



## 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 next year. 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.

### Newspaper vs Newsmagazine

A few standards are newspaper specific or newsmagazine specific. If a standard does not apply to the specific format of the publication you are judging, please don't check any boxes for that standard.

### Scoring

The numerical score you give each publication 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 ball park of your check mark ratings.

Again, we appreciate your time! Thank you.

	Exceeds Standard+	Meets Standard ✓	Needs Attention –
<b>Newspaper Standards</b> (Adapted from the National Scholastic Press Association critique sheet)			
<b>Newspaper: Coverage &amp; Content</b>			
<b>Reporting: Stories, Features and Visuals</b>			
The publication informs through stories, briefs, features, profiles, editorials, commentary, photos, illustrations and informational graphics.			
Coverage encompasses the diversity of the student body, across grade levels, across gender and sexual orientation, and across socioeconomic, racial and ethnic status.			
News judgment reflects a publication edited by students for students, with academic reporting on the school and district.			
Local angles dominate any coverage of state, national and international news and events.			
Reporting is objective, not editorialized, with opinions quoted from sources. Reporters do not inject their opinions into coverage.			
Each edition strives to offer a lead story of significance that offers depth, enterprise and strong, local sourcing and background.			
For newspapers: Print reporting focuses on events that occur close to the publication date or focuses more on impact. For newsmagazines: Coverage of past events offers more depth, analysis and reflection, but with a current news peg.			
Shorter reporting forms – briefs, infographics, secondary photos and/or mug shots – increase the publication's news value and relevance.			
Infographics or data complement coverage by presenting information best told through a graphic.			
<b>Reporting: Sourcing and Context</b>			
Reporting encompasses a range of relevant, reliable sources, preferably local, not from random websites.			
Stories lead with the primary sources closest to the story. Source relevance and quotation context are clear, with secondary sources in secondary positions.			
<b>Reporting: Editorials and Commentary</b>			
Readers are informed, enlightened, entertained and/or challenged through commentary that is diverse and significant.			
Commentary is clearly labeled by type – editorials, columns and reader feedback.			
The editorial, produced by an editorial board on behalf of the publication, takes clear positions for the greater good of the student body.			
Columnists, both recurring and occasional, are clearly identified.			
All commentary offers a clear point of view within the first few paragraphs.			
Opinions are built upon attributed research and credible sources. They acknowledge opposing viewpoints as they support their own viewpoints.			

Newspaper: Coverage & Content Continued			
<b>Reporting: Editorials and Commentary Continued</b>			
Local perspectives are offered on local, regional, state, national and international news and events.			
Columnists use personal experience only within the context of universal theme or the news of the day and with transparency.			
Reviews of performances and pop culture engage and inform readers, even those unfamiliar with the genre. The reviewer's expertise, or the lack of it, is acknowledged for credibility with readers.			
<b>Reporting: Sports</b>			
Coverage is journalistic, with no cheerleading or editorializing.			
Sports content relies more upon features than dated post-game reporting.			
Coverage and commentary offer a diversity of participants at a diversity of levels – varsity, junior varsity, clubs and intramurals when applicable.			
Briefs and infographics update readers on a range of sports.			
<b>Reporting: Online and Social Media</b>			
If staffs produce content online and in social media, their print editions help readers navigate to it, with links and teasers. <i>There is no deduction of points if a publication does not have online or social media materials.</i>			
<b>Reporting: Ethics and Law</b>			
Student editors exercise their First Amendment rights with maturity and responsibility as they serve their fellow students.			
News, commentary and advertising are clearly distinguished from each other.			
Plagiarism is unacceptable. When detected, it must be acknowledged for readers. All information, visuals and opinions from other sources must be attributed.			
The publication avoids conflicts of interest, both present and perceived. Whenever possible, reporters do not cover or quote their friends and staff members in sports and clubs and do not report on their own organizations. If coverage comes from such situations, it is clearly labeled for readers.			
The publication maintains a clear separation between news and advertising. The staff does not accept gifts, perks or special treatment that would influence journalistic integrity.			
The publication avoids awkward juxtapositions of unrelated content.			
Stories avoid word play that is inconsistent with the tone of the story.			
The staff respects the content integrity of photos and illustrations and labels all photo illustrations for clarity.			
The publication does not break any laws (libel, invasion of privacy, false light, copyright infringement, etc).			
<b>Newspaper: Coverage &amp; Content</b>			
<b>Judge's Comments</b>			
Discuss <b>positives</b> while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss <b>areas needing attention</b> while referencing specific examples and specific pages.		

Newspaper: Coverage & Content <b>Positives Continued</b>	Newspaper: Coverage & Content <b>Areas Needing Attention Continued</b>

<b>Coverage and Content Score</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Recognition (Describe rationale in a few words)
_____ /200	

	+	✓	-
<b>Newspaper: Text</b>			
All writing is free of the writer's opinions. The exceptions are in commentary, such as editorials, editorial columns, reviews and analysis.			
Reporting follows a simple structure – a crisp, focused lead supported with adequate background, and then direct and indirect quotes, transitions and a concluding quotation, preferably a direct quote.			
In stories and features, subjectivity appears only in direct and indirect quotations.			
In editorials and columns, the point of view is clear, but the writer's opinion is supported with narratives, background and research that make the opinion credible.			
Text is in third person. An occasional lead may use the second-person you. First person is limited to commentary, and is rare.			
News leads are tightly written and offer the latest news or only the important news elements. Secondary news and elements do not clutter the first paragraph.			
Direct-quote leads are avoided, and leads that launch with a time element do so only when that time element is the news.			
Feature leads launch with the micro – someone or something that illustrates and introduces the macro, the larger story. The micro focuses on a person or example to introduce the broader topic or issue.			
<b>Direct</b> quotations (the precise words of sources) are used for the why and the how of a story, not simple facts or vague impressions. <b>Indirect</b> quotes are tightened and edited for clarity. <b>All</b> quotes are attributed to their sources.			
Close attention is paid to consistency through journalistic style and mechanics. Meticulous copy editing and proofreading ensure correct spelling and punctuation, which are crucial to credibility. While AP Style is encouraged, consistency is more important than any specific format.			



*Arkansas*  
**SCHOLASTIC PRESS**  
ASSOCIATION

Newspaper: Text Continued			
The structure of paragraphs and sentences varies. Longer ones are only occasional. Short ones provide emphasis. The grammatical approach varies from sentence to sentence.			
Writers avoid clichés and generalities that aren't specific to the topic or event.			
Text relies more upon specific nouns and verbs. It relies less upon adjectives and adverbs, which are less believable.			
The tone of the text is appropriate to the tone of the subject matter.			
Headlines offer key words in sentence style, with a subject, present-tense verb and object. Some feature headlines apply a phrase or theme, supported with a secondary or deck headline, with key words in sentence style.			
Captions are crisp, focused and detailed. The first sentence uses present tense to describe what's happening in the photo. Subsequent sentences use past tense to provide background and to link the visual to the text. Using a good quotation from a source to further explain a photo is encouraged.			
Newspaper: Text Judge's Comments			
Discuss <b>positives</b> while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss <b>areas needing attention</b> while referencing specific examples and specific pages.		

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

	+	✓	-
Newspaper: Visuals			
<b>General</b>			
Visuals, like text, offer diversity across the student body, faculty, staff and administration.			

Newspaper: Visuals Continued			
Photos and illustrations introduce stories and commentary with visual-verbal connections. They link the content of visuals with the content of text.			
Opinion pages are anchored with staff-produced illustrations and/or editorial cartoons.			
Visual content should be staff produced and specific to the content that it supports.			
<b>Photos</b>			
Captions describe both the event and the background. Captions identify all subjects in focus, and they share the relevance of the visual. Mug shots are identified.			
High technical quality is built upon focus, contrast, depth of field and the rule of thirds.			
Color photos are toned to match the available printing quality.			
Photo content is newsworthy, significant or unusual. Lead photos are worthy of large play.			
Photos are cropped to emphasize a focused center of interest and to trim unnecessary background. <i>Crops and photo shapes can be occasionally bold and dramatic, but only to enhance photo content.</i>			
Secondary photos support lead photos with secondary subjects, angles and crops.			
Photos can apply distinctive angles, from above and from below, to enhance otherwise routine content.			
Avoid computer-generated photo illustrations that compromise the integrity of the content. Modified photos must be labeled as such.			
Each component of a photo package tells a different portion of the story.			
Mug shots put faces with names in stories, and environmental portraits enhance features. Otherwise, posed photos and group photos are avoided.			
Stock visuals, clip art and low-resolution images are discouraged. Images acquired online are presented within fair-use provisions, with written permission and proper credit.			
Manipulation of images, such as adding or removing people or objects in a photo is not allowed.			
<b>Illustrations</b>			
Illustrations introduce features and commentary with content that is both quickly recognized and easy to discern.			
Illustrative styles match the tone of the topic, and they work within the parameters of the printing process.			
Editorial cartoons are both simple and concise, with well edited text that quickly conveys the message.			
<b>Infographics</b>			
Infographics are consistent in their design and typography. They are not designed like advertisements, with varying styles and typefaces.			
To distinguish them from traditional copy, infographics likely use a different type face.			
All infographics are consistent in type and presentation, with a headline, introduction (also known as chatter), data, source and credit.			
Each chart applies the correct approach to its content. Pie charts are simple, with few pieces. Bar graphs and tab charts are tightly spaced. Fever charts or line graphs offer only natural progressions in numerical comparison. Maps offer recognizable geographic shapes and details.			
Larger infographics include the elements listed in the above standard plus a dominant image, with text on a consistent grid.			
Boxes, rules, screens and typographical gadgets such as dingbats and bullets are limited and, when used, used with purpose.			

## Newspaper: Visuals Continued

### Judge's Comments

Discuss **positives** while referencing specific examples and specific pages.

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

### Visuals Score

☐ Special Recognition  
(Describe rationale in a few words)

/100

+

✓

-

## Newspaper: Presentation

### General

Front pages and newsmagazine covers introduce readers to content through a dominant image and lead headline placed on a grid.

On front pages, a centerpiece package presents the lead story – with a dominant photo, caption, lead headline, secondary headline and text on a grid. Secondary elements are indeed secondary, not competing with the centerpiece package.

Newsmagazine covers are a showcase for the publication's best photo or illustration, in a bold presentation and lead headline that introduces the publication's most important story. Headlines and teasers are clean, simple and efficient.

Newsmagazines capitalize on center spreads for the cover story. The spread offers a magazine design, with a dominant image, lead headline, secondary headline and text block. Its design is simple, and there is a clear visual link between the cover and the center spread. The design offers ample white space. Content isn't crammed onto it, and longer text forms may jump to inside pages.

Simplicity and consistency are the benchmarks of inside pages, with adequate white space between elements and headline sizes that show the priority of content. Tabloids should design facing pages as one design unit.

In general, avoid screened backgrounds, boxes and tooling lines. They distract from the content.

## Newspaper: Presentation Continued

### Typography

The publication's design applies the correct type tool for each task. Use of a design style sheet is recommended.

Headline type is in display and/or condensed fonts, intended for larger use. Headlines may be serif or sans serif or both, but in several sizes and weights, to build contrast.

Headline sizes vary in weight and size on the page to establish hierarchy, thus helping readers see the priority of the content.

Body copy type is preferably serif, not condensed or kerned, in an efficient size appropriate for the readership, in a column width that's not too narrow and not too wide. Text type is efficient, without awkward linespacing or wordspacing.

If text type is justified, with both margins aligned, then hyphenation is increased, for tighter spacing and better readability. If text type is flush left, then hyphenation is disabled, to avoid unneeded breaks between words.

When utilized, reverse type is used to create interest without sacrificing readability. A sans serif or serif typeface with sturdy or broad serifs are well-suited for reversing. Background should also be considered for legibility.

Be watchful of how background affects type readability. Avoid placing type on a photo or illustration. If unavoidable, ensure type placed on a photo or illustration is placed in a way that minimized disruption of the photograph.

### Infrastructure: Grids, white space and navigational tools

The publication applies a modular design, with elements packaged in rectangular shapes.

The format employs a grid, or column structure, in a consistent width that keeps text readable. Inside pages avoid random changes from the established grid.

White space sets off lead packages, with adequate space between all elements. Content isn't crammed onto the page, and more space is above headlines than below them.

Navigational elements, such as the nameplate and page folios, do not consume space at the expense of content.

Page folios are simple and helpful, with page numbers to the outer margins.

The flag, or nameplate, offers a simple, effective brand for the publication. It is devoid of devices, type and color that would overwhelm content on the page. Its typography has consistent letterspacing.

If used, teasers or indexes are relevant, vibrant and variable to news judgment.

The masthead, or staff list, appears inside, likely on Page 2 or the opinion page. Its design and typography are also simple and efficient. Contact information should be included.

If applicable, print content offers links to any staff-produced content offered online or in social media.

### Advertising *If a publication is not allowed to sell ad space for any reason, no points are deducted.*

Student-designed advertising offers a clear message relevant to student readers, with complete information for reader service.

Ad design allows more flexibility in typography, but it keeps simplicity and readability in mind. Reserve news fonts for news content.

If used as supplemental content or special section, make sure advertorial or native advertising is marked accordingly.





Newspaper: Presentation Continued	
Judge's Comments	
Discuss <b>positives</b> while referencing specific examples and specific pages.	Discuss <b>areas needing attention</b> while referencing specific examples and specific pages.

**Total Score**  
  
\_\_\_\_\_/500

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



**Publication Name**

**School Name**

**Score Breakdown**

**Coverage and  
Content Score**

\_\_\_\_\_/200

☐ Special Recognition

**Text Score**

\_\_\_\_\_/100

☐ Special Recognition

**Visuals Score**

\_\_\_\_\_/100

☐ Special Recognition

**Presentation  
Score**

\_\_\_\_\_/100

☐ Special Recognition

**Photo Score**

\_\_\_\_\_/100

☐ Special Recognition

**Overall Comments**

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