

# Quill and Scroll

# NEWS MEDIA

# evaluation

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## What the service is:

Quill and Scroll News Media Evaluation is a cooperative study of five areas that are significant to the production of scholastic news media – Coverage, Writing and Editing, Visuals, Policy Guidelines and Business Practices.

It's basically a simple process. First, the staff and adviser make their self-analysis using this form as a guide. Second, the Quill and Scroll judges review the responses and publications, then offer their evaluations in all five areas, and rate three of them – Coverage, Writing and Editing, and Visuals – for award recognition.

Staffs may choose a **ratings-only** option and forgo the self-analysis and evaluation. The full evaluation is \$75; the rating alone is \$55.

## Instructions:

Examine your Evaluation Form PDF for this year's News Media Evaluation. Staff analysis is in the left column. Judge evaluations are in the right column. Please read all the information below before you begin to complete the evaluation form, if you're seeking a full evaluation. *Staffs seeking a rating alone with overall comments should skip to instruction number 3.*

1. For the full evaluation, we recommend the news media staff and adviser conduct a self-analysis session to respond to prompts in the staff analysis column; this allows participants to discuss pertinent topics and learn from the experience. Write comments and explanations in the Tell Us More section of each division. The Tell Us More field expands, and thus is larger than it appears.

2. Judges will use the information provided by staffs to evaluate the news media and offer suggestions in the column at right.

3. In addition to the Evaluation Form, include four issues of the news media (newspaper or news magazine) published during the past school year that you would like evaluated. Schools publishing fewer than four issues should send all issues published during the school year. We recommend issues submitted include those in which you tried new techniques, were challenged in producing, or would simply like feedback. Do not send special editions, such as homecoming, senior, holiday or any issues focusing on one event, as these are often atypical representations of your publication.

4. Publications receiving the George H. Gallup Award, the highest rating, will be recommended by the judges from among the best news media entered that received superior achievement ratings in each of the three rated categories.

6. Complete registration information. Use **Adobe Reader** or **Acrobat**; do not use Preview. This is a saveable PDF. Save your answers on the PDF. Return your completed PDF by email between April 1 and June 15. Email the PDF to [quillscroll@gmail.com](mailto:quillscroll@gmail.com). When saving the PDF, use your **school name** in the document title and in the email subject line.

7. Print a copy of the Registration Page (this page only, please) and include it with your news media entries. If you did not pay online with a credit card, include a check or a purchase order/PO number for the registration fee in the mailing with your entries.

## What the judges do:

Quill and Scroll assigns entries to judges who have the expertise to provide objective and thorough evaluations and feedback. They examine the newspapers and/or news magazines. In the case of full evaluations, they will read your analysis and offer feedback. Final ratings and comments are located on the last page of this form for all entrants. Feedback and ratings in each category are given in full evaluations. Only ratings in each category, and final ratings and comments are provided for those who opt for ratings-only.

The judges consider the entry in terms of the specific situation of each school – large or small, public or non-public – recognizing production problems news media face, including factors beyond their control. The evaluators concern themselves with the achievement possible within your resources and limitations.

The Evaluation Form PDF with the judge's feedback will be returned to the **adviser e-mail address** provided, early in September. The Evaluation Form PDF can be projected from a computer with a data projector for group discussions, or e-mailed to individual staff and editors for instructional purposes.

All News Media Evaluation results will be published on the Quill and Scroll website: [www.quillandscroll.org](http://www.quillandscroll.org). Gallup Award winners are included in a PowerPoint presentation available on CD from Quill and Scroll. Ordering information is below.

## Registration

Type of Publication:

Quill and Scroll 2014 News Media PowerPoint CDs are now available for \$15 each. Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the 2014 Quill and Scroll News Media PowerPoint CD, with Gallup Award-winners and judges' commentary on trends and best practices. I would like to participate in: **News Media Evaluation (Fee is \$75);**  
**RATING ONLY (Fee is \$55). Payment is included as:**

Pay by credit card on the Quill and Scroll page of PaytoGov secure payment service:  
<https://paydirect.link2gov.com/quillscrollmembership/ItemSelection/SelectItems>

**PRINT A COPY OF THIS PAGE TO SEND WITH YOUR NEWS MEDIA.**

# COVERAGE

## Administration

### *Judge--Evaluation:*

Coverage includes district school boards and elections, purchases, building repairs and construction, calendars, taxes and budgets, and their impact.

Stories cover appropriate angles and perspectives; interviews include administrators, faculty, students, parents and/or community members.

Services such as maintenance, health, and transportation; issues including truancy and violence within the school and their impact are covered.

### *Staff--We cover:*

Services available to students, including health, guidance counseling, parking and building maintenance.

Administrative and faculty policies and developments, as well as staff activities, achievements, employment, training and related issues.

School boards, administrators and policies addressing such district matters as school safety, calendars, budgets, schedules, dress codes and attendance.

### Strengths

### Weaknesses

### Tell Us More!

### Administration Rating

## Classroom and Curriculum

### *Judge--Evaluation:*

Class projects, curriculum, field trips, speakers and presentations are covered.

Course changes, texts, competitions, and class achievements are covered.

Examinations, testing schedules, trends and preparation are covered.

College preparation, visits and student recruitment activities are covered.

Parents, alumni and other external constituents as appropriate are interviewed.

Varied story formats are used to best tell the breadth of class and curriculum stories, including in-depth, analysis, feature and brief articles.

### *Staff--We cover:*

A range of core courses, such as in the humanities, languages, social sciences, special education, and physical education.

Additional courses in areas, such as life skills, career development, and the arts.

Course support services, such as in technology, texts, field trips, student teachers and aides, and others.

College preparatory activities, such as achievement tests, advanced and honor courses, campus visits and recruitment fairs.

Student class-related activities, including special projects, class presentations, guest speakers and foreign exchange programs.

### Strengths

### Weaknesses

### Tell Us More!

### Classroom and Curriculum Rating

# School Life

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

Balances coverage of all teams and groups, and reflects the school's diversity.

Stories report sports, activity and group meeting schedules in advance.

Examinations of policies and selection criteria for student government and other co-curricular activities are included.

A variety of story forms are used as appropriate, including briefs, features, sidebars and visuals.

Developments and issues in student services are reported, such as cafeteria prices, library facilities, and tutoring and speech therapy availability.

Teamwork is emphasized as well as recognition of individual achievements within groups.

## *Staff--We cover:*

Drama, forensics, dance, media, art, religious, diversity and political campus groups and clubs.

Student government and affiliated activities, assemblies, elections, holidays, fundraisers and issues.

Student services, facilities such as library and media centers, cafeterias, and accessibility and development issues.

Band, chorus, musical performances and concerts, participation issues as well as developments behind the scenes, achievements and awards.

Athletics and sports, boys and girls teams, interscholastic and intramural competitions, achievements, participation issues as well as on-field and off-field developments.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

## School Life Rating

## Tell Us More!

# External News

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

Uses relevant and credible sources to explore trends, issues and society.

Students are recognized as taxpayers and as soon-to-be voters in coverage of city, state, and federal government, and related issues.

Coverage of crime, controversies and other issues provides tie-ins to school audience.

Seizes opportunities to investigate and thoroughly report news; uses Internet and other secondary sources primarily as background.

## *Staff--We cover:*

Stories about crimes committed, trends, laws and punishments with tie-ins to our audience.

Government officials, elections, taxes, political developments and issues relevant to our audience.

Trends in employment opportunities, fashions, volunteerism, festivals and activities.

Issues and disasters (tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, fires, poverty, disease, unemployment) impacting our audience directly or indirectly.

Social institutions, activities and their developments, including religion, civil rights, environment, entertainers and services, that relate to our audience.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

## External News Rating

## Tell Us More!

## Overall **COVERAGE** Rating

# VISUALS

## Graphics

### *Staff--We strive to:*

Incorporate graphics in layouts of each section/spread and page.

Have access to and be adept at using digital editing software, such as Photoshop and Illustrator, to enhance graphic creation.

Utilize a variety of graphics to enhance the visual experience and storytelling, including cartoons, typography, infographics and digital artistry.

### **Tell Us More!**

### *Judge--Evaluation:*

Editorial cartoons and illustrations are delivered in a clever, meaningful way.

Typography enhances the visual appeal of a page.

Graphic elements are sharp, neat and clear, and add points of entry, interest and character to content.

### **Strengths**

### **Weaknesses**

### **Graphics Rating**

## Photographs

### *Staff--Evaluation of Photographs:*

Students on staff assign, take and edit all photos.

Photo subjects are in action, rather than posed; photo illustrations are clearly labeled.

Care is taken when using computer manipulation to enhance the appearance of photos, while retaining proportions and original content.

Photographers use various techniques, such as leading lines and framing, to draw the reader's attention.

Photographers talk to reporters and editors about stories prior to shooting assignments.

Staff understand legal and ethical issues pertaining to photos, including manipulation, copyright, and labeling stipulations.

### **Tell Us More!**

### *Judge--Evaluation:*

Cropping focuses attention on subjects, and doesn't cut off subject's head, arms, feet, etc.

Photos complement text to advance the story, or are displayed as stand alones with captions.

Photographers use various techniques to make subjects interesting, while employing ethical standards to accurately convey information.

Technical quality of photos is strong, with a sharp focus, clean composition and appropriate contrast.

Computer manipulation of photos enhances their appearance and is not apparent, i.e. proportions are not distorted; images are not pixilated.

Most photos are taken by staff and credited as such; photos are not downloaded from the Internet and published without the permission of owners.

### **Strengths**

### **Weaknesses**

### **Photographs Rating**

# Layout

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

### *Staff--We strive to:*

Use updated layout software, such as InDesign.

Follow a design style, and assign staff to lay out pages.

Use a dominant visual, photo or graphic, on each page.

Include a visually interesting index or teasers on the front page to preview key stories from each section.

Use spot color to highlight particular stories or headlines, based on a design style, while ensuring readability.

Shaded boxes are not too dark, and text in them is readable.

A proper balance of white space is apparent; columns are aligned.

Photos, graphics and type work together to create an enjoyable reading experience.

Text wrap looks clean and is easy to follow, avoiding awkward spacing between words.

Staff maintains a design style with a consistent color palette and set of fonts for text, headlines, bylines, and captions.

Newspaper avoids tombstone headlines; they don't run into each other and are clearly defined.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

## Layout Rating

# Overall Appearance

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

### *Staff--We strive to:*

Use display headlines and color for special effect; and, when possible, use secondary heads to attract readers.

Involve editors and reporters to help conceive graphic and visual elements.

Use special effects, such as text wraps, photo cut-outs or dropped capital letters, to vary presentations.

Routinely review designs and visual presentations in professional media to find models and ideas.

Employ technology, such as scanners, software and cameras, to enable the best possible design.

Margins and gutters are proportionate to the page.

Overall design reflects a distinct, contemporary character.

Special effects lend interest and attention to presentation.

Graphics and visuals are used appropriately, and advance storytelling.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

## Overall Appearance Rating

## Overall VISUALS Rating

## Tell Us More!

## Tell Us More!

# WRITING/EDITING

## Editing

### *Staff--We strive to:*

Adhere to established styles for copy, such as AP and Quill and Scroll, and for layout and design.

Thoroughly edit copy by assigning more than one editor to review copy for accuracy, correct spelling, usage of grammar, source credibility and story organization.

Maintain an organized system for news gathering, such as assigning beats, and for production by designating staff responsibilities, assessing performance and reliability.

### **Tell Us More!**

## Editorial Writing

### *Staff--We strive to:*

Include at least one staff, unsigned editorial in each issue, addressing timely, relevant news topics.

Adhere to journalistic writing, grammar and style guidelines. We avoid IVY: I = First person, I; V=Verbosity; Y=Second person, you.

Incorporate credible, pertinent sources of information to substantiate editorial positions, build logical arguments and emphasize actions students might legally take.

Use a variety of formats to present student opinions, such as letters to the editor, Q&A, polls and surveys, infographics, editorial cartoons and columns.

Cover topics of interest to readers when writing reviews, including music, movies, video games, books, television and computer programs, restaurants, concerts, cell phones, and school theater and music productions.

### **Tell Us More!**

### *Judge--Evaluation:*

Newsworthy stories are written accurately, concisely, clearly and simply.

Publication reflects a well-organized news operation through coverage, quality of content and timeliness.

Capitalization, dates, times, numbers, titles, abbreviations, full names and other uses follow a consistent style, such as AP or Quill and Scroll.

### **Strengths**

### **Weaknesses**

### **Editing Rating**

### *Judge--Evaluation:*

Voices and topics reflect a diverse student body, with balance and fairness.

The editorial "we" is used to refer to the newspaper staff, and not the school population as a whole.

Relevant, significant topics are presented in an effective manner that avoids scolding, whining, complaining or childish tones.

Strong introductions, lively and pointed discussions and effective conclusions are written concisely and in adherence to length constraints.

A variety of formats present a range of student opinions, such as columns, reviews, polls, letters, editorial cartoons, infographics and staff editorials.

Evidence of careful planning, research and thoughtfulness is reflected in exemplary writing.

### **Strengths**

### **Weaknesses**

### **Editorial Writing Rating**

# News Writing

*Judge--Evaluation:*

Soft and hard news approaches are used as appropriate to tell stories.

Sources reflect diverse viewpoints, and are credible, balanced and appropriate to the context.

Writers consistently adhere to grammatical, spelling, style and structural standards in writing.

Libelous, profane, obscene or vulgar expressions, as well as biased and opinionated statements, are not used.

Story organization presents the most important information first, using the inverted pyramid style of writing and not burying the lead.

Paragraphs and sentences with varied beginnings and lengths are used to enhance reader interest, especially avoiding repetitive use of "the" or people's names.

## *Staff--We strive to:*

Be timely in covering news, and apply the feature approach to reporting news when events occur before publication.

Write leads concisely, using active verbs and the best choice of words to draw readers in and entice them to continue reading the story.

Present much of our news in-depth, with emphasis on analysis, investigations and interpretations, while using the inverted pyramid style of writing.

Include multiple sources and interviews in stories, being diligent in ascertaining the credibility and value of negative, sensitive and controversial information.

Identify sources by using information such as full names, positions, grade levels, job titles, class assignments, organizations and affiliations, and ages, as applicable.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

**Tell Us More!**

## News Writing Rating

# Feature Writing

*Judge--Evaluation:*

Topics reflect the interests of diverse readers.

Solid journalistic writing standards, including correct spelling, grammar and style, are evident.

A variety of writing techniques is used to effectively address an interesting array of topics.

Ethical and legal missteps, ill-formed humor and trivial subjects are avoided. Opinion is included only in reviews and columns.

Various feature writing formats are employed, as appropriate, such as profiles, how-to-do-it, human interest and interpretive news.

Information is derived from sound, thorough interviewing and substantial research from multiple primary and secondary sources, with the use of appropriate attribution.

## *Staff--We strive to:*

Emphasize good structure, flow and organization, as well as correct spelling, grammar and style.

Begin stories with active leads that attract attention or arouse curiosity to encourage further reading.

Write creatively, clearly and concisely, using carefully selected words to add color, life, emotion and interest.

Employ various feature writing formats, as appropriate, such as profiles, how-to-do-it, human interest and interpretive news, and take care in using humor.

Use proper attribution of credible primary and secondary sources, with generous use of direct quotes to lend interest and advance the story. Writing is void of opinions and conclusion endings.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

**Tell Us More!**

## Feature Writing Rating

# Sports Writing

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

### *Staff--We strive to:*

Use descriptive and action words to reflect the excitement of sporting events, yet avoid trite, hyperbole and excessive words.

Consider timeliness in covering competition outcomes, focusing on human interest stories, off-field or behind-the-scenes developments, to keep coverage fresh.

Employ journalistic writing standards in spelling, grammar and style. Full identifying information is consistently used, including sport, first and last names, positions and grade levels.

Include statistics, analysis and dates, records and comparisons with previous performances, taking care to clearly and accurately convey information without confusing readers.

Reflect knowledge gained through interviews with coaches, players, competitors and other sources as appropriate, while maintaining a professional detachment from school teams, except in opinion articles and columns.

## **Tell Us More!**

Writers employ journalistic standards of writing, spelling, grammar and style.

A variety of story forms is used to provide broad coverage, including briefs, columns, profiles, infographics, and narratives.

Informed reporting is reflected through the use of resources, such as interviews with team members, coaches, competitors and others; conference performances, trends and statistics.

Topics are covered in a timely manner, focusing on advances and follow-ups, off-the-field and behind-the-scene developments, as well as individual out-of-school activities, such as martial arts, extreme sports, skiing and surfing.

Colorful leads and text use action verbs and adjectives to convey the excitement of sports, balanced with a sensitivity to readers who are not familiar with sport terminology.

## **Strengths**

## **Weaknesses**

## **Sports Writing Rating**

# Captions and Headlines

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

### *Staff--We strive to:*

Use active verbs while writing concisely and clearly.

Follow consistent styles for cutlines/captions and headlines.

Write captions/cutlines and credits for each photo and graphic, as appropriate; and headlines for every story.

Verify and edit captions/cutlines and headlines to ensure they follow journalistic standards in areas such as accuracy, spelling, grammar and style.

Fully identify subjects in captions/cutlines to allow readers to discern the identity of those pictured and to tell the story behind what is obvious in photos.

Consistent type styles are used for cutlines/captions, photo credits and headlines, respectively.

Captions/cutlines and headlines display journalistic standards of accuracy, spelling, grammar and style, such as AP or Quill and Scroll styles.

Captions/cutlines and credits are written for each photo and graphic, when needed; and headlines for every story.

Writing of captions/cutlines and headlines is substantial and informs readers in an interesting way, advancing the respective story or photo.

## **Strengths**

## **Weaknesses**

## **Captions and Headlines Rating**

## **Overall WRITING/EDITING Rating**

## **Tell Us More!**



# POLICY GUIDELINES

Devising a set of operational policies, printing them and then making them available to staff is among the most important steps to be taken by successful news media. Such policies establish systems of operation and offer guidance, which is especially useful during times of staff changes, challenge and memory loss. Updating the policies allows staffs to reflect on their operations and to make decisions about new paths. We encourage you to complete this section, and receive feedback from our expert judges on this important topic. *This section is optional and does not affect the overall rating.*

## *Staff--We strive to:*

Use professional publications and the Internet to gain ideas for stories, writing and design techniques.

Create a solid working relationship among staff members, media advisers, faculty, administrators and the community.

Follow an established guideline for copy approval and editing by staff, which allows for timely publication of articles.

Create a board of editors, managers and the adviser to choose the editor-in-chief and make other staff changes as needed.

Analyze past issues to determine how effectively the publication is doing its job and reflects its reading community.

Conduct regular staff meetings to plan content, clarify editorial and staff policies, set long-range goals and transact other business as required.

Use constructive suggestions from evaluation and critical services, conference sessions and workshops to improve news media and staff performance.

Publish news in accord with local, state and federal press rights laws, including postal and copyright regulations, and court decisions interpreting those regulations and laws.

Assemble and support an inclusive staff, representative of the school's population in gender, ethnic, racial, religious, ability, sexual orientation and other diverse characteristics.

Develop fair processes to commend and reward staff members for responsible service, innovative ideas and meritorious work; and arrange occasional "fun" events to unify and motivate staff.

Follow a policy in which the publication leadership and news coverage is under the general supervision of the editor-in-chief, and the specific supervision of associate editors, an editorial page editor, and/or other line editors. Staff perform all news dissemination tasks.

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

Advisers coach the staff members, but do not do the work for them.

Fair processes are developed to commend and reward staff members for meritorious work and achievements.

A board of editors and/or managers regularly discusses production-related and staff developmental activities with the adviser.

Staff maintain a solid working relationship with media advisers, faculty, administrators and the community.

Guidelines and policies established by the staff and administration seek to maintain professional standards.

Students have the responsibility of content and editorial decision-making, performing all publication production tasks.

Staff are encouraged to act professionally in their publication responsibilities as well as when "off-duty," to retain the publication's credibility.

An editorial policy details the publication's public forum status and outlines its legal and ethical responsibilities. A summary of the editorial policy is published in the masthead of each issue.

Appropriate policies are maintained to address publication leadership, staff organization and responsibilities, as well as procedures to recruit, select and train editors, reporters and other staff members.

Production-related matters are routinely discussed in meetings between the publication's board of editors and/or managers, and developmental activities are conducted for the staff to enhance their performance and motivation.

Staff and adviser responsibilities and authority are outlined in the staff manual, and include the process for selecting the editor-in-chief as well as the production deadlines and timelines.

Policies are in place to enable staff members to decide content and form within the limitations that Supreme Court rulings, and state and local laws and policies have established. Staff are also directed to act in accordance with copyright and postal regulations.

A policy is in place and in practice to publish editorials that reflect the publication's official position; editorial content is free of biases and stereotypes that are based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability and other factors.

## **Strengths**

## **Weaknesses**

## **Tell Us More!**

# BUSINESS PRACTICES

Student news media operate optimally by practicing sound business principles. Staff, please provide information about your business practices below to help judges better understand your news operation and offer feedback. *This section is optional and does not affect the overall rating.*

## Income and Expenses

### STAFF INFORMATION ONLY:

Advertising income:	Expenses from printing:
School system subsidy or activity fees:	Other expenses:
Income from circulation:	TOTAL EXPENSES:
Other income:	Reserve funds:
TOTAL INCOME:	PROFIT/DEFICIT:

Number of newspaper/news magazine staff members:

Number of business staff members:

### Tell Us More!

## Financing

### Staff--We strive to:

Establish a policy outlining practices and responsibilities of business staff.

Maintain accurate, up-to-date files, accounts and records to track spending and income.

Prepare a budget before publishing the first issue, monitor expenditures at least monthly, make adjustments as necessary to balance expenditures with income, and establish a reserve fund.

Include funding of student development activities, such as state and national conferences, summer workshops, scholastic media association membership dues and contest/evaluation fees, in the budget.

Budget for routine expenses, including supplies, postage and printer cartridges, software and technology upgrades, and annually seek bids and enter contracts with printers that specify deadlines, production schedules and other details.

### Judge--Evaluation:

Budget balancing practices are sound.

Policies are in place to govern finances.

Staff are professional and knowledgeable in their business operations.

Income is primarily generated by the news media staff and the sale of related products.

Records and accounts are tracked, checked for accuracy, and processed in a timely manner.

Expenses are substantiated, sustain news media operations by purchasing such items as supplies, postage, printer cartridges, technology and software upgrades, and are in line with income.

Plans have been made to fund student development activities, such as conference and workshops attendance, contest/evaluation service fees and scholastic media association memberships.

### Strengths

### Weaknesses

### Tell Us More!

# Circulation

## *Judge--Evaluation:*

Newspaper/news magazine circulation:

Press run:

Number of copies sold:

Number of copies exchanged:

Total student enrollment :

Frequency of publication:

Strategic steps have been taken, as necessary, to improve circulation.

A permanent file of publication copies is maintained for historic purposes.

Staff distribute the publication in a timely fashion.

Publication copies are printed in adequate numbers to meet distribution needs.

Circulation is under the supervision of trained staff assigned to specific responsibilities.

Steps have been taken to strategically make the publication available to interested readers.

Readers and potential readers are informed about how to obtain single copies or subscriptions.

## *Staff--We strive to:*

Appoint circulation staff and provide training in journalism class or in special meetings.

Distribute all copies to exchange schools, Quill and Scroll and other press associations, and to advertisers within a week after publication.

Distribute to targeted locations inside the high school as well as in the community, such as nearby schools; conduct promotional campaigns on social networking sites, posters and school announcement broadcasts, websites and others.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

## Tell Us More!

# FINAL REMARKS

## Comments

*STAFF AND JUDGE SUMMARIES:*

**Staff: Last words for judges?**

**Judge: Observations for staff?**

## Judge's Ratings

**Overall COVERAGE Rating**

**Overall VISUALS Rating**

**Overall WRITING/EDITING Rating**

**NEWS MEDIA EVALUATION Rating**