



ALL-KANSAS

NEWS WEBSITE CRITIQUE BOOKLET

SCHOOL NAME:

NEW WEBSITE NAME:

YEAR:

ADVISER:

This guide is designed to be an educational device to improve the quality of your news website program. It is intended to point out positive aspects of your program as well as to point out possible deficiencies.

Judging comments are designed as suggestions for improvement. Keep in mind that these comments represent just one individual's opinion. A judge's comments may not apply to all school situations. Please understand that it would be impossible for your judge to be aware of the specifics of each school. However, comments should represent current trends in online journalism.

Each of the sections contained in this guide book has an overall evaluation where the judge must rate the section according to an overall set of criteria. The final evaluation is based on a total of the five section evaluations. Each criteria calls for a specific ranking with a (+) for strong work in the area; a (✓) for being adequate and a (-) for needing improvement.

An overall open-comment critique space is included on pages 7 & 8 of this document.



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WRITING & EDITING

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| + | ✓ | - | Do stories on the site give the reader new information and offer new insight to the topic? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are news stories fair and balanced with all important sources and information included? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do feature stories show unique aspects of the student body and school-related topics and use appropriate and relevant sources? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do in-depth stories utilize multiple, relevant sources and thorough research? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do opinion columns and editorials include well-organized arguments and timely research? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are direct quotes used in all stories and focused on reactions and emotions rather than facts? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do leads for features and opinions capture readers and bring them into the story? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do leads for news stories include the most important information in the story? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do headlines show consistency in style and appear with every story? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are headlines written in present tense using active verbs? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are headlines written for SEO (Search Engine Optimization) with specific keywords used? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do captions include important and relevant information and avoid stating the obvious? |
| + | ✓ | - | Does the staff thoroughly edit all text for correct grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are captions included for all photos? |

LEVELS OF DISTINCTION

All-Kansas Writing & Editing:

Writing for online media is complete, stories are crisply told and feature all the hallmarks of good Web presentation.

Award of Commendation Writing & Editing:

Writing for online media is generally complete and adequate, stories could be more crisply told and could feature more of the hallmarks of good Web presentation.

Award of Merit Writing & Editing:

Writing for online media tends to be somewhat shallow and inconsistent, stories are not crisply told and the site is missing many features that are the hallmarks of good Web presentation.

Writing & Editing Overall Comments:



INTERACTIVITY & MULTIMEDIA

- + ✓ - Are media used to enhance content and help tell stories rather than simply add flashy elements to the site?
- + ✓ - Does the site use one or more multimedia elements consistently (photo galleries, graphics, videos and/or audio stories/podcasts)?
- + ✓ - Are multimedia elements accompanied by at least some text that allows readers to gain some context before listening to or viewing the multimedia?
- + ✓ - Do photos/photo galleries incorporate a variety of compositions/shots and captions to tell a coherent story?
- + ✓ - Do photos demonstrate good photography skills: correct camera settings, sharp focus, intentional cropping and editing for color and contrast?
- + ✓ - Do audio stories or podcasts, if used, contain clearly-recorded voiceovers, natural sound and sound bites to tell a coherent story?
- + ✓ - Do videos, if used, include a variety of b-roll and sources?
- + ✓ - Do videos demonstrate good videography skills: correct camera settings, sharp focus, uncluttered backgrounds and good audio quality?
- + ✓ - Are special projects and packages well organized and designed to help readers navigate through the content?
- + ✓ - Does the staff follow copyright laws, using only original content or copyright-free material or material in the public domain?
- + ✓ - Do useful hyperlinks add value to a story by directing readers to other stories or sites with vital information?
- + ✓ - Is it clear how readers can engage to share ideas, letters or other materials?
- + ✓ - Are graphics clear and easy to understand?

LEVELS OF DISTINCTION

All-Kansas Interactivity & Multimedia:

Staff makes full use of interactive elements to help cover its audience and to involve its audience in the production of news. The staff also uses multimedia effectively and strives to meet high standards in its production.

Award of Commendation Interactivity & Multimedia::

Staff occasionally uses interactive elements to help cover its audience and to involve its audience in the production of news. The staff includes multimedia elements on its site, but it may not always meet high standards in multimedia production.

Award of Merit Interactivity & Multimedia:

Staff rarely makes full use of interactive elements to help cover its audience. And it rarely involves its audience in the production of news. The staff rarely uses multimedia.

Interactivity & Multimedia Overall Comments:



DESIGN & NAVIGATION

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| + | ✓ | - | Does the site's header contain the school name and location? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are readers clearly directed to different sections of the publication, such as news, sports, features and opinion? |
| + | ✓ | - | Is the home page easy to navigate, well-organized and uncluttered? |
| + | ✓ | - | Is the navigation consistent throughout the publication? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are stories presented in a clear hierarchy, with the most important and/or newest stories prominently displayed? |
| + | ✓ | - | Is navigation easy, presenting readers with only enough options on a single page that they won't become overwhelmed or confused? |
| + | ✓ | - | Does the site provide links to relevant resources, such as the high school or district website or other school-related site? |
| + | ✓ | - | Does the site have a staff page (possibly with photos) with biographies and e-mail addresses included? |
| + | ✓ | - | Does the site have a means for interactivity, such as letters to the editor, comments (as an open forum for the student body to discuss current events and give feedback), online contests, polls/surveys, etc.? |
| + | ✓ | - | Does a dominant element, like a photo or graphic, anchor each page? |
| + | ✓ | - | Are visual elements, such as photos or graphics, used to enhance content and not as decoration or space fillers? |
| + | ✓ | - | Does the design follow a consistent style? Do the pages look similar throughout? |
| + | ✓ | - | Does the site have multiple scrolling elements on the same page? |
| + | ✓ | - | Do all the pages link to somewhere, eliminating dead links? |

LEVELS OF DISTINCTION

All-Kansas Design & Navigation:

Site is attractive, easy to navigate, and presents the most important stories prominently. There is a good balance between graphic elements and text.

Award of Commendation Design & Navigation:

Site is generally attractive, easy to navigate, and usually presents stories in a hierarchy of importance. There is an adequate balance between graphic elements and text.

Award of Merit Design & Navigation:

Site is not attractive or easy to navigate, and presents stories without a clear hierarchy of importance. There is a need for balance between graphic elements and text.

Breaking News Overall Comments:



COVERAGE & CONTENT

- + ✓ - Does the staff report on important news, sports and features in a timely manner?
- + ✓ - Does the staff seek to include new content as often as it can?
- + ✓ - Does the staff follow breaking/important news stories for as long as the news changes and is relevant?
- + ✓ - Does the staff use the site for special reports and in-depth coverage?
- + ✓ - Is coverage comprehensive, focusing on several aspects of the high school community it serves, including academics, sports, clubs and activities?
- + ✓ - Do stories and source selection reflect the diversity of the school community?
- + ✓ - Are stories thoroughly reported, with multiple points of view represented?
- + ✓ - Does the site regularly and successfully use different media to contribute to different parts of the story, including photos, graphics, video and audio when available?
- + ✓ - Is the content coordinated to package related news, pictures, video and audio?
- + ✓ - Are all issues covered from a student perspective?
- + ✓ - Are stories, excluding opinion columns and editorials, free of the writer's opinions and avoid "cheerleading" in favor of the school, group or sports team?
- + ✓ - Are opinion pieces well researched and well argued, citing factual evidence to support the views expressed?
- + ✓ - Is sports coverage current and comprehensive, including scores, records, statistics and game highlights?
- + ✓ - Is news the central focus of the website's content?
- + ✓ - Is the coverage fair and accurate?

LEVELS OF DISTINCTION

All-Kansas Coverage & Content:

Coverage is complete, thorough and timely, and includes relevant sources and diverse content.

Award of Commendation Coverage & Content:

Coverage is generally complete and adequate, but could benefit from more timely and comprehensive content and more relevant sources.

Award of Merit Coverage & Content:

Coverage tends to be somewhat shallow and inconsistent, and the staff needs to place more emphasis on creating a more engaging and journalistic website experience.

Interactivity & Multimedia Overall Comments:



IN SUMMARY

WRITING & EDITING

All-Kansas
Award of Commendation
Award of Merit

INTERACTIVITY & MULTIMEDIA

All-Kansas
Award of Commendation
Award of Merit

DESIGN & NAVIGATION

All-Kansas
Award of Commendation
Award of Merit

COVERAGE & CONTENT

All-Kansas
Award of Commendation
Award of Merit

FINAL EVALUATION

All-Kansas:

This is a great website that understands the key concepts of news presentation online. It features important stories, breaking news, valuable multimedia elements, interactivity and reader participation. Further, its design allows for easy navigation. In all, this website reflects the best of online news presentation.

Award of Commendation:

This is an overall good website that may, in spots, hint at greatness. However, its deficiencies in a few areas—be they breaking news, coverage, multimedia, interactivity or design – prevent it from being All-Kansas. Greater attention to the components of web news will make this an All-Kansas site in the near future.

Award of Merit

This is a website that has too many flaws to be rated at the top. It may be a new enterprise, and because of that, the staff and the adviser may just be learning about the nuances of multimedia and Web presentation. Further, the website may have some strong areas, but it also has many areas that need significant improvement.

Final Evaluation Overall Comments:

Judges should use this text box for overall comments on the qualities and suggestions for improvement for the program.