

Critiques - Review and Scoring

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Coverage & Content

A good multimedia site can't survive on flashy graphics and cool video alone. It needs to have substance — good, solid content. And just as with a print publication, it needs to serve its readers, which may go beyond the traditional newspaper readership: students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, prospective students, community members and even people who land on the site from a Web search.

Students, advisers and judges should consider these criteria when judging quality of work:

- Coverage is comprehensive, focusing on many aspects of the high school community it serves, including academics, school activities, faculty and administration and student affairs.
- The site includes Web-exclusive content, such as blogs, interactive elements, video, audio and breaking news.
- Coverage reflects the diversity of the school population and aims to be inclusive.
- Content is well coordinated, with different media contributing different parts of the story rather than repeating the same information.
- Stories are thoroughly reported; multiple points of view are represented.
- Coverage is accurate, fair and balanced.
- Writing is engaging, informative, to the point.
- Opinion pieces, including columns, editorials and blogs, cover issues and events of interest to the school community.
- Opinion pieces are well researched and well argued, citing factual evidence to support views expressed.
- Special reports and in-depth coverage is well planned and includes multimedia components.
- The site maximizes the capabilities of the Web, making use of multiple media and interactivity.
- Controversial issues are included and reported thoroughly.
- All stories, except for editorials, opinion columns, blogs and analysis pieces, are free of the writer's opinions.
- Headlines, captions and teasers are accurate and engaging, drawing readers into the material.
- The site demonstrates a spirit of experimentation by taking risks and trying new things.

Strengths:

Provide strengths, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

On average there are over ten news stories published a month with a focus on school leaders and newsworthy events. Localizing national events like the cheating scandal is a good idea, but I have some tips below to improve your coverage. The chapter or section format of many of your stories is well done and helps the reader digest different parts of the story. Great work on profiles from the "Eraser Lady" to an academic star to EJ the football star. Great work having audio recordings of the student council candidates. Their voice or hearing their voice makes the different candidates stand out in an effective way of using multimedia. The video highlight of the senior basketball game was AMAZING. Great work. I do have some suggestions on the video below to improve it too. Great stats and quotes in sports stories that follow the quote - transition format. Excellent work embedding Spotify songs on the artist profile of Cam. Superb working having a VLOG of NYC and food. I think this kind of content is what teens want and should be on a high school journalism site, but categorized in the right place. Social media is present, but more tips to come to improve.

Recommendations:

Provide recommendations, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

Some of the posts were categorized in both news and sports. Keep the sports stories in the sports section to improve. Some of the stories also included the writers' opinion or observations such as transitions like, "Anyone who knows Coach Hill would wholeheartedly agree that he deserves the Work of Heart award". It might be true but making broad statements or saying "anyone" who know the coach wholeheartedly would agree makes me wonder if everyone he ever coached would say that about him. As writers in a school it is easy to cheer or go for the what we think the reader wants to read, but to improve work on more precise descriptions of events or factual transitions to improve or remain more objective. When localizing a national event make sure not to use copyrighted images. I found your image of William Singer on Town and Country magazine website. To give you the benefit of the doubt, I think it could be a Getty Image available for non-commercial use, but I am not sure because it isn't sourced. Make sure to photo credit all your photos and caption them. My biggest tip is to have a clear separation of news stories and opinion stories. The Q and A with Will Nickols should be in the Profiles or news section. It isn't opinion because it doesn't have any of your own writer's opinions. Having students opinions in quotes is great in news or profiles or sports stories. The important distinction is that you can't have reporters opinions outside of the opinions section. I was also sad to see the Photo Gallery section hasn't been updated in a year or so. It would be great to get that going again. Think about writing longer more engaging headlines with nouns and verbs. Be precise or make sure to let the reader know what the story or conflict is about in the headline. The RoundUP Ready to dominate in the Expository ball was really well done, but I was a little confused. Is the journalism team going to battle the football team? I am sure y'all know it means, but make sure to have a deck or explanation for people who might not be on the inside of a story. Some of the series like Civil Rights haven't been updated since 2012. Make sure to take those categories off the drop down or update them. For coverage and content my biggest piece of advice is to develop a big feature or in-depth news story every month. Think of that big story like the college cheating scandal and write a 1500 to 3000 word piece on it with professional sources, infographics and more student interviews. As always, make sure to keep your own opinions out of the news, feature and sports section.

Total points:

80

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Interactivity & Community

Interactivity is an essential element of 21st century journalism. It's no longer simply about giving information to the reader; it's about creating a dialogue between the publication and its readers.

Students, advisers and judges should consider these criteria when judging quality of work:

- Readers are able to interact with the publication in numerous ways, which may include comment functions, discussion boards and polls.
- Social networking and community tools, such as links to other information and guides to community services, are used to empower the reader.
- Games, polls, quizzes, interactive maps and other interactive tools are used to engage the reader with the news.
- Readers are invited to submit story ideas and given a way (either a story submission form or an e-mail address) to do so.
- Contact information is provided for readers who want to write a letter to the editor, buy an ad or contact the adviser and staff.
- The publication makes use of reader-generated content, which may include stories, photos and videos.
- Links on stories direct readers to other sites with useful and credible information that enhances the story.

Strengths:

Provide strengths, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

Strong use of polls and social media. They are very timely too with the March Madness question (North Carolina is going to win) The Twitter feed is very active and engaging. The About section showcases a very large and strong staff. I love the alumni archives on the bottom as well. The Instagram page also is well done with good photos and student life action. The community of your school is very strong and the more you can engage the community and the alumni of your school the stronger the publication and readership will become. Keep using social media as a two way street for interaction with your audience. It is great that you allow all students to submit opinion columns and allow all student voices to be expressed.

Recommendations:

Provide recommendations, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

You are off to a good start with your social media and audience interaction. To take it to the next level think about adding more video and graphics to your interaction. Also add your polls to the Twitter feed. Facebook is also a big debate I get into with teenagers. I know, I know it isn't the coolest, but it does get the biggest reads or clicks. I would encourage you to push stories and interactions for a month on Facebook and see how much your traffic blows up. I predict a 200% to 1000% increase in reads on your site. One recommendation on your Viewpoint or accepting opinion articles would be to add something in there about not making personal attacks or hate speech. Also, I don't recall much hyperlinking inside stories to resourced information or other stories on your site. This does pop up on the sidebars, but more hyperlinking inside the story itself would be a stepup. It might be good to review with the staff how to hyperlink. I am always surprised how many students don't know how to hyperlink.

Total points:

85

/ 100

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Breaking News

Since high school print publications generally come out infrequently, the Web offers students the opportunity to report important news events in a timely manner. Online student publications may be updated on a daily basis, even if the print edition only comes out a few times a year.

Students, advisers and judges should consider these criteria when judging quality of work:

- The site is updated regularly, daily if possible.
- Important news events are reported in a timely way.
- Multiple media — which may include photos, graphics, text, audio, video and interactive elements — are used to report breaking news events.
- Breaking news reports are updated as information comes in.
- News is covered in a fair and balanced manner.
- Coverage includes useful information for readers, such as notification of school closing in the event of bad weather or an emergency.
- News coverage includes stories of interest to the school community.
- Coverage of national and international events is related to the school community.
- News is accurate, even if the information is incomplete.

Strengths:

Provide strengths, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

I am pretty hard on what is breaking news. There are some stories that are recent about the debate club, Gail Nogle coming to school, and the Bowling Ravages story (love the headline) was close, but it was published two weeks after the event. There were some live videos on social media, which is great! For a story to be breaking, in my opinion it needs to be published right as it is happening or within a few hours. Sports reporters will have a game recap up five minutes after the game. Do I expect this out of a high school reporter, no, but I think a 12-hour rule would still allow the story to be written in class.

Recommendations:

Provide recommendations, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

Break news! Have a breaking news team. Five students that for that week will post breaking news briefs. Having a breaking news graphic to put on the website and social media. Do it fast, but do it right. Make sure to use the "triangulation of truth". You need a professional source (admin), student source, and another quote. If you have that and a real photo your odds of being accurate are pretty good. I would ask your staff how many are using cell phones to do journalism or take photos of school life? The cell phone camera and video camera are amazing. Stories can also be written on Google Docs and shared through phones or on a Wordpress app to get news out there before it is old. Check the analytics for motivation too. A breaking news story on the cast list for the school musical or school being delayed or a new athletic director will blow up the internet (especially Facebook :). There is a good mantra that your #1 job should be to be the #1 source of news about your school. Don't ever let the local papers beat you to a story about Jesuit High School. Plus breaking news is fun.

Total points:

70

/ 100

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Design & Navigation

A Web site should be attractive and easy to navigate, steering the reader toward the newest and most important information. Content should drive design, not the other way around.

Students, advisers and judges should consider these criteria when judging quality of work:

- The site is visually appealing, drawing readers into stories.
- Navigation is easy; readers can effortlessly find what they are looking for.
- The home page is simple and uncluttered.
- The site provides links to relevant resources, such as the high school Web site.
- A dominant piece of art, at least twice as big as anything else, anchors each page.
- Visual elements, such as photos and graphics, are used to enhance content, not as decoration.
- News is presented in a clear hierarchy, with the most important and/or newest stories prominently displayed.
- Tabs clearly direct readers to different sections of the publication, such as news, sports, entertainment and opinion.
- Multiple elements of a story are packaged together into an integrated unit.
- Bullets, fonts, boxes and other design elements are used to facilitate reading and navigation.
- Links provide access to related content on the site.

Strengths:

Provide strengths, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

The site is clean and well designed. All the menus work and there is an abundance of drop down menus. Sidebars contain relevant and interactive material for the viewers of the site. It is responsive and quick to load. The logos are very well designed, but are they the official school logos? You might consider doing your own RoundUp logo in the future to brand your student journalism as a bit different than your school. The display section that highlights the most recent and important stories also allowed the viewer to click on the big stories of the day. The fonts were easy to read. Many of the stories contained a nice dominant image.

Recommendations:

Provide recommendations, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

I do have a problem with stories being categorized in a number of categories. Pick one category for stories to be placed in. This is especially important when separating opinion from news and sports stories. To improve work on having more of your own photos that are captioned and credited. I can't emphasize that enough. Taking great photos and formatting them correctly is the most important part of web design. Next would be to add more infographics (try Piktochart or Visme), and add more art. Can student artists design more art for the opinion section and feature stories?

Total points:

80

/ 100

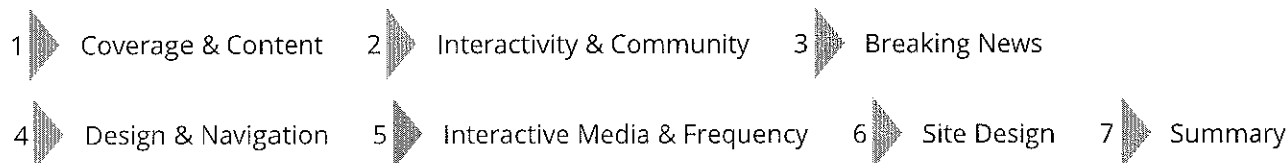
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Interactive Media & Frequency

Multimedia offers a rich experience for readers that taps multiple senses. New media is constantly changing, and innovation should be a vital element of any Web site. Student sites, in particular, which are less bound by convention and market pressures, should be creative and pioneering.

Students, advisers and judges should consider these criteria when judging quality of work:

- The site uses a variety of media, which may include audio, video, slide shows and/or audio slide shows, text and graphics.
- Media are used to enhance content and help tell stories rather than simply add flashy elements to the site.
- Each media element — slide show, video, podcast, etc. — tells a story.
- Photos and video are adequately lit and well composed.
- Photo illustrations are clearly labeled.
- In photos and video, a variety of shots — action, candid, long shots, close-ups and detail shots — are used.
- In audio and video reports, sound quality is clear; voices are easy to understand.
- Audio reports make use of ambient and natural sound as well as interviews.
- Graphics are clear and easy to understand.
- Special projects and packages are well organized and designed to help readers navigate through the content.
- Copyright laws are understood and respect; only original content or copyright-free material (music, photos, videos, etc.) is used.

Strengths:

Provide strengths, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

Superb work of video highlights. Silas is doing powerful work as media editor. I also really enjoyed Saad's Vlog. Doing Vlogs and that kind of journalism is needed on high school sites. Saad's voice was fun and a great narrator through the streets of NYC that I am sure many students enjoyed watching. The audio interviews with student council candidates a good use of multimedia content too. Having the voices of student candidates at your school and the strong opinions for more "girls" was quite funny. This is a good example of how hearing the voices and media can really add to the content of a web story.

Recommendations:

Provide recommendations, supported with specific references. (Minimum 350 characters)

My biggest concern is copyright and using copyrighted material. Make sure to source all your graphics and photos and use more of your own photos and graphics. To improve, I highly recommend taking your videos to the next level with b roll, voiceovers, and interviews. For sports, ESPN recommends or follows the rule of ACTION - REACTION - REACTION - ACTION. So basically you need twice as much footage of fans and coaches and player reactions as the actual game. Also, don't be afraid to tell the story. Ira Glass says the viewer or listener should feel like they are on a train. Let people dive into the story of the game with all the characters, conflicts and action that happened at a sporting event or student council meeting. My other big recommendation is PODCASTS. A sports talk show with interviews of players, coaches and fans that brings life what is trending in the sports scene at your school could be hugely popular. Culture podcasts or film review podcasts or Vlogs are also very popular. Teen Vogue's YouTube channel is a very creative resource as well as the classics of the Washinton Post, NY Times and Rolling Stone. Also, what about a GAMEDAY live show before big basketball or football games? Getting the photo stories going from school events would also help take your multimedia to the next level.

Total points:

85

/ 100

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Summary

Judge's Summary Comments:

(Minimum 350 characters)

It was an absolute pleasure to judge and critique your website. Your staff looks like a great group of student journalists that are having a good time covering the events of a very lively high school. I hope you take this critique and build off the good work that you are doing. The world needs good truth seeking storytellers and The RoundUp staff should be very proud of what you have built or are part of producing. These are my big tips and I will go more in-depth below them: Break news Take your own amazing photos Write short and powerful leads Use specific descriptions or facts for transitions. Avoid having the author's POV in the story. Add video storytelling Blowup social media Photos are key to a great website and drawing the reader into the story. Many of your stories are national stories. Try to focus more on your school or find students who have been affected by the national issue to photograph. I also love a good lead. Seek out great writers in Texas and read really good leads to stories. I am a big fan of descriptions that take me into the story. Short factual leads that go into a great quote can also get a story really going. Video and social media are really close to being at the top level. To get there make sure to tell stories with your videos. The highlight clips are fun and keep doing those, but try a SportsCenter like highlight package with voice over, b roll, and interviews. Also add the RoundUp logo to the videos to brand your content. Social media is also huge in 2019. Embrace it and use it to get students at your high school to read and view your stories. Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook are great platforms to build upon what you have done. Lastly, break news and be the #1 source of news about your school. I encourage a beat system where a reporter covers the student council on a regular basis or the basketball team or the student council. There are interesting stories happening every day at Jesuit Prep. Keep up the great work!

Score:

Coverage & Content: 80

Interactivity & Community: 85

Breaking News: 70

Design & Navigation: 80

Interactive Media & Frequency: 85

Site Design: 0

Total Score: 400

Marks of Distinction:

Honor Rating:

First Class

Judge:

Jonathan Rogers

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