



Advisers

Thank you

Thank you for trusting the Arkansas Scholastic Press Association with your publication. We know putting the hard work of your students up for judging can be nerve wracking; after all, you're putting their (and your) time, energy and, oftentimes, tears up for review. It takes bravery and we appreciate you.

The Results

First, and we can't emphasize this enough, do not evaluate the hard work you do with your kids every day solely with this critique. Everyday you shape lives, teach writing, technology, people skills and a host of other things that are far more important than any rating a critique could provide.

So what should you do with the results? Use them as a way to look for what to attack next. Take this judge's suggestions and figure out a handful of things you want to make better in your next book. Once your staff has mastered those things, pick out another handful. Use the critique as a teaching tool. Remember: It's a formative assessment and not a summative.

The Standards

Our standards are heavily influenced by the critique provided by the National Scholastic Press Association. In fact, they're nearly identical. Why? We wanted our state level critique and competitions to mirror the national critique and competitions.

We also need to give a nod to the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. They are the other major national critique service and we borrowed from their format.

Judges

Thank you

Thank you so much for taking the time to help advance scholastic journalism in Arkansas. We know you have many demands outside of this critique and appreciate you making the time for Arkansas.

Judging

We ask that you judge with education in mind. This critique should serve as a learning service much more than a ranking service. Please provide thorough explanations to justify your scores. More importantly, provide examples of where they're doing it right and where they're doing it wrong. As you know, checks without meaningful written comments and specific examples aren't very helpful.

Scoring

The numerical score you give each book does not have to have an exact correlation to the check mark ratings. We recognize not all criteria rank equally. However, please make an effort to have your numerical score fall in the ballpark of your check mark ratings.

Again, we appreciate your time! Thank you.



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	Exceeds Standard+	Meets Standard ✓	Needs Attention –
<p>Yearbook Standards (Adapted from the National Scholastic Press Association critique sheet)</p>			
Yearbook: Essentials			
A unique theme is developed verbally and visually and ties the book together. It is specific to the school and year.			
The cover has visual appeal and introduces the unifying devices.			
The name and year of the book appear on the front cover.			
The book name, year, volume number, school name, city, state and thematic unifying device appears on the spine.			
The endsheets coordinate with the cover. <i>(Endsheets left blank due to budget constraints will not detract from a book's overall score.)</i>			
The theme is developed through thematic elements (words, photos and graphics) on the cover, endsheets, title page, opening pages, dividers, closing pages, including the last page in the book, with details showing relevance to the specific year. <i>(All mentioned elements may not appear on the cover/all pages, but several elements should appear on each page).</i>			
Opening, closing, divider pages and any special section pages have a thematic design style distinctively different from the rest of the book.			
The title page lists the name of the book, year, volume number, school, city, street address, state, zip code, and theme reference. School website, activities league or conference, principal's name, school population including student enrollment, faculty and staff are optional, but are encouraged.			
The table of contents accurately lists all major sections, including reference (index, group/team photos). Contents is reader friendly and reflects thematic elements from the cover. The contents listing should not be on the title page but should appear early in the book before the first division page.			
Folios identify page content and give page numbers. At least one folio per spread appears as a reader reference.			
The colophon appears in the back of the book and includes information on staff policies, fonts used, staff size, equipment used, price of book to the students, dates of coverage, where the book was printed and by what company.			
Acknowledgments, dedications and memorials are presented consistently in an understated manner. Tribute coverage should be part of the staff's publication policy. <i>(Memorials purchased and appearing in the ads section will not detract from a book's overall score.)</i>			
Group photo (also known as team and club group pictures) captions list those in the photo by first and last names.			
Group photo captions start with the group identifier and then list people within the rows. Remain consistent throughout the book on how groups and people in rows are identified. It is not necessary to include "left to right" notations.			
Subjects in group photos are arranged in easily identifiable rows with empty spaces and distracting objects cropped out.			
Index is a complete listing of everything in the book (topics, classes, clubs, sports, scoreboards, people cited or quoted and ads), in addition to people covered.			



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Yearbook: Essentials Continued
Judge's Comments

Discuss positives while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss areas needing attention while referencing specific examples and specific pages.

Essentials Score	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Recognition (Describe rationale in a few words)
_____ /100	

	+	✓	-
Yearbook: Coverage			
Overall coverage is specific to the school and the year.			
The organization of the book is logical and enhances the story of the year.			
Coverage can be organized in a number of ways (traditional, chronological, umbrella, blended, etc.) but all areas of the year are adequately covered.			
Consider these suggested guidelines to ensure balanced coverage – Student life coverage should compile about –25 percent of the content, Sports about 18 percent, People about 30 percent, Clubs and organizations about 15 percent, and Academics about 12 percent. Deviating from these percentages is acceptable but should be thoughtful.			
Coverage reflects the diversity of the school population and an effort to cover all individuals.			
Effort has been made to cover as much of the year as possible, including summer activities in a well-rounded and balanced manner.			
Coverage has strong storytelling photos, creative copy angles and meaningful quotes. Coverage should focus on this year and should be repeatable from year to year.			
Community and national events are reflected in coverage with emphasis on local student involvement and reactions.			

Appropriate coverage planning allows for variation in space allotment, such as single-page design, modular design or extended special section coverage as content and budget dictate.



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Yearbook: Coverage Continued			
When controversial or sensitive issues are relevant to the school and year they are developed thoroughly.			
Shorter reporting forms – briefs, infographics, secondary photos and mug shots increase the publication’s news value and relevance.			
Coverage is enhanced through use of social media, special applications or links to online content.			
Student Life			
Student life coverage reflects both on and off-campus activities and topics.			
Trends of the current year are covered.			
Student life on-campus coverage reflects balance in daily events, routines, lifestyle and special activities. This coverage of student life off campus should reflect what students do, think about and spend money on in their free time. <i>(Possible areas of coverage could include: entertainment, social issues, personal interests, summer activities, mission trips and vacations. Individual sports that are not part of the school district offerings may also be included. These suggestions are not all inclusive or required but may serve as a starting point.)</i>			
Academics			
In academics, all class offerings are represented although not necessarily by department.			
Academic coverage focuses on student involvement, additions to equipment and curricular offerings and specific classroom activities which are distinctive to the year.			
Honors, awards, selections and elections are included and are covered journalistically.			
Clubs			
In club section, all offerings are covered with emphasis on student involvement which is distinctive to the year. Club activities, rather than goals and purposes, are covered.			
Group photos can be placed with club coverage or in a reference section but should be included.			
Sports			
Sports coverage should offer a balanced approach of all athletics included at the school. This can include boys, girls, varsity, junior varsity and freshmen teams reflecting the entire athletic department.			
Cheerleaders and spirit groups are included as part of the coverage.			
Practices, sideline activities, team interaction, travel and summer practices are included in addition to game coverage.			
Fans, trainers, coaches and managers are represented.			
Quotes, definitions, timelines and other relevant team information is provided with an emphasis on players.			
Emphasis is on action rather than posed photos. Team pictures should not dominate the spread and may appear in a separate reference section.			
Coverage is not limited to one game but extends throughout the season.			
Complete and accurate scoreboards including the season record are part of the coverage and appear in sports or in reference section.			
People			
People coverage should encompass all grade levels, faculty, administration and support personnel in a logical fashion.			
Portrait pages, unless organized as reference only in the reference section, include features of reader relevant topics to extend coverage. <i>(Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, student achievements, hobbies, personal stories and activities.)</i>			



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Yearbook: Coverage Continued

Faculty and support staff information (job title, subjects taught and extracurricular assignments) is provided with the portrait picture or in the index next to the name.			
A list of those not pictured is included at the end of each class and faculty/staff section.			
Advertising <i>(If a book does not include advertising, skip this section and do NOT deduct points for the omission.)</i>			
Business ads are designed to appeal to student readers more than business card ads.			
When appropriate, additional content, whether related to the community or student centered, invites readers to these pages.			
Content ads (baby, senior, clubs/organizations) are designed to fit the look of the book.			
When appropriate, additional value has been added to ads by offering online links to business and personal sites or linking via social-media platforms.			
If students appear in business ads, the staff should have a signed model release form on file.			
All ads are listed in the index.			

Yearbook Coverage
Judge's Comments

Discuss positives while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss areas needing attention while referencing specific examples and specific pages.

Coverage Score		<input type="checkbox"/> Special Recognition (Describe rationale in a few words)	
_____ /100			



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	+	✓	-
Yearbook: Writing			
Stories focus on original and specific angles, show evidence of research and reporting, avoid generalities and answer the who, what, when, why, where and how for this year.			
Text is treated as an important element in telling the story of the year. Care is taken to make writing energetic, inviting and interesting.			
The story of the year is told in a variety of ways – long-form narrative, quick-read modules/ sidebars, extended storytelling captions and infographics.			
Meaningful storytelling quotes and background material in standard copy blocks and secondary packages reflect thorough interviewing.			
Editorializing (expressing the writer’s opinion) is avoided, as are projections for the future.			
Traditional pieces (long-form narrative) are written in third person, past tense, active voice.			
Leads use a variety of styles (descriptive, anecdotal, narrative, for example) to draw the reader into the story.			
Stories are written clearly and concisely.			
Effective transitions, a variety of sentence types and lengths and short paragraphs enhance readability.			
Headlines use specific, creative words to attract the reader, and label headlines (football, math...) are avoided.			
Headlines are written in present tense and combine a feature-style primary headline to get the reader’s attention with a sentence-style secondary headline to tell the reader what the story is about.			
Every photo in the book is captioned. Captions add to the story the photos begin. They do not state the obvious and avoid editorializing or speculating about the content of the photo.			
Gag, or “funny,” captions are never used.			
Caption starters use impact words.			
Captions avoid adverbs but do use strong nouns, active-voice verbs and adjectives.			
Captions are two or more sentences long, giving the who, what, when, where, why and how.			
The first sentence is written in present tense. Subsequent sentences are written in past tense.			
Storytelling captions, especially when used instead of a traditional copy block, should include a quote to give a more complete picture of the event. The quote should be a story telling quote that adds to the coverage and does not restate what the caption has already said.			
Content of the captions should not be repeated in the story.			
Copy, headlines and captions are carefully edited and proofed to eliminate mechanical errors such as spelling, grammar, sentence structure, usage, syntax and agreement.			
All words in the yearbook follow the AP Stylebook or the publication’s copy style guide and are fact checked for accuracy.			
Individual bylines recognize student writers for their work.			



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Yearbook: Writing
Judge's Comments

Discuss positives while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss areas needing attention while referencing specific examples and specific pages.

Writing Score	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Recognition (Describe rationale in a few words)
_____ /100	

	+	✓	-
Yearbook: Design			
Layouts should function as a reader service resulting in effective communication. Whether utilizing modular design or traditional design, layouts fit the content and content is not shoehorned into design.			
Design decisions have been made to enhance the story-of-the-year package and make it easy for the reader to navigate the pages.			
Layouts have been designed using a column or grid structure.			
Typically, layouts are designed as two-page spreads.			
Each spread features its strongest photograph as the dominant visual element (a single image or a visual package) at least twice as large as other elements.			
Layouts include elements in a variety of sizes – square, vertical and horizontal – which repeat and contrast the dominant.			
Tilted photos and elements have been used for a purpose and sparingly.			



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Yearbook: Design Continued			
Subjects and action in photos face onto the spread rather than distracting the reader by looking off.			
Balance is achieved by placing heavier elements (photos) toward the center of the spread and lighter elements (text and white space) to the outside corners.			
Use of white or negative space works as a reader service on three levels – tight (to unify), standard (for consistency) and expanded (to separate).			
The design is anchored by having each margin touched by at least one element (photo, copy block, caption, infographic, headline).			
A horizontal eyeline carries the reader from one side of the spread to the other.			
Typography should be legible. Font choice, weight and size should enhance the content of the spread and be easy to read.			
Font choices should be limited to two or three throughout the book with a possibility of using a dedicated theme font.			
Color is used to highlight the content of the spread and is not so overpowering that it draws attention to itself.			
External margins (sides, top and bottom) are consistent and maintained to create a frame around spreads.			
Graphic elements – lines, screens, reverses and spot color – enhance spread content rather than calling attention to themselves. Distracting gimmicks are avoided.			
Graphic elements are repeated within a section or throughout the book to achieve unity rather than to decorate and fill space.			
Informational graphics are attractive, easy to read and fit the personality of the spread.			
Body copy and captions are consistent in type style and size throughout the book to enhance unity. Exceptions may be made on theme-related or special pages.			
Special pages (sometimes called stoppers or breakers) provide pleasant surprises for the reader. Creative levels are pushed to expand the design style.			
Appropriate space has been allotted for body copy, headlines and captions.			
Copy and captions are set at an appropriate width for reader ease. No copy is so wide it is hard to grasp or so narrow that the lines become choppy.			
When copy is justified (aligned both left and right) type adjustments are made to prevent gaps or rivers in the lines of text. Special attention is given to hyphenation to maximize readability.			
Sidebars, quick reads and/or mods are used as additional entry points into the spread.			
Packages follow a hierarchy to guide the reader through the spread content. The primary headline and package are largest; secondary headline and package are smaller than the primary and the tertiary headline and package are smaller than the secondary.			
Typographic elements such as initial letters, lead-ins, quote blurbs and display type, when used consistently, enhance readability by leading readers into copy without distractions or unnecessary repetition.			
As a reader service, captions should be easily connected to the photos they describe by touching the photos, by leading linking the captions to the photos or by numbering the photos when group captions are used. Readers should not have to hunt to connect photos and captions.			
Individual design credits recognize student designers for their work.			



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Yearbook: Design
Judge's Comments

Discuss positives while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss areas needing attention while referencing specific examples and specific pages.

Design Score	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Recognition (Describe rationale in a few words)	_____ /100
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	+	✓	-
Yearbook: Photography			
Photo content emphasizes faces, action, emotion and a strong center of interest.			
Content avoids backs, lowered heads, dark shadows, mugging the camera, static scenes and posed shots.			
Photos use basic techniques (framing, repetition, leading lines, depth-of-field, unusual angles and rule of thirds) to capture the story of the year.			
Cropping emphasizes the center of interest, eliminates unnecessary areas, people and distractions.			
Cropping avoids chopping off body parts unnecessarily, cropping at a joint or forcing an image into an awkward space to fit the layout.			
The center of interest in each photo is in focus.			
Photos have proper contrast.			
Color photos have accurate color values. Skin tones are natural.			



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Yearbook: Photography Continued			
Images should be free of distortion and not stretched.			
Special effects are used sparingly and for a definite purpose.			
Photos should not be flipped because the resulting image is not journalistically accurate.			
Images are not pixelated and have minimal digital noise (appearance of grain).			
Head sizes in portraits are consistent.			
Environmental portraits, clearly labeled photo illustrations and cutouts are used for emphasis and to illustrate an aspect of the story.			
Storytelling photos capture before, during and after moments to tell the full story.			
The size and shape of posed group shots varies based on the number of people in the picture. Head sizes should be big enough to be recognized.			
Individual photo credits recognize student photographers for their work.			
Photos not taken by staff members list their source and credit.			
No copyrighted images are used without written permission from the original creator.			
Any black and white images should have a wide range of tones—black, white and shades of gray.			

Yearbook: Photography	
Judge's Comments	
Discuss positives while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss areas needing attention while referencing specific examples and specific pages.

Photo Score _____ /100	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Recognition (Describe rationale in a few words)
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Total Score
_____/500

Rating
 375-500 **Superior**
 330-374 **Excellent**
 250-329 **Honorable
Mention**



Publication Name

School Name

Score Breakdown

Overall Comments

Essentials Score
_____/100
 Special Recognition

Coverage Score
_____/100
 Special Recognition

Writing Score
_____/100
 Special Recognition

Design Score
_____/100
 Special Recognition

Photo Score
_____/100
 Special Recognition

Judges: Please provide final thoughts on the overall book. It's a final opportunity to offer praise, encouragement and constructive criticism.