

2024 IJEA Newspaper & Digital News Media Contest Division 2 Results — Enrollment 841 to 1,500

2024 BEST PUBLICATION AWARDS

The results for Best Publication are determined by the number of points accumulated in the 30 individual categories of the IJEA Newspaper & Digital News Media Contest.

- 1st in a category = 5 points
- 2nd in a category = 4 points
- 3rd in a category = 3 points
- Honorable mention (HM) in a category = 1 point

Best Overall Publication | Most points regardless of publication type

1st: Kaneland Krier — Kaneland H.S., Dominic Bruno, adviser

2nd: The Advocate — Washington Community H.S., Jennifer Reiser, adviser

3rd: The Paw Print — Walter Payton College Prep H.S., Stephanie Vargas, adviser

Best Print Publication | Most points by publication that appears in print only

1st: The Advocate — Washington Community H.S., Jennifer Reiser, adviser

Best Digital Publication | Most points by publication that appears online only

1st: The Tiger — Elmwood Park H.S., Christina Heinen, adviser

Best Hybrid Publication | Most points by publication that appears both in print and online

1st: Kaneland Krier — Kaneland H.S., Dominic Bruno, adviser

2nd: The Paw Print — Walter Payton College Prep H.S., Stephanie Vargas, adviser

3rd: The Knight Times/Knights Media — Grayslake North H.S., Brenda Smith, Mark Lard & Dr. Wes Clevenger, advisers

HM: Inscape — Mother McAuley Liberal Arts H.S., Abigail Sheahan & Thomas Bochenczak, advisers

2024 INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

The Division 2 results for each category of the IJEA Newspaper & Digital News Media Contest are listed in the pages that follow. ***The categories are listed alphabetically, one category per page.*** Congratulations to all!

Best Advertisement (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Kaneland High School Theater presents: TRAP
Entry Credit: Sara Toman, Adam Walker
Judge Comment: Fantastic. I'm not sure how much of this ad was actually created by the students (the main image? the choice of main font?), but the part that I'm sure the students had something to do with (the overall layout, the specific information chosen to be highlighted) is excellent. The image, the typography and the colors all come together for an ad that really catches the eye.

Competition Comment: Three strong entries. The winner had it all — aesthetics and essential info. The second-place entry was outstanding except for a bit of vagueness about the business it was advertising. The third-place entry was visually arresting but lacked actionable info. But overall, the work here is impressive.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Purple Moose Consulting
Entry Credit: Lizzy Sidman
Judge Comment: Clean, minimalist design, very pleasing aesthetically. The essential info is there, but I wanted to know just a little bit more about this company. What consulting do they do? If I'm a Kaneland student, would this company be relevant to me? I can't tell. Otherwise, this is solid. Nicely done.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Ultimate Frisbee Ad
Entry Credit: Palmer Norman
Judge Comment: Visually this is extremely appealing, but it's missing some essential info, such as, how does a student join the Walter Payton frisbee team? Who's the point of contact? When does the season begin? Etc.

Best Alternative Storytelling (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: 2023 Senior Statistics
Entry Credit: Ashley Vanderhoff
Judge Comment: How many in the senior class responded? It's important to say how representative it is. Good otherwise!

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
Entry Title: Homecoming
Entry Credit: Imani Ongalo
Judge Comment: Amazing response on the poll.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Songs of Shadows and Fire
Entry Credit: Sanaa Taqvi
Judge Comment: The timeline was small to read, I had to copy the image url and look at it in a new window. The second graphic was readable though. Both substantially made the piece better.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: The battle of the holiday treats
Entry Credit: Lizzy Sidman, Rafika Khan
Judge Comment: Excellent design and I like the "verdict."

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
Entry Title: Sept/Oct photo-op
Entry Credit: Brijana Labiak
Judge Comment: Good cropping, good format.

Competition Comment: It was tough to select winners as all were high-quality.

Best Audio Journalism (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: The Payton Student Scoop: The Power & Threat of Student Voice
Entry Credit: Rhea Makkuni
Judge Comment: The only entry that pays even slight attention to the category description, although it's mostly commentary.

Competition Comment: None of the other entries matches the category description. Consider a separate "talk show" or "podcast conversation" category for the future? If we really must award prizes to the rest, can they all be honorable mentions?

Best Centerspread Story Package (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Bad habits and addiction: a taboo that needs to be addressed
Entry Credit: Elliot Krippelz
Judge Comment: Very interesting and thorough story that explores a topic many students (and adults) probably think about often — not necessarily a "taboo," but something that doesn't get written about from this perspective often. Despite dark background, the simple design is surprisingly effective because designer realized what typography is necessary against such a background — sans serif, and large and bold enough to remain legible. Flush-left set would have helped even more.

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: 'Good sports': Recovery requires teamwork
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins, Maddie Johnson
Judge Comment: Nice, comprehensive package, but it lacks a main head! Perhaps it could have been incorporated into the tornado art? Just two or three well-chosen words would have been enough. As with many other entries, (what should have been the) secondary heads are too small/light, plus artificially tight character width makes them hard to read.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
Entry Title: 2024 Popular Trends and Styles
Entry Credit: Imani Ongalo
Judge Comment: Not sure the Valentine design was necessary or appropriate for this spread of varied content, but it is well-organized. Really needs a dominant photo or art element besides the stack of hearts.

Best Editorial Cartoon (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Crowded Corridors
Entry Credit: Sam Blackburn
Judge Comment: The cartoon hits home with its depiction of two indifferent students crushing the student who needs the ramp. The call for compassion is a gentle nudge to the complacent users of the ramp.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: The Age of Politics
Entry Credit: Palmer Norman
Judge Comment: Biden and Trump duking it out makes a clever image with appropriately colored boxing gloves. The title is also well-focused word play.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Prioritizing critical issues
Entry Credit: Dane Coyne
Judge Comment: The beleaguered protagonist connects with readers and helps pull them into the opinion piece. The surrounding chaos explains the shortening attention spans.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
Entry Title: Editorial Cartoon-February Issue
Entry Credit: David Johnson
Judge Comment: The images reflect the poetry of the title. The timing makes this a delightful seasonal cartoon.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Respect others' identities
Entry Credit: Dane Coyne
Judge Comment: The graphic highlight the important issue and should encourage readers to engage with the article.

Competition Comment: All entries made their point. One tip for all -- edits the captions and dialogue for typos, grammar, etc. Errors can distract from the lively art.

Best Feature Story (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: James 'Fulton' Engstrom comes back to life 61 minutes after pronounced dead
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins
Judge Comment: A very well-written and captivating piece.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Chicago Migrant Crisis: Why Local Support Keeps Failing
Entry Credit: Macarena Ugalde-Bada
Judge Comment: This was informative but interesting to read. Great explainer piece with a human angle.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
Entry Title: Macs outplay, outsmart and outsing
Entry Credit: Brijana Labiak
Judge Comment: Loved the little vignettes highlighting these women. Short, sweet and interesting stories.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: 2016 WCHS alumna Tilton competes to win 'Miss America'
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins
Judge Comment: I really enjoyed the storytelling aspect to this piece.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
Entry Title: North seniors tackle college applications
Entry Credit: Roxy Rondon
Judge Comment: This was a great snapshot of what seniors are dealing with as they face the biggest decisions of their lives to date.

Competition Comment: Another round of work that does a great job brining storytelling to life, and finding new and unique angles to take on stories. Well done!

Best Front-Page Design (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Washington Stronger!
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins, Maddie Johnson
Judge Comment: Excellent conventional "compact" tabloid newspaper front. Great head hierarchy; includes teasers; strong typography; readable content.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Oct. 6, 2023
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins, Maddie Johnson
Judge Comment: Art with teasers is appreciated. Smaller images packaged to form a dominant visual element doesn't always work, but does in this case.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
Entry Title: January/February Cover
Entry Credit: The Inscape Staff
Judge Comment: Very nice lead story illustration — but what page is the story on? Also, is there local (i.e. campus/community) news inside? Teasers (which are well-done) suggest not. If that's the case, there's a problem larger than design.

Competition Comment: None

Best Headline (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Panther-style celebration spreads cheer
Entry Credit: Maddie Johnson
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: A "bout" time for a fencing seminar
Entry Credit: Macarena Ugalde-Bada
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
Entry Title: The new "love" of tennis
Entry Credit: Savannah Simon
Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: Conveying the sense of the story well with charm or zing, and also fitting the space for print, takes time and talent. This winner did that well. A play on words can pay off, or fall flat, as some worthy also-rans did. It helps if the wording is well known in the culture, supported in the story, or --best-- both. It is customary, especially in print, to use single quote marks. Quote-marked wording in the headline should be supported by the story.

Best Humorous Commentary (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
 Entry Title: Students use college savings to fuel Starbucks addiction
 Entry Credit: Ella Brown
 Judge Comment: This editorial represents what humorous editorials are supposed to be: timely, detailed to create credibility, well organized, making it an effective way of bringing attention to what the writer sees as a problem.

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
 Entry Title: Medieval 'Pages' drive students, faculty crazy
 Entry Credit: Annabelle Hiel
 Judge Comment: Outrageous proposal written with detailed descriptions of its many repercussions make this editorial humorous and effective in saying the new identification process could be worse.

Place Name: Third Place
 Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: Facebook Moms and protective parents: The true heroes of modern schooling
 Entry Credit: Kevin Sigrist
 Judge Comment: Cleverly written editorial that uses sarcasm to mock interfering parents. It cites several instances and supports them with detailed elaboration, including quotes, then disguises his contempt with fake praise.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: "Fighting fire with fire" English Department caught using ChatGPT to grade student work
 Entry Credit: Bridget Galbois
 Judge Comment: The author of this editorial rightfully had so much faith in the credibility of this story (SBE investigation, parents' complaints, teacher quotes) that she labeled it satire. Sound judgment.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: Pumpkin Spice and everything overpriced: the Starbucks fall menu
 Entry Credit: Vivian Kaleta
 Judge Comment: Definite point shared with humor and facts to back it up.

Competition Comment: None

Best Illustration (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Students share what's on their TikTok 'For You' Page
Entry Credit: Emily Deatherage
Judge Comment: Nice storytelling with this illustration. It was interesting to read all the quotes/thought bubbles. Painted a nice picturee.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: The Omnipresence of Amazon
Entry Credit: Camila Alvarado
Judge Comment: Powerful image that tells a story right away.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Which are You
Entry Credit: Nora Nabhan
Judge Comment: Nice job sketching! Kudos on using an old-school style.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Making the most out of the present
Entry Credit: Dane Coyne
Judge Comment: Very creative and engaging.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
Entry Title: A closer look
Entry Credit: Molly Carr
Judge Comment: Informative and useful.

Competition Comment: None

Best In-Depth News Story (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: State inclusivity mandates reflected in curriculum
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins
Judge Comment: Good timely topic. It has strong impact on both faculty and students. Nice job including faculty and administrator quotes. Quotes from students would help. Good inclusion of ISBE. Quotes from local state lawmakers would have been a nice inclusion since it's a recent law.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: The Pandemic's toll on education
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins, Crista Baker
Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: The Competition Note for this category is clear -- an in-depth story is a news story that goes beyond surface facts to provide context and background about a subject of importance to the school community. This should be longer and more heavily researched than a standard news article. The emphasis is on understanding "why" and "how." Nearly all of the entries in this category came up short. The two award winners demonstrated a fundamental understanding of what an in-depth story entails. And while they were the best of the group, more sources -- internal, external and expert -- were needed as was more data.

Best Infographic (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
Entry Title: Fashion Trends
Entry Credit: Jocelynn Krause Gonzalez
Judge Comment: Great job. Beautifully done with appropriate and consistent-looking graphics.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Craze for cookies in the lunch line
Entry Credit: Jay Paulson
Judge Comment: Clever idea! Drawing and graphics are great. Callouts on pie chart are a little small and hard to read.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
Entry Title: Seniors' Future Schools
Entry Credit: Roxy Rondon
Judge Comment: Well done! Looks very professional - attention-getting. Nice doodles, but would be better if the doodles were college-related.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Foreign Exchange Students
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins
Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: Well done by all!
Difficult to pick a winner - s so many good entries.

Best Multimedia Story Package (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: The psychological effects of gun violence on students
 Entry Credit: Sophie Thill, Jay Paulson
 Judge Comment: Good timely topic. While you mentioned some of the proposals for prevention, how many of the mass shootings occurred with illegally obtained weapons? How many occurred with legally obtained, ie, appropriate background and waiting periods. Need to make certain you examine both sides of the issue. Good use of podcast--wasn't just duplicative, but additive. I hope you keep writing and fine-tuning your journalistic craft!
 Good job

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: Pets of Payton
 Entry Credit: Olivia Sampson, Madeleine Spanbauer
 Judge Comment: fun feature of pets and good variety of pets-not all dogs and cats-fun photos. I hope you keep writing and fine-tuning your journalistic craft! Good job

Place Name: Third Place
 Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: Different trends come back in style
 Entry Credit: Tiffany Johnson, Sela Valignota, Preslee Sutherland
 Judge Comment: fun feature on fashions and trends. Podcast was fun, a bit duplicative in content, but deeper exploration.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
 Entry Title: Boys basketball prepares for postseason
 Entry Credit: Luis Eloiza, Chris Filas
 Judge Comment: From your article, it doesn't seem like the bball team had a good season. That happens. Should report the win-loss record. Be truthful with your readers. Remember you are the historical record of your school. Headline did not match story--doesn't tell reader how the team is preparing for post season-who they will play, how they will do anything different. More of a gloss over with "we came together as a team, had fun..."

Competition Comment: None

Best News or Feature Photo (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: How Fitts Finds Herself Through Art
Entry Credit: Audrey Walker
Judge Comment: Great portrait of the artist at work. I really like how the painting is looking back at us.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: A celebration of culture: Ballet Folklorico dazzles Payton students at the Hispanic and Latin American Heritage Compass
Entry Credit: Leah Galbois
Judge Comment: Excellent image capturing the artistry of the dance. I love the intensity of the expression.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Safety with State Farm
Entry Credit: Braden Vanderheydt
Judge Comment: Love this "action" shot. Interesting story, as well.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Embracing Imperfections (Back Page)
Entry Credit: Carli Filek
Judge Comment: Conceptual and inventive.

Competition Comment: None

Best News Story (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Washington Community High School

Entry Title: Chronic absenteeism rises; faculty encourage attendance

Entry Credit: Maddie Johnson

Judge Comment: Good solid news story about an issue significant to your school. Does a good job digging into the issue. Good use of details and quotes from authority figures. Did you talk to students? Their POV would add further depth to the story. I would like to have seen how the 21.8% figure translates to number of actual students, e.g. "... that means X students are absent on any given day."

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School

Entry Title: Visual Arts Department receives state recognition

Entry Credit: David Johnson

Judge Comment: This is a good, solid news story about an honor that clearly has deep meaning and relevance to your school. Good use of quotes from those close to the story; input from another student or two would have made it stronger.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Washington Community High School

Entry Title: Washington Stronger!

Entry Credit: Tristan Bailey, Abbie Schmidgall

Judge Comment: This is a decently written news story about your town bouncing back from a tornado, but where's the impact on your school? It would have been so much stronger with details about, for example, students (either alumni or current students who were young kids then) whose families lost their homes and businesses, and how they recovered, or at least what the school's role was in recovery efforts. This story almost exclusively centers around the city planner, with a couple brief quotes from the mayor, but lacks the unique perspective of student journalists.

Best Overall Design (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Oct. 6, 2023
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins, Maddie Johnson, Tristan Bailey, Kai Roberson, Nora Nabhan, Crista Baker, Maddie James, Landen Dozard, Matthew Stevens, Elijah Mabe, Carter Hefta, Cami Prina, Nate Arya
Judge Comment: Page one offers several entry points for the eye. Liberal use of hairlines helps achieve a clean separation between story elements. Body copy is neat and tidy, virtually free of widows, orphans or bad text breaks. Modular design achieved on all pages. Nice photo collage on P. 6. Multiple story/visual elements on nearly every page help boost reader interest.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
Entry Title: Sept/Oct Inscape Vol. 81
Entry Credit: The Inscape Staff
Judge Comment: Color-coded sections are undeniably useful and easy on the eyes. Body copy is generally clean and free of widows, orphans or bad text breaks. Consider using hairlines to separate text and more hierarchy of photo sizes to guide readers' eyes across the pages.

Competition Comment: None

Best Personality Profile (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Payton student Ivanna Dzhadzha recalls her Ukrainian roots and looks to build understanding

Entry Credit: Bridget Galibois

Judge Comment: High on newsworthiness, this is an excellent piece that took in-depth interviewing and makes strong use of quotes. This story also captures the complexity of life for any immigrant and student during COVID.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Feece: Once a Knight, always a Knight

Entry Credit: Audrey Walker

Judge Comment: This is a great profile that shows the twists and turns of life and humanizes a teacher. Good interviewing.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School

Entry Title: Grayslake North welcomes new teachers

Entry Credit: Ariana Selea

Judge Comment: Effective, probing interviewing enables this reporter to tell powerful, quick anecdotes about multiple new teachers. This is great work.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: How Fitts finds herself through art

Entry Credit: Audrey Walker

Judge Comment: This is a strong profile with thorough interviewing. For future reference, a few anecdotes would give this piece more power and depth. I would also love some descriptions of her work and quotes of her jokes.

Competition Comment: This is a small category with some heavy hitters. Many of these profiles show skillful and impressive interviewing.

Best Photo Gallery/Photo Slideshow (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: "Lift Every Voice and Sing":
Portrayals of strength and resilience from the
Black History Month Compass
Entry Credit: Leah Galbois
Judge Comment: This is an excellent gallery
whose photos and text bring an important
cultural event to life. The use of varied angles
and perspectives is expertly done and sets
this apart from other entries. Outstanding!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Making music and memories: A
collection of performances and presentations
from Payton's Hispanic and Latin American
Heritage Month Compass
Entry Credit: Leah Galbois
Judge Comment: Another significant cultural
event brought to life by vivid and dynamic
photos. Great job!

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Kaneland vs. Sycamore varsity
volleyball match
Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery
Judge Comment: The photos told a
compelling story from beginning to end. They
captured the emotions of a big night for the
girls volleyball team. Well done. But this entry
didn't place as high as it could have because
of two things: 1) It lacked cutlines/captions. I
know that the accompanying article contained
the information that explained what was
going on in the photos, but a gallery should be
able to stand alone. Captions allow that to
happen. 2) This gallery wasn't a single gallery;
it consisted of five mini-galleries of two
photos each. This made for a disjointed
viewing experience. A gallery should be one
seamless whole. Had these two weaknesses
been remedied, this would have been a
first-place winner.

Competition Comment: The three entries that
placed did an excellent job of telling stories
through images that featured a variety of
angles, perspectives, distances and subjects.
They documented significant events from
beginning to end, with an emphasis on
emotion and feeling. My one word of advice
to all would be: Don't shy away from getting
close to your subjects. Closeups — indeed
extreme closeups — can produce some of the
most powerful photos. Again, impressive job
by all! The students responsible should be
proud of the work they did!

Best Photo Story (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: What makes up Kaneland?
Entry Credit: Barbara Martinez
Judge Comment: Inventive and elaborate design with lots of images. So much to look at!

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: "Yeah, yeah! We got spirit!"
Entry Credit: Leah Galibois
Judge Comment: Only three pictures, but the variety makes it work. Black and white is a nice touch.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Dress up days encourage student creativity, participation
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins, Maddie Johnson
Judge Comment: A good number of images capturing the excitement and interest in the event.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Holiday Spirit
Entry Credit: Maddie Johnson, Madelyn Robbins
Judge Comment: A nice collection of different pictures.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Red string theory
Entry Credit: Barbara Martinez
Judge Comment: A good collection of portraits.

Competition Comment: None

Best Review (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: The Whale
 Entry Credit: Dane Coyne
 Judge Comment: Good work analyzing not only "The Whale" and its messages, but also how it was received. The article is a bit repetitive in certain parts.

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School
 Entry Title: Page-Turner Picks
 Entry Credit: Yeimi Alday
 Judge Comment: Good concept with a variety of books to choose from with solid analysis. However, the article would have benefitted from either slightly shorter reviews or including fewer books.

Place Name: Third Place
 Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: Review of Everybody: A Payton Players' Production
 Entry Credit: Rhea Makkuni
 Judge Comment: Highlights well what makes "Everyone" unique. The paragraph lengths were a little unbalanced, leading to an abrupt ending.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
 Entry Title: Barbie movie spurs gender role conversations
 Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins
 Judge Comment: Fine analysis of "Barbie" and its commentary on gender roles but some of the points could have been condensed.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
 Entry Title: The Hunger Games: The ballad of Songbirds and Snakes
 Entry Credit: Olivia Murray
 Judge Comment: Fine review but could have fleshed out ideas more fully.

Competition Comment: Solid reviews overall and passion from each writer was evident. One thing across the board, is to be more specific in headlines about your opinions of the subjects.

Best Serious Commentary (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School
 Entry Title: Why EPHS Should Allow Backpacks
 Entry Credit: Weronika Walaszek
 Judge Comment: Well done. Timely topic clearly important to your school. Any teacher feedback or from administrators to know if they are aware of this discontent? No need to have so many first-person references. We know it's your opinion.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: The "Screenager" Epidemic
 Entry Credit: Saron Alem
 Judge Comment: Good research and explanation of the national problem and more specifically at your school and how it's dealt with. Good advice without being preachy.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: Younger Generation's Role in Politics
 Entry Credit: Sophie Ponce de Leon
 Judge Comment: Good research about a timely issue. Nice to see comments from a student and a teacher, too Good story organization and call to action, although I think that point could in the second graph, rather than the point about realizing the country is divided.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
 Entry Title: AI: Digital wolf in sheep's clothing?
 Entry Credit: Annabelle Hiel
 Judge Comment: Good, interesting piece that would have been improved with some outside attribution to research and some local comment, perhaps from teachers or how the district is using or monitoring AI

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: Reform is Essential to End Homelessness
 Entry Credit: Lizzy Sidman
 Judge Comment: Local and national problem addressed. Good research and community angle. Is there a school one? Are any students homeless? Do any classes or organizations help the helpless or shelter in your community? That would bring in the school angle, too.

Competition Comment: None

Best Single-Page Story Package (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Washington Community High School

Entry Title: Seniors map out post-high school plans around U.S.

Entry Credit: Tristan Bailey, Madelyn Robbins

Judge Comment: Great story package about seniors and their majors and destinations after high school. The U.S. map at top is a great size, and the push-pin effect clearly displays where students are headed. The two stories are both related and well done. One suggestion: Add a list of exactly where students are going (to correspond to the map).

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Washington Community High School

Entry Title: Queen Brooklyn Ulick & King Tyler Brown

Entry Credit: Tristan Bailey, Madelyn Robbins, Javonn White, Elijah Mabe

Judge Comment: Nice-looking compilation of homecoming events and memories. Good selection of representative photos and enough info to job everyone's memories. Photos are a little bit similar in size – remember that one of them needs to dominate and should be about twice as large as the next-largest. I think the king/queen photo is probably the best bet for dominance.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School

Entry Title: Snowcoming Dance starts new traditions

Entry Credit: Lola Brama, Imani Ongalo

Judge Comment: Nothing beats an axe-throw photo as the dominant art! Good size on the main photo, nice story about this new tradition, informative secondary photos. Would have liked to have seen photo(s) from the Mario Kart tournament, though.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School

Entry Title: North seniors tackle college applications

Entry Credit: Roxy Rondon

Judge Comment: good reporting and varied sources on this story about college apps.

There's a little bit of competition among the artwork for attention: The graphic in the middle, featuring students' favored schools, could be a little bit larger to assure that it dominates the package.

Competition Comment: The key to this category is this: The story, photos/artwork, headlines and graphics all work together, tied together by a dominant photo or illustration that is prominently displayed. Don't be afraid to go big with the main photo or illustration. A rule of thumb is that the dominant art on a page should be 20 percent of the available space (and no other photo/artwork should be more than half the size of the dominant one). Comments on other entries: Kaneland: Nice idea for the story, and the artwork is simple but sufficiently dominant (the bottom one). The examples provided are excellent, but I would have liked to have heard from more students about their formative memories. I also would have liked to have heard from some experts on this topic Kaneland (wildfires): Good idea, but the story needs some original reporting. Is there anyone at the school, either faculty or student, who has had experience with such a fire? Is there anyone who has relatives in Hawaii or anywhere else where wildfires have happened in recent years? Localizing a major event like this would be preferable to compiling national and international sources. In terms of design, the artwork would be more striking if it were slightly largely ("dominant"). McAuley: (5) Nice variety in stories for this sports page, including a good localization for the Chicago Marathon. For this category, the stories are intended to be related (meaning all are about, say, the Marathon, featuring different local runners) and design is all-important, and although this story package does include artwork, none of it dominates the page as it should in this category. Payton: Nice variety in stories for this opinions page, but it's important to keep in mind that for this category, the stories and artwork all should be related, and that's not the case here (unless you would argue that both stories relate to immigration, but that seems a very slippery linkage). Design is also all-important in this category – a single art element needs to dominate the package, meaning that it covers twice as much space as any other artwork and consumes about 20 percent of the available space. Payton: Interesting stories, but they are not related. The artwork for either story is large enough to support that particular story, but again – there's no dominant artwork and the stories themselves are not related; both of those are part of the category's description.

Best Sports Commentary (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: James vs. Jordan: Why LeBron Isn't "The King"
Entry Credit: Kieran Blake
Judge Comment: A solid piece using stats to bolster your opinion.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Illinois' physical education waiver policy flaws
Entry Credit: Audrey Walker
Judge Comment: Nice piece using actual examples of unfairness to support your opinion.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: IHSA Player Eligibility: The Most Damaging Factor to High School Soccer?
Entry Credit: Owen Zolner
Judge Comment: Good job pointing out a flaw in soccer player eligibility and arguing your opinion.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: (SATIRE) Esports demands waivers
Entry Credit: Carly Vaughn
Judge Comment: I enjoyed this fun satire.

Competition Comment: None

Best Sports Feature Story (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School
Entry Title: Senior wrestler Rose Craig aims to put girls wrestling on the map at EPHS
Entry Credit: Matthew Pritt
Judge Comment: Well written feature chronicles the development of an athlete from a freshman new to her sport to team captain her senior year. Well organized with good use of quotes.

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School
Entry Title: EPHS Athletics Spotlight: New head football coach looks to build winning program
Entry Credit: Matthew Pritt
Judge Comment: Insightful profile of new head coach captures his personality and coaching philosophy. A bit more about his personal/family life would enhance it.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
Entry Title: Race to the 1%
Entry Credit: Brijana Labiak
Judge Comment: Interesting story about a faculty member and her family involved in non-school athletics. Good use of quotes.

Best Sports News Story (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Kaneland boys soccer beats rival Sycamore at home
Entry Credit: Erin Doucette
Judge Comment: Really good job showing the intensity of the game. Would've loved to have a little more detail on the celebration that led to the ejection and clearing of spectators.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Sectional IHSA Basketball
Championship: Payton falls to St. Patricks
Entry Credit: Owen Zolner
Judge Comment: Really loved the quarter by quarter analysis and the portrait of Payton being the underdogs yet still having the support from students, parents and alumni. From a season perspective, what was it about St. Patrick that made them so good?

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Panthers face E. St. Louis after defeating Chatham-Glenwood (59-16)
Entry Credit: Madelyn Robbins
Judge Comment: I like the hybrid approach of highlights from the Chatham-Glenwood game with preparation for the game against East St. Louis. A player's perspective for how they'd prepare for a game like this would've added another layer to the approach of detailing a game plan against East St. Louis.

Competition Comment: A lot of different angles here, I enjoyed the amount of effort put into showing why each story was unique, relevant or newsworthy.

Best Sports Photo (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Kaneland High School Basketball 2024
Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery
Judge Comment: Wonderful shot! Tight, sharp, and well-timed.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Power Move
Entry Credit: Nora Nabhan
Judge Comment: Excellent framing capturing the intensity of the sport.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Washington Community High School
Entry Title: Fast and Furious
Entry Credit: Elsa Olmstead
Judge Comment: Good framing showing the power of the pitch, as well as the form and expression.

Competition Comment: None

Best Staff Editorial (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: Finding your own way
 Entry Credit: Lizzy Sidman, Sela Valignota, Katie Pfothenhour, Rafika Khan, Elliot Krippelz, Jackson Kottmeyer
 Judge Comment: Nicely done with this! Well written and researched. It would be even better if you could connect it back to a specific issue facing students. That would make it more relatable for others to read and share your voice and thought a bit more.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School
 Entry Title: Sickening Weather
 Entry Credit: Elise Malinowski, Addison Haywood
 Judge Comment: This is nicely done! Great job on researching this topic. In the future, I'd recommend connecting it back to students in high school or your specific school just a bit more to give it that final touch.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: Prioritizing critical issues
 Entry Credit: Lizzy Sidman, Sela Valignota, Katie Pfothenhour, Rafika Khan, Elliot Krippelz, Jackson Kottmeyer
 Judge Comment: Nicely done on this one as well! Similar to my other comment, this would be made even better by focusing in on one or two issues that are important to students.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: The mark of the Paw Print: Student journalism is here to stay
 Entry Credit: Bridget Galbois
 Judge Comment: This is very well done, thoughtful and well-researched. Unfortunately, it does have a byline and isn't labeled as an editorial. In the future, try to refrain from submitting articles with bylines for this category. Otherwise, this is great! Nice work!

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: Rethinking Student Resource Officers: A Call to Build Safer and More Supportive School Communities
 Entry Credit: Owen Zolner
 Judge Comment: Another very well-done and thoughtful article! Unfortunately it does contain a byline, which this category is not supposed to have. In the future, please refrain from submitting articles with bylines for this category

Competition Comment: Great job with these!

I loved the chance to write these and appreciate your writing. Be sure to always make sure that staff editorials are unsigned and not from any one person on the staff. It would also be great if you could connect these back to high school students or other issues facing your campus.

Best Use of Social Media (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: The Payton Paw Print
(@PaytonPawPrint)
Entry Credit: Rhea Makkuni
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Kaneland Krier Instagram
Entry Credit: Audrey Walker, Carli Filek
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Kaneland Krier TikTok
Entry Credit: Audrey Walker, Carli Filek
Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: None

Best Video Story (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
 Entry Title: Concert Choir at ILMEA
 Entry Credit: Julianna Mokaya
 Judge Comment: Very well done! Transition between clips were smooth and hearing the songs the vocalists referred to in their answers was a wonderful touch. Bravo!

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
 Entry Title: GNHS Cheer
 Entry Credit: Grace Merki, Bri Alvarez
 Judge Comment: The introduction to the video was well done and the creators used a healthy amount of different visual clips.

Place Name: Third Place
 Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
 Entry Title: Kickin' it with the Krier - Gaza Episode 1
 Entry Credit: Jay Paulson, Sophie Thill, Tom Thill, Casper Suehs
 Judge Comment: This piece was extremely well done and appropriately edited given the topic. The incorporation of the timeline and the various interviews was extremely well done.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School
 Entry Title: Video: Tiger football breaks through with Homecoming victory
 Entry Credit: Michael Rominski
 Judge Comment: This was a great video. The background of the band and the fanfare was great. One thing to note would be to slow down on the transitions of each clip. The video was a bit choppy

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Grayslake North High School
 Entry Title: Girls Flag Football
 Entry Credit: Megan Engert, Tyahna Peterson
 Judge Comment: This is such a great! How the various game footage was incorporated was great. One thing to note for the future would be to work on the camera angle for interviews/quote clips.

Competition Comment: This was a wonderful group of submissions! The videos were extremely impressive, creative and captivating. Bravo to all!

Best Website (Enrollment Division 2)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: The Payton Paw Print

Entry Credit: Rhea Makkuni

Judge Comment: I LOVE the design of your website! That moving graphic on the top of the website is very engaging and interesting, and it drew me in right away. It looks like you have a wide array of available content on the site and everything has a great photo or graphic attached which looks great. And I love the crossword puzzle! My one piece of advice is to see what other interactive elements you can add to the site, like polls or even social media embeds. Or if you can find a way to embed the crossword onto the website, that would be super cool too, though I know that isn't always possible. Great website!

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Krier Website

Entry Credit: Rafika Khan, Sela Valignota, Katie

Pfothenhour, Lizzy Sidman, Elliot Krippelz,

Jackson Kottmeyer, Dane Coyne, Tiffany

Johnson, Andrew Valentini, Delaney

Calabrese, Taylor Anello, Sofia Williams, Carli

Filek, Audrey Walker, Nathan Lapitan

Judge Comment: Great work! I love the

interactive elements you have on your

homepage, like the Twitter embed and the

poll, and I think your logo is SO cool! I also

really like your multimedia content! It looks

like you have an array of stuff between news

and entertainment, which is a great mix to

have (especially for a student publication).

One recommendation I have to make the site

even better is to make sure every story is

being posted with an image or graphic

attached, even if it's just a stock image.

Having photos with every story makes the

articles so much more engaging and

interesting, and it makes the article-exclusive

pages (like the news and features pages) look

more interesting as a whole as well. Great

website!!

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Grayslake North High

School

Entry Title: Knights Media

Entry Credit: Staff of Knights Media

Judge Comment: Great work! It looks like you

have a wide variety of content available on-

site between "print" and multimedia. And the

Knights News videos are so cool! Just one

piece of advice I have is to see where you can

incorporate more media and less text when

posting things. The site looks a little text-

heavy on the homepage, so making sure a

photo or graphic is being attached with every

story you post can be a good way to combat

that, even if it's just a stock image. That will

also help to make your news and feature

pages look more engaging and help fill the

gray boxes. Other than that, great website!!