



Newspaper/Newsmagazine Evaluation

School

Publication Name

School Year

All-Florida publications consistently exhibit most skills across multiple issues.

Gold publications frequently exhibit most of the skills, but not all, across multiple issues.

Silver publications usually exhibit some skills, but lack a few or are inconsistent in exhibiting skills.

Bronze publications sometimes exhibit skills, but need improvement in more than one area.

Merit publications occasionally exhibit some of the skills expected of a scholastic publication.

The Florida Scholastic Press Association's mission is to educate, train and support scholastic journalism statewide. FSPA offers a variety of services to assist journalism students and advisers, including an evaluation service for publications and broadcast programs.

For many advisers and staffs, asking an outsider to evaluate their publication is not easy. Egos are fragile. While most of us concede the value of constructive criticism, we seldom enjoy having our "pride and joy" assessed by someone who didn't endure the grind of producing the work.

We need to remember that awards are not the only rewards of critiquing work. Most notably, another benefit is the role critiques play in helping programs grow stronger from valuable feedback.

This revised evaluation instrument aims to capture the demands of producing campus newspaper/magazines.

FSPA Newspaper/Newsmagazine Critiques are conducted in the middle of the academic year, with an early February deadline for submitting up to three published issues.

FSPA utilizes a two-tiered judging system for these publications. First, a panel of three experienced educators/journalists review all publications and establishes an overall rank of All-Florida, Gold, Silver, Bronze or Merit.

That panels also selects Sunshine Standouts from among the All-Florida winners.

After that holistic scoring, the publication is sent to another evaluator who provides in-depth written comments and specific feedback in five areas:

- Coverage, Content and Reporting
- Writing & Editing
- Layout & Design
- Photography & Visuals
- Law, Ethics & Leadership

COVERAGE, CONTENT AND REPORTING

How well does the publication cover all areas of school, student life, community and news of interest to its audience? Coverage should be both broad and deep. The highest-scoring publications will demonstrate the following:

All-Florida

Reporting

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

Multiple sources are quoted or cited in each story. All items, including graphics and photos, are properly sourced. Stories are balanced with a variety of viewpoints and written in objective voice. Most stories show evidence of background research, thorough questioning of sources, and observation of events when appropriate. Quotes illuminate the how and why of the story, not vague impressions, common feelings or cliché thoughts. Polls include information on when, who and how many people were polled. Cheerleading and editorializing are avoided, including in sports coverage.

All-Florida

Variety

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All aspects of school and student life are covered. School-sponsored sports as well as athletic activities enjoyed outside school are included. Entertainment and trends are represented in feature stories as well as reviews. Academics, school clubs and organizations, elective activities and school events are fully covered. A variety of topics and issues are included. A variety of approaches and story forms are used.

All-Florida

Diversity

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

Story selection, photos, graphics and sources reflect the diversity of the school and its community, including by age, ethnicity, race, gender and sexual orientation. The publication also reflects the diversity of programs within the school. For example, in a school with both magnet and traditional programs, students from both are well-represented. The students producing the newspaper do not focus on themselves.

All-Florida

Depth

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

Each issue includes stories of significance with enterprise reporting and local sourcing, focusing on "how" and "why." News, topical issues and trend features show strong evidence of research, interviewing of experts, and student/faculty reaction. Sports coverage highlights both accomplishments and challenges in each sport, unique to this year's team, and includes all facets of athletics, including, for example, injuries, rule changes, eligibility or college signing. Innovation and investigation is evident in all sections.

All-Florida

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

Timeliness

Stories tend to look forward or are based upon current events and timely topics. Coverage of past events offers depth, analysis and reflection, with a current or future news peg. Older news items such as sports results, past club and organization events, awards and other recognitions are kept short and contained in a column of briefs, round-up, or reference to more details online.

COVERAGE, CONTENT AND REPORTING

All-Florida

Localization

Gold

Community, school district, state, national and international news of interest to students is included and localized for relevance to students. Secondary sources are appropriately attributed.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Commentary and editorials

Gold

Opinion serves to inform, enlighten, entertain and challenge readers. Topics reflect the interests and concerns of students. Opinion columns and staff editorials are clearly labeled. Opinions are built upon attributed research and credible sources. Opposing viewpoints are acknowledged.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Creativity

Gold

Fresh angles are found for coverage of routine events such as homecoming, spirit week, the school play, and holidays. Topics are timely and not overused. Alternative story formats, photo essays and other approaches are used to make information accessible and interesting to readers.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

Coverage Content and Reporting, overall rating and written feedback

All-Florida

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

Note: Evaluators are asked to use professional discretion when determining final ratings. It is possible a publication exemplifies itself in Reporting while showing little evidence of, say, Localization, which one could argue should not be weighed as heavily. In other words, the rating above need not be calculated in the same way as a GPA. Apply best practices here and throughout the guidebook.

WRITING & EDITING

How well-written is the publication? All copy should be clear, concise, coherent, correct and complete. The best publications will consistently demonstrate the following:

All-Florida

Story organization and style

Gold

Journalistic structure (LQTQ or inverted pyramid) or other feature structure is evident in every story and column. Paragraphs are kept short. Quotes are used to express opinions, emotions

Silver

and subjective content, not to impart facts. News and feature writing, including sports, is free of the writer's opinion and written in third person. Feature writing is primarily narrative, focusing

Bronze

on a person or group and their experience to illustrate the broader topic. "Said" is the only word used in attribution unless the situation demands another verb.

Merit

All-Florida

Lead writing

Gold

Cliché and overused leads such as a direct quote, question, "imagine," or stating the obvious are avoided. Leads are short and tight, indicating the focus of the story. Time and place are not the

Silver

beginning of a lead unless the time or place is the news or reason for the story. Features begin with a person or thing at the center of the story and illustrate the focus of the story.

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Voice and style

Gold

Journalistic voice is used in news and news features. Writing is active, telling who did what to whom. Passive voice is avoided. Sensory description, observation and insightful quotes enliven

Silver

the writing. First person pronouns are used only in opinion columns. Second person pronouns are used sparingly if at all. Voice, tone and style are consistent within in each story.

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Accuracy and Comprehensiveness

Gold

Stories are accurate and based on facts from credible sources. All concerned stakeholders are addressed through quotes and research, properly attributed. Stories are not based on one

Silver

source or a single point of view and key pieces of information are not obviously missing.

Bronze

Merit

Stories attempt to explain why the information matters to readers. The "so what" is evident. Stories contain all 5Ws and usually H.

All-Florida

Headlines

Gold

Headlines summarize the content and angle of the story or column. Action verbs and vivid nouns predominate. Writing is in present or future tense. Brief main heads, particularly those

Silver

without a verb, are supported by subheads in sentence form. Abbreviations, school name and mascot are limited in use. Capitalization style is consistent, with sentence case preferred.

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Captions

Gold

All photos have a caption, usually more than one sentence. The first sentence is in present tense, telling who is in the photo and what they are doing, without stating the obvious.

Silver

Remaining sentences are in past tense and describe the action or situation of the photo in more detail. All people in the photo are identified. Captions should include most of the 5Ws and H.

Bronze

Merit

WRITING & EDITING

All-Florida **Opinion writing**

Gold All opinion columns, personal essays and staff editorials are clearly identified as opinion or commentary. A direct statement of stance is made near the beginning of each editorial or opinion column. Opinions are supported by research and fact. Opposing viewpoints are acknowledged and countered. Reviews engage and inform the readers and do not give away too much of the plot. The reviewer's expertise, or lack of it, is acknowledged for credibility.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida **Copy editing and AP style**

Gold Copy is generally free of error in grammar, syntax and conventions. Style is consistent, regardless of which rule book is followed. AP Style is preferred. Students are identified by grade.

Silver Adults are identified with first and last names on first reference unless a consistent local style is utilized.

Bronze

Merit

Writing & Editing, overall rating and written feedback

All-Florida

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

LAYOUT & DESIGN

How well does the publication's design and layout enhance the content and serve the readers? Design should be consistent, clean and uncluttered. Layouts and graphics should never interfere with written content. The best publications will consistently demonstrate the following:

All-Florida

Reader Aids

Gold

Nameplate is clear and establishes a brand for the publication without overpowering the page.

Silver

Nameplate contains the name of the publication, date, volume number, school name, address and zip code, and possibly a website. Folios with page numbers are readable and easy to find.

Bronze

Pages are clearly labeled by section, either as part of the folio or as a separate element. Logos are used to identify standing content and columns. Logos are simple, understandable and appropriately sized. They do not overpower the content or page. Sigs or column logos identify commentary columns that repeat in multiple issues, including in sports or features.

Merit

All-Florida

Overall Organization

Gold

Content appears in appropriate sections. Page labels and folios assist navigation. A digest, cover lines, table of contents or some other device appears on or near Page One to help readers identify additional contents, stories and/or sections within in the publication. A masthead appears in the same place each issue and includes information about how to reach the staff, as well as a list of staff members and the adviser. The masthead may also include the website, social media handles, publication membership in scholastic journalism organizations, awards and policies.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Design

Gold

The publication displays an obvious use of a stylebook and design plan. The publication has a distinctive, coordinated appearance. Color, screens, line rules and white space are used deliberately and deliberately to help readers navigate content. Design elements never interfere with readability. The publication's overall design is typically consistent from issue to issue.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Layout: Organization

Gold

Layouts are modular and use of a column grid is obvious. Each page or two-page spread has a clearly dominant visual element. Headlines and other visual elements are used to create a hierarchy on each page, so that the most important stories dominate and secondary elements are secondary. Elements that belong together are grouped together. Most stories are paired with a visual or graphic element to help draw readers to the story. Column widths are consistent. Type around photos, pull quotes or other elements is wide enough to be readable. Internal and external margins are consistent. White space is used effectively and bleeds to the outer edges of a page.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida

Layout: Designing with Photography

Gold

Photo captions are provided their own space within each layout, and are not placed over the photo except when the photo is clearly planned to accommodate a caption in a specific layout.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

Photos are mostly rectangular, unless an irregularly shaped photo enhances the design of the page. Photos in circles are avoided.

LAYOUT & DESIGN

All-Florida **Typography**

Gold Type is clean and readable. It differentiates body copy, captions, headlines and other elements, but the chosen fonts blend well. Font proliferation is avoided and decorative fonts are used sparingly. Headlines vary in size and weight, not font, according to the importance of the story.

Silver

Bronze Because they are harder to read, italics and script headlines and vertical type are avoided. All-cap headlines are used judiciously or not at all. Typography over photos is avoided whenever possible. Capitalization style in headlines is consistent. Body copy, captions, bylines, credits, and copy within graphics are standardized as to font, size and style.

Merit

All-Florida **Graphics and mods**

Gold Informational graphics such as polls, charts and fact boxes are well planned to enhance communication. Borders, reverses and screens are used effectively to delineate content, and never interfere with readability. Color is used with restraint. Irregularly shaped blocks of type and excessive hyphenation are avoided. Stand-alone graphics contain their own headline and lead-in with adequate background information. Charts, graphics and mods are easy to understand.

Silver

Bronze

Merit

All-Florida **Covers, centerspreads and special feature pages**

Gold Creativity and coherence go hand in hand. Illustrations are eye-catching and bold while helping readers to understand what the story is about. Spreads are well balanced and unified. Headlines and teasers on news magazine covers help to introduce the magazine's content. Ideally, covers will include cover lines, digest or other teasers to promote content beyond the cover story.

Silver

Bronze Decorative fonts may be used as design elements, but always with readability, appropriateness to content, and unity in mind.

Merit

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Layout & Design, overall rating and written feedback

All-Florida

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

PHOTOGRAPHY & VISUALS

How creative and informative are the publication's photography, illustrations and other visual elements? Photos should be primarily candid and illustrations should be of obvious quality. The best publications will consistently demonstrate the following:

All-Florida **Photography content**

Gold Most photos show the action and/or emotion of an event or activity. Posed photos are avoided. When used, portraits and mug shots should reveal the personality of their subject through their environment. Photos are cropped to emphasize a center of interest. Cropping of people at major joints such as knees or elbows avoided, especially in cut-outs. Composition techniques such as rule of thirds, framing, distinctive angles, and depth of field are used to enhance visual interest. Sports photos include the key elements of the sport – racket, ball, club, etc.

All-Florida **Photo and visuals technical quality**

Gold Exposure is correct, not too light or too dark. Toning and color balance is correct. Photos are not pixilated or of poor resolution. They are in focus. Artwork is free of random pencil marks or shadows, is of obvious quality and in good taste. Illustrations are well-executed.

All-Florida **Artwork and photo illustration concept and execution**

Gold The idea of the illustration is clear to readers and reflects the tone and focus of the story it illustrates. Artwork is mature and high-quality, not pencil drawings or amateurish cartoons. Hand lettering is avoided in illustrations. If used in editorial cartoons, hand-lettering is legible and compatible with the quality of the artwork. If copyrighted images are used within an illustration, they must be used with permission and properly credited. Clip art is avoided.

All-Florida **Variety and appropriateness to content**

Gold All visual elements, including infographics, photos, illustrations and artwork, assist in illuminating readers. Photos vary in content, size and angles. A mix of close-ups, mid-range and long-shots are used. Artwork and illustration styles are varied and match the content. Illustrations are not simply used as a crutch in lieu of photography.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VISUALS

Photography & Visuals, overall rating and written feedback

All-Florida

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

LAW, ETHICS & LEADERSHIP

All-Florida **Overall readability and impression**

Gold The publication provides readers with an idea of what the school is about. It serves readers
Silver needs and interests in a visually inviting and intellectually challenging way. Voice and diction
Bronze is appropriate to content. The publication is professional and journalistic in its approach. Word
Merit play that doesn't match the tone of the story and awkward juxtapositions of words and images are avoided.

All-Florida **Copyright and credits**

Gold All photos and artwork are credited. Images acquired online are presented within fair-use provi-
Silver sions, under Creative Common license provisions or used with specific, written permission from
Bronze the owner of the image. Proper photo credit is provided in all uses.
Merit

All-Florida **Sourcing and attribution**

Gold Plagiarism is unacceptable. Secondary sources such as websites and other news organizations
Silver are properly attributed, cited or credited. News items based on reporting from other sources,
Bronze such as a national news round-up, must include the source of the information reported. All
Merit quotes are properly attributed. Sources of information for graphics are included in the graphics.

All-Florida **Editorial leadership**

Gold The publication is edited by students for students. Audience is considered throughout. The
Silver publication reflects maturity and responsibility in story choice, coverage and opinion. News
Bronze values shape coverage and news judgment is sound. The publication reflects the school com-
Merit munity. Staff Editorials are included and relates to a pressing issue or topic of importance to students. A mission statement or editorial policy statement is included in the masthead, ideally reinforcing ethical journalism standards and, freedom of student expression.

All-Florida **Risk taking and creativity**

Gold The publication takes risks in its coverage, writing and visual presentation. Fresh angles and
Silver approaches are used. Alternative story forms are included to present content in atten-
Bronze tion-catching ways. Investigative and/or data-based reporting is included. Eye-popping visuals
Merit capture readers' interest. Even if a risk missed its mark, the staff may be commended for trying something new or challenging.

All-Florida **Advertising (if included)**

Gold Advertising is appropriate to the audience. Ad design is attractive, modular, and differs from
Silver editorial significantly enough to be clearly recognized as advertising. Ads are not secluded to
Bronze their own pages or section, but spread throughout the publication. Ads for similar business are
Merit not placed on the same page.

All-Florida **Online and social media**

Gold Print editions help readers navigate to the publication's web site and social media sites. Break-
Silver ing and timely news is covered online. Publications should reflect an ongoing online news
Bronze presence.
Merit

LAW, ETHICS & LEADERSHIP

Law, Ethics & Leadership, overall rating and written feedback

All-Florida

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Merit

PUBLICATION SUMMARY

**COVERAGE,
CONTENT
& REPORTING**

All-Florida
Gold
Silver
Bronze
Merit

Publication summary, written feedback

**WRITING
& EDITING**

All-Florida
Gold
Silver
Bronze
Merit

**LAYOUT
& DESIGN**

All-Florida
Gold
Silver
Bronze
Merit

**PHOTOGRAPHY
& VISUALS**

All-Florida
Gold
Silver
Bronze
Merit

**LAW , ETHICS
& LEADERSHIP**

All-Florida
Gold
Silver
Bronze
Merit

**FINAL
RATING**

All-Florida
Gold
Silver
Bronze
Merit

EVALUATOR