

# NEWS PUBLICATION

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2015-16

## Evaluative Criteria Booklet

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Virginia High School League  
1642 State Farm Blvd.  
Charlottesville, VA 22911  
434-977-8475 / 434-977-5943 (fax)  
[www.vhsl.org](http://www.vhsl.org)

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Newspaper: \_\_\_\_\_

Rating:  Superior /  Excellent /  Good /  Needs Improvement

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the Virginia High School League's Publications Evaluation Service is to facilitate improvements in Virginia high school publications. The evaluator's comments and suggestions should be used primarily as guidelines to increase the effectiveness of your scholastic publication.

Your evaluation is a critique from another qualified person's perspective. That perspective includes many variables -- education, experience, trends and even subjective preference. When submitting a publication for critique, there is an expectation of acceptance of results, whether or not you agree with or choose to implement them.

VHSL recommends that you submit your publication to other evaluation services in addition to the League's for additional comments and suggestions.

## PUBLICATIONS EVALUATION SERVICES ENTRY POLICY

Newspapers submitted for entry in the VHSL Publications Evaluation Services are considered officially entered only if the following conditions are met:

1. The VHSL Publications Evaluation registration form has been completed.
2. One copy of any three representative issues of the newspaper produced that school year has been submitted.
3. The correct entry fee accompanies your entry.
4. Your entry is RECEIVED by the June 15 deadline.

For additional information contact VHSL at 434-977-8475 or by e-mail at [lgiles@vhsl.org](mailto:lgiles@vhsl.org).

VHSL awards are presented annually at the VHSL Regional Media Championship. Publications are evaluated by out-of-state evaluators who are experts in scholastic publications: Suzanne Bardwell, Ann Bertoldie, Don Bott, Alexis Bunka, Pam Bunka, Eva Coleman, Kathy Craghead, Carolyn Crist, Leslie Dennis, Melissa Dixon, Susan Duncan, Allison Floyd, Kathleen France, Christina Geabhart, Donna Griffith, H. L. Hall, Mary Jessica Hammes, Nancy Hastings, Ken Henderson, Carole Henning, Marva Hutchison, Lisa Kritchman, J. Grady Locklear, Jim McGonnell, Janet McKinney, Amy Morgan, R. J. Morgan, Mitzi Neely, Casey Nichols, Sarah Nichols, Jane Robbins, Matthew Schott, Terry Sollazzo, Brian Thies, Lizabeth Walsh, Anne Whitt, Lori Wilken, Stan Zoller.

**STUDENT PUBLICATION:** Work on a student publication should be one of the most challenging academic experiences a high school provides. Students not only learn to write for a real audience from original research, they receive training in editing, layout and design, photography, computer skills and business management. Beyond that, personal growth is achieved in responsibility, dependability, leadership, teamwork and ethical decision making. The product should be student produced, under the training and supervision of the adviser and other professionals. Since the purpose of the VHSL's program is to encourage schools to produce quality student publications, work done by individuals other than students at your high school must be clearly identified.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** No publication will be rated, nor will it receive an award if it uses obscene graphics or language (whether obvious, coded or disguised). No publication containing plagiarized or libelous material will be rated, nor will it receive an award. Publications should indicate that permission was given for use of copyrighted material (for example: used with permission by Associated Press).

**REVISED: December 2015**

## GENERAL STIPULATIONS

On the following pages the evaluator will mark "Superior," "Excellent," "Good" or "N/I" (Needs Improvement) for each specific point as it pertains to your publication.

The categories are as follows:

1. Content and Coverage
2. Writing and Editing
3. Layout and Design
4. Management and Production
5. General

The evaluation in each category will be separate.

News publications will also be rated in each category as to the overall quality of work relating to that evaluation criteria:

Superior / Excellent / Good / Needs Improvement

The rubric shall be used as a guide, not a score card. Evaluation is not based on a point system. The check marks denoting Superior, Excellent, Good and Needs Improvement are ratings, not rankings. Ratings are defined as relative standings. Therefore, the final cumulative ranking given to the publication will be based upon, but not necessarily equal to the number of Superiors, Excellents, Goods and Needs Improvements given to the publication.

## RESULTS

Good sportsmanship is expected of all VHSL activities participants and includes conduct becoming to a participant and graceful acceptance of results.

If you have legitimate concerns with the results of your evaluation (e.g. your evaluation is incomplete), the League may review your evaluation. Please provide the League with a detailed letter stating your concerns and a copy of your Evaluative Criteria Booklet via e-mail, mail or fax within 14 days of the posted results.

Please note that disagreeing with the judge's findings is not justification for review and remember that the primary purpose of an evaluation is to provide information to a staff that will help it to improve its publication. Awards are secondary.

## EVALUATOR: QUESTIONS AND SCORING

Please mark SUPERIOR, EXCELLENT, GOOD or N/I (needs improvement) for each SPECIFIC POINT as it pertains to the publication. Include under the COMMENTS FROM THE EVALUATOR section any ideas or suggestions you have for improvement as well as praise for those things well done. When you have completed the entire section, please circle a rating based on your overall assessment of the quality of that section.

We do expect that final ranking -- Trophy Class, First Class, Second Class and Third Class -- will match up with a majority of Superior, Excellent, Good or Needs Improvement ratings. If it does not, **judge must provide** specific justification to help advisers and staffs to understand **the decision**.

## I. CONTENT AND COVERAGE

The **purpose** of the school newspaper or newsmagazine is to cover the school **news and to** reflect the concerns and interests of the students. A proper balance should be maintained between “hard” news and entertainment, seeking out varied news sources. **Coverage includes** faculty and administration, alumni, service staff, curriculum development, **and** events outside the immediate school environment.

Certain features in every publication account for its distinctiveness. Some of these considerations are effective use of good principles of make-up, an obvious concern for news that is timely and vital to the school community, a variety of topic areas, and adequate attention to factual and objective presentation as well as warm, personal profiles and entertaining features.

News and sports **coverage** emphasize future angles. If the basic news is already general knowledge, stories ~~should~~ look beyond who did what and emphasize information readers do not know. **Emphasis is** directed to analysis of past events or to personality profiles, features and editorials and future games or events.

SPECIFIC POINTS:	Superior	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
1. This publication achieves individuality. While the publication has a consistent personality, each issue looks unique.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. There is emphasis on responsible and professional journalism practices. Content ranges from issue to issue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Through first-hand reporting, the publication <b>covers news events of interest to students</b> to include all phases of school life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Advance <b>news</b> stories take precedence over <b>stale news</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The publication is student-oriented, yet to <b>relevant</b> to a non-student reader.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The publication <b>balances sources</b> . <b>Sources can include</b> students, administration and faculty/ <b>staff</b> , and community <b>members</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. A news briefs column, with a head over each item, <b>covers</b> minor news.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. A calendar of future events <b>should be</b> included.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. In-depth features show research and insight.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The publication covers out-of-school activities such as student jobs <b>and community</b> service projects and activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The publication omits jokes, horoscopes, and gossip columns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Features represent a variety of approaches <b>including</b> news-features, informative, human interest trends and consumer reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Personality profiles are <b>included</b> for reader interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. The publication serves as a forum for its readers through letters, polls, surveys, <b>and</b> symposiums.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## I. CONTENT AND COVERAGE, CONTINUED

SPECIFIC POINTS:	Superior	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
15. A publication statement in each issue encourages readers to submit letters and explains how to do so.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Editorial page content reflects a wide range of subject matter oriented to readers, school and community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Unsigned editorials <b>that</b> stand as the voice of the newspaper reflect statistical research and authoritative opinion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Columns are timely and relevant to student interest and extend beyond the writer's personal thoughts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Sports coverage emphasizes future events and analysis emphasizing the significance of results rather than rehashing past events in play-by-play style.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Sports coverage is balanced to include all school sports, as well as a variety of reader-oriented features.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Interviews, personality profiles, action photography and other feature material related to sports are found on sports pages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Sports stories use active voice and color verbs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. A sports column is used for all opinionated sports writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Sports content includes at least brief coverage or score boxes for all sports teams and schedules.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COMMENTS FROM THE EVALUATOR:**

**STRENGTHS:**

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**SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**RATING:**  Superior /  Excellent /  Good /  Needs Improvement

## II. WRITING AND EDITING

Writing and editing should reflect high journalistic practices. News leads should feature distinctive elements of the story, **are** terse and crisp, and should open with **significant** words. Paragraphs **are** brief, style **is** consistent, and copy **is** objective, accurate and carefully proofed.

SPECIFIC POINTS:	Superior	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
1. Leads emphasize the most important elements of the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. News leads are crisp, lively and written in the active voice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Leads avoid labels, dates, articles (i.e., a, an, the), <b>and</b> the school name, as openers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If old news has to be included, some feature or future angle is given to the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Editorial comment is avoided in news stories.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. In-depth stories have evidence of thorough investigation, citing multiple sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. In-depth stories reflect extensive interviewing and localization rather than copying already published material.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Careful editing and proofreading are evident, showing consistent use of a style sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Overuse of school name is avoided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Articles reflect extensive interviewing and attribution of sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. News articles avoid all use of first and second person, except in direct quotes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Articles avoid writer interjection ("When asked, this writer. . .").	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Feature leads <b>and word choice</b> capture reader's imagination and encourage further reading.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Editorials are well developed, logical and unsigned, avoiding preachiness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Editorials reflect the concerns of students in community, state, national and world affairs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Columns and reviews reflect thoughtful editorial comment, oriented toward the reader rather than the writer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Sports writing reflects <b>knowledge and</b> understanding of the <b>sport</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Sports stories favor analysis <b>of</b> significant or <b>future events</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Sports stories are objectively written, avoiding opinion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Paragraphs are generally short but varied in length.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## II. WRITING AND EDITING, CONTINUED

SPECIFIC POINTS:	Superior	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
21. Headlines <b>are interesting and informative telegraphic sentences, written in active voice</b> present <b>or future</b> tense; <b>label headlines are avoided; multiple decks are encouraged.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Headlines <b>do not use</b> school name, <b>mascot</b> , or initials, "students," or opinion words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. All captions/cutlines answer who, what, where, <b>when</b> , why <b>and go beyond what is obvious in the photograph.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. All people featured in photos are identified, including opponents in sports photos.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Credits are used for all photographs and artwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Names are used in a consistent style (i.e., full name, first reference; last name only, second reference).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COMMENTS FROM THE EVALUATOR:**

**STRENGTHS:**

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**SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**RATING:**  Superior /  Excellent /  Good /  Needs Improvement

### III. LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Effective design, including photography, typography and headlines. **Design** serves two vital functions for the reader, to **recognize** the most important articles and **to aid** in **readability**. Modern typographic goals **emphasize** horizontal display, strength, balance, variety and harmony. **Design arranges stories according to graduated news value**, keeping in mind that all four corners should be anchored with strong elements — photos, boxes or headlines. The standard taboos prevail: avoid tombstoning **and** large block or gray areas. Photos should be tightly cropped, **designed** as large as possible and tell stories emphasizing people.

SPECIFIC POINTS:	Superior	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
1. The front page establishes the publication’s personality and creates reader interest, using traditional newspaper style or a magazine cover as is appropriate to the publication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The flag includes name of publication, name of school, city, state, zip, volume, email/home page address, issue number and date, which includes day of the month.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The masthead is submerged and condensed on the editorial page.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The masthead includes a miniature flag to identify the paper, complete school mailing address, phone number with fax and email/home page address as appropriate, publishing information, frequency, condensed letter policy and editorial policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. There is adequate information in the folio lines — name of newspaper, date, including day, page number, and identification of page content such as news, sports and features.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Other pages are <b>varied</b> , attractive and inviting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The pages are well-balanced with a variety of headline sizes and photos.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Each page has a dominant element.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Large gray areas of type are avoided by using copybreakers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The lower half of each page is emphasized with photos, multiple column heads or ads.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. <b>Ads are blocked off from copy at the bottom or outside edge of the page and are confined to the feature, news, and sports pages.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Double page spreads are creatively designed and well-organized as a single unit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. “Up” or “downstyle” headlines are used consistently.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Type styles are used in a pleasing combination for headlines in no more than one or two faces.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Headlines vary in point size, width and number of lines.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Headlines fit the assigned space with each line filling at least 3/4 of the last column of space used.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### III. LAYOUT AND DESIGN, CONTINUED

SPECIFIC POINTS:	Superior	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
17. Photos follow traditional rules of composition (framing, storytelling, rule of thirds, leading lines, and/or depth of field).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Photos are of adequate size, varied and well-cropped.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Photos are clear and sharply detailed. Distorted, over-manipulated, and low-resolution photos are avoided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Photographs reflect planning and photo awareness by the photographer, with storytelling candid mug or group shots.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Photos, cartoons and artwork are used effectively as stand-alone features or to illustrate stories. Student artwork is of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Elements such as screens, boxes, borders, typography and white space are used to enhance content and encourage readership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Infographics are used to convey statistical information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Spot or full color enhances content without overwhelming it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COMMENTS FROM THE EVALUATOR:**

**STRENGTHS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**RATING:**  Superior /  Excellent /  Good /  Needs Improvement

## EVALUATOR'S SUMMARY

### TOTAL SCORING

	Rating			
	S	E	G	NI
I. Content and Coverage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
II. Writing and Editing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
III. Layout/Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trophy Class, First Class, Second Class and Third Class should match up with a majority of Superior, Excellent, Good or Needs Improvement ratings. If it does not, judge must provide specific justification to help advisers and staffs to understand the decision.

**EVALUATOR'S OVERALL RATING:**  Superior /  Excellent /  Good /  Needs Improvement

**EVALUATOR'S OVERALL RANKING:**  Trophy Class /  First Class /  Second Class /  Third Class

**EVALUATOR'S GENERAL COMMENTS:**

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