks, scratches, and other flaws
- photos are in focus, and make good use of depth-of-field
- photos are not printed backwards so that numbers or letters are reversed
- photos are not grainy or fuzzy because they were enlarged too much or were shot with the wrong lens
- lighting is correct, and photographer did not try to shoot into the sun or into a window
- photos are not pixelated due to inappropriate resolution
- non-traditional treatment of photos, such as cut-out backgrounds, vignettes, ghosting, etc., is effective

B. Content

Rating _____

- photos are not posed, and do not include subjects who are looking at the camera, except when appropriate
- photos strive to capture emotion, especially surprise, laughter, determination, or sadness
- sports photos include key elements — the ball, the racket, the golf club, etc.
- no person is cropped at major joints such as the elbow or knee, thus leading some to assume the person may be missing that body part
- photos are cropped so that excessive ground or sky, as well as any other unnecessary background distraction, is eliminated
- photographers strive for unique, creative photographic angles, including shooting from above the subject to lying on the floor shooting up at the subject
- photographers shoot so that photos appear close-up, and avoid printing photos where subjects are merely unidentifiable blobs (like in soccer or football)

**commendations
and
recommendations**

Judges Final Comments

Judge's Signature

Final Rating

- Each division in each section is rated as Superior (5 points), Excellent (4 points), Good (3 points), Average (2 points) or Needs Improvement (1 point).
- Judges will include comments relevant to each division and therefore each section in the space on the pages provided. In addition, they will include supplementary comments explaining their overall impressions.
- Publications will, based on the rankings of each section, be awarded one of the following class ratings:
 - Cornhusker (Superior — 23-25 points)
 - Award of Distinction (Excellent — 18-22 points)
 - Award of Merit (Good — 13-17 points)
- If a publication receives no official rating, the judge will provide specific recommendations along with a detailed evaluation.

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Part One: | Reader Aids | Rating _____ |
| Part Two: | Coverage | Rating _____ |
| Part Three: | Writing | Rating _____ |
| Part Four: | Design | Rating _____ |
| Part Five: | Photography | Rating _____ |

_____ **Cornhusker**
_____ **Award of Distinction**
_____ **Award of Merit**

Golden Kernel Awards:



Name of School: _____

Classification: (circle one) A1 A2 B C D