



# Yearbook Evaluation

**School**

**Publication Name**

**School Year**

*Revised June 2020*

# FSPA



Florida Scholastic Press Association

*All-Florida publications consistently exhibit attributes of an effective scholastic publication.*

*Gold publications frequently exhibit most of the attributes.*

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

*Bronze publications sometimes exhibit the attributes, but need improvement in more than one area.*

*Merit publications occasionally or infrequently exhibit the attributes expected of an effective 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 a journalistically sound yearbook.

FSPA Yearbook Evaluations are conducted at the end of the academic year, typically with a

mid-June submission deadline.

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 six areas:

- Concept
- Coverage, Content and Reporting
- Writing and Editing
- Layout and Design
- Photography and Visuals
- Essentials (Reader Service, Law and Ethics, Leadership)

***NOTE: For 2020, we are amending this process and will send books directly to evaluators. Then, a panel will review all books to identify All-Florida winners and Sunshine Standouts. In the interest of statewide consistency, the panel may adjust a book's final rating.***

# CONCEPT

## *All-Florida* **Theme development**

*Gold*

- The book uses a unifying concept: a theme, a graphic, a logo, spin-offs or similar devices to achieve an overall impression and personality.

*Silver*

- The theme is original, imaginative and relevant to the school and school year.

*Bronze*

- The unifying concept is apparent throughout the book. It clearly appears on the cover (front and/or back), the endsheets, the title page, an opening/closing section and divider spreads. It is also evident on internal pages via graphics, storytelling, mods/alternative story forms, fonts, phrases, etc...

*Merit*

- The unifying concept is simple, clear and well-conceived, easily identifiable and relevant to the student readers.

- Photos and text carefully advance the concepts in quality, contrast, variety and content.

- Opening/closing introduces/wraps up the book and school year.

- Opening/closing includes specifics related to the school and year, including facts, figures and feelings.

- Divider pages develop graphic elements, but look different from opening/closing spreads.

- Divider pages introduce each section and include verbal theme development to continue the year's story.

- Theme development is evident beyond just traditional "theme" pages.

## Concept, overall rating and written feedback

*All-Florida*

*Gold*

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

*Note: Evaluators are asked to use professional discretion when determining category and final ratings. It is possible a publication exemplifies itself in one area versus another, but not every checkbox here necessarily carries the same weight. 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.*

# COVERAGE, CONTENT AND REPORTING

*All-Florida*

## **Coverage essentials**

*Gold*

- Coverage (whether traditional, chronological or blended) includes all areas of the school, including academics, clubs, people (including faculty and staff), sports and students' outside-of-school lives.

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

- Photo selection depicts photos of one person (focus on individual), two persons (interaction) and three or more (relationships) to tell the whole story of the spread.
- Mods are used to explore multiple aspects of topics.

*All-Florida*

## **Creativity**

*Gold*

- Fresh angles are found for coverage, including of routine events such as homecoming, spirit week, the school play and holidays.

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

- Topics are timely and not overused.
- Alternative story formats, photo essays and other approaches are used to make information accessible and interesting to readers.

*All-Florida*

## **Student life**

*Gold*

- Includes school activities, such as homecoming, dances, school events and traditions.

*Silver*

- Covers students' lives inside and outside of the school/campus.

*Bronze*

- Strives for realistic coverage of teen interests, including current events and potentially controversial issues.

*Merit*

- Routine coverage is enlivened with unique angles or approaches.
- Photos, quotes and graphics strive to include a diverse array of students.

*All-Florida*

## **People**

*Gold*

- Reader interest is attracted through feature coverage, with options such as infographics, sidebars, first-person features and/or specialized topic coverage.

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

- People panels are appropriately sized, and adjoining names are easy to read and match up to each photo. Photographic quality is consistent throughout pictures.
- Obvious effort is made to include a fair representation of the total student body, their interests and activities in the school, including administration and support staff, positions/courses taught.

*All-Florida*

## **Academics/Curriculum**

*Gold*

- Coverage includes all facets and grade levels of academics, in and outside of the classroom.

*Silver*

- Section avoids photos of students just sitting in their desks or a teacher standing lecturing.

*Bronze*

- Emphasis is on students in learning activities.

*Merit*

- Stories emphasize a unique, interesting or timely angle to the topic. General/generic stories about what is taught in each subject area are avoided.

*All-Florida*

## **Clubs/Organizations**

*Gold*

- Coverage focuses on organizations' activities, rather than meetings.

*Silver*

- Focuses on students doing things, rather than just the purpose of the club.

*Bronze*

- All organizations are represented with a group photo and some type of coverage.

*Merit*

- Group photos are included with consistent identification of the group's name and students' names. Faces are identifiable.

# COVERAGE, CONTENT AND REPORTING

## *All-Florida* **Sports**

- Gold* • A complete sports overview, including JV and freshman teams, intramural sports (if school has this) and individual sports is given.
- Silver* • Coverage includes sports outside of school.
- Bronze* • Coverage shows the breadth of the season: sports events, practices and playoffs.
- Merit* • Coverage goes beyond the obvious and is driven by story rather than just plug-and-play season recaps.
- Team photos are included with consistent identification of the team's name and students' names. Faces are identifiable.
- Complete scorebards -- with overall win/loss record, dates and accurate scores -- are included.

## Coverage, Content and Reporting, overall rating and written feedback

*All-Florida*

*Gold*

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

# WRITING AND EDITING

## *All-Florida* **Organization and voice**

- Gold* • Journalistic structure (LQTQ or inverted pyramid) or other feature structure is evident in traditional copy.
- Silver*
- Bronze* • Paragraphs are short.
- Merit* • Quotes are used to express opinions, emotions and subjective content, not to impart facts.  
• News and feature writing, including sports, is free of the writer's opinion and in third person.  
• Feature writing is primarily narrative, focusing 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.  
• Writers use active voice, telling who did what to whom.  
• Sensory description, observation and insightful quotes enliven the writing.  
• Second person pronouns are used sparingly if at all.  
• Voice, tone and style are consistent within stories and alternative copy.

## *All-Florida* **Lead writing**

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

## *All-Florida* **Accuracy and comprehensiveness**

- Gold* • Stories and alternative copy are accurate and based on facts from credible sources.
- Silver* • Concerned stakeholders are addressed through quotes and research, properly attributed.
- Bronze* • Single-source stories are avoided.
- Merit* • Stories attempt to explain why the information matters to readers. The "so what" is evident.  
• Copy and alternative story forms answer 5 W's and usually H.

## *All-Florida* **Headlines**

- Gold* • Headlines are dynamic so that they logically lead the reader into the copy.
- Silver* • Standard headlines contain a verb, stated or implied, and are written in the present or future tense. Gerund (-ing) headlines are avoided.
- Bronze*
- Merit* • Headline style is consistent regarding which words are capitalized.  
• Kickers and decks are used effectively.

## *All-Florida* **Copy editing and 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*
- Bronze* Adults are identified with first and last names on first reference unless a consistent local style is utilized.
- Merit*

# WRITING AND EDITING

## *All-Florida* **Captions**

*Gold*

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

- Captions are usually more than one sentence with the first sentence in the present tense and subsequent sentences in the past describing the context of the photo. Ideally, most captions will be in four parts: lead-in, present-tense explainer, past tense sentence with context, quote from person pictured or additional background information.
- Captions provide the reader with information not obvious in photo. May incorporate direct or indirect quotations.
- Captions identify every recognizable person in the photo except when impractical; usually fewer than six giving first and last name and grade.
- Group photo identifications are consistent (Typically starting with Front Row, Row 2, Row 3 ... Back Row, with names listed left to right).
- Captions attempt to answer five W's and H along with the "so what."

## Writing and Editing, overall rating and written feedback

*All-Florida*

*Gold*

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

# LAYOUT AND DESIGN

## *All-Florida* **Layout**

- Gold* • Layouts contain a clean, uncluttered appearance.
- Silver* • Facing pages are linked.
- Bronze* • Dominant photo/package are significantly larger than other elements on the spread and provide a clear entry point for readers.
- Merit* • Spreads contain an eyeline (or there is a purposeful reason for not doing so).  
• Graphics unify or separate elements without overpowering or decorating the spread.  
• Designs utilize white space to create visual hierarchy.  
• Trapped white space is avoided.  
• Yearbook's pages include multiple levels of white space, including Level 1 (typically 1-3 points used for packaging), Level 2 (traditionally 1 pica used for internal spacing) and Level 3 (rails used to isolate and emphasize modules).  
• Grouped elements have a clear visual relationship. Unrelated elements are separate.  
• Modules have consistent design elements to further enhance the theme. Mods have their own headline and utilize type hierarchy on a spread.

## *All-Florida* **Typography**

- Gold* • Body, alternative copy and caption typeface and size remain consistent throughout the book
- Silver* • Fonts are chosen purposefully and used consistently.
- Bronze* • Headline styles (ups, down, centered, flush left, etc.) are consistent.
- Merit* • Careful selection of font doesn't interfere with readability.  
• Staff members are careful not to mix too many typefaces on the same spread.  
• Typographical hierarchy used from headline package to secondary and tertiary items.

## *All-Florida* **Graphics**

- Gold* • Reverses, screen and boxes do not interfere with legibility of copy or overpower the page, and are used consistently.
- Silver* • Any borders, screens or other graphics enhance, rather than distract, from the overall design.
- Bronze* • Uses high quality images/vectors without distortion.
- Merit*

## *All-Florida* **Organization/Consistency**

- Gold* • Content appears in appropriate sections.
- Silver* • Page labels and folios assist navigation.
- Bronze* • Publication has a distinctive, coordinated appearance with obvious use of a design stylebook.
- Merit* • Margins, both external and internal, are consistent and sufficient.  
• There is obvious use of a column/grid system.

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

- Gold* • Ads are appropriate and appealing with attractive, creative design and consistent typography.
- Silver* • Business ads are appropriate for the audience.
- Bronze* • Senior ads are consistently designed and use similar elements to the book's overall theme.
- Merit* • Staff has been careful not to place ads of like businesses beside or near each other.  
• Thematic elements and/or ad borders enhance the message of the ad rather than distract.  
• Internal margins are consistent, and external margins should be used to frame the spread.  
• High quality photos and artwork is used.



# LAYOUT AND DESIGN

## Layout and Design, overall rating and written feedback

*All-Florida*

*Gold*

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

# PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUALS

## *All-Florida* **Photography content**

- Gold* • Photos strive to capture emotion, especially surprise, laughter, determination or sadness.
- Silver* • Posed photos are avoided. When used, portraits and mug shots should reveal the personality of their subject through their environment.
- Bronze* • 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.
- Merit* • 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.
- Silver* • Toning and color balance is correct.
- Bronze* • Photos are not pixelated or of poor resolution.
- Merit* • 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* **Variety and appropriateness to content**

- Gold* • All visual elements, including infographics, photos, illustrations and artwork, assist in illuminating readers.
- Silver* • Photos vary in content, size and angles. A mix of close-ups, mid-range and long-shots are used.
- Bronze* • Illustrations are not simply used as a crutch in lieu of photography.
- Merit* • Photo placement leads readers into the spread.

# PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUALS

## Photography and Visuals, overall rating and written feedback

*All-Florida*

*Gold*

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

# ESSENTIALS

## *All-Florida* **Reader service**

- Gold* • Front cover includes theme, book name and year.
- Silver* • Spine includes theme, book name, year, school name, city/state, and volume number.
- Bronze* • A table of contents appears on the front endsheet or close to the front of the book, but typically not on the title page.
- Merit* • Title page includes school name, book name, year, volume, theme, complete mailing address, website, phone number, total student count and faculty and staff count.  
• Folios are on every spread (with easy-to-find page numbers) and provide readers with extra information about the spread contents.

## *All-Florida* **Index and colophon**

- Gold* • Contains an index.
- Silver* • Index lists every student, faculty member, support staff, and administrator, and every business advertiser, club, sport and major topics covered in the yearbook.
- Bronze* • Index typically includes additional content to make pages more engaging.
- Merit* • Colophon specifically explains details of the production of the yearbook, including fonts, colors, equipment used, books sold, price(s) and editorial policy. May include prior year awards/recognitions received.  
• A list of yearbook staff members is included, along with their respective positions.

## *All-Florida* **Diversity**

- Gold* • Story selection, photos, graphics and sources reflect the diversity of the school and its community, including by age, ethnicity, race, gender and sexual orientation.
- Silver* • Yearbook 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 yearbook do not focus on themselves.
- Bronze* • Yearbook does not overuse the same students or staff.
- Merit*

## *All-Florida* **Copyright and credits**

- Gold* • All photos and artwork are credited.
- Silver* • Images acquired online are presented within fair use provisions, under Creative Commons license provisions or used with specific, written permission from the owner of the image.
- Bronze* • “Courtesy of” attribution is avoided.
- Merit*

## *All-Florida* **Sourcing and attribution**

- Gold* • Plagiarism is unacceptable.
- Silver* • Secondary sources such as websites and other news organizations are properly attributed, cited or credited.
- Bronze* • All quotes are properly attributed. Sources of information for graphics are included in the graphics.
- Merit* • Polls provide number of students polled, date conducted and method used.

# ESSENTIALS

## *All-Florida* **Editorial leadership**

- Gold* • The publication is created BY students for students. Audience is considered throughout.
- Silver* • The publication reflects maturity and responsibility in story choice and coverage.
- Bronze* • The publication demonstrates ethical journalism.
- Merit*

## *All-Florida* **Risk taking and creativity**

- Gold* • The publication takes risks in its coverage, writing and visual presentation.
- Silver* • Fresh angles and approaches are used.
- Bronze* • Alternative story forms are included to present content in attention-catching ways.
- Merit* • Even if a risk missed its mark, the staff may be commended for trying something new or challenging.

## Essentials, overall rating and written feedback

*All-Florida*

*Gold*

*Silver*

*Bronze*

*Merit*

# EVALUATION SUMMARY

## Evaluation summary, written feedback

### CONCEPT

*All-Florida*  
*Gold*  
*Silver*  
*Bronze*  
*Merit*

### COVERAGE, CONTENT & REPORTING

*All-Florida*  
*Gold*  
*Silver*  
*Bronze*  
*Merit*

### WRITING & EDITING

*All-Florida*  
*Gold*  
*Silver*  
*Bronze*  
*Merit*

### LAYOUT & DESIGN

*All-Florida*  
*Gold*  
*Silver*  
*Bronze*  
*Merit*

### PHOTOGRAPHY & VISUALS

*All-Florida*  
*Gold*  
*Silver*  
*Bronze*  
*Merit*

### ESSENTIALS

*All-Florida*  
*Gold*  
*Silver*  
*Bronze*  
*Merit*

### FINAL RATING

*All-Florida*  
*Gold*  
*Silver*  
*Bronze*  
*Merit*

### EVALUATOR