



KEMPA Newspaper Critique

Kettle Moraine Press Association
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Continuing Education Services
2005 Roseman Hall
Whitewater, WI 53190

Newspaper Name _____ Year _____

Adviser's Name _____

School _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Total Points:

	Maximum Scores	Your score
News	(175)	_____
Feature	(200)	_____
Sports	(190)	_____
Opinion	(220)	_____
Editing	(190)	_____
Graphic Design	(225)	_____
Total	(1,200)	_____

Rating

All-KEMPA	1,200-1,085
First Class	1,084-970
Second Class	969-855
Third Class	854-740

Acknowledgements

KEMPA thanks the Maryland-District of Columbia Scholastic Press Association and the Columbia Scholastic Press Association for allowing us to borrow freely from their scorebooks. (06-2007)

All KEMPA newspapers are critiqued by non-member judges located in geographic areas outside of Wisconsin and Illinois.

Introduction

Student newspapers demonstrate the fundamental principles of scholastic journalism: relevant stories, well-researched writing, inclusive coverage, dynamic photography and functional layout and design.

The Kettle Moraine Press Association (KEMPA) is dedicated to those basic principles. To this end, KEMPA encourages leadership, responsibility and objectivity for all newspaper staff members. This critique is just one of the ways in which KEMPA promotes quality scholastic publications.

• Scorebook

This scorebook serves two purposes. First, and most importantly, the scorebook is a teaching tool. It gives newspaper staffs an objective analysis of how well their publications exemplify the fundamentals of scholastic journalism. Secondly, the scorebook rewards a newspaper staff for everything the staff members have done well. Any criticism is constructive by its very nature.

• Scoring decisions

Scoring decisions are made against basic standards of scholastic journalism. Occasionally, newspaper staffs choose to ignore certain standards. That editorial decision is the privilege of the staff. In evaluation a publication, however, a judge cannot make scoring exceptions because the staff made a decision to follow a certain “tradition” of the school. The judge is obligated to score each newspaper against set standards.

• Newsmagazines

Sometimes a newsmagazine’s primary purpose is to report human interest/feature stories, not school news, club activities and sporting events. Judges should take this into consideration.

• Copyright

Simply attributing work to its creator is not the same as receiving consent to publish. Photos, graphics and art republished with permission should be credited with “Photo used with permission of...” or a similar statement. Using “Photo courtesy of” does not tell readers or judges whether you have permission. Do not use “Used with permission” unless you have permission.

Use of apparently copyrighted materials without permission will result in disqualification from receiving an ALL-KEMPA rating.

• Plagiarism

Plagiarism might be as unintentional as failing to attribute a quote to its source or as deliberate as submitting a movie review downloaded from the Web.

If a judge finds evidence of plagiarism in an entry, he or she will reduce the score in that area with an explanation noted. Furthermore, that publication is disqualified from receiving an ALL-KEMPA rating.

Judges should note that high quality student work with a range of expert sources does not necessarily point to plagiarism.

• Judges

KEMPA judges are qualified professional journalists, or past or present advisers of top-rated publications. A publication’s evaluation is likely to be helpful, fair and well-substantiated.

• Concerns

If you have any concerns or comments about the scoring you received or suggestions for improvement of this scoring booklet, please go to www.kempaonline.com to find the current board of directors and send an e-mail to the president.

• Scoring Directions for the Judges

When scoring subtotals and totals, please use pencil. If the total score falls within 5 points or fewer of the low end of the next higher category, please go through your scoring to see if you can find 1-5 points that would enable you to place the rating at the next level.

Judges’s Scoring Guide

All-KEMPA	1,200-1,085	scores are mostly 10 and 9	or 5
First Class	1,084-970	scores are mostly 9 and 8	or 4
Second Class	969-855	scores are mostly 8 and 7	or 3
Third Class	854-740	scores are mostly 7 and 6	or 2

News

The judge should underline or circle problem areas.

Content/Coverage

- _____ (10) 1. Coverage includes a wide range of news and issues both inside school and out -- including, when appropriate, local, national and world news.
- _____ (5) 2. News coverage includes spot news as well as scheduled events.
- _____ (10) 3. Stories puts their main emphasis on school news and seek to show how additional news about community, regional, national and international events affect students.
- _____ (10) 4. News coverage is broad enough to reach the whole school community.
- _____ (10) 5. News and In-depth stores are comprehensible to outside readers.
- _____ (10) 6 News and In-depth emphasize material of consequence to most students while taking all readers into account.
- _____ (5) 7. Stories include a broad range of student and official voices, both inside and outside the school.
- _____ (10) 8. The publication's primary emphasis is on balanced, thoroughly researched content.
- Subtotal _____ (70)

Reporting

- _____ (10) 1. Stories are balanced and fair. All sides are given an equal opportunity to be heard.
- _____ (10) 2. Stories are as free of editorializing as possible. They are written in the third person.
- _____ (10) 3. Information and quotes are fully and properly attributed. Unnamed sources are used only in exceptional circumstances.
- _____ (5) 4. Primary sources are used where possible. Stories do not rely heavily on what has been reported in other media. Second-hand information is avoided.
- Subtotal _____ (35)

Writing

- _____ (10) 1. Writing style is consistent, whether AP or other style.
- _____ (10) 2. Paragraphs and sentences are short, but not choppy.
- _____ (10) 3. Leads emphasize the Ws and H that focus on stories' impact. They seldom feature the "when."
- _____ (10) 4. Stories are concise and coherent, and generally written in inverted-pyramid style or other accepted format.

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

- _____ (10) 5. Quotes are used effectively to move the story, but not overused.
- _____ (5) 6. Most writing is in active voice.
- _____ (5) 7. Stories provide sufficient background and context for the reader.
- _____ (10) 8. Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are used.
- Subtotal _____ (70)

NEWS SCORES

Content/Coverage (70 possible): _____

Reporting (35 possible) _____

Writing (70 possible) _____

Section Total (175 possible) _____

Features

The judge should underline or circle problem areas.

Content/Coverage

- _____ (10) 1. Coverage includes a wide range of issues both inside school and out.
- _____ (10) 2. Feature stories are timely and, when possible, pegged to news elsewhere in the paper.
- _____ (10) 3. Sidebars and graphics are used when appropriate to help readers grasp larger, complex stories.
- _____ (10) 4. In features, the publication presents original, thoroughly researched subject matter.
- _____ (5) 5. Features stimulate and reflect students' thoughts and interests.
- _____ (5) 6. Personality profiles of students, faculty and others offer realistic, newsworthy portrayals.
- _____ (5) 7. Coverage of school-related arts programs, performances, and exhibits is balanced with stories about non-school-related works.
- _____ (10) 8. Coverage of student opinion polls emphasizes a summary of results. The coverage indicates the size and range of the sampling, and when the sampling was taken.
- _____ (10) 9. Only appropriate personal narratives are used.
- _____ (10) 10. Puzzles, jokes, horoscopes, gossip columns, etc. are omitted in favor of more interesting and entertaining subject matter.

Subtotal _____ (85)

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Reporting

- _____ (10) 1. Stories are balanced and fair. All sides are presented.
- _____ (10) 2. Stories are as free of editorializing as possible. They are written in the third person.
- _____ (5) 3. Primary sources are used where possible. Stories do not rely heavily on what has been reported in other media. Second-hand information is avoided.
- _____ (10) 4. Feature stories are well-researched and clearly sourced, news-style; stories do not merely reflect the opinion of the writer.
- Subtotal _____ (35)

Writing

- _____ (10) 1. Writing style is consistent, whether AP or other style.
- _____ (10) 2. Paragraphs and sentences are short, but not choppy.
- _____ (10) 3. Leads are creative and interesting, grabbing the attention of the readers.
- _____ (5) 4. The nut graf is no more than four paragraphs into the story.
- _____ (10) 5. Quotes are used effectively to move the story, but not overused.
- _____ (10) 6. Most writing is in active voice.
- _____ (10) 7. Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are used.
- _____ (5) 8. Anecdotes relate directly to the main theme of the story.
- _____ (10) 9. Writers avoid big words and flowery language, relying instead on concrete examples that make their point. They don't just tell the reader what happened, they show it.
- Subtotal _____ (80)

FEATURES SCORES

Content/Coverage (85 possible): _____

Reporting (35 possible) _____

Writing (80 possible) _____

Section Total (200 possible) _____ Subtotal

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Sports

The judge should underline or circle problem areas.

Content/Coverage

- _____ (10) 1. Coverage includes a wide range of sports, not just the most popular ones.
- _____ (10) 2. Boys' and girls' athletics are given equal treatment.
- _____ (5) 3. Stories focus on news about upcoming games or analysis of past games, rather than play-by-play summaries.
- _____ (10) 4. The sports section does more than simply chronicle teams and athletes, but includes general news about athletics, features and trends that cut across sports.
- _____ (10) 5. Content reflects the diverse aims and objectives of competitive team sports, individual sports and lifetime activities.
- _____ (10) 6. Sports coverage focuses on the most important games/matches, rather than chronological coverage of events.
- _____ (5) 7. Stories include varsity, JV and freshman sports.
- _____ (5) 8. Coverage often includes summaries of statistics. It also presents briefs of game or playoff results and conference results.

Subtotal _____ (65)

Reporting

- _____ (10) 1. Stories are balanced and fair. All sides are given an equal opportunity to be heard.
- _____ (10) 2. Stories are as free of editorializing as possible. They are written in the third person.
- _____ (5) 3. Opposing teams and coaches are interviewed and their viewpoints included in stories.
- _____ (5) 4. Outside, impartial sources--conference officials, analysts, where available--are sought out and quoted.
- _____ (10) 5. Stories are well-sourced and attributed; assertions are backed up with facts and statistics.
- _____ (5) 6. Leads avoid combining team name, school name or nickname, and/or sport name.

Subtotal _____ (45)

Writing

- _____ (10) 1. Writing style is consistent, whether AP or other style.
- _____ (10) 2. Paragraphs vary in length and are usually short.

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

- _____ (10) 3. Leads are creative and interesting, grabbing the attention of the readers.
- _____ (10) 4. Style is colorful, but generally stays objective for straight reporting.
- _____ (10) 5. Quotes are used effectively to move the story, but not overused.
- _____ (10) 6. Most writing is in active voice.
- _____ (10) 7. Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are used.
- _____ (10) 8. Stories are fresh and lively; they avoid cliches and jargon.

Subtotal _____ (80)

SPORTS SCORES

Content/Coverage (65 possible): _____

Reporting (45 possible) _____

Writing (80 possible) _____

Section Total (190 possible) _____

Opinions

The judge should underline or circle problem areas.

Editorials

- _____ (10) 1. Editorials demonstrate leadership through responsible commentary on a wide range of subjects of consequence to students.
- _____ (10) 2. Issues include at least one editorial in each issue, often based on a timely and important topic covered elsewhere in the same issue.
- _____ (10) 3. Editorials reflect through research and, when possible, offer solutions to problems.
- _____ (5) 4. Editorial page allows opportunity for reader feedback.
- _____ (10) 5. Editorials show evidence of thorough research and are well-sourced.
- _____ (5) 6. Writers are not reluctant to confront school officials or challenge popular notions.
- _____ (10) 7. Editorials are concise and persuasively constructed.
- _____ (10) 8. Editorials frame the issue and then take a clear stand on that issue.
- _____ (5) 9. Writing style is consistent, whether AP or other style.
- _____ (5) 10. Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are used.
- _____ (5) 11. The pronoun “we” is used, meaning the editors.

Subtotal _____ (85)

Judge’s comments and suggestions for improvement.

Columns

- _____ (10) 1. Topics are timely, relevant and consequential to a broad range of students.
- _____ (10) 2. Attribution is used when necessary. The writer does not rely completely on his own background.
- _____ (10) 3. Writer avoids using the column as a personal vendetta.
- _____ (10) 4. Background material supports the opinions of the columnist.
- _____ (10) 5. Material is not preachy and inside jokes are avoided.
- _____ (10) 6. Columnists present their points of view effectively and articulately.
- _____ (5) 7. Writing style is consistent, whether AP or other style.
- _____ (5) 8. Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are used.
- _____ (5) 9. The pronoun “you” is avoided

Subtotal _____ (75)

Reviews

- _____ (10) 1. Reviews clearly state the opinions of the reviewer.
- _____ (10) 2. Reviews include in-school and outside-of-school events were appropriate.
- _____ (10) 3. Specific examples are used to support the reviewer’s opinions and generalizations.
- _____ (10) 4. Reviewers provide necessary background to provide readers with an understanding of their appraisal.
- _____ (10) 5. Reviewers present their points of view effectively and articulately.
- _____ (5) 6. Writing style is consistent, whether AP or other style.
- _____ (5) 7. Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are used.

Subtotal _____ (60)

OPINIONS SCORES

Editorials (85 possible): _____

Columns (75 possible) _____

Reviews (60 possible) _____

Section Total (220 possible) _____

Judge’s comments and suggestions for improvement.

Editing

The judge should underline or circle problem areas.

Copy

- _____ (10) 1. Stories are factually correct.
- _____ (10) 2. Stories are free of potential libel.
- _____ (10) 3. Writing is original, free of plagiarism.
- _____ (10) 4. Stories do not leave readers' questions unanswered.
- _____ (10) 5. Stories do not make assertions that are not fully supported.
- _____ (10) 6. Names, titles are consistent; all speakers are identified; all have full name on first reference.
- _____ (10) 7. Successive paragraphs in a story do not begin with the same words.
- _____ (10) 8. Sentence structure is clear and varied.
- _____ (10) 9. Subjects and verbs agree, pronouns and antecedents agree, pronoun references are clear, and verb tenses are consistent and appropriate.
- _____ (10) 10. "Said" is used in attribution, rather than synonyms.
- _____ (10) 11. Quotes, whether direct or indirect, appear by the third paragraph of stories.

Subtotal _____ (110)

Headlines and Cutlines

- _____ (10) 1. Headlines accurately summarize the story's main idea.
- _____ (5) 2. Standard headlines contain a verb, stated or implied, and are written in the present or future tense.
- _____ (5) 3. Display headlines are attractive and are paired with a standard headline in the deck.
- _____ (10) 4. Publications makes good use of decks to invite readers into stories.
- _____ (5) 5. Headlines do not break single thoughts, proper names, prepositional phrases over two lines.
- _____ (5) 6. Headlines are downstyle, use single quote marks and avoid use of articles, "a," "an," "the."
- _____ (10) 7. All photos and art include a credit and all photos have their own cutlines adjacent to the photo.
- _____ (10) 8. Cutlines say more than what is obvious in the photo. They should consist of more than one sentence.
- _____ (10) 9. Cutlines fully identify subjects and provide all necessary information.
- _____ (10) 10. Cutlines avoid clichés, "pictured above," "poses for the camera," "left to right."

Subtotal _____ (80)

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

EDITING SCORES

Copy (110 possible): _____

Headlines & Cutlines (80 possible) _____

Section Total (190 possible) _____

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Graphic Design

The judge should underline or circle problem areas.

Layout

- _____ (10) 1. Modular layout places all parts of the story package in a rectangular shape.
- _____ (10) 2. Each page has a dominant piece of art (photo, illustration, graphic, use of typography).
- _____ (5) 3. More important stories are placed on the top of the page, along with dominant art. Pages are balanced.
- _____ (10) 4. Stories do not run out from under their headlines.
- _____ (5) 5. The nameplate includes the name of the newspaper, school, address, volume number, issue number and date.
- _____ (5) 6. The "gray look" is avoided through judicious use of art.
- _____ (5) 7. Folio lines on inside pages include section name along with name of newspaper, date and page number.
- _____ (5) 8. Ads are grouped at the bottom or outer edges of pages. They do not appear on page one or the opinions pages.
- _____ (10) 9. In-depth or special sections are designed creatively and in good taste. Two page spreads are designed as a single unit with dominant art.
- _____ (10) 10. Each issue has an opinions page. It includes a masthead.
- _____ (5) 11. Internal margins are consistent. At least one pica of white space surrounds type that is boxed and surrounds the boxes themselves.
- _____ (5) 12. Pages mix vertical and horizontal elements. Tombstoning and bumping headlines are avoided.
- _____ (5) 13. Borders, screens and other decorative elements are used with restraint.

Subtotal _____ (90)

Photography, Illustrations, Infographics

- _____ (10) 1. Visual elements are original, clearly avoiding copyright violation.
- _____ (10) 2. Photos are newsworthy.
- _____ (5) 3. Photo content is well-selected.

- ____ (10) 4. Photos are action-oriented, not obviously posed.
- ____ (10) 5. Photos are cropped to remove extraneous background and feature the subject, but not so tight that body parts are cut off or the subject is boxed in.
- ____ (5) 6. Group shots are used sparingly, if at all.
- ____ (5) 7. Faces in photos are no smaller than the size of a dime.
- ____ (10) 8. Photos are focused and well-composed with sharp contrast and details.
- ____ (5) 9. People in photos faced toward the related story, not off the page or into the wrong story.
- ____ (5) 10. All photos contain people (with rare exceptions).
- ____ (5) 11. All photos except mug shots give credit.
- ____ (10) 12. The publication makes good use of maps, charts, graphs and diagrams. These visuals are accurate, complete, immediately understandable, easy to follow and properly attributed.
- ____ (10) 12. Cartoons, comic strips and illustrations are attractive and understandable at a glance. Artists use shading when warranted. Clip art is avoided.
- Subtotal _____ (100)

Typography

- ____ (10) 1. Body type is easy to read. The basic column width has eye appeal. The publication effectively varies column widths.
- ____ (5) 2. Longer blocks of text are broken up with subheads, lead-ins, pull quotes and other devices that minimize gray space.
- ____ (5) 3. The publication consistently uses one or two headline type faces with variation on the in-depth or special interest pages. Type faces of kickers and drop headlines complement typefaces of primary headlines.
- ____ (5) 4. Headlines' point sizes and/or weights vary according to story importance and length so that emphasis decreases down the page.
- ____ (10) 5. Cutlines are in a different type face from the copy so that they stand out.
- Subtotal _____ (35)

GRAPHIC DESIGN SCORES

Layout (90 possible): _____

Photography, etc. (100 possible) _____

Typography (35 possible) _____

Section Total (225 possible) _____

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Judge's Summary Comments