Overall Marks

• THEME /UNIFYING CONCEPT: Theme story carried in content and graphics on all theme pages, validated by content of book
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• READER SERVICES: Title page, contents listing, folios, index, cover and spine all include essential information
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• PHOTOGRAPHY: Good technical quality, carefully chosen dominants, cropped to point of interest, cluttered backgrounds avoided, variety on each spread
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• CAPTIONS: Tells more than the obvious, identifies by first and last names, names everyone important in the photo, adds significantly to the story
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• WRITING: Begins in an interesting way, tells stories of people, includes good, relevant student quotes, devoid of writer's opinion, written in past tense and third person, follows a stylebook
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• HEADLINES: Great content and design, generally uses main headline/subheadline format, directs reader into the story
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• DESIGN AND GRAPHICS: Each section is unique, pages designed as spreads, design is consistent, white space is used well, typography and graphics are contemporary and aid readership and understanding
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• COVERAGE: Contains all important sections although not necessarily in separate sections, tells important stories in interesting ways
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

• LEADERSHIP: student decision making and work, follows legal ethical and professional standards, includes published policy, not subject to prior review, shows fiscal and deadline responsibility
- ❑ Outstanding
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Needs work
- ❑ Non-existent
- ❑ All-Ohio quality

OSMA Yearbook Contest Evaluation

Ohio Scholastic Media Association

Date _____

School name _____

Publication name _____

City _____

Judge's Instructions

1. Please read the OSMA contest "data sheet" the school's filled out and included with their yearbook. Take into account any special problems such as budget, production differences, etc.

2. Next to each question in this book, mark (+) for strong work in that area, (✔) for adequate work and (-) for needing improvement and (NA) for not applicable.

3. For each section use the same marks to indicate overall category quality. Based on these marks and your experience evaluating in the past, rate this publication a All-Ohio — reserved for the top publications strong in most categories — or First, Second, Third or Honorable Mention.

4. Write comments in this booklet, being sure to make reference to specific examples that show this to be true.

5. Through citing strengths and weaknesses and offering specific suggestions, we help students improve as journalists. They appreciate your time and input and so does OSMA. Thank you.

Entrants' Instructions

Yes, you get instructions, too. In fact, they're more important than the judge's. What you do right now will determine whether you wasted your money submitting your publication to be evaluated or whether this will be worth more than the piece of paper with your rating on it.

Follow these steps:
1. Don't look at your rating yet. (OK, it's too late, but try to keep an open mind. This is only one judge's opinion, BUT he/she is very knowledgeable.)
2. Read the evaluation thoroughly and calmly from front to back, using your yearbook for reference.

3. Find three things the judge thinks you can improve and discuss how you might make these changes.

4. Find three things the judge liked and feel proud. These are good things to continue. Good luck!

- ❑ **All-Ohio**
- ❑ **First Place**
- ❑ **Second Place**
- ❑ **Third Place**
- ❑ **Honorable Mention**

Theme/Unifying Concept   ties that bind

The use of a theme and spin-offs as a means to unify the book is still very much new school. While themes have become more sophisticated and the ways of carrying them through the book have expanded, the basic catch-phrase themes are still the mainstay of most books. However, many staffs are experimenting with a conceptual theme or chronological format carried through with unifying elements such as logos, typography, artwork, even textures. Regardless, the idea is to unify the various parts of the book into a coherent whole that shows how this school, this year was unique.

❏ Does the book have a unifying concept? A theme, a graphic, a logo, spin-offs or similar devices should create an impression of unification. If there is a verbal theme slogan, is it designed as a logo and is its design consistent every time it is repeated?

❏ Does the unifying concept appear on the cover (front and/or back), endsheets, title page, opening and closing section and divider spreads? Is the design clearly a visual package, using graphics and typography in a consistent way?

❏ Is the unifying concept simple, clear and well-conceived, easily identifiable and relevant to the students?

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

❏ Do the photographs on the theme pages visually advance the theme concept by adding to the story? Are they exceptional in quality, contrast, variety and content?

❏ Is the theme copy specific, detailed and does it reinforce the unifying concept through detailed examples, quotes and presentation?

❏ Do captions on the theme pages answer the important reader questions and supplement the information provided in the copy rather than repeating information? Is the design well thought out and does it fit with the theme design?

❏ Are headlines on the theme pages distinctive? Do they have a unique type design and are they written to provide key information and pull readers into the content?

❏ Is the theme relevant and meaningful and does it fit this year for this school rather than being one that could fit any school any year?

❏ Does the theme seem real and relevant rather than forced?

❏ Does the theme reflect the maturity and sophistication of today's teenager?

Theme story is carried through in content and graphics on all theme pages. Theme story is validated by content of book. Copy is specific and detailed and includes student voices. Sidebars and secondary coverage play an essential part. Typography and graphics help unify the book.

❏ Outstanding   ❏ Good
❏ Average   ❏ Needs work
❏ Non-existent

                              ❏ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Reader Services

Staffs can make using the book easy by providing reader essentials like table of contents and an easy-to-use index. Avoid naming sections to reflect the theme without telling the reader what section it is. The index should be complete — including every person named or seen in the book, all clubs, organizations, teams, advertisers and story topics. Some things may seem obvious — like having the complete name of school and address on the title page, but it is essential.

❑ Does the book include a title page, providing the name of the book, the name of the school, the complete school address, phone number 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, athletic conference and other pertinent data (such as a web page or e-mail address)?

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

❑ Does the book contain a complete index listing every student, teacher, spread, advertiser, story topic and other relevant information?

❑ Does the book include folios on every spread? Are they placed consistently for easy reader use? Does the folio tab provide content that helps the reader, such as including the section and spread content? (This will also help the staff create a more complete index.)

❑ Does photography enhance the reader service pages?

❑ Is the name of the book and the year on the cover and/or the spine?

❑ Does the spine include the school name, city and state, year and volume number in Arabic numbers?

❑ Does the book contain a colophon, providing printing information including printer, number of books ordered, cost per book, advertising information, typography information and other information that an outside reader may want to know?

❑ Does the book include acknowledgements to those who have helped with the book?

The title page, contents listing, folios, index, cover and spine include essential information to help the reader, both at the school and outside the school community, use the book.

❑ Outstanding   ❑ Good

❑ Average   ❑ Needs work

❑ Non-existent

❑ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Photography

Arguably the most important part of the yearbook, photography is what readers look at first. The photography shows who was a part of the school that year, what part they played and provides memories of events and everyday occasions. In this day of digital images, there's little excuse for not shooting enough to get good photos. Action, reaction and emotion should be the mainstay of all candid photography. Technical quality is a must with rich colors and great contrast. Rules of composition should be used. Great cropping should be in evidence.

❑ Technical quality: Do photos have good contrast? Are they in focus? Do they have obvious centers of interest?

❑ Does each dominant photo or dominant photo grouping provide an anchor for the spread and keep the eye flowing around the spread? Is the content story-telling?

❑ Does each of the secondary photos tell a different story?

❑ Is there variety in content and shape of the photo? Is it obvious the spread was designed around the photos rather than photos being forced into pre-planned shapes?

❑ Are photographs taken from a variety of angles? Does the photographer shoot from above and below as well as from varying angles around the subject?

❑ Are cluttered backgrounds and merges avoided? Are horizons straight?

❑ Are the majority of photos action photos, capturing the emotional high of the event or moment?

❑ Are posed photos avoided?

❑ Are photos placed so they do not require flopping?

❑ Are a wide variety of people doing a wide variety of activities evident? Are photographs of yearbook staff members kept to a minimum?

❑ Are odd shapes avoided?

❑ Are the photos treated with integrity? If a photo is manipulated or posed for a purpose, is it labeled as a photo illustration?

Photographs have a clean, clear center of interest, and subjects look candid, natural and engaged in activity. Photos work together to tell the whole story. Photos are cropped tightly and avoid cluttered backgrounds. A variety of angles adds interest.

❑ Outstanding   ❑ Good
❑ Average   ❑ Needs work
❑ Non-existent

❑ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Captions

While photos are the first attraction in yearbooks, the caption is the essential that makes each photo truly story telling and provides the information people won't remember in years to come. Captions should tell more than the obvious. They should tell what happened before and after the action captured in the photo. The caption should tell the meaning of the photo and should expand coverage beyond what is in the story. Captions should not repeat information in the story or other captions. Remember space is precious in yearbooks.

❑ Do captions avoid telling what is obvious in the photographs? Do they avoid repeating information already found in another caption or in the body copy?

❑ Do captions name everyone recognizable and involved in the photograph including opponents in sports photographs?

❑ Do captions supplement the story with details not included elsewhere without bogging down with unimportant minutia?

❑ Do captions include interesting information about a person or the action shown?

❑ Do most captions tell what is going on without stating the obvious, add additional relevant and specific interesting information and include a student quote?

❑ Are captions placed so that it is easy to tell what caption goes with what photo without verbal directions?

❑ Do captions provide some sort of visual-verbal link between the caption and the photo it identifies?

❑ Do sports captions include information about the game, the player or the result?

❑ Are the captions devoid of the writer's opinion?

❑ Are student quotes added to help tell the story and provide reaction?

❑ Do captions vary in the way they start? Has the writer avoided starting with names, -ing words or labels (the Spanish Club, the senior class, etc.)?

❑ Are captions written in present tense to tell what is happening in the photo and in past tense for additional information?

Captions are written in present tense when describing the action shown and past tense for additional and after-the-fact information. Captions use a variety of starts, add information not already in other captions or the story, and are written as tight mini-stories.

❑ Outstanding   ❑ Good
❑ Average   ❑ Needs work
❑ Non-existent

❑ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Writing

Yearbooks serve as the historical record of the year. No other book provides the events and emotions of the year in vivid story-telling copy. The story of the year cannot be told through photos alone, even if you supplement the photos with great captions. You must report and write journalistically. This reporting must be the result of interviewing and observation. Stories need strong angles.

❑ Are the stories descriptive, well-researched, orderly and unified? Do stories have a strong start and end without summarizing?

❑ Do the stories reveal the emotions of the activity without being overly dramatic?

❑ Do feature stories have leads that pull readers in and make them want to read on?

❑ Do stories vary in the way they start, avoiding label leads, question leads and reference to the year?

❑ Are there good, colorful student quotes that help tell the story and provide reaction while not re-stating facts sprinkled through the story?

❑ Does each quote employ the word "said" rather than "smiled," "commented" or "stated"? Do quotes stand as their own paragraphs?

❑ Are paragraphs short, usually no more than 30 to 50 words? Does the writer start a new paragraph with each new idea?

❑ Has the writer's opinion been kept out of the story? Is generalization avoided?

❑ Is the story balanced and fair, giving all sides?

❑ Are features written in past tense and generally third person? Are stories told in active voice?

❑ Are detail and specifics included, helping bring the story to life?

❑ Are the words "many," "some," "few," "a lot," "others," "very" or "quite" and other non-specific general words avoided? Have the words "this year" or the numeric year been avoided? Has use of the school name and mascot been avoided except when needed for clarity? Remember your book is about your school and this year, your reader doesn't need to be told that.

❑ Has a stylebook been used consistently?

❑ Has the story been carefully edited? Has spell check been used? Are names spelled correctly?

Copy tells the history of the year in specific detail and with colorful anecdotes and interesting student quotes. Use of a stylebook is evident.

❑ Outstanding   ❑ Good
❑ Average   ❑ Needs work
❑ Non-existent

❑ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Headlines

Headlines serve two purposes. First, they should attract the reader through content and second, they are a major component in design. We'll address the first one here. First of all, think of headlines as a two-part unit: a main headline and a secondary headline. The main headline can be clever and doesn't have to have a verb. The secondary is a short summary of the story focus and needs to be in present tense and have a verb. Headlines should set the mood of the story.

❑ Are headline units made up of a main headline and secondary headline?

❑ Is the secondary headline written like a sentence without a period and is it in present tense?

❑ Does the main head grab the readers' attention and make them want to read on? Does the headline fit the mood of the story?

❑ Are headlines placed so they read into the copy or is there a graphic device that pulls the reader back to the start of the story after reading the headline?

❑ Is any portion of the headline "throwaway," meaning that its placement is such that the reader doesn't read it?

❑ Are headlines easy to read rather than being in a difficult-to-read font or in a color that hurts readability?

❑ Do headlines avoid editorializing and suggestive language?

❑ Has the writer avoided headlines that could be used for any year at any school? Examples are "Wrestlers hit the mats" and "Swimmers make a splash." Has the writer avoided headlines written in foreign languages?

❑ Is the style and placement of the headline consistent throughout each section?

❑ Have headlines avoided the use of "a," "an" and "the"? Is the word "and" replaced with a comma? Have headlines avoided splitting phrases?

❑ Have headlines avoided the repetition of words or ideas?

❑ Have headlines avoided use of team names, club names and class names?

❑ When using quote marks, does the headline contain single quote marks instead of double quotes?

❑ Have headlines been carefully edited? Has spell check been used?

The main head grabs the readers' attention through the use of clever word play and striking statements while the secondary headline tells about the story. Headlines are readable, easy to follow, properly punctuated and placed to lead into the start of the story.

❑ Outstanding   ❑ Good
❑ Average   ❑ Needs work
❑ Non-existent

                              ❑ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Design

Design isn't just about placing photos correctly on the page or the graphics you may use to unify your book and give it pizzazz. It is those things, but it is also how you use white space and typography and arrange the elements to work together so the reader moves logically through the pages. Even as design changes, some things remain true: you need a dominant element, spreads should be designed as one unit, and reader friendliness is first and foremost.

❑ Does each section have its own unique look or has the book adopted a whole book look?

❑ Is there a dominant element that is an anchor for readers? Does the reader's eye flow naturally around the page rather than bouncing helter-skelter from busy element to busy element?

❑ Are spreads distinctive and uncluttered? Is white space planned rather than looking like holes in the spread?

❑ Are scatter stories and other extras designed to be a part of the spread?

❑ Does typography employ a few complementary fonts? Are fonts repeated on the spread and within a section to make them a consistent part of the overall design? Are typefaces readable and legible?

❑ Are stories and captions within a section consistent in type size and leading? Are they attractive, appealing and easy to read? (Stories are generally 9 to 11 point and captions 6 to 8 point.)

❑ Is color used well and repeated on the spread to seem planned? Have all-color backgrounds been avoided?

❑ Has the designer avoided graphics and backgrounds that distract from content?

❑ Does each section effectively use graphics to provide a distinctive but uncluttered look? Are fundamental design principles (proportion, balance, harmony, contrast, sequence, unity) emphasized?

❑ Are margins consistent and sufficient? Does white space help create contrast and showcase design?

❑ Are graphic effects well-planned and executed, adding to the presentation? Unless intentionally otherwise, is there one visual center of interest per spread: photograph, typographical presentation or illustrative presentation?

❑ Are there multiple entry points? Are reader's eyes pulled to the caption through a graphic or other lead-in?

❑ Are advertisements designed to appeal to the student audience? Are ads clearly separated and sized consistently?

The design of the spread encourages readers to enter the page through a dominant element and moves them around the page skillfully. Fonts, graphics, and photos contribute to an uncluttered contemporary or classic design rather than a hodge-podge of unrelated pieces.

❑ Outstanding ❑ Good

❑ Average ❑ Needs work

❑ Non-existent

❑ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Coverage

The easiest way to determine what a book's content will be is to look at last year's book. It's also the most boring. Great staffs look for new topics, new angles, new ways to tell the same old stories that really are different. Homecoming must be included but don't do it the same old way. Perhaps tell the stories of how people found dates or how the injured player cheered his teammates on from the sidelines. Look for the new angle or new idea.

❑ Does coverage show students lives in school? Does coverage show how students live outside of school such as after-school jobs, service, recreational sports, and hobbies?

❑ Are a wide variety of people included in the book? Has overuse of the yearbook staff members and select students been avoided?

❑ Are everyday activities and items included as well as major events?

❑ Does the book reflect the diversity of the school?

❑ Does the coverage reflect real-life experiences of teens in a mature and responsible way?

❑ Do pages attract readers through feature coverage?

❑ Is story content expanded by use of secondary coverage? For example, a spread on music could include a sidebar called "What's on your iPod?" or settings on a radio face could act as an infographic showing the percentage of students who listen to different stations.

❑ Is story-telling an important part of the coverage?

❑ Are complete scoreboards with scores, place out of the total for invitationals and season win-loss record included for each team? Are additional statistics, like district and state records or post-season play, included for each team?

❑ Does academic coverage show students learning rather than teachers teaching?

❑ Are names in the people section written with first name first, and do teacher identifications include specific classes taught and clubs or sports they advise/coach?

❑ Has organization coverage avoided goals and purposes? Has academic coverage avoided telling the same old story?

❑ Has staff found a new way to create a section or cover an aspect of school life? Examples might be academics from A to Z or a calendar approach.

Coverage reflects the diversity of the school and shows a variety of students in and out of school in all parts of the book. The staff has looked for new ways to tell the same stories and has found new stories that aren't covered yearly.

❑ Outstanding   ❑ Good

❑ Average   ❑ Needs work

❑ Non-existent

❑ All-Ohio quality

Comments:

Leadership*

Creating a yearbook requires hard work and professionalism and should be the responsibility of the students on staff. Students should be making content decisions and doing the work. Staff members should demonstrate ethical journalistic practices and abide by press law and professional standards, including meeting deadlines and showing fiscal responsibility. Administrators and outsiders should not review the yearbook prior to publication.

❏ Do students perform most of the regular tasks like deciding story angles, taking candid photographs, writing, proofreading and editing? Do students make final content decisions?

❏ Is the yearbook free of pre-publication review by the administration, faculty members - other than the adviser, or anyone outside the school?

❏ Does the yearbook have publication and advertising policies? Are policies printed in the yearbook?

❏ Does the staff take care not to violate copyright or invade the privacy of others?

❏ Did the staff members meet all company deadlines?

❏ Is the yearbook financially solvent and operating without a deficit or are the staff members making strides to reduce a deficit left by a previous staff?

❏ Did the staff members maintain or increase the number of yearbooks sold from last year or explain the factors that lead to a decrease?

❏ Did the staff members apply any innovative techniques in a unique way and not copy other yearbooks?

❏ Did the staff implement any suggestions from last year's evaluation in order to improve?

❏ Did the staff overcome censorship or other hardship?

***NOTE:** Most of the judge's determinations for this category are based on information the adviser reported on the school data sheet.*

Student work demonstrates professionalism and meets legal and ethical standards. The staff members meet deadlines and maintain a fiscally sound operation.

❏ Outstanding ❏ Good
❏ Average ❏ Needs work
❏ Non-existent

❏ All-Ohio quality

Comments: