

2025 IJEА NEWSPAPER & DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA CONTEST

DIVISION 2 INDIVIDUAL WINNERS — Enrollment 600 to 1,399

BEST ADVERTISEMENT

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Turning Moments Into Stories

Entry Credit: Clare McRoberts, Eli Raikhel

Judge Comment: Really impressive! This brings to mind the classic ads that U-High Midway used to create back in the Wayne Brasler era (for Medici in particular). The photo is first rate — really expressive and inviting. The tagline is excellent, and the first-person testimony tells a great story. All elements of the design work together to produce an eye-catching message. Very effective!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Radium Girls Advertisement

Entry Credit: Stacy Layton

Judge Comment: Straightforward and to the point. All of the essential info is here. Color scheme is attractive. Nice job!

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Alice's Corner Advertisement

Entry Credit: Jasper Paulson

Judge Comment: Good use of artwork. Simple and clean design. The emphasis on the deal ("Buy any sandwich, get one drink free") is effective. Would like to see the hours of business.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST ALTERNATIVE STORYTELLING

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School

Entry Title: Galentine's Day Activities

Entry Credit: Adilene Urbina

Judge Comment: Such a wonderful piece of service journalism.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School
Entry Title: City Life: Slice of the City
Entry Credit: Sohana Schneider
Judge Comment: Honestly the layout is perfect, and so is the design.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School
Entry Title: Midway 100
Entry Credit: Jaya Alenghat, Ari Novak, Lucy Shirrell, Declan Smith
Judge Comment: Great content, and a lot of dedication went into this. Well done.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: What is your biggest irrational fear?
Entry Credit: Kayli Loonam, Casper Suehs
Judge Comment: Great job on the design!

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: 2024- 2025: Meet the teachers
Entry Credit: Paw Print Staff
Judge Comment: There might be a way to que people to read the photo's associated articles, by slightly editing the photos in Adobe Express potentially to tease the new webpage. I think the content is spot on and otherwise well executed.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST AUDIO JOURNALISM

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School
Entry Title: Audio: Dungeons & Dragons fosters creativity, connection
Entry Credit: Light Dohrn
Judge Comment: Fine storytelling here. Good use of audio at the outset, but actuality could have been better mic'd.

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School
Entry Title: Audio: Through self-discovery about identity, students gain independence
Entry Credit: Ari Novak
Judge Comment: Solid, newsy opening for a story more important than ever. Awkward,

choppy audio editing. Would have benefitted from perspectives outside of those students being profiled—like educators, parents, counselors.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Boys Varsity Basketball Ends Historic Season with Super-Sectional Loss to DePaul Prep

Entry Credit: Audrey Walker

Judge Comment: Poor production. Off-mic voice. A piece that sounds crafted like a print article, not produced for the ear. Ends abruptly, after actuality—with no signoff or concluding remarks by the reporter.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kickin' it With the Krier: Kaneland Life | Senior Sarah Slattery

Entry Credit: Casper Suehs, Isa Alba

Judge Comment: Volume so low as to be almost inaudible. Well structured interview, but could have benefitted from lots of editing to keep things rolling.

Competition Comment: The top two in this category are equally qualified for the top prize. Can we make it a tie?

BEST CENTERSPREAD STORY PACKAGE

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Future in the Balance

Entry Credit: Chloë Alexander, Taariq Ahmed, Light Dohrn, Edward Park, Sygne Stole

Judge Comment: The spread localizes the national issue and uses good design to pull readers to well-reported coverage.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Addicted to the Algorithm

Entry Credit: Clare McRoberts, Milo Platz-Walker, Taariq Ahmed, Jaya Alenghat, Skye Freeman, Naomi Benton, Lila Coyne, Sygne Stole

Judge Comment: This topic should find much interest by readers, and the design is clever and eye-catching. Be ready to keep covering this issue.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Rising Tuitions: The Challenges of Affording College

Entry Credit: Anna Gatz, Sophia Schroll

Judge Comment: This topic makes a good focus for a spread and shows an effort to provide readers with crucial information. Avoid colons and get verbs in headlines.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Generational Differences in Childhood

Entry Credit: Clara Saros, Sophie Thill, Sophia Schroll

Judge Comment: The news sense is sharp in spotting a good feature topic for a spread. Again, avoid the colon and use actions verbs in headlines.

Competition Comment: The entries all showed good news sense in spotting school-related subjects for spreads. The follow-up with good reporting in lively design showed hard work and good journalism.

BEST EDITORIAL CARTOON

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Troubling Tech

Entry Credit: Ilana Umanskiy

Judge Comment: Point of view is shown and supports opinion. Cartoon is nicely done.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Burnout Avenue Cartoon

Entry Credit: Zoe Gannon

Judge Comment: Point of view is subtle, but effective and makes reader think about the issue,

Competition Comment: Aside from the winning entries, all others did not meet the criteria for an editorial cartoon, that being, as stated, "A cartoon that expresses an opinion about a subject of relevance to the publication's audience" and that an editorial cartoon "should not simply be an illustration that goes along with a news or feature article."

BEST FEATURE STORY

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School

Entry Title: Service and surfin': EPHS students visit the Dominican Republic

Entry Credit: Yeimi Alday

Judge Comment: Students traveled to Costa Rica to learn, provide service, earn credit,

etc. Good overview and chock full of info about the program, the trip and the students and staff. Nice job. The reader feels as if he were there with them!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Rising Tuitions: The Challenges of Affording College

Entry Credit: Anna Gatz

Judge Comment: Excellent writing style and story flow. Good use of primary and secondary sources. Lots of good information to provide context. Love the descriptive lead, but it takes five graphs to get to the real topic. Mention cost a bit earlier. Nice job.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Skipping breakfast makes students run on empty

Entry Credit: Orlie Weitzman

Judge Comment: Good quick story. Does your school cafeteria have any insight into the practices of your student body? Does your kitchen staff consider these same issues? How many people pop down for something to eat in the morning? What is offered? Any breakfast places near the school? Nice anecdotes, use of background data and good story flow.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Meet your 2025-26 LSC student representatives

Entry Credit: Alexa Gola

Judge Comment: I liked this piece a lot and felt that I had a good understanding of their goals. I did not feel as if I got to know them as much. Maybe a little about themselves. Why do they personally do this? Does it feed into their future plans?

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Mrs Sanders: Inspiring a love for literature in every student

Entry Credit: Marcus Hoog

Judge Comment: New teacher profile, an important staple of the high school paper. Lots of good background. I think you answered any questions I might have about her, so GOOD JOB!

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST FRONT-PAGE DESIGN

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Krier Volume 51 Issue 4

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: Outstanding photo illustration! It works perfectly with the headline to create a clear thematic message about the contents of the issue. The page itself is a work of art. Bravo!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Vol. 99, Issue 10, May 30, 2024

Entry Credit: Taariq Ahmed

Judge Comment: This is a textbook-perfect example of a visually compelling traditional newspaper front page: clear hierarchy of elements, simple and clean modular design, consistent typography, well-composed and relevant photos, reader-friendly teasers. My only suggestion would be to break up the text-heavy lead article with a pullout quote or subheads. Other than that, this is superb work!

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Vol. 100, Issue 3, Oct. 24, 2024

Entry Credit: Taariq Ahmed

Judge Comment: This is another strong traditional front-page design. The lead photo here is stronger than the lead photo in the second-place entry, but the action within this photo directs the reader off the page rather into the story. A few adjustments in the arrangement of the elements probably could have fixed that and would have made the design even more effective. Also, the cutline for the photo at the bottom of the page is a little unclear. Who is the person in the photo? A current faculty member or the former project assistant? Don't assume everyone would know. Everything else is solid.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School

Entry Title: January/February Edition Cover

Entry Credit: Alila Underwood, Elysia Gonzalez

Judge Comment: Impressive illustration and nicely laid out, but I'm not sure how it works as the gateway to this issue. Is "2025" the theme of the issue? Does the illustration accompany one specific article? Or is it a stand-alone illustration, unrelated to the rest of the content? If readers are asking these type of questions, then the front page isn't working as intended.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Krier Volume 51 Issue 3

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: Another superb photo illustration! Well executed. Not sure how effective it is as a front page, however. The topic and illustration are both a bit abstract. I would be curious as to how it was received. It doesn't seem to sell the rest of the issue's contents.

Competition Comment: The "Civic Edition" front page is a nice traditional design. However, it needs to establish a more clear and distinct hierarchy of elements. The headlines and photos of both articles are too similar in size. The lead article should declare itself as such by having the indisputably dominant headline and photo.

BEST HEADLINE

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: New president 'shoes' away negativity

Entry Credit: Andres Sotelo

Judge Comment: While I expected more focus in the story about the main subject's shoes, the double entendre of the word choice in the headline is cleverly incorporated into the sole ... er, soul ... of the story, which is about his approach to leading. Turning the noun "shoe" into a clever verb used ingenuity to find the right phrasing to capture the essence of the story.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: School or Fuel

Entry Credit: Edward Park, Simon Vaang, Nika Nelson

Judge Comment: Great tie-in from "fuel" in the main headline to the "run on empty" phrase in the subhead. A different verb instead of skipping that connects to transportation ("bypassing", for example?) would have put a strong emphasis on the metaphor.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: One tough cookie

Entry Credit: Jaya Alenghat, Naomi Benton

Judge Comment: The content of this piece offers so many possibilities for plays on words, it must have been difficult to decide what to use. The use of "tough" appropriately ties to the main subject's military background within the familiar "tough cookie" phrase. It also pairs well with his building bicep in the adjacent photo.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: A Dream Shaped by Family and Grit

Entry Credit: Carli Filek

Judge Comment: The headline is not flashy, but then neither is the content of the main subject's story. It's all about determination and finding a way to succeed through hard work. The simple use of the ideas of "family" and "grit" appropriately capture the heart of the story. This is not a story to try to create a cutesy or overly clever headline, and its understated, straightforward nature is just right.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Double standard(ized): Illinois' SAT-ACT switch

Entry Credit: Alexa Gola

Judge Comment: Very clever play on words with the "double standard" phrase. As a traditionalist, I prefer to see strong verbs used in headlines. "Illinois' SAT-ACT switch ..." DOES what?

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST HUMOROUS COMMENTARY

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: A Twin Perspective

Entry Credit: Sophie Thill

Judge Comment: Excellent piece of humor writing. It presents an interesting point of view about being a twin. Creative and well presented.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Why Don't You Get a Job

Entry Credit: Bobby Leavey

Judge Comment: Nice humorous opinion writing with a well presented argument.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Sigma slang skibidies on brain

Entry Credit: Agatha Niznik

Judge Comment: Excellent take on generational slang.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Flag Forward

Entry Credit: Abhay Chandran

Judge Comment: Well researched and written rating piece.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST ILLUSTRATION

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Freedom in the Balance

Entry Credit: Sygne Stole

Judge Comment: Powerful display showing so much detail in one illustration.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Hollywood High

Entry Credit: Asher Dennis

Judge Comment: Juxtaposition of viewer and screen helps to draw readers in.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Double standard(ized): Illinois' SAT-ACT switch

Entry Credit: Palmer Norman

Judge Comment: Clever idea of the relay and message of a relay race to college.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School

Entry Title: The Possible Gain of More U.S. Territory

Entry Credit: Alila Underwood

Judge Comment: Love the simple idea of the pencil erasing that show what is being proposed as a simple idea.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Athletes question the necessity of gym class

Entry Credit: Palyn O-Saithai

Judge Comment: Strong art of athlete with eye-catching color choices.

Competition Comment: Illustrations showcase strong art with clear messages. Most entries look as if conversations between illustrator, reporter and editors have taken place (instead of throwing art in at the last minute to take up space.) Impressive art skills and creative ideas draw in readers.

BEST IN-DEPTH NEWS STORY

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: AI becomes a tool: ChatGPT tasks expand beyond simple prompts

Entry Credit: Light Dohrn

Judge Comment: This is a great example of how a big picture topic can be localized within a school community in a context that is informative and interesting. Well done.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: TikTok remains a staple amid security scare

Entry Credit: Taariq Ahmed

Judge Comment: I enjoyed the input from students in how the app's ban affected them and their views on the app. That insight drove the narrative and kept it relevant to the intended audience.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Recapping Dr. Stacey A. Dixon's visit to Payton

Entry Credit: Alexa Gola

Judge Comment: This was a well-done feature on the school visit. It dove into a lot of the discussion that matters to students. In future recaps, I would suggest using more scene to make it feel less like a full agenda. I did like how it was broken up into digestible subheads.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Marking five years since CPS shutdown: Students reflect on the impact of COVID-19

Entry Credit: Alexa Gola

Judge Comment: This is a wonderful look back on how far the school community has come since the pandemic years. Fantastic insight. In the future I would consider breaking up the quotes by paraphrasing and then using a sentence or two quote. Just helps the reader glide through the story easier.

Competition Comment: I see a lot of creative angles coming out of these submissions. A lot of the topics covered are bigger picture things that were broken down in a relatable way to show what it means to/how it impacts student life. Well done all.

BEST INFOGRAPHIC

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School

Entry Title: Meta calls it quits on fact-checking

Entry Credit: Luna Munoz-Diaz

Judge Comment: I love the illustrations in your infographic! The complementary color scheme works well. I wish the illustrations were a little larger though - you have the room!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Amenorrhea

Entry Credit: Sophia Schroll

Judge Comment: Great illustrations in your infographic! I think the original artwork really enhances the page.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Every vote matters: preparing for the Nov. 5 election

Entry Credit: Alexa Gola

Judge Comment: Great job on this infographic! The dial with arrows showing the process progression is very well done and a great concept.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Historic Basketball Season infographic

Entry Credit: Sophia Schroll

Judge Comment: Nice design! I love the idea of using the sections of the basketball to contain the information, very inventive! Colors are great.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST MULTIMEDIA STORY PACKAGE

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Boys Varsity Soccer Defeats Sycamore 2-1

Entry Credit: Audrey Walker, Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: good action shots, nice article-told the story of the event, including how fans were separated and what happened in previous years. great

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Eclipse excitement: Lab community gathers to celebrate unique celestial event

Entry Credit: Jaya Alenghat, Taariq Ahmed, Mia Lipson, Nathan Li, Olin Nafziger, Eli Raikhel, Grace LaBelle, Ryan Burke-Stevenson, Ellis Calleri, Bryce Light

Judge Comment: Your photos told the story. Great photo essay. Nice job.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland repeats as Plano Christmas Classic Champion with win over Yorkville Christian

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: some good action shots, some shots unfortunately cropped too tight as to limit the action,

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Dynamic Duets: Through co-teaching, music faculty improve engagement, experience

Entry Credit: Skye Freeman, Taariq Ahmed

Judge Comment: Good story idea. The video could have been a strong point of the entry, however, it wasn't used effectively. Need to edit the video down--too long. Needed to script the video--write lead-ins to soundbites. Never put a CG on screen of the question. Write the question into the set-up. Needed cutaways for interviews. Let's see the folks in action rather than just sitting and talking--so as they are talking, we see different video that enhances the purpose of the piece. Directing, interacting with students, show me what they do since it is a piece about co-teaching--see them teaching

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST NEWS OR FEATURE PHOTO

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Flying high: A celebration of one of Chicago's favorite yearly traditions

Entry Credit: Leah Galibois

Judge Comment: Powerful, tight shot. Well-done!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Prom ... celebration (Photo 3)

Entry Credit: Daniel Baeza

<p>Judge Comment: Not sure which image was the entry, but alot of good photos in the series!</p>
<p>Place Name: Third Place Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School Entry Title: Remembering Officer Dan Entry Credit: Caitlin Sears Judge Comment: Touching image. Sad and celebratory at the same time.</p>
<p>Place Name: Honorable Mention Contestant Name: Kaneland High School Entry Title: Motorcycle Drive Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery Judge Comment: Dramatic lighting and interesting composition.</p>
<p>Place Name: Honorable Mention Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School Entry Title: Healing through dance: The Power and Strength that comes from Movement Entry Credit: Leah Galibois Judge Comment: Good work capturing the energy and intensity.</p>
<p>Competition Comment: See judge comments.</p>

BEST NEWS STORY

<p>Place Name: First Place Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School Entry Title: Problematic 'confessions' shared Entry Credit: Taariq Ahmed Judge Comment: Very well-written story about an issue of obvious relevance to your school community. Great lede -- really sets the scene. Good use of sources and quotes from students and admin. Excellent job!</p>
<p>Place Name: Second Place Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School Entry Title: Lab adapts to reality of tighter budget Entry Credit: Taariq Ahmed, Jaya Alenghat, Clare McRoberts Judge Comment: A great approach to a budget story, focusing on the impact on school programs. Your first sentence is well crafted but a bit longer than a lede should be. Great quotes and details. Very well written and organized. Excellent job!</p>
<p>Place Name: Third Place Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School</p>

Entry Title: Democrats warn DNC attendees of Project 2025's threat to society

Entry Credit: Madeleine Spanbauer

Judge Comment: What an opportunity for a student to attend and cover a national political convention! A bit too much background at the outset before getting to the first-hand account of the speakers. I would have also liked to see you tie the significance of these issues to your school community, to personalize this for your audience. Overall well written, nicely done!

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Financial Struggles Force Cuts

Entry Credit: Carli Filek

Judge Comment: There's plenty of good information here but more careful organization would make for a more compelling story. Because of the time lag, you should be leading with the impact of the plan, not the vote -- your lede's your second graf (the "when" is rarely the most important part of a story). Good quotes and sources. A generally decent job -- more strategic organization will make it better.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Food trucks, new classes, small projects

Entry Credit: Cassie Martinez, Magdalena Mokrzycki

Judge Comment: There are a lot of details and information here, but it could be better organized for a news presentation. For example, the details about new classes in your 2nd graf could be more powerful as your lede. Still, lots of great insights that should be important to your local school readers. Avoid editorializing, as in your last graf.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST OVERALL DESIGN

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Vol. 100, Issue 8, Feb. 20, 2025

Entry Credit: U-High Midway Staff

Judge Comment: Slight shifts in type size and weight give even the busiest pages enough visual hierarchy to boost reader interest. Eye-popping graphic on feature spread is original and on point. White space, modular design and visual hierarchy achieved on all pages. Screens add visual interest.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Krier Volume 51 Issue 3

Entry Credit: Krier Staff

Judge Comment: Provocative cover images compels readers to look inside. Screens on pp. 6-8 help boost reader interest. Modular design and proper white space achieved on all pages.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Mother McAuley High School

Entry Title: September/October Edition

Entry Credit: Inscape Staff

Judge Comment: Color-coded department markers make for an easy-to-follow read. Copy is generally clean and free from widows or orphans. White space and modular design achieved on all pages.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST PERSONALITY PROFILE

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Defying Gravity: Daisy Coleman finds freedom in aerial silks

Entry Credit: Mia Lipson

Judge Comment: This is a strong story with good storytelling and reporting.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Dean Deb retires after 25 years of unforgettable service

Entry Credit: Hannah Hoog

Judge Comment: A good story well told.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Bruett-Fedell brings faith-filled zeal to theology department

Entry Credit: Hannah Hoog

Judge Comment: This article effectively introduces a new teacher and brings her to life with good details and stories. It could use a better (more compelling and likely anecdotal) opening.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST PHOTO GALLERY OR PHOTO SLIDESHOW

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: After 8 days, UChicago pro-Palestine encampment removed on morning of May 7

Entry Credit: Jaya Alenghat, Chloë Alexander, Mia Lipson, Olin Nafziger

Judge Comment: This tells a gripping story. The visual narrative is wonderfully done. This is truly professional caliber work!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Exchange students arrive from China; Lunar New Year performance amazes

Entry Credit: Bryce Kenny, Olin Nafziger, Orlie Weitzman

Judge Comment: These are beautifully composed photos. A great deal of thought and care obviously went into planning the coverage of this event. The execution is flawless!

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Boys Basketball Wins Sectional Championship over Crystal Lake South

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: Powerful action shots, but would have liked more horizontals. The verticals crop out too much of the surrounding action and atmosphere. Also, the photos seemed out of order. The gallery appears to begin with the post-game celebration. Those are terrific photos, but they would have more impact if they were placed sequentially at the end of the gallery.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Black History Month Compass

Entry Credit: Alexa Gola, Leah Galibois

Judge Comment: Excellent variety of shots. The gallery really brings the event to life.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland falls to DePaul College Prep in Super-Sectional round

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: Very impressive action shots. The gallery would have been stronger with some shots of the team (and even their fans) reacting to the loss.

Competition Comment: NOTE: The "Flying high" entry appeared to consist of only one photo. The photo itself was excellent, but this category calls for at least five photos as part of a gallery or slideshow.

BEST PHOTO STORY

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Peak Action

Entry Credit: Milo Platz-Walker, Simon Vaang, Eli Raikhel, Ryan Burke-Stevenson, Carter Chang, Bryce Light, Daniel Baeza

Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Coaching with Care

Entry Credit: Milo Platz-Walker, Lucy Shirrell, Devyn Moubayed, Bryce Kenny, Clara Blucher, Suleiman Sufi, N.C. Gunning

Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Protecting Democracy: A visualization of the 2024 Democratic National Convention

Entry Credit: Leah Galibois

Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: The first-place winner in this category is a good example for other schools to follow: A dominant photo; informative captions; minimal copy; strong, large headline. Some schools seem unclear on the importance of dominant photos in design, especially in photo stories. A photo story should be more than a collection of photos: It should be a grouping that tells a story.

BEST REVIEW

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Court Theatre's 'A Raisin in the Sun' honors Hansberry's vision

Entry Credit: Light Dohrn

Judge Comment: A wonderfully written analysis of Lorraine Hansberry's masterpiece when viewed through a modern lens.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: 'Cunk on Life' provides both meaning and humor

Entry Credit: Abhay Chandran

Judge Comment: An excellent and enticing exploration of the comic persona created by Diane Morgan.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Charli XCX's new album a summer success

Entry Credit: Kellan Schieler

Judge Comment: An illuminating look at how Charli XCX dominated the culture with her "Brat summer."

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School

Entry Title: It Ends With Us: Comparing the Book & Movie

Entry Credit: Ella Vargas

Judge Comment: A fantastic account of the striking ways in which the film version of "It Ends with Us" differed from its source material.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Don't Worry Darling: A Psychological Mystery

Entry Credit: Faith Maschman

Judge Comment: This impassioned review does an exceptional job of detailing how the film told its story visually, which is all too often overlooked.

Competition Comment: What these submissions give me, above all, is a renewed hope for the future of incisive and thoughtful journalism.

BEST SERIOUS COMMENTARY

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Current Sex Education is Insufficient

Entry Credit: Audrey Walker

Judge Comment: Very detailed, careful analysis of where the schools are in complying with these mandates. Investigative as well as persuasive. A good follow-up: Should LGBTQ issues, for example, be incorporated into sex education curricula?

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: The Struggles of Being Mixed Race

Entry Credit: Jasper Paulson

Judge Comment: Excellent personal take on a big topic. Personal experiences always help readers identify and bring an issue home.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Op-Ed: Even in an overwhelmingly liberal school, diverse political voices matter

Entry Credit: Steven Jiang

Judge Comment: Some courage shown here in writing a column with the potential of creating more heat than light, but writer achieves the opposite. Careful writing and clarity help create an environment for open discussion.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST SINGLE-PAGE STORY PACKAGE

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: City Life: Cicadapalooza!

Entry Credit: Jaya Alenghat

Judge Comment: Great job on all three written pieces. Nice art with all the cicadas. A very informative page. Makes me miss the cicadas.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Opinion: 2 Views

Entry Credit: Kabir Joshi

Judge Comment: Both stories are well written. Nice graphic at the bottom that includes students' thoughts.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: St. Viator High School

Entry Title: Hydration vessel debate

Entry Credit: Atharva Patel

Judge Comment: I like the illustration that comes with this piece. It grabs my attention right away.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Unwrapping Blue Christmas

Entry Credit: Carli Filek, Zoe Gannon

Judge Comment: Nice job on the quotes from students at the bottom.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: KHS Welcomes New Principal

Entry Credit: Audrey Walker, Carli Filek

Judge Comment: Nice graphic to accompany the story, which was easy to follow and comprehend. I got a good feel for what the new principal is like.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST SPORTS COMMENTARY

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Elmwood Park High School

Entry Title: Why Girls Flag Football Deserves A Spot in EPHS Athletics

Entry Credit: Shailese Lebron

Judge Comment: A good story using facts and opinion advocating for having a girls' flag football program.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: High School Sports: Private vs. Public

Entry Credit: Evan Whildin

Judge Comment: A nice opinion piece arguing for separate competitions for private and public high schools. I like the statistics and the coach interview to give depth to the argument.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School

Entry Title: Why you should start watching Chicago Fire soccer

Entry Credit: Steven Jiang

Judge Comment: A nice story imploring readers to embrace our local professional men's soccer team.

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Revenue Sharing Does Not Belong in College Sports

Entry Credit: Nate Sand

Judge Comment: A very strong opinion. It would have been better if the writer mentioned counter arguments and then debated those arguments. Overall, a good job.

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST SPORTS FEATURE STORY**Place Name:** First Place**Contestant Name:** Kaneland High School**Entry Title:** How Hard Work Has Led to Success**Entry Credit:** Nate Sand**Judge Comment:** Nicely written, well rounded profile. Good use of quotes from the subject and his coaches. Good job exploring the "human side" of distance running.**Place Name:** Second Place**Contestant Name:** University of Chicago Laboratory High School**Entry Title:** Dancing Duo: Sonali Shaw, Ceci Siegel lead with passion, experience**Entry Credit:** Skye Freeman**Judge Comment:** Solid feature about competitive dance and the hard work it demands. Introduction works especially well as a scene-setter.**Place Name:** Third Place**Contestant Name:** St. Viator High School**Entry Title:** Football team hits jackpot with Gould hire**Entry Credit:** Ainslie McKenna**Judge Comment:** Good feature introducing the school's new football coach, a former NFL star. Letting the subject talk -- adding background as needed for context -- works here.**Place Name:** Honorable Mention**Contestant Name:** University of Chicago Laboratory High School**Entry Title:** Ella Nguyen finds fencing success through hard work, determination**Entry Credit:** Edward Park**Judge Comment:** Solid profile of a student in a relatively overlooked sport, fencing. Very strong quotes from her coach and brother help it work.**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.**BEST SPORTS NEWS STORY****Place Name:** First Place**Contestant Name:** Kaneland High School**Entry Title:** An Uphill Battle: Kaneland's Track**Entry Credit:** Anna Gatz**Judge Comment:** Incredibly detailed, well-written story not only about a sport, but about something that developed into a safety issue at the school. Some transitional paragraphs could've been smoother but that's being extremely nitpicky. Extremely well done.

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Boys Varsity Soccer Defeats Sycamore 2-1

Entry Credit: Audrey Walker

Judge Comment: Great job including the context on how spectator conflict impacted games in the last two years, it really helps show how intense this rivalry is. More in-depth quotes from the players on how the rivalry games generate a different atmosphere from other games.

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Adapting to the sideline: seniors coach Lab soccer team

Entry Credit: Clare McRoberts

Judge Comment: A creative take on having players help coach a team of players younger than them. It'd be nice to see more on how the players took lessons from coaching back to their own teams and if/how that experience helped them develop as players.

Competition Comment: A nice variety of creative approaches to telling sports stories in an informative way. Also shows that sports news isn't just tied to specific events, but can also be broadened to look at other factors such as safety issues on a track field or how spectator disputes have impacted rivalry games.

BEST SPORTS PHOTO

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Sam Bruno Kicking: Football

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: Such a unique shot! Love the low angle!!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: High Hopes (soccer players heading ball)

Entry Credit: Bryce Kenny

Judge Comment: Great shot! The physicality and intensity really come across!!

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Freddy Hassan Dunking: Basketball

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery

Judge Comment: Love the energy and enthusiasm depicted in the shot!

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School
Entry Title: Alex Giles girls basketball
Entry Credit: Simon Vaang
Judge Comment: Really like the drive and determination captured in the image!

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST STAFF EDITORIAL

Place Name: First Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Staff Editorial: In Defense of a Student-led Sweetness Day
Entry Credit: Paw Print Editorial Board
Judge Comment: This is an excellent editorial and a great example for other schools to follow. You uplifted something highly specific to your school and did so in a way that captivates your reader's attention while helping them learn about school tradition. Great job!

Place Name: Second Place
Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School
Entry Title: DEI initiatives are essential
Entry Credit: Mia Lipson
Judge Comment: Phenomenal job taking a national topic and relating it back to your school. I think you had a clear and concise argument that captivates the reader's attention.

Place Name: Third Place
Contestant Name: Walter Payton High School
Entry Title: Staff Editorial: In defense of the student voice at Payton
Entry Credit: Paw Print Editorial Board
Judge Comment: I learned a lot from this excellent editorial and commend you for speaking out about issues students are talking about at your school.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School
Entry Title: Battle fake news with literacy
Entry Credit: Chloë Alexander
Judge Comment: Nice work here! This is such an important topic and your readers are sure to learn a lot from your voice.

Place Name: Honorable Mention
Contestant Name: Kaneland High School
Entry Title: Harm of Overachieving Mindsets

Entry Credit: Sarah Slattery, Audrey Walker , Sophie Thill, Jasper Paulson, Nate Sand, Carli Filek, Zoe Gannon

Judge Comment: Very strong work here. I'm glad you took the opportunity to write about something on your minds. You did so in a compelling way that helps the reader relate.

Competition Comment: What a close competition with so many worthy entries! Thank you for the chance to read these. Keep sharing your voice in these editorials. Only you can use your power to inform others about things happening at your school and I encourage you to do so.

BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Instagram

Entry Credit: Naomi Benton, Abhay Chandran, Juliana Daugherty, Caroline Skelly

Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Instagram

Entry Credit: Carli Filek, Sophie Schroll

Judge Comment: None

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Tiktok

Entry Credit: Sophia Schroll, Carli Filek

Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment: Consistency is key! Consistently posting, consistently engaging, and consistent graphics make your social media stand out!

BEST VIDEO STORY

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Exchange students arrive from China; Lunar New Year performance amazes

Entry Credit: Ari Novak, Calder Wong

Judge Comment: This is visually gorgeous. Love the technical quality of the b-roll footage. Strong narration. The pace is fast and the overall length is just right, but the teacher

soundbite is really long (more than a minute). The use of b-roll on top of the soundbite breaks up the monotony, but a second (or even a third) voice would have been nice. The ending also seems a bit abrupt. But those are minor points. This is excellent work!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: Video: U-High Chamber Collective holds female-forward pop fundraiser

Entry Credit: Skye Freeman, Olin Nafziger

Judge Comment: Outstanding videography under some challenging lighting conditions! The concert footage is really lovely. Nice framing of the teacher. Good script with lots of pertinent info, but the narration was spoken a bit too rapidly. The technical quality of the student's soundbite was noticeably inferior to the teacher's audio. Any idea what caused that? A comment from one of the male musicians would have been interesting. Loved the reaction footage of the younger students in the audience. Overall, terrific video!

Place Name: Third Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Krier Insider: Episode 3 (Something Rotten)

Entry Credit: Anna Gatz

Judge Comment: Nice play preview! Good length, great pace, energetic b-roll, lots of student voices as well as just the right amount of essential info. The audio quality is a bit inconsistent, especially toward the end (Sarah Syed soundbite), and the choice of yellow and white for the intro and outro cards seems suboptimal. But overall this is well done!

Place Name: Honorable Mention

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kickin' it With the Krier | Connected Episode 1: Inflation

Entry Credit: Jasper Paulson, Casper Suehs

Judge Comment: Under two minutes is a good length, and the choice of topic is excellent. But a few things prevent this video from realizing its potential. First, it doesn't become clear — at least to this viewer — that the focus of the video is on cafeteria prices rather than inflation in general until we're about one-quarter of the way through (30 seconds in). This confusion could easily be avoided by making the cafeteria focus clear from the outset by revising the title of the video and reworking the intro. Second, the explanation by the teacher is good, but the lack of b-roll during his clip makes it a 70-second talking head segment, which is way too much. Third, the audio volume is inconsistent. The off-camera narration volume is good, but the on-camera audio volume is too low. Fourth, the real news — about the actual lunch price increase — is left for the end. That should have been part of the intro. Lots of potential here, though!

Competition Comment: See judge comments.

BEST WEBSITE

Place Name: First Place

Contestant Name: University of Chicago Laboratory High School

Entry Title: uhighmidway.com

Entry Credit: Jaya Alenghat, Chloë Alexander, Clare McRoberts, Mia Lipson

Judge Comment: Thoughtful layout and design. Header ticks all the boxes. Organized navigation with drop down and nice visual elements across the board. Versatile multimedia elements. Nice interactive poll on homepage and the newsletter sign-up is great. Longform featured stories have either quotes, internal/external links, tagging, info boxes, and optimized images with credits. Responsive mobile design. Desktop passed core web vitals & good page speed scores. I love the sticky footer. Amazing job U-High Midway!

Place Name: Second Place

Contestant Name: Kaneland High School

Entry Title: Kaneland Krier Website

Entry Credit: Preslee Sutherland, Sophie Thill

Judge Comment: Nice site header; logo, social icons, and search bar. Organized navigation. Homepage has a thoughtful layout, color choices, and theme elements. Very nice Multimedia section with a lot of variety! Good practice having a placeholder image for when you don't have an article photo. However, a featured article can be greatly enhanced by an image, even if it's a stock photo. Images add context and are great for SEO. Responsive mobile design. Well done, Kaneland!

Competition Comment: See judge comments.