

## **2024 IJEA Newspaper & Digital News Media Contest Division 3 Results — Enrollment 1,501 to 2,160**

### **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: KnightMedia — Prospect H.S., Jason Block, adviser

2nd: Wildcat Chronicle — West Chicago Community H.S., Leslie Fireman, adviser

3rd: NCHS Inkspot — Normal Community H.S., Brad Bovenkerk, adviser

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

1st: Westerner — Maine West H.S., Laurie McGowan, adviser

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

1st: Wildcat Chronicle — West Chicago Community H.S., Leslie Fireman, adviser

2nd: Inkspot — Normal Community H.S., Brad Bovenkerk, adviser

3rd: North Star — Niles North H.S., Jean Ordonez, adviser

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

1st: KnightMedia — Prospect H.S., Jason Block, adviser

2nd: The Omega — Downers Grove North H.S., Eric Landschoot & Kristen Virostko, adviser

### **2024 INDIVIDUAL AWARDS**

The Division 3 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 3)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Prospect High School

Entry Title: DQ Player of the Game

Entry Credit: Ben Mitchell

Judge Comment: This isn't very imaginative, but at least it includes the address of the DQ. More info such as business hours would be helpful, as would info about the player. What game? What sport? Using a company's logo in an ad is fine, but a good ad goes beyond that and shows creativity by the designer. Maybe a photo of the player enjoying something from DQ?

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Prospect High School

Entry Title: The Crash Dog

Entry Credit: Abby Damasky

Judge Comment: As an outsider, I had a hard time understanding this. First, why is the entry on Instagram and not in a publication? Second, what is the business? I assume the name of the business is located in the upper left corner, but if you aren't already familiar with it, you would be scratching your head. Don't make the reader work. Tell us very very clearly the name of the business, where it is, when it's open, and why we should spend our money there. There's a lot of potential here, but right now it's unrealized. I'm sure people who are familiar with the business love this ad, but as an outsider, I'm a bit confused.

Competition Comment: Not enough is going on in the first-place entry, and too much is going on in the second-place entry. I gave first place to the DQ ad because it at least told us the address of the business. There's a lot of potential in both ads. The first is short on creativity; the second needs to rein in all of the different elements.

### Best Alternative Storytelling (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Top five sports moments of '22-'23  
Entry Credit: Zoe Brown  
Judge Comment: You did a great job with this short and sweet list, and the multimedia component is a bonus.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: 6 Iron athletes sign National Letters of Intent Check out the Inkspot's Q & A with the athletes and their career highlights  
Entry Credit: Zachary Knox-Doyle, BJ Dumas II  
Judge Comment: I enjoyed the format and thought the questions were solid.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: Our Parking Lots Finest  
Entry Credit: Zonna Todorovska  
Judge Comment: I like the concept and design. It does get a little confusing in the center but overall you did a good job with the structure of the story.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: A rose by any other name: What kind of flower are you?  
Entry Credit: Emily Ziajor, Nancy Sanchez  
Judge Comment: You can tell a lot of work went into this and I appreciate the diversity of questions.

Competition Comment: None

### Best Audio Journalism (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Student section safety  
Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady  
Judge Comment: Solid journalism at work here. Would have benefitted from harder (local) news lead instead of generalities from elsewhere.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Caitlin Clark's impact on girls' basketball  
Entry Credit: Matthew Pulver  
Judge Comment: Matthew Pulver could benefit from tighter, more energetic writing and delivery.

Competition Comment: Recommend separate categories for sports play-by-play, talk shows (sports and otherwise). Those other two entries don't match this category. Also: Recommend that length of entries be limited to 10 minutes. (Or first 10 minutes, if longer ...)

### Best Centerspread Story Package (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Learn to appreciate the heartaches  
Entry Credit: Tessa Trylovich, Xander Adkins  
Judge Comment: Have to admit this is compelling content. Great reporting, interviewing to get quotes and info presented. Both presentation and copy seem to strike a balance between serious and fun.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Family is home, not just a house  
Entry Credit: Mollie Kearns, Stella Palm  
Judge Comment: Once again great content and writing. Presentation could have been more effective. Background color really unnecessary. Photos really too small to communicate much — and never tilt!

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: Welcome to past Des Plaines Illinois  
Entry Credit: Caiden Claussen, Joey Bruno, Taryn Mcgannon  
Judge Comment: Clean design, especially like the little locator maps, but not much here to keep reader from turning the page. Label heads don't tell me why I should read the story. Photos are too small to be effective. This might have benefited from some additional reporting that would have allowed it to be a series, if the content merited it. And don't tilt photos!

Competition Comment: None

### Best Editorial Cartoon (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: THE FAFSA MAZE  
Entry Credit: Emily Ziajor  
Judge Comment: Superb work. It can stand alone as well as enhance the article. You capture the injustice of the maze for students aid. The tears of frustration show the victim, too.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: Temptation Backfires for AI Users  
Entry Credit: Noah Abero  
Judge Comment: Creative, cogent and clever. You show that something sinister is in all this - and that the brain is the prey.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Welcome to the jungle  
Entry Credit: Colleen Karsten  
Judge Comment: This grabs readers and pulls them into the article. The sense confusion as the hallmark of the halls is spot-on.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Review scores prove problematic  
Entry Credit: Luca Nicolai  
Judge Comment: The ratings scale juxtaposed with a masterpiece captures the absurdity that the article describes.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: The Pros & Cons of Cutting  
Entry Credit: Adrian Perez  
Judge Comment: This hints at the potential harm with this standard practice. The question should hit home with readers.

Competition Comment: None

### Best Feature Story (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
 Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Tell me how to get to Sesame Street  
 Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush  
 Judge Comment: I really enjoyed how the writer led into this piece, without giving the whole story away. I felt like I really got to know the subject. It was written in a style that felt light-hearted, much like Sesame Street itself. Great headline, too.

Place Name: Second Place  
 Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
 Entry Title: Generations make HOCO their own  
 Entry Credit: Emilia Ezlakowski, Irene Han  
 Judge Comment: The entire piece, layout and stories shared were interesting. I really enjoyed the creativity and the stories these students uncovered in their research. Felt like a time capsule almost, in how things changed -or stayed the same- throughout the decades.

Place Name: Third Place  
 Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
 Entry Title: MLK Day's lesser known history shows reluctance, divisions in Americans  
 Entry Credit: James Prizant  
 Judge Comment: This piece was clearly very well-researched and well-written. As a reader it felt informative but conversational- a hard balance to strike on research-heavy pieces.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
 Entry Title: Persevering through tough times  
 Entry Credit: Stella Palm  
 Judge Comment: I really enjoyed the intro into this piece, using a memory to capture how difficult the deployment situation is within a family. Well-done. Interviewer clearly asked the right questions to include such great scenes in the story.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Jasper's Java serves coffee grounded in family  
 Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush  
 Judge Comment: I enjoyed the approach you took with this story. Well-written and kept me interested in wanting to know more.

Competition Comment: All in all, this was a very competitive category. Many talented writers who submitted many different dynamic pieces. I wish I had more awards to give out, because the talent I'm seeing is phenomenal. Keep up the good work, all of you!

### Best Front-Page Design (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Weekend of champions  
Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady  
Judge Comment: Good use of color and strong photo. Magazine-style fronts should have something to get readers inside (teasers, etc.), but at least this story does jump.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: West Gambles on Homecoming  
Entry Credit: Gabby Szewczyk  
Judge Comment: Cover well-executed, but the subhead — which is well-written and so important to comprehending the main head — is far too small to see or read. This would have been an easy fix.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Snowy storms and sadness  
Entry Credit: Stella Palm  
Judge Comment: Illustration is nicely done, but there's nothing here besides the nameplate to suggest this is anything other than a regular feature page. You need teasers or something to indicate there's content beyond the cover.

Competition Comment: None



## Best Headline (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: West Chicago High School

Entry Title: From kazoo to college auditions,  
Kyler Campbell's crescendo of musical  
pursuits

Entry Credit: Adam Mackovic

Judge Comment: Some folks just like kazoos  
(joke) and deft wordplay (no joke). This one-  
liner also plays well a music word, crescendo.  
It accurately notes college\_auditions\_.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Normal Community High  
School

Entry Title: Going to the mat for pro wrestling  
Entry Credit: BJ Dumas II

Judge Comment: The main headline, Going to  
the mat for pro wrestling, does the job. The  
deck's reference to entertainment,  
reputation, and controversy reinforces the  
main .

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Prospect High School

Entry Title: Business booms, issues loom  
Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady

Judge Comment: Clever rhyme in just 4 words  
of the bold main head needed, and got, a  
well-focused deck. It accurately reflects a  
main theme of the article.

Competition Comment: A fine wavy line  
separates the delightful from being perceived  
as too-cute. Most of these headlines were in  
accord with their articles. We saw good use of  
deck heds to flesh out mains, but some were  
unduly wordy. LIMIT ALL-CAPS generally to  
concise one-liners. Beware plays on names.  
Search-engine clickbait did not seem to  
intrude.

### Best Humorous Commentary (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
 Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Top 5: Fast food fails  
 Entry Credit: Carter Hull  
 Judge Comment: This editorial is clever from start to finish. The writer baits his fellow fast-food aficionados by mentioning successful items, hooks them with the competitive nature of the business, and reels them in with fascinating facts. The writer's appropriate analogies add spice to the nutritional facts he includes and concludes with an apt warning.

Place Name: Second Place  
 Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
 Entry Title: Review scores prove problematic  
 Entry Credit: Xander Adkins  
 Judge Comment: This well-written editorial is timely and Informative for all readers who have ever hit the reviews selection for any product. Its appropriate use of outside sources and interjection of clever comments keep the reader's attention; and restatement and clarification of important facts aid in driving the main points home.

Place Name: Third Place  
 Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
 Entry Title: Behind Bars VS Hitting the Books  
 Entry Credit: Nikhil Nair  
 Judge Comment: With the political and media attention being given to the rising costs of a college education, this editorial addresses a concern of many high school students. While not a solution any right-minded politician might propose, the writer has proposed advantages of going to prison after high school in a logical, well-organized manner, using an extreme solution to highlight the problems the rising costs produce

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: Top 5 red flags in women  
 Entry Credit: Fernando Calvillo-Morales, Emily Ziajor  
 Judge Comment: A fresh outlook on an age-old topic that shows much insight in its introduction and in each of its five flags. While offering no help to the women being characterized, it does fulfill its mission as a warning.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
 Entry Title: From Playgrounds to Makeup Primers  
 Entry Credit: Aleksandra Majewski  
 Judge Comment: A timely editorial written with a clear position and perceptively argued by someone not many years older than its subjects

Competition Comment: None

### Best Illustration (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
Entry Title: Messmer's former athlete: confliction emotions  
Entry Credit: Brooke Bobbitt, Audrey Gorey  
Judge Comment: Powerful image for a sensitive story. Sets the tone right away. And it's creative and clever.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: Anxiety Seizes Performers of all Kinds  
Entry Credit: Maria Leonor Murillo  
Judge Comment: Very powerful. The eyes looking at the performer are daunting and paint a good picture. You can see why someone would have anxiety!

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Front row seat  
Entry Credit: Luca Nicolaie  
Judge Comment: Great illustration of three popular movie characters--almost basking in their fame, which is great

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Newer finals pivot to projects  
Entry Credit: Grace Schiltz  
Judge Comment: Tells a nice story about how finals have changed. It's almost like reading a story by looking at the images.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Curtain closes on Mrs. Kevin Vernon's career as theatre director [video still frame cover image]]  
Entry Credit: Marielsie Iglesias  
Judge Comment: Nice image depicting saying goodbye.

Competition Comment: None

### Best In-Depth News Story (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
 Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
 Entry Title: New rules serve to 'rein' students back into class  
 Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady  
 Judge Comment: Excellent report that exhaustively covers a policy that impact the entire student body. Additional info. about policies at neighboring schools, districts would help.

Place Name: Second Place  
 Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
 Entry Title: IT security increasing in priority  
 Entry Credit: Justin Peabody  
 Judge Comment: Well reported story. Excellent use of internal sources. External expert sources would help the story and woud a little less coverage of outside cases.

Place Name: Third Place  
 Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Department heads share perspective on Accelerated Placement Act, test-driven course placement  
 Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush, Kirsten Santana  
 Judge Comment: Good coverage of topic that impacts students and faculty. Comparison to other schools would help.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Experts emphasize impact of diverse children's literature on empathy, tolerance as Scholastic reverses controversial decision  
 Entry Credit: Pranathi Ganti, Charlie Faulkner, Brody Roberts  
 Judge Comment: Great topic. Some good sources. Explanation of impact on school would help.

Competition Comment: As the category description says: "A news story that goes beyond surface facts to provide context and background about a subject of importance to the school community." The winners do this. They generally answer questions about the issue and address the impact on the school. Many entries are merely basic news or feature stories.

## Best Infographic (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: How do you get your caffeine?  
Entry Credit: Claire Wynkoop  
Judge Comment: Nice graphics! Love the illustrations and how they are sized relative to %. Superimposed text can be hard to read.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: History of the Pledge  
Entry Credit: Karidja Monjolo  
Judge Comment: Nice timeline! Good color choices. Easy to follow.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: On track to state  
Entry Credit: Emily Torok, Zoe Brown  
Judge Comment: Nice design - love how it looks like lanes of a running track. Should the lane numbers have been the numbers mentioned in the data points?

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: The Ripple Effect  
Entry Credit: Taryn McGannon  
Judge Comment: Nice graphics, but missed the opportunity to visually represent the 46% with the amount of liquid in the bottle.

Competition Comment: Difficult to pick a winner. On some entries, I think it would help if the actual infographic you want judged is more clearly defined for the judges. I did not fully know what I was judging on a couple of the entries.

## Best Multimedia Story Package (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: Making a splash  
Entry Credit: Karidja Monjolo, Emily Ziajor, Brandon M. Heath, Devin Larimer  
Judge Comment: Great multimedia piece. This was a nice feature that showcased the talented swimmers that had great photos, great writing, and was a nice overall feature piece. I hope you continue your journalism career and continue to refine your talents.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: The week of music  
Entry Credit: Karidja Monjolo  
Judge Comment: Good photos, good clips of music--maybe try video next time--good feature showcasing the talents of the fine arts.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Girls Cross Country warming up for upcoming Nationals  
Entry Credit: Olivia Kaczowska, Jocelyn Farina  
Judge Comment: Great photos and multimedia piece showcasing the talents of the cross country team. I hope you continue your journalism career and continue to refine your talents.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Para-normal activity: Are Normal's halls haunted?  
Entry Credit: Avani Rai  
Judge Comment: Fun piece--The interactive map was a super idea. Need to tighten up the writing/editing of the videos- I hope you continue your journalism career and continue to refine your talents.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Sweet home ... not Chicago?  
Entry Credit: Danny Martinez  
Judge Comment: Interesting piece--good use of links--need to tighten up the writing--keep honing your craft

Competition Comment: None

### Best News or Feature Photo (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
Entry Title: The Little Mermaid The Musical Ariel Photo  
Entry Credit: Meaghan Wernett  
Judge Comment: Excellent composition and exposure. A lovely performance photo.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: A scavenger hunt for photos  
Entry Credit: Jayem Nato  
Judge Comment: Love how this captures the enthusiasm and interest in the activity. Great moment.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: NO EXIT  
Entry Credit: Dhanveer Gill  
Judge Comment: Nice conceptual image. Powerful and quirky.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Young boy picking out his pumpkin to decorate (photo 7 in album)  
Entry Credit: Kenny Munao  
Judge Comment: Good "rule of thirds" composition. A nice quiet moment.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Girls dancing at the Philippines table (photo 7 in album)  
Entry Credit: Priyanka Shah  
Judge Comment: Good composition in what looks like a crowded environment.

Competition Comment: None

## Best News Story (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: State champions left speechless after win  
Entry Credit: Danny Martinez  
Judge Comment: Very well written -- captures the excitement of the moment, brings story around to other students competing, rounded out with excellent detail, background and quotes.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Small fire in locker room sparks investigation  
Entry Credit: Ali Ince, Bayli Ferris, Abigail Ziemer  
Judge Comment: A good, solid news story showing impact on your school. Good quotes from authoritative sources. Lede would have been stronger by combining your first two sentences, e.g. "A student allegedly ignited a towel dispenser in the boys locker room, starting a small fire that authorities said is still under investigation."

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Bleeding blue: PHS earns ribbon  
Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady  
Judge Comment: Well written, captures the excitement, relevance and importance to your school. Good quotes. Lede could be more dynamic -- stronger if it started with "Prospect was honored ..." and kicked the attribution and date to the end.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Curtain call: Vernon restages 'The Dining Room' as final production Diverse cast, decades of laughter in 'The Dining Room' culminate Mrs. Kevin Yale Vernon's two-decade theatrical career  
Entry Credit: Lyra Townsend  
Judge Comment: A nicely written profile with good quotes and detail.

Competition Comment: The winners in this category reported truly local stories and demonstrated their relevance to their school communities with great detail and strong quotes from authoritative sources.



### Best Overall Design (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: DP: Home Sweet Home (full in-depth issue)  
Entry Credit: Teagan O'Connor, Zonna Todorovska, Giuseppe Bruno, Caiden Claussen, Emilia Ezlakowski, Bethsaida Acevedo, Irene Han, Weronika Kmiec, Aleksandra Majewski, Taryn McGannon, Thomas Noonan, Om Patel, Maximilian Siuchta, Gabriela Szewczyk, Arya Thomas  
Judge Comment: Playful use of typography on pp.2-4. Body copy is generally clean and easy to read. Creative text wraps with River and McDonald's stories help boost visual interest. Screens and artwork help keep pages looking fresh.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Prospector Issue #5  
Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady, Mollie Kearns, Amanda Feinberg  
Judge Comment: Body copy is neat and tidy; modular design generally achieved on all pages. Colored feature well, well-chosen type and artwork all create visual interest. Eye-catching entertainment page.

Competition Comment: None

### Best Personality Profile (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Finding Fukomoto How studying in America helped Anna Fukomoto find herself  
Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush  
Judge Comment: This is a beautifully told story that depends on extensive reporting.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
Entry Title: Andy Klamm, Chemistry teacher, Head tennis coach  
Entry Credit: Yoni Soloveychik  
Judge Comment: This is a terrific interview with many wonderful and startling questions that lead to surprising answers. I forgot I was reading the work of a nonprofessional journalist.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: Humans of WEGO: Owen Payton's heart of gold  
Entry Credit: Eric Deguzman  
Judge Comment: This is a wonderful story about human strength and valuing life.

Competition Comment: I was delighted to see the in-depth reporting and storytelling in this group of profiles.

## Best Photo Gallery/Photo Slideshow (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: The Prospect Varsity Coed Cheer team at Sectionals  
Entry Credit: Tessa Trylovich  
Judge Comment: Wow, what a spectacular gallery! This tells the story of the cheer team's state-qualifying sectional performance from beginning to end. The action photos of the performance itself are superb, but the photos before and after the routine are even better. The focus is always on the emotions of the athletes and their supporters, which it should be. Great use of captions to complement the photos. Just outstanding!

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: WEGO water testing  
Entry Credit: Eshan Amir  
Judge Comment: This isn't really a gallery, but it's close enough. The photo essay does an excellent job of taking an unlikely subject (a water testing expedition) and turning it into a compelling visual narrative. The use of varied angles, perspectives and subjects brings the event to life. The composition of each photo is strong, featuring a nice variety of people, natural surroundings and inanimate objects. The accompanying text provides useful context and detail. Excellent work!

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Knightimes homecoming football game  
Entry Credit: Alyssa Kowols, Sienna DeMonte, Priyanka Shah  
Judge Comment: This gallery is strong, but it could have been even better. The photos, well composed though they are, become a bit monotonous. That's because the gallery focuses relentlessly on the game itself. How about the other things that were part of the event—the marching band, the cheerleaders, the fans, the alums who returned for the game? Adding those photos could have resulted in a higher placing.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: Charlestowne Mall: once booming, now abandoned  
Entry Credit: Dhanveer Gill, Muaz Ali  
Judge Comment: Fascinating subject for a photo essay! But this was even less an actual gallery than the water testing expedition. These particular photos were embedded within a larger article. That's fine, but it's not really a gallery. The photos were evocative, even haunting, but they were too dependent on being positioned within the article to place higher. If this had been an actual gallery (which is easy to create in SNO) and if each photo within the gallery had been accompanied by an explanatory cutline, this would have placed much higher. The potential was great here, and I can see how this earned a Best of SNO honor. But within the confines of this particular contest category, I couldn't give this more than an honorable mention. But again, great concept and excellent individual pieces.

Competition Comment: All the entries that placed were impressive examples of photo storytelling. The first-place winner was head and shoulders above the rest, but the other entries were exemplary as well in their ability to tell a compelling story through the use of a variety of angles, perspectives, distances and subjects. The highest-placing entry put a premium on capturing 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 work by all!

### Best Photo Story (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Roll the credits: reminiscing on homecoming week  
Entry Credit: Mollie Kearns, Claire Wynkoop  
Judge Comment: A good collection of pictures, with a nice variety of images illustrating the story.

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Tryouts spring into action  
Entry Credit: Mollie Kearns, Ben Mitchell  
Judge Comment: Good, tight shots of the players.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: fidgeting for focus  
Entry Credit: Teagan O'Connor, Evin Mathew, Kateryna Voroshykina  
Judge Comment: Nice layout/design, however the images stray from the photo story category.

## Best Review (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: A Christmas Prince: Royally Awful — And I Can't Wait To See It Again  
Entry Credit: Sage Gilliland  
Judge Comment: Engaging, witty lede that does not let off the gas (or the ridicule) for the rest of the article. Just be on the lookout for small proofreading and AP Style items like me versus I and spaces in between dashes.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
Entry Title: No need to calm down: Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour lives up to concert legacy and more  
Entry Credit: Audrey Gorey  
Judge Comment: The reviewer makes her passion for Taylor Swift and her music is very evident and does a good job establishing yourself as a credible reviewer early in the article by mixing in your personal experience with the review. I would just be on the lookout for small proofreading items like typos and clunky sentences.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
Entry Title: David Fincher's 'The Killer' is a refreshing piece of high-end cinema  
Entry Credit: Sam Dababneh  
Judge Comment: Good work comparing The Killer to Fincher's other work as well as current films by other directors. I would avoid using too much summary, especially about the film's ending. Also watch out for small proofreading items like repetitive or clunky sentence construction.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
Entry Title: Cord Jefferson's striking debut 'American Fiction' is one of the best satires in years  
Entry Credit: Sam Dababneh  
Judge Comment: The article is very detailed, but at its strongest when speaking about the film more generally, like the strong pairing of Cord Jefferson and Jeffrey Wright. I would avoid relying too heavy on summary, especially of critical plot details, as that may discourage readers from seeing the movie. Also, be sure to check the AP Stylebook for Black/black and AAVE/Ebonics.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Why 'Barbie' was more than 'Kenough' [review]  
Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush  
Judge Comment: The article is well-written for the most part with good analysis of "Barbie" and its messages, but reads more like a class essay assignment than a newspaper article. I would work on paring down topics to paragraphs rather than pages.

Competition Comment: Solid reviews overall and each writer's passion for the topic was evident. The two biggest recurring issues I saw were awkward sentence construction and a tendency to use a lot of words when a few would do the trick. Both should go away with time and experience.

### Best Serious Commentary (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
 Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: Stop taxing us for being women  
 Entry Credit: Sasha Baumgartner  
 Judge Comment: Good, timely topic and well argued. Clear examples and explanation. Nicely written with good structure and opening/closing.

Place Name: Second Place  
 Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
 Entry Title: My Solution to the Media's Misinformation Mess  
 Entry Credit: Peter Radosh  
 Judge Comment: Good sources. Interesting example. Maybe the premise of know your source at the end of the piece could also be somewhere near the start, too.

Place Name: Third Place  
 Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
 Entry Title: Embedded English Honors creates a more equitable learning environment  
 Entry Credit: Penelope Roewe  
 Judge Comment: Bravo. Thorough. Explanatory. Well organized. Showed pros as well as cons with clear balance. Nice job!

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
 Entry Title: Unwilling Riding the Struggle Bus  
 Entry Credit: Bethsy Galvan  
 Judge Comment: Perfect local topic important to readers. Is it really just a money issue? Are there safety issues? You mention teacher stress. Is fear an issue, that something could go wrong? Nice piece!

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
 Entry Title: Don't Fear the Classics and the Controversies  
 Entry Credit: Arya Thomas  
 Judge Comment: Such a good topic. What books are relacing these three you mention? What does the department head say about this? Is updating the curriculum a regular occurrence? I assume when these books were added to the curriculum way back when, some other 'classics' had to be cut to make room, too.? But I understand your point.

Competition Comment: Timely topics. The ones that clearly connected with their school community had more passion and conviction. Good sources and research.

### Best Single-Page Story Package (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Weight class sports exhibit growth  
Entry Credit: Mollie Kearns  
Judge Comment: interesting approach to this topic. good interviews and detail. graphics focused on the misconceptions might help in carrying the focus.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Roald Dahl's books fuel debate  
Entry Credit: Dylan Maye  
Judge Comment: Dominant artwork needed here.

Competition Comment: Dominant artwork is a must for a story package of this kind. As a general guide, think of "dominance" as roughly 20 percent of the available space; the dominant artwork also should be at least twice as large as the next-largest artwork. Art of that size will assure that the reader's eye is drawn to it (so make certain it conveys the package's focus).

### Best Sports Commentary (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Tales of a QB1: powderpuff problems  
Entry Credit: Claire Wynkoop  
Judge Comment: A fun, light piece with solid opinions and real reporting. Nice graphics too.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
Entry Title: Let public and private schools play by the same rules  
Entry Credit: Adi Zaveri  
Judge Comment: A good presentation of the issue with solid ideas for leveling the playing field.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Beyond the box score: 5 things we learned from boys basketball's loss to Metamora  
Entry Credit: Zach Knox-Doyle  
Judge Comment: Solid reporting to back your opinions on the game's outcome. Good job.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Sticking with Fields: The best move for the Bears' future success  
Entry Credit: Lucas Drengwitz  
Judge Comment: I liked your presentation of stats to back your opinion. I also liked your critique of the possible draft option. We'll see if you are correct.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: College playoffs matchup "chosen" teams  
Entry Credit: Carlos Allen  
Judge Comment: Nice reporting to back your opinions on the teams competing in the playoffs.

Competition Comment: None



### Best Sports Feature Story (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Passion for pickleball fueling Feeney's competitive spirit  
Entry Credit: Jeffery Woodard  
Judge Comment: Nicely quirky feature about a faculty member's involvement in the pickball craze. Some clever wordplay and effective use of quotes.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: Batting a Little Differently  
Entry Credit: Max Siuchta  
Judge Comment: Very interesting story about a sport most Americans know little about. Lively quotes.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
Entry Title: Junior Evan Parker places 14th in State, takes home Boys Cross Country All-State title  
Entry Credit: Penelope Roewe, Griffin Larson-Erf  
Judge Comment: This feelgood story about a successful student athlete captures his personality and enthusiasm through effective use of quotes.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
Entry Title: XC STATE OF MIND  
Entry Credit: Audrey Gorey  
Judge Comment: Well organized. Good use of quotes.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
Entry Title: Girls Bowling popularity highest since pandemic, players voice supportive environment  
Entry Credit: James Prizant  
Judge Comment: Nicely written. Made me want to go bowling.

Competition Comment: None

## Best Sports News Story (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Buzzer-beating dunk ends Quincy's season in Super-Sectionals upset  
Entry Credit: Zach Knox-Doyle  
Judge Comment: Great context in the lede, I love the "2,500 matchups" wording – it's a creative way to say something like this hasn't happened in a long time. Great imagery detailing the final seconds of the game.  
Would've liked to see the game summary a couple of paragraphs higher to smoothly transition from the great lede into the main focus of the story.

Competition Comment: Nearly every story had at least one fantastic piece of imagery.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
Entry Title: Trojans advance to Elite Eight  
Entry Credit: Adi Zaveri  
Judge Comment: Fantastic detail and imagery in lede. Nice job using quotes from the players themselves to add another dimension to the story. Maybe include the final score of the game to help emphasize the team's ability to close out the game.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
Entry Title: Steady treading above the rest  
Entry Credit: Caiden Claussen  
Judge Comment: Unique perspective from the opposition about how high of a level Maine West plays at. I love the detail about Maine West succeeding at the fundamentals, but some extra context on what those fundamentals are would help establish what makes Maine West's excellence impressive enough for Prospect to want to emulate it.

### Best Sports Photo (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
 Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: Making a splash (this photo is the background image on a multimedia package Emily Ziajor put together for swim)  
 Entry Credit: Emily Ziajor  
 Judge Comment: Great tight, sharp shot. Well-done!

Place Name: Second Place  
 Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Ironmen boys basketball take on DePaul College Prep Rams in elite matchup  
 Entry Credit: Jeff Christopherson  
 Judge Comment: Classic basketball action shot. Framed, exposed, and timed perfectly.

Place Name: Third Place  
 Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: Airborne (cheerleader image in "Homecoming 2023 heads under the sea")  
 Entry Credit: Emily Ziajor  
 Judge Comment: Excellent work freezing the action and framing the moving subject.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Road to State: What we learned from the Iron's takedown of Downers North  
 Insights and analysis of the Ironmen's Elite Eight win ahead of the 4A IHSA State Finals  
 Entry Credit: Jeff Christopherson  
 Judge Comment: Good wide angle shot capturing the action and surroundings.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
 Entry Title: Noah Battle takes the field  
 Entry Credit: Steven Toth  
 Judge Comment: Good composition and exposure capturing the drama and excitement of the team entrance.

Competition Comment: Excellent entries made it difficult choosing the winners. Great work!

### Best Staff Editorial (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
 Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
 Entry Title: Eviction notice: Hate still has a home here  
 Entry Credit: Penelope Roewe, Griffin Larson-Erf  
 Judge Comment: This is outstanding. I'm glad you're taking an honest look at your school's environment. This is a great editorial and goes beyond typical ones on this topic.

Place Name: Second Place  
 Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: FAFSA's launch leaves much to be desired out of a system that the government seems to care less about each passing day  
 Entry Credit: Dhanveer Gill, Emily Ziajor  
 Judge Comment: Very well done! I'm surprised I haven't seen more written about this topic given how important it is for seniors right now. As someone who works in higher education access, your words illuminate many of the concerns I hear in my work all the time and this editorial does so in a unique, well researched way that is memorable. Great job!

Place Name: Third Place  
 Contestant Name: Niles North High School  
 Entry Title: MENA Summit shows the importance of having difficult conversations  
 Entry Credit: Ruby Rosenberg, Saif Salman  
 Judge Comment: This is one of the more thoughtful entries I've seen about this topic! Nice job at relating a global issue back to students and your campus.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: Maine West High School  
 Entry Title: Standardized Test Stress  
 Entry Credit: Bethsy Galvan, Arya Thomas  
 Judge Comment: Very nicely done! This is a thoughtful editorial that I'm sure resonated with a lot of the student body. Great job using this as a method to call an issue to the administration's attention.

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
 Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: Banning books is First Amendment violation  
 Entry Credit: Fernando Arroyo-Garcia, Eshan Amir, Lizbeth Huerta Padilla, Sami Moesch, Anjali Rai, Brandon M. Heath, Chris Pena, Sasha Baumgartner  
 Judge Comment: Very nicely written and well-researched!

Competition Comment: Wow, what a great contest. To schools who might not have placed where they wanted to, know that you did a great job and are doing some of the best work in high school journalism that's out there. Congratulations to all of you!

### Best Use of Social Media (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: @wildcatchronicle  
Entry Credit: Alexa Morales, Karidja Monjolo, Miley Pegg, Sebastian Alarcon, Sasha Baumgartner, Ryley Salazar, Fernando Calvillo-Morales, Tyler Buikema, Carlos Allen  
Judge Comment: Great variety of content and consistent branding.

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: Instagram  
Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff  
Judge Comment: Good variety of coverage!

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School  
Entry Title: dgn\_omega  
Entry Credit: Malini Fisher, Maggie Stevenson, Ava LaBianco, Audrey Gorey  
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Local Delights: Coco and Blu  
Entry Credit: Kenny Munao, Abby Damasky  
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Honorable Mention  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: Boys' basketball documentary trailer  
Entry Credit: Kenny Munao  
Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: None

## Best Video Story (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: Wildcat Preschool teaches skills, builds connections  
 Entry Credit: Alyson Dusing, Juliet Payton, Fernando Calvillo-Morales, Karidja Monjolo, Emily Ziajor  
 Judge Comment: The best thing about this video is that it came in under three minutes. I don't mean that as a wisecrack. This is a solid piece of work, very impressive, and one of the reasons it's effective is that it's well edited, which means there was no doubt a lot of cutting and revising. I would have cut even more. The pre-K kids didn't need to have their sound bites included. Those sound bites really added nothing, not even a cuteness factor (the cuteness was already apparent in the excellent B-roll footage). Cut the PK soundbites and you could get this down to 2:30. Great use of B-roll. Good interviews with the teacher and her student assistants. I like how one of the high school students had been a PK student there herself. But I found one part of the teacher's interview a bit confusing. She referred to her "students" several times, and I couldn't tell if she meant the PK kids or her high school students. She teaches child development, which I assume is a high school class, but that's not clear either. Also, the video says the PK program has been around since 2007, but the headline says it returned in February 2024. Does that mean it was gone and then came back? I found that confusing. Editors should anticipate these kinds of questions and answer them in the video or in the accompanying article/intro text. A confused viewer won't be a viewer for long. But I don't want to take away from the accomplishment here. This is an impressive video.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
 Entry Title: Local rock band Jeff's Invention plays with heart  
 Entry Credit: Molly Mundt, Dylan Maye  
 Judge Comment: Lots of potential here, but 5:35 is much too long. Videos can almost always benefit from being shorter. Tighter editing could cut at least two minutes from this, maybe more. The result would be fast-paced and more engaging. Audio quality here is very inconsistent, which isn't good for a video about music. Nice use of footage from previous concerts, but it would have been much better to get your own footage close up at an actual gig rather than just at an informal practice session. I didn't really recognize any of the songs they performed. They do covers? It would have been nice to hear snippets of them covering a few classic rock songs. Many of the interview sound bites lasted too long. We didn't need to see the band members on screen for more than a few seconds when they spoke. B-roll of them in concert or practicing would have been better than talking-head footage. Overall, this was more sprawling than it should have been. Keep the focus tight. Why do they do this? Why this music? Why this band? Why classic rock and blues and not mainstream pop or alternative or hip-hop? What keeps them going? The sister answers some of these questions near the end of the video, and the brother talks about blues near the middle. Focus on the why, and you would have a leaner, tighter and ultimately more engaging video.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
 Entry Title: Defending their legacy: PREP hockey returns after memorable season  
 Entry Credit: Matthew Pulver, Nick Eyles  
 Judge Comment: This is an impressive job of video storytelling. At 3:20, the length is good, but 2:00 would be even better. There's enough nonessential material here that you could easily cut this down to 1:45-2:00, and the result would be really fast-paced and engaging. The current video is good, but tighter editing would have improved it, perhaps bumping it up to first place. A few questions: I'm still not sure what PREP is — a club team that's open to players from different schools or is it just for Prospect athletes? Where's it based? How many Prospect athletes play for it? Good use of B-roll. Some of the interviews are too long. For example, we don't need the comment about retaliation and we don't need to go in depth about the coach, unless he's got a direct Prospect connection. Focus on the Prospect angle. Keep it tight. Good use of third-party footage and good use of credits.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
 Entry Title: Olivia Corson scores 32 in Community girls basketball home opening win over Peoria Richwoods  
 Entry Credit: BJ Dumas II, Bella Green, Lucas Drengwitz  
 Judge Comment: The individual pieces are good, but put together this video is way too long. This shouldn't be longer than 90 seconds. Sixty seconds would be ideal. The B-roll footage, shot from the same distance and perspective, is monotonous. If you're going to do a video about a game, put your own camera person down at courtside and under the basket. Show the action at ground level. Show interesting angles and perspectives. The audio quality was consistently good. The interview sound bites featured informative comments from the coach and players, but many of the comments could have been trimmed. The narration could have been trimmed a bit as well. Try not to show the interviewees for more than a few seconds when they're speaking. Cover them with B-roll instead. Lots of good potential here, but tighter editing and the use of your own camera person at courtside would have improved this significantly. Concerning the other Normal Community video, which didn't place, here are my comments: At nearly seven and a half minutes, this video is almost unwatchably long. At least three minutes, maybe four, should be cut. I don't think anything after 5:02 needs to be included, and then I would cut another minute and a half from the first five minutes. The B-roll needs to be better. How about footage of actual productions? The audio levels are extremely inconsistent. The final sound bite is almost impossible to hear. Even though the video is extremely long, it doesn't address some of the most important questions: When did she start at NCHS? How did she end up there? Why the career change? Why did she stay?

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
 Entry Title: Students savor last ROAR of 2024  
 Entry Credit: Brandon Heath  
 Judge Comment: The narrator did an excellent job of explaining ROAR — what it is, what it tries to do and why the March meeting was significant. The video was three minutes and 40 seconds long. This could have and should have been under 3:00. The last 30 seconds or so were more appropriate for a promotional video rather than a feature video by a news publication. Some of the B-roll was shaky and detracted from the video. Some of the sound bites were too long. Compare this with the pre-K video, and you'll see how the latter was much tighter and as a result more fast-paced and engaging. Don't get me wrong. This is a good video, but it could have been better with tighter editing.

Competition Comment: All of the entries that

placed here showed great potential. Tighter editing would have benefited each of them. The students responsible for these videos should be proud of their work. Keep on creating!

## Best Website (Enrollment Division 3)

Place Name: First Place  
Contestant Name: West Chicago High School  
Entry Title: Wildcat Chronicle  
Entry Credit: Sasha Baumgartner, Karidja Monjolo, Dhanveer Gill, Emily Ziajor  
Judge Comment: Great website! I love the diversity of content you have and how you can see previews of a lot of it on the homepage. I especially love those podcast embeds! The little staff opinion box on the home page is also a cool feature with quick news for students. Great work!

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place  
Contestant Name: Normal Community High School  
Entry Title: The Inkspot  
Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush, BJ Dumas, Zachary Knox-Doyle, Marielsie Iglesias  
Judge Comment: Great work! I love the diversity of content on your site, how you can see previews of a lot of it on the homepage (like previews of recent video interviews and sports coverage). The images and other media on the homepage all look super nice and high-res as well! The set up of feature stories like "Digital Daze: The phone distraction gripping students" is super cool as well and very engaging for website users.

Place Name: Third Place  
Contestant Name: Prospect High School  
Entry Title: ProspectorNow.com  
Entry Credit: Brooke Michalczyk, Tessa Trylovich, Dean Carlson  
Judge Comment: Great work! I love the little breaking news box on the front page; I'm sure that's a great way for students to check in quickly and see if there's anything going on at school that they need to know about. The rotating previews of the photo albums, Knight TV, and Knight voices looks great and shows how much content you guys have available on the site. Great work!