



# Spartan Yearbook Critique

School \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Yearbook Name \_\_\_\_\_

Year \_\_\_\_\_

**To have your yearbook evaluated, your student media outlet must be a current MIPA member.**

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# OVERVIEW OF CRITIQUE

Like all forms media, yearbooks evolve to reflect modern communication trends. MIPA encourages staffs to experiment with story formats, photography, design and book organization to reflect what they see in professional media, challenging tradition as they seek to meet the needs of their audiences. We do not encourage the production of formula books.

At the same time, we must uphold high standards. Ethical principles in journalism such as fairness, inclusiveness and accuracy and standards of our craft such as grammar, composition, color theory, etc., hold steady.

We have taken this delicate balance into consideration in designing our critique standards.

This Yearbook Critique Form is designed to provide a framework for the judge in evaluating the book, to reward the staff for creativity and accomplishment and to provide suggestions for improvement for future books. We have tried to make this guide as open-ended as possible to allow the judge to consider all factors: sound journalism, student work rather than professional, reader expectations, community traditions and marketing needs.

We do not want to promote cookie-cutter yearbooks. We want to allow staffs as much latitude as possible in producing yearbooks that reflect their school and community as well as reflect sound journalism practices. We encourage advisers to detail unique circumstances or special considerations on the entry form, and we encourage judges to take that information into account. This evaluation is designed to provide meaningful feedback and to recognize and reward excellence.

With this in mind, we award the following ratings for the **overall score** given to a yearbook:

**Spartan Award**

900 or more

**Gold Medal**

800 or more

**Silver Medal**

700 or more

**Bronze Medal**

0-699

In addition, regardless of overall score, we ask the judge to award a **Commendation to one of the six critique categories** outlined in this critique booklet. This often is the top-scoring category (in percent), but may be another category the judge deems worthy of praise for students' effort.

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO JUDGE

This form may be completed and returned to MIPA as a digital PDF or on paper. If you have any questions, please contact the MIPA office at [mipa@msu.edu](mailto:mipa@msu.edu) or 517-353-6761. Thank you!

Please rank each category according to the scale provided and assign the appropriate number of points. The scale is provided for your convenience. You are not limited to the numbers shown on the scale. You may award any number of points from a zero to the highest number available for the category. Please use the space provided for detailed suggestions and comments that will help the staff understand concerns and problem areas and how they may be improved.

# UNIFYING CONCEPT

Traditionally, yearbooks have had themes, usually in the form of a catch phrase with mini-themes for each section. Though themes remain popular, many staffs are experimenting with more conceptual approaches. These concept books may employ logos, typography, artwork or textures to create a unifying element. Whatever form the unifying concept takes, it serves as the thread that holds the book together to present a coherent history of the year.

- Book has a clear unifying theme that uses a graphic, a logo, spin-offs or a similar element to create an overall impression and personality.
- Unifying concept is original, imaginative and relevant to readers for the particular year.
- Unifying concept is apparent throughout the book. It is clearly apparent in such places as on the cover, endsheets, title page, in the opening and closing and on the dividers and also is evident on internal pages via graphics, mods, colors, fonts, phrases or other elements.
- Design of theme/concept pages is distinctive, reflecting both understanding of design and contemporary influences.
- Theme/concept pages employ photographs with complete captions that reinforce unifying concept.
- Theme concept pages contain copy that develops unifying concept as well as containing details that mark the year.

## Unifying Concept Strengths:

## Unifying Concept Recommendations:

### Score for Unifying Concept:

<b>0</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 100.

# COVERAGE

Coverage includes an entire year. In general, coverage should reflect the diversity of the school population and the effort to cover all individuals. Coverage should be personalized through strong photos and direct quotes. It should be balanced and well-rounded with the emphasis placed on what makes this year different from others. Coverage organization may be in traditional sections but might also be chronological or topical, as long as the coverage is all-inclusive.

## STUDENT LIFE

- ❑ Coverage may appear in traditional sections or within chronological/blended sections.
- ❑ Coverage is appropriate for size of book and size of school.
- ❑ Coverage gives reader a complete overview of entire year, including both special events and everyday life in and out of school. Feature topics are fresh and help the reader appreciate the personality of the school.
- ❑ Coverage focuses on student involvement in and reaction to events.
- ❑ Coverage employs strong action photos rather than posed shots.
- ❑ Stories amplify coverage through specific details, active voice and meaningful student quotes.
- ❑ Complete captions add to the story and show evidence of research. Captions provide more information than the obvious pronouncement of who is pictured and what is happening.
- ❑ Sidebars, secondary stories, infographs and other alternative story forms add to coverage.

### Student Life Coverage Strengths:

### Student Life Coverage Recommendations:

# COVERAGE, cont.

## CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

- ❑ Coverage may appear in traditional sections or within chronological/blended sections.
- ❑ Coverage is appropriate for size of book, size of school and activity of each club/organization.
- ❑ Coverage emphasizes student involvement and gives the reader a complete overview of club, including routine events as well as special events and activities.
- ❑ Coverage topics are interesting and innovative rather than telling goals or purpose of club and listing officers.
- ❑ Coverage employs strong action photos rather than posed shots. Photos are taken at different events, not all at the same time.
- ❑ Stories amplify coverage through specific details, active voice and meaningful student quotes.
- ❑ Complete captions add to the story and show evidence of research. Captions provide more information than the obvious pronouncement of who is pictured and what is happening.
- ❑ Sidebars, secondary stories, infographs and other secondary features add to coverage.
- ❑ Group photos with complete identifications are included here or elsewhere in book such as index or ad section. Group photos are not dominant element.

### Club Coverage Strengths:

### Club Coverage Recommendations:

# COVERAGE, cont.

## ACADEMICS

- ❑ Coverage may appear in traditional sections or within chronological/blended sections.
- ❑ Coverage is appropriate for size of book and size of school.
- ❑ Coverage gives the reader a complete academics overview, including core courses, electives and vocational courses.
- ❑ Coverage concentrates on student rather than faculty involvement.
- ❑ Coverage topics are interesting and innovative rather than repeating curriculum purposes and/or listing course descriptions.
- ❑ Coverage employs strong action photos rather than posed shots.
- ❑ Stories amplify coverage through specific details, active voice and meaningful student quotes.
- ❑ Complete captions add to the story and show evidence of research. Captions provide more information than the obvious pronouncement of who is pictured and what is happening.
- ❑ Sidebars, secondary stories, infographs and other secondary features add to coverage.

### **Academics Coverage Strengths:**

### **Academics Coverage Recommendations:**

# COVERAGE, cont.

## SPORTS

- ❑ Coverage may appear in traditional sections or within chronological/blended sections.
- ❑ Coverage is appropriate for size of book and size of school. Coverage gives the reader a complete sports overview, including women's sports, JV and freshman sports, intramural (where applicable) and individual sports.
- ❑ Coverage topics go beyond the obvious to show team accomplishments, struggles and triumphs throughout the year as well as fans, coaches, managers, practices and other activities. Copy avoids editorialized comments on season and predictions for next year.
- ❑ Coverage employs strong action photos rather than posed shots. Photos include a wide variety of games and activities.
- ❑ Stories amplify coverage through specific details, active voice and meaningful student quotes.
- ❑ Complete captions add to the story and show evidence of research. They name everyone in photo, including opposing team players, and tell outcome of pictured play as well as outcome of game.
- ❑ Sidebars, secondary stories, infographs and other alternative story add to coverage.
- ❑ Scoreboards for all sports are included either here or elsewhere in the book listing win-loss and overall record
- ❑ Team photos with complete idents listing full names are included here or elsewhere in book such as index or ad section. Idents use Front ... Second Row... Back and do not simply list team members alphabetically. Team photos are not dominant element.

### **Sports Coverage Strengths:**

### **Sports Coverage Recommendations:**

# COVERAGE, cont.

## PEOPLE

- ❑ Coverage is appropriate for size of book and size of school.
- ❑ Coverage includes all grade levels, faculty, administration and support personnel.
- ❑ Unless the section is reference-only, feature topics with related candid photos enhance coverage in the section. Stories or other alternative content amplify coverage.
- ❑ Faculty section lists specific courses taught and extracurricular positions with portraits. Section includes list of not pictured.
- ❑ Section avoids use of baby pictures and mock elections except as part of journalistic feature coverage.
- ❑ Complete captions add to the story and show evidence of research. Captions provide more information than the obvious pronouncement of who is pictured and what is happening.

### **People Coverage Strengths:**

### **People Coverage Recommendations:**



# COVERAGE, cont.

## ADVERTISING/COMMUNITY

**NOTE TO JUDGE:** Please adjust points for books without advertising. Books should not be penalized for lack of advertising section.

- Coverage gives the reader a complete community overview. National and international events are covered somewhere in the publication, emphasizing local angles and student involvement. This does not include inserts designed by publishing companies.
- Ads are placed in such a way that small ads are contrasted with larger ads, creating visual contrast.
- Some type of content may be included to invite readers into section.
- If personal ads are included, they should be spaced throughout the section.

### Advertising/Community Coverage Strengths:

### Advertising/Community Coverage Recommendations:

### COVERAGE SUMMARY COMMENTS:

#### Score for Coverage:

**0**                      **50**                      **100**                      **150**                      **200**                      **250**

Needs Improvement                      Average/Good                      Very Good                      Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 250.

# WRITING

One of the main purposes for the yearbook is to serve as a historical record of the year. It is impossible to tell the story through photos alone. We must observe, interview, report and write journalistically to make the story complete. Stories and captions need to be descriptive, well researched and unified.

## **COPY (REFERS TO BOTH TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE COPY)**

- ❑ Writing reflects obvious research and evidence of interviews. It employs clear angles.
- ❑ Strong, varied leads capture readers' attention.
- ❑ Copy comes alive through use of meaningful student quotes with proper attribution.
- ❑ Copy avoids editorial comment, use of school name, year and mascot.
- ❑ Copy is generally written in past tense using third person and active voice.
- ❑ Effective transitions, short sentences and short paragraphs aid readability.
- ❑ Copy shows evidence of careful editing and proofing.
- ❑ Copy observes journalistic rules.

## **CAPTIONS**

- ❑ Every photo has a caption.
- ❑ Captions show evidence of research and answer the readers' questions without stating the obvious or editorializing.
- ❑ Captions use active voice and avoid structures such as is running, is playing and Pictured above (below, left, right) is Laurie Stein.
- ❑ In general, captions contain at least two sentences. The first sentence explains the action of the photo and is written in present tense. Subsequent sentences are written in past tense.
- ❑ Captions employ varied leads, avoiding name leads and overuse of verbals.
- ❑ Captions identify everyone pictured with complete names but do not use left to right. Group photos use Front row...Second row...Back row.
- ❑ Captions show evidence of careful editing and proofing and observe journalistic rules.
- ❑ A distinctive caption style adds to section design.

## **HEADLINES**

- ❑ Headlines are relevant to spread content without being labels. They are clever, imaginative and not cliché.
- ❑ Headlines grab and pull the reader into copy both through content and placement.
- ❑ Secondary headlines add to content by providing details for reader.
- ❑ Headlines and secondary headlines are set in an appropriate size to enhance design. They should be noticeably larger than any other text on the page.

# WRITING, cont.

**Writing Strengths:**

**Writing Recommendations:**

**Score for Writing:**

<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>200</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

# DESIGN/GRAPHICS/TYPOGRAPHY

Though design continues to go through a period of experimentation, the basic aims remain. First, the design should attract the reader to the spread. Second, design should make the spread contents easy to digest. The desired result of all layouts is effective, appealing communication.

- ❑ Each section has a distinct design with pages designed as double-page spreads that employ apparent spread linkage.
- ❑ Spreads generally use a columnar, grid or modular plan which presents elements in a logical, imaginative and well-planned manner that encourages eye movement.
- ❑ Each spread contains a dominant element. (Dominant element need not be a single photo.)
- ❑ Spreads employ consistent, sufficient external margins and effective use of white space. Three types are used simultaneously: tight spacing to package elements, standard spacing to establish consistency and expanded spacing to separate one content area from another
- ❑ Action in photos travels toward the gutter rather than off the page and faces look toward the gutter rather than off the pages.
- ❑ Portraits are uniform in size and head sizes and arranged in rectangular panels with names to the outside.
- ❑ Faces are not trapped in the gutter.
- ❑ Use of odd-shaped photos and collages has been avoided.
- ❑ When used, graphic elements are well planned and executed, adding to the presentation. Graphics are used to unify, package, separate and emphasize, not to decorate.
- ❑ Color use is restrained and/or purposeful and is implemented with consistency to complement spread contents.
- ❑ Each section has a consistent style. All styles add to the overall design style and personality of the book.
- ❑ Copy, captions and headlines fit space allotted and are set in attractive, readable type.
- ❑ Body copy and captions are consistent in type style, leading and size within a section.
- ❑ Captions touch the photos to which they refer or are placed as close as possible. No more than two traditional captions are stacked or side by side. Group captions have an effective, simple method for indicating with captions corresponds with each photo, such as numbering.
- ❑ Visual hierarchy is clearly established, with main headline being the largest type. On secondary packages, type size corresponds with the importance of contents.
- ❑ Special typographical effects such as initial letters and display type enhance readability and attractiveness of spreads.

# DESIGN/GRAPHICS/TYPOGRAPHY, cont.

**Design/Graphics/Typography Strengths:**

**Design/Graphics/Typography Recommendations:**

**Score for Design/Graphics/Typography:**

<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>200</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	<input type="text"/>

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

# PHOTOGRAPHY

Photos make or break the yearbook. It's vital that they accurately tell the story of the year. To do this, they must have both strong content and technical quality.

- ❑ Photos represent original student work. With the exception of portraits and group/team shots, photos from professionals have been kept to a minimum. It is clear which photographs are by staff members vs. other sources.
- ❑ Photo content concentrates on action and has strong storytelling ability. Photos with students mugging for the camera or photos of back or tops of heads are avoided.
- ❑ Photos have strong center of visual interest and feature action or emotion. Center of interest is clearly in focus.
- ❑ Cropping emphasizes center of interest and eliminates wasted space.
- ❑ Photos show an understanding of composition elements such as rule of thirds, framing and leading lines.
- ❑ Spreads include a variety of photo content.
- ❑ Special effects are used sparingly and for a purpose. Photo illustrations are designated.
- ❑ In group photos, subjects are arranged in easily identifiable rows with recognizable faces and empty space cropped out.
- ❑ Digital images are not pixelated and are free from digital noise. They have been properly sized to avoid distortion.
- ❑ Photos have good contrast and minimum grain/noise.
- ❑ Photos not taken by staff members list proper source/credit. Unauthorized copyrighted photos are not used.

## **Photography Strengths:**

# PHOTOGRAPHY, cont.

## Photography Recommendations:

### Score for Photography:

<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>200</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	<input type="text"/>

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

# READER SERVICES

Reader services are all the little things that make it easier for us to navigate through the book.

- ❑ Cover introduces unifying concept and includes name of book and year.
- ❑ Spine includes name of school, city, state and volume number.
- ❑ Title page connects to unifying concept and includes name of book, volume number, year, school name, complete address and telephone number. It may include student population, faculty population, athletic conference and web address.
- ❑ Table of contents is provided, accurately listing first page of main section dividers and index. Placement is on endsheet or page 2-3 or on title page. If table of contents appears on title page, the theme elements should be dominant and the table of contents should play a secondary role (i.e., not take up the whole page.)
- ❑ Folios appear on at least one page of every spread. Folio tabs identify specific page contents.
- ❑ Book includes a complete, accurate index which includes students, faculty, activities, organizations, sports, academic areas and advertisers. The index is set in a readable type and size.
- ❑ The book includes a colophon placed after the index but not as a part of the closing. It includes technical aspects of the book and printing as well as a listing of the yearbook staff and adviser. It may include press association memberships and previous awards. Acknowledgments are tastefully presented.

## Reader Services Strengths:

## Reader Services Recommendations:

### Score for Reader Services:

<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>50</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 50.



# THE FINAL ANALYSIS

## TOTAL POINTS EARNED

Unifying Concept (10 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/100  
Coverage (25 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/250  
Writing (20 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/200  
Design/Graphics/Typography (20 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/200  
Photography (20 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/200  
Reader Services (5 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/50  
**Total** \_\_\_\_\_/1,000

## OVERALL RATING

Please select an overall rating based on the total score.

- SPARTAN AWARD**  
900–1,000
- GOLD MEDAL**  
800–899
- SILVER MEDAL**  
700–799
- BRONZE MEDAL**  
0–699

## COMMENDATION

Please designate one of the above category areas as worthy of commendation for the effort students have put into this book. This often is the top-scoring category (in percent), but may be another category the judge deems worthy of praise. Please include a brief comment in the Summary Comments area about this work.

- UNIFYING CONCEPT**       **WRITING**       **PHOTOGRAPHY**  
 **COVERAGE**       **DESIGN**       **READER SERVICES**

## SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Judge's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for evaluating student media for the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association!