

Unifying Concepts

Cover | Endsheets | Opening | Dividers | Closing

Graphic Design

Does the book use a unifying concept: a theme, a graphic, a logo, or a similar devices to achieve an overall impression?

Is the unifying concept simple, clear, and well-conceived? Is it easily identifiable and relevant to the student readers?

Is the unifying concept original, not overly dependent on a professional ad, logo, or graphic that is identifiable with a product or service available to the general public?

Does the design chosen for the concepts pages present a distinctive look, leading the reader logically through the book?

Headlines, Coverage, Captions

Do the headlines appear in a distinctive type design, and are they written in a way to provide key information while pulling the reader into the content?

Do the elements of coverage (copy blocks, story captions, mods, etc.) reinforce the unifying concept through specific examples, quotes, and presentation?

Do the captions provide key information in a distinctive style, answering the important reader questions and supplementing the information provided in the coverage?

Photography

Do the photographs carefully advance the concepts in quality, contrast, variety, and content?

Do the photographs honestly represent events of the year?

Unifying Concepts – Summary Evaluation

Excellent: Staff clearly understands the importance of a unifying concept and has carefully designed and executed the concept.

Good: Staff has provided a unifying concept that is functional and attractive.

Average: Staff has used some unifying concepts, although improvements could be made in the execution of the concepts

Weak: Staff needs to develop and use a specific unifying concept.

Judge's Comments and Suggestions:

Reader Services

Title Page | Folios | Index | Colophon

Coverage

Does the book include a title page that provides the name of the book, the complete school address, and the volume number in an easily readable design?

Does the title page provide the reader with extra information such as the school's current population, scholastic conference, and other pertinent data?

Does the book provide a contents listing that provides main section dividers and includes the beginning page number for each of the book's sections?

Does the book include folios on every spread (with page numbers to outside of the page) that provide the readers with extra information, such as specific page content and the book's section?

Is the folio design simple, providing the essential information without creating a visual element that competes with other design elements?

Do the headlines on the reader services pages enhance the reader's ability to use the publication, providing quick and easy references to specific content areas?

Does the book have a complete index listing in alphabetical order of individuals, groups, activities, events, and subject areas covered in both photos and copy?

Are the colophon acknowledgments and staff credited in a tasteful and subtle way?

Photography, Illustrations

Have photographs, graphic elements, or illustrations been used to enhance the reader services pages, providing visual variety through candid photographs, secondary coverage options, or other elements?

Has the staff avoided ghosting photographs and illustrations -- or printing text on top of visual elements -- thus enhancing the readability of both the text and photographs?

Reader Services – Summary Evaluation

Excellent: Staff clearly understands the importance of reader services and has designed them in a usable and readable way.

Good: Staff has provided accurate and complete reader services.

Average: Staff has used some reader services, although improvements could be made in the consistency of use and in the design.

Weak: Staff has provided few reader services.

Judge's Comments and Suggestions:

Student Life/Chronological Elements

Academics | Sports | Clubs | People

General Coverage

Does the coverage of student life, academics, sports, clubs, and people seem appropriate, both to the size of the book and the size of the school?

Does the coverage give the reader a complete overview, detailing the activities and events of the entire school year?

Does the Student Life section avoid repetitive or overused feature topics, emphasizing instead the unique events that marked this school year?

Does the section expand feature coverage through secondary coverage options, aside from copy blocks, such as infographics, sidebars, first person features, or specialized topic coverage?

Do the pages attract reader interest through feature coverage?

Are coverage topics interesting and innovative?

Does the copy begin in an interesting way, attracting reader interest?

Are good, relevant, and colorful student quotes a significant part of feature coverage?

Do copy blocks, or other methods of coverage, provide details and make the described events come alive for the reader?

Is copy written in past tense?

Has a stylebook been used consistently?

Are paragraphs and other pieces of text short, carefully edited, and readable?

Do the stories and amplify the coverage of the year by providing details about a large number of students, avoiding over-coverage of certain students?

Academic Coverage

Does the coverage give a complete academic overview, including core courses, electives, and vocational classes?

Does the academic coverage go beyond the classroom to show the integration of the whole educational spectrum?

Does the academic copy avoid the trap of repeating curriculum purposes and/or listing course descriptions?

Sports Coverage

Does the coverage give a complete sports overview, including women's, JV, freshman, intramural, and individual sports?

Does the sports coverage go beyond the field and the obvious to show team accomplishments, struggles, and triumphs during the school year? Does the scoreboard present an accurate record of the year?

Is the sports coverage interesting enough to attract non-athletes?

Does the sports copy avoid predicting the outcomes of next year's season, making excuses for losing seasons, or failing to tell the real story?

Club Coverage

Does the coverage give the reader a complete clubs overview, including routine events like meetings as well as special events and activities?

Does the clubs coverage go beyond the obvious to show club accomplishments and contributions during the school year?

Does the clubs copy avoid the trap of telling club purposes, functions, or goals, emphasizing instead the specific details and accomplishments of this year?

People Coverage

Does the coverage give the reader a complete overview of the school population, detailing activities and accomplishments of the individual classes and faculty?

Does attribution of quotes follow correct journalistic style (quote first, attribution second, unless quotes from different people follow one another)?

Headlines

Are headlines interesting, clever when possible, appropriate, and accurate?

Do headlines provide the reader with detail through the use of secondary deck, read-ins, or lead-ins?

Are headlines appropriately placed, generally above or to the left of the copy or other method of coverage?

Are headlines written in present tense?

Is a distinctive style used to help the reader differentiate between the Student Life/Chronological section and the other sections of the book?

Do headlines make it clear what area of student life is covered in the spread?

Has the staff avoided overusing the name of the mascot?

Have different headline designs and typefaces been used for individual classes where appropriate?

Captions

Do the captions avoid telling what is obvious in the photograph?

Do the captions supplement the copy or other method of coverage with details without being overwritten or becoming overly wordy and distracting?

Do the captions name everyone recognizable in the photographs with complete first and last names and the grade or year of graduation?

Are captions written in present tense except when additional information or detail is provided in subsequent sentences?

Do the captions name people from left to right without stating the directional pattern unless it deviates from this pattern?

Is a distinctive caption style used throughout the Student Life/Chronological section?

For sports: Do the captions tell the outcome of the pictured play as well as of the pictured game?

For group photos: Are groups identified with the name of the club or team first, complete names of those pictured, and row identifications in a bold face or other distinctive type?

Photography

Is the emphasis on candid photographs that show students involved in the actual events and activities of the year, rather than on posed or mechanical shots?

Are the candid photographs of good quality? Do they have good, consistent contrast? Are they in focus? Do they use depth of field appropriately and have obvious centers of interest?

Are the candid photographs cropped effectively?

Do the candid photographs show a diversity of students representative of the school? Do they show a wide range of student age levels, reactions, and relationships. Do they vary in the number of students represented in each shot?

Do the spreads utilize photographs of various sizes and shapes, as well as varied content? Is each photograph contributing a different story-telling moment?

Have the dominant photographs been chosen carefully to provide strong anchors for the pages visually? Do the other photos complement the dominant one and keep eye flow moving toward the page gutter without unnatural effects such as flopping? Has the staff avoided using group shots as dominants?

Do the photographs contain reactions and emotions, keying on significant moments?

Do academic photos show actual classroom and out-of-classroom situations, avoiding posed or mechanical shots?

Do sports photographs show actual sports events, practices, and play-offs, avoiding posed or mechanical shots?

Do sports action shots leave the ball in the photograph to provide the proper context for the action?

Do club photographs show actual club meetings and activities, avoiding posed or mechanical shots?

Graphic Design

Is the section design distinctive, providing a unique and attractive look?

Does the section effectively utilize graphics to provide a distinctive but uncluttered look?

Are the pages designed as spreads, rather than as single pages where appropriate?

Are margins consistent and sufficient?

If color is used, is it used effectively?

Does the use of white space throughout the section help create contrast and showcase the section design?

Is the use of special typographical effects (copy starter letters, lifted quotes, and secondary coverage) well-executed and visually interesting?

Are graphic effects well-planned and executed, adding to the presentation? Is there one visual center of interest per spread: a photograph, typographical presentation, or illustration?

Is there a sense of special design technique used to showcase this section, especially if it follows the opening section and appears early in the book?

If superlatives or outstanding students are a part of the section, have those features been carefully designed to avoid elaborate displays that distract from the overall design?

Has the staff avoided ghosting photographs and illustrations -- or printing text on top of visual elements -- thus enhancing the readability of both the text and photographs?

Student Life/Chronological – Summary Evaluation

Excellent: Staff has effectively covered student life, academics, sports, clubs, and people through good photographs, interesting copy, and attractive designs.

Good: Staff has provided an interesting and attractive student life/chronological section.

Average: Staff has grasped most of the basics in designing the student life/chronological section. More attention is needed to provide section development.

Weak: Staff coverage of student life/chronological events is incomplete.

Judge's Comments and Suggestions:

Portraits

All Class Levels | Faculty | Staff

Coverage

Does the section expand feature coverage through copy blocks, infographics, sidebars, first person features, or specialized topic coverage?

Is coverage short, carefully-edited, and readable?

Are good, relevant, and colorful student quotes a significant part of the coverage?

Is the copy written in past tense?

Do stories amplify the coverage of the year by providing details about students who have not been covered in other sections of the book?

Does attribution of quotes follow correct journalistic style (quote first, attribution second, unless quotes from different people follow one another)?

Photography

Are the panel portraits of a consistent head size with simple backgrounds, avoiding ornate or distracting drapes?

Are faculty portraits included in the section, in appropriate size, with consistent backgrounds and contrast? Do identifications include full names, titles, and exact courses?

Are candid photographs used of good quality, with consistent contrast, focus, depth of field, and centers of interest? Are any candid photographs used cropped effectively?

Graphic Design

Are the portraits organized and displayed in an intuitive manner, making it easy to identify the students in the portraits? If senior credits are used, are they easy to read and understand?

Does the section effectively utilize graphics to provide a distinctive but uncluttered look? Are they well-planned and executed?

Are margins consistent and sufficient?

If color is used, is it used effectively?

Does the use of white space throughout the section help create contrast and showcase the design?

Does additional coverage in the spread avoid visual clutter?

Portraits – Summary Evaluation

Excellent: Staff has effectively displayed student, faculty, and staff portraits through good photographs, interesting coverage and attractive design.

Good: Staff has provided an interesting and attractive portrait section.

Average: Staff has grasped most of the basics in designing the portrait section. More attention is needed to provide section development.

Weak: Staff execution of the portrait section is incomplete.

Judge's Comments and Suggestions:

Ads/Community

Coverage

If staff excludes coverage on ad spreads, skip first standard and apply coverage standards to community spreads only.

Is advertising copy clever and informative, relying on more than the names and addresses of the advertisers? Does it key in on relevant student services or products offered by the advertiser?

Do the ads emphasize services and products of student interest?

Does the coverage seem appropriate, both to the size of the book and the school/community?

Does the section expand coverage through copy blocks or other coverage methods, such as infographics, sidebars, first person features, or specialized topic coverage?

Does the coverage show the involvement of students in the community?

Do stories begin with strong, interesting leads? Are headlines appropriate, accurate, and interesting?

Are good, relevant, and colorful student quotes a significant feature of the coverage?

Does the coverage provide details and make the described events come alive for the reader?

Is copy written in past tense? Has a stylebook been used consistently? Does attribution of quotes follow correct journalistic style? Is copy short, carefully edited, and readable?

Photography

Do photographs show actual community situations, avoiding posed or mechanical shots?

Are photographs of good quality? Do they have good, consistent contrast? Are they in focus? Do they use depth of field appropriately and have obvious centers of interest? Are they cropped effectively?

When possible, have students been used in advertising photographs?

Graphic Design

Does the section design use graphics to effectively provide an uncluttered, distinctive look?

Are pages designed as spreads, rather than as single pages?

Are the ads designed with a controlled use of graphics and typography? Is there visual contrast?

Are margins consistent and sufficient? Is white space used for contrast and to showcase design?

If color is used, is it used effectively?

Ads/Community – Summary Evaluation

Excellent: Staff has effectively covered ads/community through good photographs, attractive designs, and interesting copy.

Good: Staff has provided an interesting and attractive ads/community section.

Average: Staff has grasped most of the basics in designing the ads/community section. More attention is needed to provide section development.

Weak: Staff execution of ads/community section could be more comprehensive.

Judge's Comments and Suggestions:

Special Sections *Optional*

Magazines | Inserts

Coverage

Is the use of a special section a logical supplement to the book, providing coverage that updates the year beyond the publishing deadline or supplementing the book's coverage in a unique and useful way?

Does the special section provide coverage of interest to all students, not just to seniors?

Is the size of the special section adequate for the coverage provided, as well as to the overall number of pages in the book?

Does the copy reinforce the coverage in terms of content?

Does the section expand coverage through secondary methods such as infographics, sidebars, first person features, or specialized topic coverage?

Headlines/Captions

Do captions and headlines reinforce the coverage in terms of content, presentation, and design?

Are captions and headlines relevant and clever when possible?

Photography

Does the photography enhance the coverage in the book in terms of quality, variety, and content?

Are the photos good quality, and are they cropped effectively?

Graphic Design

Is the design of the special section well-planned and executed, providing an attractive addition to the book?

Are the graphic details and typography visually pleasing and in harmony with the design of the rest of the book?

Does the staff avoid ghosted photographs, or printing text over visual elements?

Special Sections – Summary Evaluation

Excellent: Staff has effectively used the special section to reinforce coverage and provide additional information in a thorough and interesting way.

Good: Staff has provided a special section that is functional and attractive.

Average: Staff has attempted a special section, although improvements could be made in the execution of the concepts.

Weak: More attention is needed to the development of the special section.

Judge's Comments and Suggestions:

Note to Judges

You have been selected because IHSPA trusts your judgment and appreciates your expertise.

IHSPA does not assign points to determine a publication's rating. Your rating is based solely on evaluation of the book, with an eye toward the standards set out in this evaluation guide. IHSPA believes this type of evaluation can be a more meaningful educational tool for the staffs, and a more realistic tool for the judges. Please help in accomplishing IHSPA's goal of providing the staffs with a positive learning experience through this evaluation process by adhering to the guidelines below.

Good Critiques Should:

Be completed by a qualified judge.

Apply consistent and transparent expectations from judge to judge and entry to entry.

Recognize that the realities of a student classroom experience differ from that of the professional media in terms of time, budget, and resources available.

Provide opportunities to demonstrate growth over time (year-to-year or within years).

Address targeted areas identified by an adviser or student leaders in their introductory statement.

Include concrete, specific, and thorough feedback based on recognized best practices.

Contain specific recommendations for improvement to student media outlets in ways that improve low-performing outlets but also challenge high-performing outlets by providing next steps for growth of the media outlet.

Include both positive comments and constructive criticism.

Acknowledge and encourage the idea that the best student media programs are labs for experimentation. Students may be doing something that doesn't adhere to the traditional expectations outlined in the evaluation tool. Judges should be flexible enough to allow for individual choices made by student media outlets in meeting the needs of their specific audience.

Address student freedom of expression and journalism law and ethics, including copyright, plagiarism, and censorship issues that are apparent to the judge.

Address the most basic storytelling skills (reporting and writing, photojournalism, presentation, etc.)

Address industry-standard technical skills (software usage, media platforms, etc.)

Have specific deadlines for submission and be returned in a timely manner to provide useful feedback.

Overall Summary

Section & Rating

Unifying Concepts _____.

Reader Services _____.

Student Life (overall) _____.

Academics _____.

Sports _____.

Clubs _____.

People _____.

Ads/Community _____.

Special Sections _____.

Summary Evaluation of Book

Select One

Neubert Award (Exceptional)

Award of Distinguished Merit (Excellent)

Award of Achievement (Good)

Award of Honor (Average)

Award of Merit (Needs Improvement)

Overall Suggestions and Recommendations: