

2024 IJEA Newspaper & Digital News Media Contest Division 5 Results — Enrollment 2,701 or more

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: Blueprint — Downers Grove South H.S., Mary Long, Kari Alore & Mark Indreika, advisers

2nd: The Oracle — Glenbrook South H.S., Bob Wysocki, adviser

3rd: The Voice — Huntley H.S., Dennis Brown, adviser

HM (tie): New Trier News — New Trier H.S., Sarah Hands & Kristan Kenney, advisers

HM (tie): Statesman — Adlai E. Stevenson H.S., Dean Bradshaw, adviser

Best Hybrid Publication | Publication that appears in both online and print versions

1st: Blueprint — Downers Grove South H.S., Mary Long, Kari Alore & Mark Indreika, advisers

2nd: The Oracle — Glenbrook South H.S., Bob Wysocki, adviser

3rd: The Voice — Huntley H.S., Dennis Brown, adviser

HM (tie): New Trier News — New Trier H.S., Sarah Hands & Kristan Kenney, advisers

HM (tie): Statesman — Adlai E. Stevenson H.S., Dean Bradshaw, adviser

2024 INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

The Division 5 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 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School

Entry Title: CURE Club
Entry Credit: Mia Carr

Judge Comment: Very impressive work! Everything comes together nicely in this ad — the main illustration, the color combination, the arrangement of the individual elements. Nicely done! Just curious: Is it 7:30 a.m. or p.m.? I'm sure your main audience knows the answer, but it never hurts to eliminate possible ambiguity.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School

Entry Title: Tri-Day
Entry Credit: Maria Khanani

Judge Comment: Good use of the dub logo. Nice word play in the main headline. Clean presentation of the essential information for anyone interested in attending. I noticed you spelled the event "Tri-Day" and "Friday." Was that on purpose? If not, let's pick one and be consistent. Other than that, well done!

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School

Entry Title: Irie Cup Ad
Entry Credit: Rumaithah Khan

Judge Comment: Excellent job of making the shop logo the clearly dominant element in the ad. Nice use of varied typography and horizontal lines to make the text easy to read. Love the "Mention this ad" discount. Question: Does "Oasis" need to be capitalized? Other than that, this is a textbook example of how to make an effective ad with just a single image and text.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School

Entry Title: Sweet Feet Yoga Ad
Entry Credit: Alexis Davis

Judge Comment: Like the "Irie Cup" ad, this ad does wonders with just a single logo and text. White on gray works effectively and catches the eye. Would have liked to know a little more about what if anything the studio offers teens — discounts, special classes?

Competition Comment: Really impressive entries from everyone. The first-place winner earned top honors because it did the best job of combining aesthetics with essential information. But each entry was commendable. Nice job!

Best Alternative Storytelling (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: South DI Commits
Entry Credit: Danielle Joseph
Judge Comment: I love the design elements of this story.

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: Beyond 'Booktok': my favorite reads of 2023
Entry Credit: Sloan Crosson
Judge Comment: Great formatting, content is interesting too.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Spirit flows throughout DGS
Entry Credit: Vanja Bogdonavic
Judge Comment: Clearly follows a timeline, which I like. A good recap.

Best Audio Journalism (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Rizz: do you got it?
Entry Credit: Micah Olson
Judge Comment: This report would benefit from better production and more substantial and focused writing.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Why read the classics?
Entry Credit: Elizabeth Scannell
Judge Comment: In a close contest, this entry fell short in its approach to "journalism" — including an interview with a relative.

Competition Comment: A close call, but "Rizz" takes the category on the strength of presentation.

Best Centerspread Story Package (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Discipline at DGS: Change in consequences, increase in infractions
Entry Credit: Sebastian Blanco, Grace Rerucha, Sumit Shah, Juliana Conyer, Maya Homberg, Sabrina Crowley
Judge Comment: Great content, very readable and relevant. Great photos make this entry stand out; Very simple, but well-edited and balanced with graphics. Secondary headlines too small and light to attract readers to stories and help them navigate package.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: What's the Buzz?
Entry Credit: Sofia Cole, Erika Li, Zoha Suteria, Maya Scahill
Judge Comment: Really effective and informative illustrations. Style of art combined with colors and frankly strange choice of fonts gives this spread a "jittery" effect appropriate to the subject. Body copy is very hard to read; different specs or different font would have helped. And someone really should have caught the misspelling of "caffeine."

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: minimum wage workers
Entry Credit: Sofia Cole, Mia Carr, Milutin Todorovic, Riley Shankman, Kaitlyn Jiang, Maya Scahill, Erika Li
Judge Comment: Lots of good information but could have been presented more effectively. Green is obviously a good color choice, but there's way too much of it. All-caps style of secondary heads, in this font, make them hard to read. Upper and lower case, if available in the font, would have helped. I realize it's a timeline and irregularity is a given, but "green space" in bottom graphic could have been managed better.

Competition Comment: None

Best Editorial Cartoon (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: New Trier High School

Entry Title: Trevis Maximus, Episode 1

Entry Credit: Carina Brown

Judge Comment: Clever and creative, this s trip uses a narrative, images and dialogue to satirize privileged teen drama. It packs a gentle punch and challenges readers to see themselves, laugh --and grow up..

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School

Entry Title: Pick Your Pressure

Entry Credit: Erika Li, Cez Kruzhkova

Judge Comment: The art grabs readers with a striking image that illustrates the point f the article. There's also subtle hints about the way fashion can chain the self. Do you become what you wear?

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Huntley High School

Entry Title: A genocide is a genocide

(illustration).

Entry Credit: Taryn Rainey

Judge Comment: This image makes a strong, uncompromising point. It challenges readers to confront violence and likely spurred sharp emotional reactions while asking readers to think.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School

Entry Title: Editorial: Book bans flirt with fascism

Entry Credit: Itzel Sanchez

Judge Comment: The portrayal of censors as police-like bullies fits the editorial's thesis that book bans reflect a fascist impulse.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: New Trier High School

Entry Title: Attendance Policies

Entry Credit: Victoria Wenzke

Judge Comment: This clever standalone makes a good case against overdoing it with enforcing attendance policies. The idea of instant replay would appeal to some teachers -- making them worthy of ridicule.

Competition Comment: This category was competitive -- lots of sharp entries. One tip for all is to edit captions and dialogue for grammar, typos, missing words. etc. Proofread. Then proofread again.

Best Feature Story (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Discipline at DGS: Change in consequences, increase in infractions
Entry Credit: Sabrina Crowley, Sebastian Blanco, Juliana Conyer, Maya Homberg, Sumit Shah
Judge Comment: This was a very informative piece that was well-researched and well-reported.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Cost of Success
Entry Credit: Timothy Bui, Sriya Mamidanna, Siya Patel
Judge Comment: Well-written. I really enjoyed how the informative piece started through the lens of a newer student. Great idea!

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: 'Prairie good': students leave their mark on DGS with a reconstructed grassland
Entry Credit: Maya Homberg
Judge Comment: Great lead into the story. I liked how the author takes the reader through the process and the prairie becomes symbolic of students leaving their mark and bettering their communities.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Backstage
Entry Credit: Maggie Armstrong, Jessy Gone
Judge Comment: This is such a creative piece that peers behind the curtain of the theatre program. Bravo!

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Academy offers unique learning
Entry Credit: Maya Scahill
Judge Comment: This was a very interesting piece on a program unique to your school. Great read!

Competition Comment: The talent across the board continues to surprise and excite me. Great work by all!

Best Front-Page Design (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Mean Girls
Entry Credit: Anna Marquardt, Caroline Ohlandt, Emily Pavlik
Judge Comment: Very well-executed lead story design. Thank you for including teasers to remind readers there's stuff inside; not everyone remembered this.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: The Oracle, Volume LXIV, Issue 2, November 17, 2023
Entry Credit: Mia Carr, Gaby Yap
Judge Comment: A bit confusing at first — not helped by the rarity of a front-page editorial (at least in most publications) — but certainly lively and inviting to readers.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Memories Issue: Front Cover
Entry Credit: Ly Martil, Maggie Armstrong
Judge Comment: Simple but well-executed. Would have liked to see page numbers with each topic so they would function as true teasers.

Competition Comment: Too many entries with nothing to suggest there's anything inside, or sometimes even to explain what's on the front. These are more posters or art pieces than front pages with the job of communicating information.

Best Headline (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Turnabout called off: Low attendance dooms dance
Entry Credit: Olivia Richards
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: New Anchor Days weigh students down | Revised schedule misses the mark, producing long days and long lines
Entry Credit: Neil Sanderson
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Illinois begins new chapter, bans book censorship
Entry Credit: Juliana Conyer
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Turnip the beat for eating green at South: Students share their stories of becoming
Entry Credit: Bailey Baker
Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: This category and level had numerous excellent entries. Nearly all of the top 6 used plays on words that were clever, and also clear -- assuming in some cases that most readers are aware of a specific name. We struggled to balance brief vs thorough. And we had to admit that "label heds" and passive verbs can serve well, despite a preference for active-voice action verbs.

Best Humorous Commentary (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Idiots to watch out for
Entry Credit: Anthony Addante
Judge Comment: Epitomizes this genre of editorial: presents outrageous and biased opinions, but has examples to back up his reasoning for each of the four classifications of idiots, which in the end includes himself. Well written. Transitions between points could be more obvious-

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Best ways to celebrate Toyothaton
Entry Credit: Lucas Penavic
Judge Comment: Clever. Believable but exaggerated details and elaboration. Humorous comments. Timely

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: A plea to ban beige Christmas immediately
Entry Credit: Mara Saltzman
Judge Comment: Well written with consistent point of view. Has humorous elements, but introduces facts that show serious repercussions. Maybe document the facts about colors and babies as true so readers will know it is not opinion.

Competition Comment: Those who think people your age are not socially conscious and do not worry about future generations should read most of these editorials. The amount of humor varies, but the underlying messages are important.

Best Illustration (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: TV Specials create long-lasting nostalgia
Entry Credit: Itzel Sanchez
Judge Comment: Very nicely done. It did indeed make me nostalgic. I enjoyed looking at all the characters.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: 'Ahsoka' strikes back with refreshing debut
Entry Credit: Itzel Sanchez
Judge Comment: Very well done--and very precisely done. Recognized the character immediately.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Cheer flips into competition season
Entry Credit: Erika Li
Judge Comment: Great job of telling a story with the illustration. Clean and easy to follow.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: ILLUSTRATION: Barbenheimer is more than 'ken'ough to blow your mind
Entry Credit: Kip O'Connor
Judge Comment: Nice job having two very popular characters face off.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: ILLUSTRATION: As 'Hamilton' returns to us, you can too
Entry Credit: Kip O'Connor
Judge Comment: Nice illustration of a very well-known production.

Competition Comment: None

Best In-Depth News Story (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Huntley High School
 Entry Title: New Faces, Big Changes
 Entry Credit: Daniel Przybylko
 Judge Comment: Well reported story about school board. Excellent connection to the entire school community. Comparison to other districts would help.

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
 Entry Title: Grades Pressure Admission
 Entry Credit: Yumna Ali-Khan, Timothy Bui, Ava Gordon, harikesh Prasad
 Judge Comment: Good reporting on a topic close to most students. Good use of current students and alums. Some good external resources cited.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: New Trier High School
 Entry Title: Board of Education implements Student Voice presentations
 Entry Credit: Brendan Fijol
 Judge Comment: Good job bringing school board to students. Do other nearby districts have similar program?

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
 Entry Title: Black Box
 Entry Credit: Ansh Aggarwal, Jennifer Huang, Veronica Jia
 Judge Comment: Well reported. Interesting topic. More school/district sources needed beyond single teacher.

Competition Comment: The competition note says an in-depth is "A news story that goes beyond surface facts to provide context and background about a subject of importance to the school community." The winners did just that. A common issue is the lack of expert sources and explanation of school/district policies. External sources and information about other schools would help.

Best Infographic (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: What's the buzz (the coffee cups)
Entry Credit: Maya Scahill
Judge Comment: Excellent work! The graphics are phenomenal. Wasn't sure which of the 3 infographics I was judging but all 3 were great. Would be nice if the milligrams of caffeine were visually comparable somehow.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Navigating the Fine Line
Entry Credit: Angela Guo, Sreeja Muthukannan, Ishanvi Chaudhary, Sam Lerner, Elizabeth Yuan
Judge Comment: Great graphics! Beautifully illustrated and a great way to display the data. But perhaps a bit large for what is being conveyed?

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Miles Out of Sight
Entry Credit: Rachel Bui, Ishanvi Mishra
Judge Comment: Great concept putting the data in the form of texts on a cell phone.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Discipline at DGS: Change in consequences, increase in infractions
Entry Credit: Sumit Shah
Judge Comment: Nicely done bar graph, but the competition is fierce and you need a bit more to win!

Competition Comment: Great job. Difficult choosing winners, especially between first and second place.

Best Multimedia Story Package (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Boys varsity basketball wins against Hinsdale South
Entry Credit: Kate Dziejewski, Vanja Bogonavic, William Elliott
Judge Comment: Great journalism displayed in this piece. Handled a controversial topic very well, with great maturity and finesse--well researched, well written, good relevant interviews, you attempted to talk parents of student--super, you had interview with AD. Balanced approach. The article was good coverage of the game as well as in the context of what else was going on. Well done. I hope you continue refining your journalism skills. Keep up the good work! Well done.

Competition Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Student breaks 52-year-old record
Entry Credit: Maya Homberg, William Elliott
Judge Comment: Great feature of student breaking a long standing record, but not just any record, the record of a student turned coach to retired coach. Great to reach out to retired coach, great interviews, great cutaway footage in your report, good writing in both article and news pack. Super human interest story. Keep up the good work. Well done.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: Fialka accommodates students in new way as senior adviser chair
Entry Credit: Kate Dieffenbacher, Alexia Green
Judge Comment: Article was good, the video was not good journalism. Just a list of questions, poor audio, jump cuts in the video, having her walk away from camera. The video didn't really enhance the article. I hope you continue to refine your talents in both writing and broadcast journalism

Best News or Feature Photo (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Caption: The Purple Reign Step Team from Merrillville High School took third place in the Royal Stomp Down with their personalized routine.
Entry Credit: Vanja Bogdonavic
Judge Comment: Great performance photo capturing the energy and emotion of the group. Excellent composition and lighting. Dramatic and powerful.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Spotlight on Winship
Entry Credit: Meredith Bill
Judge Comment: Excellent portrait. Good composition and lighting.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Caption: Teacher spotlight: english teacher Markus Indreika. Indreika gets covered with streamers..."
Entry Credit: Vanja Bogdonavic
Judge Comment: Great moment that might have gone overlooked without the photo! Fun!!

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: PHOTO: There's no place like home for the holidays
Entry Credit: Ellie Jarmel
Judge Comment: Dramatic lighting and good composition.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Ava Burns Photo (Photo was laid out badly on the page BTW: I'll send the original too).
Entry Credit: Katie Walsh
Judge Comment: Nice portrait. The subject is at ease and comfortable.

Competition Comment: None

Best News Story (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: NT to launch innovative human-centered design program
Entry Credit: Kate Dieffenbacher
Judge Comment: Very well-written news story with clear impact on your school. Good lede, well organized, great use of quotes, many good details and authoritative sources.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Smokin' 'em out
Entry Credit: Daniel Przybylko
Judge Comment: Very well-written story about a timely topic impacting many schools. Great lede -- nice job painting a word picture! Lots of great details and authoritative sources. Good use of quotes, though would like to have seen comments from another student or two. Watch your style and consistency on titles for quote attribution.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Honoring History
Entry Credit: Jennifer Huang, Ava Winber
Judge Comment: Very well-written story about your school community. Good organization and use of quotes - maybe comments from a couple more students? Lede might be a bit stronger if "throughout February" was later in the sentence. Well done!

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: D225 considers calendar change
Entry Credit: Jame Sewell
Judge Comment: Good solid news story about an issue impacting your school community. Great details, good use of quotes from admin and students. Largely well written, though your lede would be stronger if you moved the 1st reference attribution to the second graf. A couple style gaffes (caps and punctuation). Nice job!

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: School implements new hall pass policy
Entry Credit: Caitlin Spindler
Judge Comment: Good solid news story about an issue that directly impacts students and faculty. Great details and quotes from students and authority figures. Interesting to include cost of passes vs. school lunches, though seems an odd comparison since the pass cost is the total for all students for the year and the lunch cost is per student - total would be in the hundreds of thousands. Story would be stronger leading with the reasons for the new pass policy and the reaction, with the cost stats further down or broken out in a sidebar.

Competition Comment: Lots of very strong contenders in this division. Honorees are strong writers with generally good grasp of style and tenets of newswriting. All did excellent jobs reporting about their schools, for their schools.

Best Overall Design (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: reality check
Entry Credit: Jennifer Huang, Vivian Zhu
Judge Comment: Thought-provoking cover image. Strong typographic visual hierarchy achieved among folios, headlines, bylines and body copy. Body copy is neat and tidy, virtually free of widows, orphans or bad text breaks. Reverse type, colored pages and creative font choices for headlines all boost visual interest. Modular design achieved on all pages.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: The Oracle, Volume LXIV, Issue 2, November 17, 2023
Entry Credit: Mia Carr, Gaby Yap
Judge Comment: Visual typographical hierarchy with respect to folios, headlines, bylines and body copy generally achieved on all pages. Eye-catching graphics on pp.6-7 boost visual interest. Text wrapping around objects on pp. 12-13 helps keep the eyes moving across the page. Body copy generally free of widows, orphans or bad text breaks.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Issue 4: March 8, 2024
Entry Credit: Sabrina Crowley, Olivia Velazquez, Caitlin Spindler, Maya Homberg, Lauren Miranda, Anthony Addante, Nicholas Sadelski, Sebastian Blanco, Grace Rerucha, NB Bandera, Jack Pastore, Kate Dziejewski, Caarson Kass
Judge Comment: North v. South spread on pp. 6-7 is easily the issue's strongest visual element. Body copy is generally neat and tidy; ample white space achieved among all visual elements.

Competition Comment: None

Best Personality Profile (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: New look, same inspiring person
Entry Credit: Maggie Armstrong
Judge Comment: Timely, powerful portrait of a transitioning fellow student. This is well reported and sensitive. It also has a strong opening.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: English teacher Mark Indreika forms notable legacy
Entry Credit: Owen Chaidez
Judge Comment: This is a well reported profile with a strong opening that captures the subject's enjoyable personality.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: NT cross country coach Lisa Loris talks running, inspiration, and balance
Entry Credit: Caidyn Lowry, Holly Nesbitt
Judge Comment: This is a strong story with a good opening and ending. Nicely reported using multiple sources.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Jazzing it Up
Entry Credit: Angela Guo, Navya Saxena
Judge Comment: This is an inspiring story of a teacher who continues to pursue her art while encouraging students to do the sam. Good reporting that offers a sense of the music and its meaning.

Competition Comment: It's a joy to read the ambitious entries in this category. I was inspired by the depth and sensitivity of the storytelling. Beautiful work.

Best Photo Gallery/Photo Slideshow (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: DGS boys varsity basketball wins against MCHS
Entry Credit: Vanja Bogdonavic
Judge Comment: Truly outstanding sports photography! Some of these action shots are of the highest professional quality. Taken together the photos do a great job of telling the story of the game from beginning to end.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Mustangs vs. Mustangs: DGS swimmers take the win against Morton
Entry Credit: Vanja Bogdonavic
Judge Comment: Swimming is a difficult sport to photograph. This gallery doesn't have that one perfect photo of a swimmer coming at the camera in full stride as it were, but the action shots are solid. There's a good variety of angles and perspectives. The "senior night" photo adds a nice touch.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Football Game: Huntley v. Crystal Lake South
Entry Credit: Maya Hiermann
Judge Comment: A good variety of well-composed shots that tell the story of the game, including the action off the field. But a lack of captions kept this entry from placing higher.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Veterans Day Ceremony
Entry Credit: Katie Walsh
Judge Comment: A commendable excursion into the community. It would have been nice to know a little more about the people in the gallery. But overall this is well done. The opening and closing photos were especially effective. The gallery as a whole brought the event to life.

Competition Comment: All of the entries that placed did an excellent job of telling their stories through images using a variety of angles and perspectives. The first-place entry featured some truly professional quality action shots that made it stand out from the others. The highest-placing entries 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. But again, all of the students responsible for these galleries should be proud of their work!

Best Photo Story (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: From the Sidelines
Entry Credit: Jacob Silverman, Eleanor Mdnnis
Judge Comment: A great collection of images, with excellent variety, and different points of view. Fun! Well-done!!

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: DGS dunks on Hinsdale South during boys basketball game on Dec. 1
Entry Credit: Vanja Bogdonavic
Judge Comment: Good variety capturing the excitement and energy of the game.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Diving into it
Entry Credit: Zidaan Aamer, Charles Klawans
Judge Comment: A nice variety giving a sense of the action and competition.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Student council hosts Mardi Gras themed winter dance
Entry Credit: Sebastian Blanco
Judge Comment: A little limited in terms of images, but the three included show some variety and tell the story nicely.

Competition Comment: None

Best Review (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
 Entry Title: Barbie breaks barriers
 Entry Credit: Molly Tomczyk
 Judge Comment: Very well-written analysis of the film and its messages with just the right amount of personal moviegoing experience for emotional connection. The end was a little rushed though and would have benefitted from another paragraph for the article to really soar.

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: Huntley High School
 Entry Title: Rodrigo is the "All-American Bitch"
 Entry Credit: Maggie Armstrong
 Judge Comment: Good analysis of the album's main themes and how Rodrigo has changed as an artist from "SOUR" to "GUTS." The lyrics, while effective at briefly characterizing the album, could be better integrated into the article to keep a smooth read

Place Name: Third Place
 Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
 Entry Title: Lana Del Rey
 Entry Credit: Max Beitzel
 Judge Comment: Fair assessment of what works and doesn't for Lana Del Rey in her latest album. The article could've used less summary of the songs and more of the reviewer's voice though.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
 Entry Title: Taylor Swift fans 'capture it, remember it' at the Eras Tour movie
 Entry Credit: Maya Homberg
 Judge Comment: Does well highlighting differences between the Eras Tour concert, Eras Tour film, and typical moviegoing experiences but falls into a lack of conciseness and some generalizations

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
 Entry Title: Olivia Rodrigo shows 'GUTS' and glory with new album
 Entry Credit: Juliana Conyer
 Judge Comment: Good description of what the album contains but needs a bit more analysis

Competition Comment: Overall, the reviews contained good analysis but need to strike a better balance between summary and opinion which should come with experience.

Best Serious Commentary (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
 Entry Title: Caring about politics, caring about your future
 Entry Credit: Maia Weissman
 Judge Comment: Really well done. Local sources. Good research to a broader context. Well written. Timely. Nice job!

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: New Trier High School
 Entry Title: Let's be considerate of others during college decision season
 Entry Credit: Kate Dieffenbacher
 Judge Comment: You addressed a situation at your school that all seniors can relate to; so matter their own experience, they have heard these comments. Timely, concise and passionate. Nice job

Place Name: Third Place
 Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
 Entry Title: DGS is terrified to raise expectations for students
 Entry Credit: Andrew Staser
 Judge Comment: Is this true: Many of these teachers lowered their academic expectations to adjust to the new, isolated world. What is your source for this? I agree. I think this is a problem. But it needs some sourcing. Legitimately, is a student able to graduate having missed classes? Say, an ill student? As long as work is completed, does it matter? Good piece that applies directly to your school and its policies. Is anyone else talking about this? Is it seen as a problem?

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Huntley High School
 Entry Title: A genocide is a genocide
 Entry Credit: Rumaithah Khan
 Judge Comment: Well researched. Good used of local sources in your school as well as general information. Tough, timely topic. Your call to actions at the end should also have been mentioned earlier in the piece, to explain to your reader that this is a call to action for those who feel helpless. That's your main point, so put it higher in the piece, and reiterate it often, as well as at the end.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
 Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
 Entry Title: Speechless
 Entry Credit: Sam Lerner, Harikesh Prasad
 Judge Comment: Good topic. The real problem it seems is locally, where local city councils and school boards are not covered. No one knows what's going on? Citizens can go online and read minutes, but the substance of journalistic coverage, giving those issues context, is missing. If you and your community is never covered, do you even exist? Is there any record of what happened, who did what, etc? To that end, is your newspaper covering its own school board? Maybe calling on your own paper to do more government reporting as it relates to the school community would be good. Budgets? Policies? Elections?

Competition Comment: None

Best Single-Page Story Package (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Visual art electives
Entry Credit: Ellory Moran
Judge Comment: Glenbrook South: Lovely page with dynamite art that includes a dominant piece of artwork (the piece adjacent to "painting." This is one of the best pages I've encountered on a simple topic: electives. Good work.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Moment I became section leader layout
Entry Credit: Maggie Armstrong
Judge Comment: What a lovely, touching story about someone whose experience is positive and probably not that unusual. The background artwork acts as the dominant aspect of this package, and the photo of the student actually is secondary. This was a delight.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: A splash... a success... and a sensation
Entry Credit: Danielle Joseph
Judge Comment: My only concern is that no single piece of art/photo is large enough to dominate the page. Both the written and visual elements, including the headlines, are good quality.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: AI Generation Page of Examiner
Entry Credit: Ana Torresarpi, Maya Ramaswamy, Kate Dieffenbacher
Judge Comment: Fun package on AI; I especially like the side-by-side comparison on drawings and text (student creator v. AI). The three drawings at the top serve as a defector dominant piece of art. Nice work.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Honoring History
Entry Credit: Jennifer Huang, Ava Winber
Judge Comment: Good idea to focus on Black History Month activities at the school, but the package would have been improved with stronger (and larger) artwork.

Competition Comment: In creating a package, make certain that a single piece (or in some cases, a linked grouping) of artwork dominates the page. That means the artwork should usually take up about 20 percent of the available space AND should be about twice as big as other artwork in the package. Comments on other entries: Downers Grove South: Good topic and an interesting first-person piece on a student's post-COVID experience (and self-examination). The artwork is a decent size but could have been larger – maybe this would be an occasion for some drawn artwork instead of the student's photo and quote. Good reading, Downers Grove South: Good update on the girls basketball team, with a couple of nice pieces of art – the photo and the color box at left. The problem is that, to be considered a "package," the entire grouping of info about the girls basketball team should be in a rectangle, so that – visually – we know that these things go together. As it is, at first glance it appears that the color box may be about the bowling team. Stevenson: Nice package about this worthwhile student outreach project. While the artwork at bottom right is fine, something that better alludes to the global nature of this project might have better carried the grouping of story and art. Something with a map, perhaps?

Best Sports Commentary (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Athletes 'get on the line'
Entry Credit: Kate Dziewinski
Judge Comment: A fine opinion piece explaining why cross country is so difficult.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Showing my gratitude: the sport that changed my life
Entry Credit: Anya Azara
Judge Comment: A very personal opinion piece that makes you think.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Chicago Bears building for the future
Entry Credit: Gabe Gowen
Judge Comment: A well-argued opinion with solid reporting.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: Our picks for Week 8 of fantasy football
Entry Credit: Owen Appel, Logan Feller
Judge Comment: A thoughtful opinion piece on what fantasy players should do for that week.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Athletic culture leaves women in the dust
Entry Credit: Erin Walker
Judge Comment: A nice piece noting the tilted benefits of men's sports over women's sports.

Competition Comment: None

Best Sports Feature Story (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Dancing Queen, Young and Sweet
Entry Credit: Jessy Gone
Judge Comment: Excellent feature story. Solid descriptive writing really captures the atmosphere of high school football from the perspective of the dance squad. The story ends by circling back to the scene in the opening paragraphs for a satisfying bookend. Nice job!

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Cushing is ready to hit it out of the park as an Illini
Entry Credit: Lauren Miranda
Judge Comment: Nicely done profile of a successful athlete headed for college. Good use of quotes brings the subject's personality to the fore.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Game Changers
Entry Credit: Jennifer Huang, Elizabeth Yuan
Judge Comment: Timely look at gender issues in non-contact sports. I found it enlightening. Well written with good use of quotes from credible sources.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: She's been throwin' and growin'
Entry Credit: Anna Karpinski
Judge Comment: This entry shows not every sports profile has to be about a star. Stories like this help to make school sports seem more accessible to more students. Well written with good use of quotes.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: Fencing team seeks to stay elite following head coach Colby Vargas' retirement
Entry Credit: Owen Appel
Judge Comment: Solid look at a team in transition. Good quotes capture the personality of the retiring coach.

Competition Comment: None

Best Sports News Story (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: NT girls wrestling rises in third season
Entry Credit: Neil Sanderson
Judge Comment: Great job covering your bases and trying to get as many perspectives as possible. Well done on not only updating where girls wrestling at NT is at, but highlighting the growth and some of the struggles for girls that came with being on the team.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: DGS varsity girls basketball team stung a 44-29 win against the Hinsdale South Hornets
Entry Credit: Kate Dziewinski
Judge Comment: Fantastic lead to set the tone and highlight the intensity of the game. Nice summary of how the game went and when it swung into DGS' favor. A deeper description of the physicality between the teams would add an extra level of detail that improves the story overall.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: South hosts Australian basketball team
Entry Credit: Danielle Joseph
Judge Comment: Great job highlighting the non-sports impact of the school playing against an Australian team and how that came about. It shows how sports can sometimes be used to connect other areas of life. Only thing that may have added to it is the perspective from an Australian player about what it's like to play in America and some of the cultural differences that exist.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: DGS varsity boys basketball team's last dance
Entry Credit: Kate Dziewinski
Judge Comment: Creative way of taking us through the game step by step to show a bit of perspective on how the team lost. Good job getting player and coach quotes to help understand what was going through their mind as this tough game played out. Would've been nice to see what the team thought they could do differently to get a more desired outcome.

Competition Comment: Many strong entries in this one. There was a lot of great detail and underlining topics where sports helped play a role in learning new life perspectives.

Best Sports Photo (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Caption: "The thing that is so special about this group, is that when someone is having a day off, there are people that can really pick it up..."
Entry Credit: Vanja Bogdonavic
Judge Comment: Really captures the physicality of the sport. Love the reactions on the faces.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Springing into Action (gymnastics)
Entry Credit: Amber Hwang
Judge Comment: Shows the poise and concentration. Nicely composed.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Football players tackle opponent photo (was published on our website in a gallery)
Entry Credit: Maya Hiermann
Judge Comment: Great tight shot with excellent composition. Really like the cascading players in red.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Football team takes the field (was published in a gallery on our website)
Entry Credit: Kathleen Nash
Judge Comment: Good framing and point of view.

Competition Comment: None

Best Staff Editorial (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Under the Varnish
Entry Credit: Fiona Jin
Judge Comment: I like this a lot! I haven't read an editorial on this yet and I think you all did a great job at writing about a topic that's important to you. This is well-researched and relatable for other students, exactly what an editorial should be.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: HHS prioritizing safety or control?
Entry Credit: Maggie Armstrong, Jessy Gone
Judge Comment: Very specific to your school and passionate. I applaud you for speaking your truth! In the future, it would be better to stick to your own voice and opinion rather than including quotes from others. Use those interviews and research to guide your thoughts but let your own voice shine through a bit more.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Editorial: Book bans flirt with fascism
Entry Credit: Andrew Staser
Judge Comment: This is great! I think the staff did a wonderful job approaching a very important topic. To make it even better, I suggest you make some recommendations that leaders on your campus can take now to speak out against book bans.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Raider Nation revised
Entry Credit: Maggie Armstrong, Jessy Gone
Judge Comment: This is great! I like how you focused on an issue close to home that's impacting your school. And by calling on those in charge to take action, you made a real change on your campus!

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: The Crush of Competition
Entry Credit: Editorial Board
Judge Comment: This is very well-written and offers touching student stories and experiences. For future reference, an editorial should be more focused on the staff's opinions on an issue rather than interviews with others. Certainly do your research to guide your work, but use your collective voice to get the point across.

Competition Comment: Some phenomenal entries here! Congratulations on some great work. Remember the best editorials focus on your own voice and on issues facing you at your specific school. Follow those two tips and your work will be even better!

Best Use of Social Media (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: New Trier News Instagram
Entry Credit: New Trier News Editorial Staff
Judge Comment: Great variety of content!

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: The Voice: Instagram
Entry Credit: Carrie Willig, Katelyn Engling
Judge Comment: Good variety of content

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: Oracle Instagram
Entry Credit: Riley Shankman, Kris Blumberg, Layla Mohamed, Sara Rahman
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Instagram: downerssouthblueprint
Entry Credit: Juliana Conyer, Maya Homberg, Lauren Miranda
Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: Huntley Voice: TikTok
Entry Credit: Carrie Willig, Katelyn Engling
Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: None

Best Video Story (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
 Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
 Entry Title: Boys varsity basketball wins against Hinsdale South
 Entry Credit: William Elliott
 Judge Comment: Count me as one of Will Elliott's biggest fans. I wasn't aware of his work before this contest, but I'm dialed in now. This is a truly professional quality news story. I am incredibly impressed at how well the video breaks down a complicated legal issue that originated at another school and localizes it for DGS viewers. The interviews are extremely well done — clear analyses that inform the viewer without oversimplifying matters. The video's exploration of the lawsuit's larger implications for high school sports is a pro move. The use of B-roll throughout the video was stellar. Great editing! I wish the video had stated when the lawsuit had been filed and whether the game against DGS was Savage's first game back since he was reinstated. A sentence or two about how the DGS-Hinsdale South game turned out would have also enhanced the video. But those are quibbles. This is first-rate work!

Place Name: Second Place
 Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
 Entry Title: Student breaks 52-year-old record
 Entry Credit: William Elliott
 Judge Comment: Another great Will Elliott video! The combination of tight focus ("focus" as in narrative focus not camera focus, although that's good too!), compelling sound bites and great B-roll footage produced a fast-moving, informative and thoroughly engaging piece of work. Oh, and the concluding comment from Dr. Antonoff was just ... chef's kiss. Perfect way to end! The one area that needed improvement here was the audio quality of the interviews, particularly Nicky's. I'm sure I don't need to tell you about wireless microphones. If you haven't invested in one, I would encourage you to do so. They make a world of difference! But I don't want to diminish the accomplishment here. I felt like I was witnessing the beginning of a great broadcasting career as I watched both of Will's videos. Amazing! Keep on creating, man!

Place Name: Third Place
 Contestant Name: Huntley High School
 Entry Title: Shining light and celebrating individuals with disabilities
 Entry Credit: Irene Banerjee
 Judge Comment: This is really a first cut rather than a final cut. The video is almost four and a half minutes long, but it really should be no more than a minute and half. In fact, with some tight editing, you could produce an extremely informative, fast-paced and engaging 60-second video. There's lots of footage here that could and should have been removed. Some suggestions for how this video could have been improved, which can also apply to future videos: (1) Edit, edit, edit. By that I mean: Listen closely to your interviews and only use the best sound bites, the comments that truly pertain to the central focus of your video. Delete everything else. Be ruthless in what you cut. Your viewers will thank you. (2) Use title graphics to identify your speakers. Don't waste time by having them say (or spell!) their names. (3) Use more B-roll. Don't just let people talk and talk. Show us some action that is relevant to what they're saying. (4) If you're going to use a narrator, the narrator should give us essential information right at the start. What is RAD? What is a RAD event? What is this particular RAD event? I still don't know what RAD is, although I can guess. I had to wait until the 3:45 mark before someone explained what this particular RAD event was. Don't assume that all of your viewers know these things. It's tempting to do so, but failing to provide essential background info is the surest way to get people to stop watching. No one wants to be confused, and no one is going to stop and do research to answer questions that should have been answered at the beginning of the video. (5) Use external microphones when recording interviews. Don't rely on the internal mic in your camera. The best mic is a wireless mic that can be attached to the interviewee's collar or lapel or lanyard. The "Rode" brand offers excellent and affordable wireless mics. Using them will improve your audio quality significantly. (6) Show us kids in action. This was an event at a middle school, right? Where are those kids? Or wasn't this event aimed at kids? Again, I shouldn't have to ask a question like that. The video should cover that within the first 15-20 seconds. I don't mean to discourage the students who produced this video. There was a lot of potential here. But taking raw footage and turning it into a compelling video requires intense focus and the willingness to cut and revise, cut and revise. I hope these suggestions can be applied to future videos. Keep on creating!

Competition Comment: The first- and second-place videos were truly outstanding; the editing was tight, the sound bites were on point and expertly chosen, and the B-roll footage was visually compelling. Each had minor flaws, but overall they were of national award-winning caliber. The third-place video had a lot of potential but would require considerable cutting and revising to bring it up to the level of the first two. But don't be discouraged. Keep developing your editing skills, and you'll get there!

Best Website (Enrollment Division 5)

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Stevenson High School
Entry Title: Overall Website
Entry Credit: Jennifer Huang, Vivian Zhu, Angela Guo
Judge Comment: I really love the design of this website! I think you have some great photos and a good mix of content (I especially like the puzzles). My only advice is to ensure that a photo or graphic is being posted with every article so certain sections don't become too text heavy, but other than that, excellent work!

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: Downers Grove South High School
Entry Title: Southbluerpint
Entry Credit: Maya Homberg, Lauren Miranda, Owen Chaidz
Judge Comment: Great work! I think you have some excellent photos and a good mix of content. And, almost every piece of content has a preview photo with it, which is amazing! My only piece of advice is to lean more into multimedia coverage of things when possible, just to add even more variety to your content. But other than that, great work!

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Glenbrook South High School
Entry Title: The Oracle
Entry Credit: Riley Shankman, Mia Carr, Gaby Yap, Kris Blumberg, Layla Mohamed, Sara Rahman
Judge Comment: Great work! You have good mix of content, and the interactive poll element on your homepage is really cool! I also really love the score stream that lists recent sports scores. One thing I'd suggest is to update the podcast on your homepage since it's from 2020. Another piece of advice from me is to just ensure that a photo or graphic is being posted with every article so certain sections don't become too text heavy, but other than that, excellent work!

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: New Trier High School
Entry Title: The New Trier News Online
Entry Credit: Logan Feller, Kate Dieffenbacher, William Karr, Alexia Green, Neil Sanderson, Brendan Fijol, Sofia Carbonell, David Rhee, Peter McNeely, Owen Appel, Charlotte Hutchinson
Judge Comment: I really love the more interactive elements you have, like the instagram embed and the puzzles, which are so cool! And, almost every piece of content has a preview photo with it, which is amazing! My only piece of advice is to lean more into multimedia coverage of things when possible, just to add even more variety to your content. But other than that, great work!

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Huntley High School
Entry Title: huntleyvoice.com
Entry Credit: Maggie Armstrong, Jessie Gone, Emma Christenson, Irene Banerjee
Judge Comment: I love your multimedia content! I think it's so fun and interesting, and I'm sure students really enjoy watching your stuff. I also really liked the social media embeds on your homepage. The one suggestion I have is to consider getting rid of the video/podcasts tab under "Multimedia" since it doesn't have anything on it. But other than that, great work!

Competition Comment: None