

Yearbook Evaluation Guidebook

ihspa

school name: _____

Yearbook name: _____

school Year: _____

editor(s): _____

adviser: _____

student enrollment: _____

annual critique

about this critique

The Indiana High School Press Association provides this opportunity for annual critique as a way for staffs to gain detailed feedback about their yearbook. Because our judges are able to provide specific comments on a number of important topics, yearbook staffs can use this completed guidebook as a way to measure progress, discuss strengths and weaknesses and set goals for improvement. Staffs are encouraged to use this in planning their next publication.

In addition to providing specific suggestions, judges may recognize certain aspects of the book for special distinctions. As applicable, your judge will note comments at the end of the section earning special distinction.

Judges are invited to provide written comments on actual yearbook pages in addition to completing this guidebook so that staffs receive as much feedback as possible. Emphasis is on continued improvement. The IHSPA strongly encourages our judges to provide constructive comments in a positive manner to encourage, rather than discourage, students.

All yearbooks are different since they reflect attitudes of individual schools and their situations as well as changing times. For this reason, many of the guidelines and suggestions offered here are meant to provide a framework rather than a set of steadfast rules. The best staffs will continue to seek innovation and will regularly survey their readers to determine what best meets their needs.

All books achieving Superior or Excellent ranking based on this guidebook are considered Finalists in the IHSPA Hoosier Star competition. A separate judge evaluates all Finalists to determine winners, which are announced each fall at the IHSPA State Convention. Books earning Hoosier Star status are consistent with the IHSPA core values of truth, courage, integrity and freedom.

scoring

Yearbooks scored in the IHSPA annual critique earn distinction as Superior, Excellent, Good, Average or Needs Improvement.

- **Books submitted by June 1 will be returned by September 1.**
- **Books submitted between June 1 and November 1 will be returned by February 1.**

EVALUATION

- **Superior:**
The staff has executed a cohesive and innovative yearbook with detailed coverage following journalistic standards.
- **Excellent:**
The staff has created a functional and attractive yearbook journalistic in nature.
- **Good:**
The staff has used basic concepts to publish a yearbook, but better planning, detail and design are necessary.
- **Average:**
The staff has included some of the components of a yearbook but increased coverage and better writing and design are critical.
- **Needs improvement:**
The staff has neglected basic concepts essential to yearbook planning and production.

_tips

- cite page numbers when referring to printed examples
- try to comment about each section of the book
- award special distinctions when work merits it
- provide examples and explanations why something is excellent or in need of improvement
- keep in mind that the newest trends may not appear in the book since its planning took place months earlier
- suggest ways the staff can incorporate trends for their next yearbook

_suggestions for Judges

- Please study the guidebook prior to evaluating a publication so you will have a solid understanding of the total concept.
- Annotate the publication in a bright color so the staff can recognize your comments easily.
- Be specific—but gentle—in your constructive comments so that no comment can be interpreted as sarcastic or hurtful.
- Please remember to cite outstanding work in addition to work that needs improvement.
- Keep in mind that the publication was conceived and produced months ago, so the most current trends may not be represented. As possible, describe trends and suggest how these may apply. Deduct points, however, if the book does not demonstrate concepts that all staffs should know.
- Use this guidebook to record your summaries and general comments with your evaluation for each category.

_advisers: help us help You (page included w/ entry)

If you would like the judge to offer specific feedback on a special section, new idea, problem or area of concern, describe it here so the judge may address your request specifically:

annual critique

4 | theme and concept

Judge's comments

standards

To capture the year and provide a unifier for the book's organization, a yearbook should include a theme. Whether openly stated as a direct theme or used as an underlying concept, the theme should be unique to the specific year as well as appropriate for the school it represents.

- **In** addition to a verbal component, the theme sets a visual tone for the yearbook. Used carefully and consistently, graphic elements reinforce the theme or concept.
- **Traditionally**, theme development occurs throughout the book in six areas as a way to guide readers and create unity: cover, endsheets, title page, opening, dividers and closing.
- **Conceptual** development also may occur in storytelling techniques, photo treatments, coverage choices and overall organization of the book, such as how many sections or how topics are grouped within sections.

basic elements

COVER

- **creates** first impression of book and theme/concept
- **introduces** visual identity with color, type, graphics
- **should** include book title and year on front; should include complete school name, city/state, book title, year and volume number on spine
- **may** include wrap-around or printing on back cover

ENDSHEETS

- **serve** as a bridge to connect book's cover and content through type and graphics

__suggestions

ENDSHEETS, CONT.

- **may** be left blank due to financial limitations or buyer preferences

TITLE PAGE

- **develops** thematic graphic elements introduced on cover and often introduces related photo coverage
- **should** include book title, volume number, year, complete school name and address (including phone number and website) and enrollment

OPENING/ CLOSING

- **introduces**/wraps up the book and school year
- **uses** graphic elements without simply repeating look of cover/endsheets
- **should** include specifics related to the school and year, including facts, figures and feelings
- **should** include verbal theme development and use student quotes to tell the year's story
- **may** include more than one spread; should be organized based on theme or concept
- **should** not identify staff, editor or adviser; should not be used for any type of dedication (opening) or colophon (closing)

DIVIDER PAGES

- **introduce** each section and create transitions between parts of the book
- **develop** graphic elements but should look distinctly different from opening and closing spreads
- **should** include photo treatments related to each particular section that help develop the theme
- **should** include verbal theme development through spinoffs and use of student quotes to continue the year's story
- **may** vary based on content needs but should be consistent in design through type and style

__Judge's comments

theme and concept
superior
excellent
good
average
needs improvement

special distinction:

annual critique

Judge's comments

standards

To record history, capture memories and serve as a reference tool, a yearbook can be organized in a variety of ways. Regardless of its setup, the book should be student-focused.

- **Based** on the theme, staffs should divide the book into sections as a way to organize content. Traditional sections include student life, academics, people/album, sports, clubs/organizations and advertising.
- **Staffs** may choose to create new sections based on the book's concept or to provide cross-functional coverage. Also, reference pages may be grouped separately.
- **With** any type of section plan, staffs should focus on covering all students. An excellent yearbook will find ways to cover each student, but a superior yearbook covers each student as a person and personality.
- **Coverage** of non-school activities is evident as a way to capture the full high school experience.
- **Student** life coverage should include traditional school events such as Homecoming, Spirit Week, Prom in addition to daily experiences unique to the school and/or year. The staff seeks new coverage angles each year.
- **Storytelling** should be presented using a variety of methods, including narratives, pulled quotes, sidebars, infographics, timelines and photo illustrations as well as feature stories and captions.
- **Content** is journalistic in nature, avoiding senior wills or superlatives.

__suggestions

- **Coverage** incorporates a variety of angles to show behind the scenes of each topic with photos beyond the obvious. Readers should see before, during and after angles with answers to the 5Ws and H.
- **Academics** coverage includes classes from each department and grade level with effort to include both required and elective courses. Photo coverage is diverse and incorporates labs, experiments, field trips, projects and special activities instead of desk shots. Students, not teachers, should be the focus. Standardized testing, curriculum changes, vocational programs and post-secondary options are covered as well.
- **Sports** coverage includes feature aspects of individual and team sports beyond season statistics. Coverage of practice and off-the-field activities supplements game photos. Each team is represented with a variety of photos and copy angles in addition to its team photograph, scoreboard and overall season record. (Reference pages may appear separately.)
- **Clubs and organizations** are represented with action shots of various activities in addition to posed group photographs. Staffs should refrain from listing each group's goal or projects.
- **People** pages in the album section may include features or personality profiles. Coverage should focus on a variety of topics suited to all students, not just seniors.
- **Advertising** pages should include feature coverage to enhance reader appeal.

__Judge's comments

coverage
superior
excellent
good
average
needs improvement

special distinction:

annual critique

Judge's comments

standards

The book's visual impact depends on its design. Page layout should reflect basic principles of design and incorporate techniques reflective of the times. Readers' wants and needs should be the focus.

LAYOUT

- **Facing** pages are designed as double-page spreads linked by a horizontal eyeline or connecting graphics. Single page design, when used sparingly, may be appropriate for topics less significant that do not merit double-page spreads.
- **Columns** or grids are used and are consistent within each book's section.
- **White** space is planned and used carefully throughout the book. Internal margins are consistent within section. A superior yearbook's pages will include multiple levels of white space, including Level 1 (1-3 points, used for packaging), Level 2 (traditionally, one pica, used for internal spacing) and Level 3 (rails used to isolate and emphasize modules).
- **Each** spread should have a dominant element as an anchor point. Within modular design, each secondary package also should have its own dominant element proportional in scale.
- **Photos** should vary in shape and size and should avoid odd shapes. Captions should be extensions of photos for maximum readability.
- **Pages** within each section should be consistent with basic graphic elements and type choices but should not appear visually monotonous. Elements should vary in size and position per spread, with use of specific coverage packages so that content dictates design.

__suggestions

TYPOGRAPHY

- **Headline** packages grab readers and lead directly to copy.
- **Captions** are smaller than body copy and are consistent in point size and width per section.
- **Vertical** type should be avoided. Used sparingly, type rotated 90 degrees can be effective.
- **Restraint** in typography is evident; each section of the book may have its own fonts, but type is consistent per section and fits the book's personality and theme.
- **A superior** yearbook staff will pay close attention to details with widows, orphans and hyphenation.

GRAPHICS

- **Graphic** elements enhance each spread's content rather than add distractions.
- **Dropped** caps, pulled quotes, text wrap and other effects are used to emphasize parts of the spread and create multiple entry points. Decisions reflect careful planning with readability as the focus.
- **Clip art** is used sparingly. Instead, photos may be used as icons or illustrations.
- **Use** of color and/or spot color enhances design without distraction. On black and white pages, tints may be used to create the same depth and variety.
- **Graphics** should be consistent within section and reflect overall tone or mood of the theme to create unity.
- **Infographics**, when used, include source information for data presented.

__Judge's comments

layout and design
superior
excellent
good
average
needs improvement

special distinction:

annual critique

Judge's comments

standards

To preserve the details of one particular year, good writing plays a key role.

COPY TREATMENTS

- **Stories** should be presented in a variety of ways, including feature stories, narratives, summary sidebars, factoids, Q/A or quote boxes, timelines and other forms of alternative copy. Regardless of format, copy should incorporate facts, figures and feelings.
- **Direct** quotes from a variety of sources enhance the story. Covering students, not teachers or coaches, should be the focus. A Superior yearbook will include quotes to represent all possible story angles, beyond the obvious sources such as the Homecoming queen or varsity football captain.
- **Leads** are attention-getting and vary, avoiding labels, summaries and questions.
- **Emphasis** is on details that differentiate this year from previous years, but year designation and "this year" should be avoided in copy.
- **School** name, initials and mascot should be avoided.
- **Copy** is presented in past tense.
- **Facts** and figures add meaning to copy related to costs, percentages, times, scores and survey results. Sources are provided for all statistics given.
- **Copy** is journalistic in style, free from editorializing.
- **Stories** include bylines to recognize student writers.

HEADLINES

- **Designed** to hook readers and lead directly into copy, headlines should reflect the spread's content and should be written in present tense.
- **Headlines** are designed for maximum readability, avoiding vertical type, paying attention to hyphenation or odd line breaks and avoiding the gutter.
- **Headlines** should attempt creativity through literary devices (alliteration, pun, etc.) instead of using labels.
- **Pages** should include secondary headlines that provide detail to the story.

suggestions

HEADLINES, CONT.

- **With** single-page design, each facing page has its own headline; headlines appear similar in type style but are not tombstoned.
- **While** secondary packages on each spread should have mini-headlines or subheads, these should not compete for attention with the primary headline package. Design is proportional.

CAPTIONS

- **All** photos have some type of caption information to identify those pictured.
- **Expanded** captions add to the story by answering all 5Ws and H, and when possible, also include direct quotes. In multi-sentence captions, the first sentence should be in present tense to capture the photo's action, while subsequent sentences should be in past tense to provide background information.
- **Captions** avoid stating the obvious and refrain from phrases like "pictured here" or "left to right."
- **Captions** may be grouped and numbered when referring to a photo montage or special treatment. These should be easy to locate, placed as close to their photos as possible.
- **For group** photos, rows should be designated in consistent format from front to back with contrasting type.
- **Captions** should appear in smaller type than other copy and may be set apart by bold type or other graphic device.

EDITING

- **To** achieve a professional quality product, staffs must pay close attention to spelling and punctuation to eliminate error.
- **Style** is consistent throughout the publication in terms of capitalization and abbreviation. This includes name and grade attribution, format for direct quotes, titles, sports scores, dates, course titles and school events like Homecoming.
- **Writing** is concise and efficient.
- **Copy** is free of editorializing, generalizations or statements that may be considered libelous. Facts are double-checked for accuracy.

Judge's comments

writing and editing
superior
excellent
good
average
needs improvement

special distinction:

annual critique

Judge's comments

standards

Capturing the year visually requires strong photo coverage in terms of honesty, variety, composition, technical quality and design.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Pages should include photos displayed within the design principles of dominance and balance. While a variety of shapes and sizes is desirable, odd-shaped photos should be avoided.
- **Coverage** should include behind-the-scenes and before/after coverage in addition to traditional photos readers expect to see.
- **Photo** content is varied per topic to tell the full story. For example, academics shots include field trips and lab work instead of all desk shots. Sports photos include practices or off-the-field activities, and game shots include both offensive and defensive action.
- **Posed** photos are used sparingly or with a specific purpose. Emphasis is on storytelling photos that show action and reaction.
- **When** used for infographics or emphasis, photo illustrations are used as such. Traditional photos are not flipped and are edited carefully without changing the story captured.
- **Photos** altered (beyond COB's and cut-outs) should carry a note of explanation in the caption.
- **Pages** contain a variety of one-shots group photos as well as a variety of close-ups and wide angles.
- **Photos** are individually labeled with photo credits. A Superior yearbook staff will not print "Submitted Photo" but instead will obtain the photographer's name (parent, non-staff student, teacher, etc.).

__suggestions

TECHNICAL QUALITY

- **Photos** should be in clear focus and free of scratches and lint.
- **Contrast** is good in black and white photos while process photos have sharp, vivid color.
- **Digital** photos should have proper resolution to appear high-quality.
- **Photos** should not be stretched or skewed.

GROUP/TEAM PHOTOS

- **Organized** group and team photos should have subjects lined in rows, with shortest rows in front.
- **Group** and team photos should not include students posed in awkward formations or using props.
- **These** photos should appear on the page large enough that faces are clearly identifiable.
- **Organized** group and team photos should be secondary to action photos on each spread unless grouped together in a separate reference section.

OTHER PHOTO TREATMENTS

- **Mug** shots, when used, should be action mugs or personality mugs instead of posed head shots. These should be consistent per section. Staffs should not duplicate the school portrait for use in feature coverage.
- **Cut-outs** or COB photos may be used as a form of photo illustration. When used, human COBs should be anchored rather than floating and should not be cropped drastically.
- **Staffs** may experiment with photo collections such as a collage, montage or photo series. These should follow basic design principles and adhere to regular photo guidelines with captions included.

__Judge's comments

Photography
superior
excellent
good
average
needs improvement

special distinction:

annual critique

Judge's comments

standards

Attention to detail makes all the difference in moving an Excellent yearbook up to the Superior level. Special sections and reader services throughout the book should be consistent and may be theme related.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **should** be accurate and appear early in the book, usually on the front endsheet or in the opening
- **coordinates** with the book's visual identity through color, type, graphics
- **should** include listings for the book's major sections and reference areas

INDEX

- **provides** an accurate alphabetical listing of all people, topics, groups and advertisers in the book
- **is designed** for maximum readability in regard to column width and point size
- **should** include photos and quick-reads or some type of feature coverage to enhance these pages

COLOPHON

- **provides** specific and technical information about the book and its printing; should provide name and address of printing facility, cover materials, paper weight, special inks or foils, type styles, computer software, previous awards, press run and cost of book to students
- **may** include a small section for acknowledgements
- **should** not appear on the parting page of the book

SPECIALTY SECTIONS

- **incorporate** similar graphic elements to fit with overall book personality while providing distinctive design and coverage topics not featured elsewhere

special details

- superior
- excellent
- good
- average
- needs improvement

special distinction:



_General comments and suggestions

annual critique

Final Evaluation

category	evaluation
_theme/concept	_____
_coverage	_____
_layout & design	_____
_writing & editing	_____
_photography	_____
_special details	_____

Judge's signature: _____

overall evaluation

- suPerior**
- excellenT**
- Good**
- average**
- needs imProvement**

annual critique