

## 2025 IJEa NEWSPAPER & DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA CONTEST

### DIVISION 4 INDIVIDUAL WINNERS — Enrollment 2,200 to 2,549

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#### BEST ADVERTISEMENT

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** Making Headlines  
**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney  
**Judge Comment:** Love it! Great tagline (“We’re making headlines”)! The background graphic is very eye-catching. The layout is simple, minimalist and effective.

**Place Name:** Second Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** Get Your News On Your Home Computer  
**Entry Credit:** Logan Szymanski  
**Judge Comment:** Love the retro look! Great use of school colors on the computer screen, but the other color combo, light yellow and light green, could be hard to read for some. Other than that, excellent work!

**Place Name:** Third Place  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Maggiano's  
**Entry Credit:** Lizzie Keane  
**Judge Comment:** Excellent layout. Good use of space and color. The main image is eye-catching, and all of the important info is present. Solid work!

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

#### BEST ALTERNATIVE STORYTELLING

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** His Courtroom...  
**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney  
**Judge Comment:** This took a lot of effort, and it shows. It isn't an infographic, or a Q&A, but it includes surveying and strong body copy -- the hallmarks of a good ALS. Well done.

**Place Name:** Second Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** COVID Q&A  
**Entry Credit:** Zach Kennett, Sami McKenney  
**Judge Comment:** It compliments the story very well.

**Place Name:** Third Place  
**Contestant Name:** Glenbard West High School  
**Entry Title:** Pre-season Interview with Coach Hetlet  
**Entry Credit:** Garrett French  
**Judge Comment:** Providing a transcript as well-edited as this with multimedia is a must in professional work. Well done.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST AUDIO JOURNALISM

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** The Niles West Sports Talk Podcast S1 Ep5, Featuring Superintendent Thomas Moore  
**Entry Credit:** Luka Cejovic, Ibrahim Quadri  
**Judge Comment:** As a sports talk show, this goes well. Solid production, engaging guest.

**Place Name:** Second Place  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Niles West Arts Podcast S1 Ep1, Featuring Richard Sims and Alex Young  
**Entry Credit:** Fiona Rae  
**Judge Comment:** Slow, unpolished introduction to the show. Good conversation, but too long. Would have benefitted from editing—and more effort to bring listeners into the conversation (by asking more questions on their behalf).

**Place Name:** Third Place  
**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School  
**Entry Title:** ABL club create art reflecting their legacy  
**Entry Credit:** Jalynn Martinez  
**Judge Comment:** Delivery is stilted. Sounds like a newspaper story being read, not a story crafted for the ear. Awkward audio editing—notably that fadeout on the last cut.

**Competition Comment:** Talk (or maybe at least Sports Talk) deserves its own category in this competition. It's at a disadvantage in a category called "Best Audio Journalism."

## BEST CENTERSPREAD STORY PACKAGE

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Beyond good intentions

**Entry Credit:** Cheryl Cheng, C.J. Getting, Marina Micic

**Judge Comment:** The topic shows good news sense in spotting a good local story that focuses on students. Photos of student who did this would help put a face on the coverage. Try to get verbs in headlines. Beware of screened text -- hard to read.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Here Comes the Sun: Basketball Defies Expectations with Surprise Success

**Entry Credit:** Logan Szymanski

**Judge Comment:** The terrific season makes a good subject for a spread. Beware of running text in a photo.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Benchmark for success

**Entry Credit:** Cheryl Cheng , Jay Deegan

**Judge Comment:** The spread gives readers a sense of the history they helped make. Try to get verbs in headlines and avoid colons.

**Competition Comment:** Although not all entries fit the full criteria of the category, all showed a solid effort in good faith to produce spreads that addressed school-related coverage. Keep basics in mind . . . beware of screened text and running text in photos . . . try to get verbs in headlines . . . use photos of people to put a face on the coverage.

## BEST EDITORIAL CARTOON

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** New swearing policy out of touch with social norms, reality

**Entry Credit:** Christine Wang

**Judge Comment:** Nicely done. Point of view is clear and presented well. Cartoon supports opinion well.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Loss of local news impacts us more than we realize

**Entry Credit:** Christine Wang

**Judge Comment:** Point of view is shown and nicely presented.

**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:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Uninterrupted: The First 4 Classes to Experience High School Lockdown-Free Since COVID-19

**Entry Credit:** Zach Kennett, Sami McKenney

**Judge Comment:** A perfect subject for a feature. A look back on such an historical event and its impact on your school community. You have strong sources who represent a variety of experiences, both students and teachers, who tell good, honest stories, peppered with facts and data to explain those stories in context. Nicely done, and timely.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Family, Found: Black Student Union Begins Forging Legacy of Togetherness

**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney

**Judge Comment:** Really lovely. Intricate story-telling in their voices. We see them in real time, interacting, negotiating, supporting. It's a lot of detail and background to showcase the group and event.. And it's more than that. We see teenagers' passions at work. How they function when something is important to them. How nice that they let the reporter see and record it all.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** 'Doing what no one else does': The vital role of paraprofessionals in District 203

**Entry Credit:** Sarah Segvich

**Judge Comment:** Great topic for your school community. Relevant not just to them but to their students and the teachers who work with them. Inside look at salaries, the realities of their jobs, in context by looking at other schools. You showed them at work in the opening. Maybe more of that, and at the end as a frame for the piece

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Immigration Series: Elizabeth Valencia

<p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Isabela Valencia</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Her grandmother's story. Brave to tell it. Brave to have lived it. Brutal and kind and loving and frightening, all in one piece.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Youth voices amplified</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> C.J. Getting</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> An amazing opportunity and experience.</p>
<p><b>Competition Comment:</b> See judge comments.</p>

## BEST FRONT-PAGE DESIGN

<p><b>Place Name:</b> First Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Central Times Page 1, December 16, 2024</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Jay Deegan</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Exceptionally good use of a dramatic photo accompanying an important story. It's not always a good idea to dedicate page 1 to a single photo and story, but this is justified and well done.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Second Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Central Times Page 1, October 16, 2024</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Jay Deegan</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Good display of an important story. The artwork is a good, dominant size but might have been enhanced with more emphasis (size, maybe) for the grades in the background. This is the key, isn't it? The page grays out a bit in the center, but the bottom is well-anchored by a photo of appropriate size and its story.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Third Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Edwardsville High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> In Profile</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Sami McKenney</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Dramatic artwork and color, along with excellent use of type, in this magazine-style front page. I especially liked the scratch mark in CLAW. Good work.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Edwardsville High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Here Comes the Sun</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Sami McKenney</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Excellent use of color, shapes and figures, although it's not completely</p>

clear to me how “here comes the sun” relates to, apparently, basketball. Or is this meant to mark the start of spring? At any rate – very attractive and well done.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST HEADLINE

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Fresh Faces, Fast Feet Lead Cross Country

**Entry Credit:** Logan Szymanski

**Judge Comment:** Nice double meaning of "Fresh" to coincide with the emphasis on freshmen contributors to the team. The fact that several of them are outpacing previous athletes gives credibility to "fast feet," so the headline efficiently captures the full scope of the story.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Dogs Visit the Library to Make Finals Week Less “Ruff”

**Entry Credit:** Aishah Khan, Ibrahim Quadri

**Judge Comment:** Clever use of "rough/ruff" homophone, which piques interest in the story. You could tighten the headline by not using "the." Feature stories lend themselves to more creative possibilities with headlines, so more casual or playful language before "ruff" might catch a student audience's eyes more quickly.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Glenbard West High School

**Entry Title:** From Grief to Forgiveness; Shrinking Season Two Surpasses Expectations

**Entry Credit:** Claire Borncamp

**Judge Comment:** The headline is solid. As a review of a show with the title of "Shrinking," especially since it is a comedy, something more fun with word choice would be nice -- perhaps a contrast to "shrinking" in place of "surpasses" (soars, stretches, etc.)

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST HUMOROUS COMMENTARY

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Stop Scrolling: Media’s Hold on the Election

**Entry Credit:** Mary Morby

**Judge Comment:** Very well researched and written. Nice balance of reporting and opinion. Offers interesting insights on the 2024 election from a first-time voter.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Opinion: Pigeons Deserve Better

**Entry Credit:** Cora Gayford

**Judge Comment:** I admired the piece because of the writer's creative approach. An interesting take on a topic most people never think about. Good writing.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Opinion: The Cafeteria Cookie Reigns Supreme

**Entry Credit:** Hanna Schneider

**Judge Comment:** This homage to the cafeteria cookie was well written. Enjoyable to read.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Drive right or take the bus.

**Entry Credit:** Lillian Grave

**Judge Comment:** None

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST ILLUSTRATION

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** College apps: Chaos, confusion, constant emails

**Entry Credit:** Alice Wang

**Judge Comment:** Strong and impressive art. The display of the forms in the background is clever.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Three-day weekends: the break we deserve

**Entry Credit:** Christine Wang

**Judge Comment:** Beautiful art that leaves a feeling of sleepiness; this adds the reader identifying with the illustration.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Opinion: Stop Sending Me Invitations to Expensive Summer Programs

**Entry Credit:** Isabella Young

**Judge Comment:** The visually appealing character clearly shows the feeling of hopelessness when it comes to tuition.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Opinion: Teenage Years are the Perfect Time to Try a New Hairstyle

**Entry Credit:** Isabella Young

**Judge Comment:** Three clear images with great color selection show off three artistic hairstyles.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Glenbard West High School

**Entry Title:** Search for the New Superintendent

**Entry Credit:** Luis Irizarry Ramirez

**Judge Comment:** A choice between past and future is clearly shown.

**Competition Comment:** Some impressive art that definitely draws in readers. Illustrations display messages through so many choices of what to include and also what not to include.

## BEST IN-DEPTH NEWS STORY

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Board member's actions seen as 'substantial misconduct' according to district documents

**Entry Credit:** Jay Deegan

**Judge Comment:** This was a very thorough researched and reported news story. This is investigative level work and is strongly written. Well done.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** English Teachers and Students Reflect on Stacked Classes Four Years After Implementation

**Entry Credit:** Khadija Khan, Isabela Valencia

**Judge Comment:** I thought this was well researched and student/staff input added a lot to the story, showing the what and why. Topics like this can be nuanced, but the subheads helped break it up.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Reason for Artwork's Removal Remains Unclear

**Entry Credit:** Hannah Kucharik



**Judge Comment:** This story is a great example of combining the strengths of news and feature writing in a way that also hints at assertive journalism. It's covering a topic that clearly matters to students. Well done.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** School day changes to be proposed across all levels of Naperville 203 instruction

**Entry Credit:** Jay Deegan

**Judge Comment:** Very well researched and thorough news angle examining and explaining the schedule changes.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Gym floor moisture source identified, gym to shut down for construction until summer

**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney

**Judge Comment:** This was a strongly written piece that covered every angle of the news story. It showed the impact of the water damage on student life.

**Competition Comment:** Another very strong competition among very talented writers. I see fantastically researched work here showcasing the what and why. All very thoughtful covered the respective news topic of the day and the impact to the community.

## BEST INFOGRAPHIC

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** COVID Youth Depression + Anxiety Rates

**Entry Credit:** Logan Szymanski

**Judge Comment:** Nice job! I especially appreciate the jittery look of the pie sections which is very appropriate for the subject matter.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST MULTIMEDIA STORY PACKAGE

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Campus or career? How rising costs and shifting priorities are cutting college enrollment across Illinois

<p><b>Entry Credit:</b> C.J. Getting</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> good illustration; good infographics and citing source of same; good layout, nicely written; thorough in coverage. Well done</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Second Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Glenbard West High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Celebrating a Long and Successful Career: One-on-One with Coach Hezlet</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Garrett French</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Good flow of interview; good capturing the essence of the story; needed to make sure coach was on mic equally--</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Third Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Niles West High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Political Protests At Union Park: United in Dissent &amp; Divided in Cause</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Fiona Rae</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> good photos; story flowed; told of different aspect of convention. Watch how you label groups--some terms have connotations</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Niles West High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Niles West Student Journalists Attend the Democratic National Convention</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Aishah Khan, Hannah Kucharik, Fiona Rae, Morgan Warner-Mackey</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> good opportunity for students--should fact check your writing--JD Vance was not the governor of Ohio. Press shouldn't be the story--photos of journalist doing what journalist do shouldn't be the story--it's about the event that you are covering--</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Youth voices amplified</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> C.J. Getting, Jay Deegan, Sarah Segvich</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> great opportunity for student journalist, but need to be journalist. Your piece lacked flow--first para should set up the entire piece--</p>
<p><b>Competition Comment:</b> See judge comments.</p>

## BEST NEWS OR FEATURE PHOTO

<p><b>Place Name:</b> First Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Kamala Harris celebration</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Jay Deegan</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Great image(s)! Professionally executed. Nicely done!!</p>
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<p><b>Place Name:</b> Second Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Niles West High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Muslim Students and Staff Grapple With Islamophobia</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Aishah Khan</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> A powerful image capturing a powerful moment and issue.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Third Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Niles West High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Displaying Diversity in Philadelphia: Reading Terminal Market</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Morgan Warner-Mackey</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Good work capturing the concentration and intensity of the process.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Edwardsville High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Sunset Serenade</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Reyez Hangsleben</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Beautiful "golden hour" light!</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Board members levy accusations...</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Jay Deegan</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Board meetings do not always yield exciting images, however, this one captures an interesting moment especially in relation to the story.</p>
<p><b>Competition Comment:</b> See judge comments.</p>

## BEST NEWS STORY

<p><b>Place Name:</b> First Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Confidential student information released in District 203 data leak</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> C.J. Getting</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Very comprehensive coverage of a matter clearly significant to your local audience. Great use of sources and documentation. Well written and organized. Would have liked to see some student reaction. Otherwise, excellent work!</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Second Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Edwardsville High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Mr. Fox to remain EHS principal, pending board approval</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Logan Szymanski</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Excellent news story important to your school community. Great lede!</p>

Excellent use of quotes from faculty and students. Love the details shared about Mr. Fox and how he's perceived by school stakeholders. Very well written and organized. Nice job!

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** District 7 implements state suggestions as Trump lessens ICE restrictions in schools

**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney

**Judge Comment:** Very well-written story making a local connection to a national issue. Great use of quotes and sources. Might be stronger if you led with D7 implementing state board suggestions rather than opening with ISBE. Otherwise a well-detailed and well-organized news story. Nice job!

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** D219 School Board Hears Public Comments About Coach Nick Torresso From Players and Parents

**Entry Credit:** Hannah Kucharik

**Judge Comment:** This story wonderfully captures the passion generated in your school community over this issue. Comprehensive coverage, great use of quotes. Very well written and organized. Excellent job!

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** 'We're not invisible': NESPA supporters rally for increased wages

**Entry Credit:** Jay Deegan, Sarah Segvich

**Judge Comment:** Very well written and comprehensive. Great use of quotes and sources. Well organized. Excellent work on an issue of clear importance to your school community. Be mindful of style (e.g. lowercase titles following names).

**Competition Comment:** This division was a challenge to rank as there were so many excellent entries. I wish more of these entries could have received higher rankings -- superior work all around!

## BEST OVERALL DESIGN

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** The Claw: Uninterrupted

**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney, Zach Kennett, Lillian Grave, Izzy Robinson, Logan Szymanski, Mary Morby, Atticus Ball, Sean Henson, Kaela Johnson, Kaitlyn Lemanski, Maggie Moseley

**Judge Comment:** Single-image covers can be risky, but in the case of this issue, it works.

Spread on pp. 6-7 makes creative use of graphics, callouts and rising wave text columns to maintain viewer interest. Fun, playful folios and screens on pp. 4, 15 and 23 are a nice touch.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Central Times, October 16, 2024

**Entry Credit:** Central Times Staff

**Judge Comment:** Modular design achieved. Most pages feature a dominant visual to establish hierarchy. Feature well graphics on pp. 4-5 maintain visual interest. Consider building a wee bit more vertical and horizontal white space between elements to let them breathe.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** The Claw: Here Comes the Sun

**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney, Zach Kennett, Lillian Grave, Izzy Robinson, Logan Szymanski, Mary Morby, Atticus Ball, Sean Henson, Kaela Johnson, Kaitlyn Lemanski, Maggie Moseley

**Judge Comment:** Liberal use of graphics and colored text screens help boost reader interest.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST PERSONALITY PROFILE

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Humanity in the crossfire: Senior's journey to aid Ukraine

**Entry Credit:** Marina Micic

**Judge Comment:** A very timely and well told story with powerful anecdotes, this piece captures the conflict and tension of our moment with an eye on the interrelations between people in different countries.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Luke Slater: Building Better

**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney

**Judge Comment:** Well conveyed conflict and accomplishment pull along the plot of this story. This is a very strong article with great storytelling and reporting.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Driven to win: Senior ignites passion and speed  
**Entry Credit:** Kate Johnson  
**Judge Comment:** Good storytelling.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST PHOTO GALLERY OR PHOTO SLIDESHOW

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School  
**Entry Title:** 2024 Democratic National Convention  
**Entry Credit:** Jay Deegan, Sarah Segvich, C.J. Getting  
**Judge Comment:** These are remarkable photos that tell a great story! The variety of shots and perspectives is very impressive!

**Place Name:** Second Place  
**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School  
**Entry Title:** 'We're not invisible': NESPA supporters rally for increased wages  
**Entry Credit:** Jay Deegan  
**Judge Comment:** Wow, what a powerful gallery! The photos are incredibly expressive and beautifully composed.

**Place Name:** Third Place  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** "Into the Woods" Makes Its Debut At Niles West  
**Entry Credit:** Hannah Kucharik, Morgan Warner-Mackey  
**Judge Comment:** A very impressive visual recounting of this play. Love the variety of angles and perspectives. The only thing that would have improved the gallery would have been some backstage shots, perhaps of actors putting on make-up, getting ready to go on stage, etc. But overall, great job!

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention  
**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School  
**Entry Title:** 3D artists show off their process and sculptures  
**Entry Credit:** TJ Julamoke  
**Judge Comment:** Some very compelling shots! The use of close-ups is quite effective. The cutlines that go along with the photos are well written and informative.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Democracy in Action: Inside Lincolnwood and Skokie's Polling Locations  
**Entry Credit:** Hanna Schneider  
**Judge Comment:** Great choice of subject matter! Good variety of shots.

**Competition Comment:** NOTE: The "¡Vamos a Vaqueros en la Pista!" slideshow was excellent and featured a nice variety of shots taken from some interesting angles. This would have received an honorable mention if more than two HMs were permitted.

## BEST PHOTO STORY

No entries.

## BEST REVIEW

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** Three Recent Releases Tell Important, Relevant Stories in the Modern Era  
**Entry Credit:** Izzy Robinson  
**Judge Comment:** The writer does a masterful job of illuminating the urgency and strengths of the work they are elevating.

**Place Name:** Second Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** 'Megalopolis': Coppola's Mega Flopolis  
**Entry Credit:** Zach Kennett  
**Judge Comment:** A hilarious take-down of one of 2024's worst films that had me laughing out loud (Dustin Hoffman's death scene did indeed feel like a cutaway gag).

**Place Name:** Third Place  
**Contestant Name:** Glenbard West High School  
**Entry Title:** Carbon Copy Chalamet – "A Complete Unknown" Review  
**Entry Credit:** Annalise Ricci  
**Judge Comment:** A fantastic, in-depth review that examines how the lead actor's performance captured the essence of Bob Dylan.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention  
**Contestant Name:** Glenbard West High School  
**Entry Title:** How Civil War masterfully puts its audience in the perspective of journalists  
**Entry Credit:** Sam Lapalm  
**Judge Comment:** A chilling look at how Alex Garland's film continues to feel more timely with every passing day.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Tyler The Creator's CHROMAKOPIA Review  
**Entry Credit:** Fiona Rae

**Judge Comment:** A hugely effective review filled with enticing descriptions of the artist's work that grab the reader's attention.

**Competition Comment:** Yet again, I am amazed by the quality, thoroughness and professionalism of the work on display here.

## BEST SERIOUS COMMENTARY

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School

**Entry Title:** Protect those who protect the truth: Why Illinois must pass HB2932

**Entry Credit:** Karim Melek

**Judge Comment:** Points out a discrepancy that most people must have missed as the law was developed and enacted. Most probably assumed the adviser also came under the law's protection, and interesting that teacher unions fought that part of it. Students who have excellent, active news media as exists at Palatine need to know what's going on with press freedom.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Opinion: Why Pronouncing Someone's Name Correctly Matters

**Entry Credit:** Suha Siddiqui

**Judge Comment:** This is an important angle to the diversity story that is excellently presented here. Most of us have seen awkward situations where a teacher (or other person in authority) butchered someone's name and didn't appear to care, or even made light of it. You're absolutely right — don't be afraid to ask someone how they want their name pronounced and how they want to be addressed. It is indeed about respect.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Make reading cool again

**Entry Credit:** Sarah Segvich

**Judge Comment:** Very engaging and readable piece on a subject that deserves more attention. Good transitions and details.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School

**Entry Title:** ChatGPT at PHS: shaping the future of learning

**Entry Credit:** Sohum Gorladku

**Judge Comment:** None

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.



**BEST SINGLE-PAGE STORY PACKAGE****Place Name:** First Place**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School**Entry Title:** Board members actions seen as 'substantial misconduct'**Entry Credit:** Jay Deegan**Judge Comment:** Great job with a FOIA request. You got an interview with the board member - did you try to talk to any others? Overall, great work reporting on a very sensitive subject. Not easy for a student reporter but you didn't let that stop you. Great photos to accompany your piece.**Place Name:** Second Place**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School**Entry Title:** Community voices concerns over school day changes**Entry Credit:** Jay Deegan**Judge Comment:** Great job getting so many perspectives. Great photos to accompany the piece. You have great potential and are already reaching it.**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.**BEST SPORTS COMMENTARY****Place Name:** First Place**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School**Entry Title:** Greed not heat killed hockey in the desert**Entry Credit:** Logan Szymanski**Judge Comment:** A very good opinion piece sprinkled with facts and examples of owners moving teams. I especially liked the use of the coyote myth.**Place Name:** Second Place**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School**Entry Title:** Bro-nepotism James**Entry Credit:** Broden Oswald**Judge Comment:** A nice commentary using facts and personal opinion exposing nepotism.**Place Name:** Third Place**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School**Entry Title:** The Chicago Bears are not, in fact, back**Entry Credit:** Broden Oswald**Judge Comment:** It's always nice to see a writer admit to error citing examples of why he or she was wrong.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Opinion: The Bears Should Have Kept Justin Fields  
**Entry Credit:** Ibrahim Quadri  
**Judge Comment:** A good commentary using facts and examples to make his case. I wonder how this opinion will age in the upcoming seasons.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST SPORTS FEATURE STORY

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School  
**Entry Title:** Strike to Success: A profile of Joseph Molina-Urbina, Palatine's forward  
**Entry Credit:** Genevieve Jennings  
**Judge Comment:** Inspiring profile of an immigrant who overcame language and cultural barriers to become a leader on the soccer team. Good use of quotes, especially from the coach.

**Place Name:** Second Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** The Weaver Brothers  
**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney  
**Judge Comment:** Who can resist a brother act on the football field? Good use of quotes brings out the pair's respective personalities. Well written.

**Place Name:** Third Place  
**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School  
**Entry Title:** A sophomore's journey 'back' to wrestling  
**Entry Credit:** Sam Stientjes  
**Judge Comment:** Inspiring story about learning to adjust to circumstances one cannot control. Writer succeeds in bringing the subject to life and also makes a complex medical condition understandable

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Johnathan Guan Dives into a New Record  
**Entry Credit:** Aishah Khan  
**Judge Comment:** Well written profile with a good balance of sources. Weaves in details of competitive diving that inform without being distracting.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Wrestler Chinyari Parrish Places Third in Conference

**Entry Credit:** Isabela Valencia

**Judge Comment:** Solid profile of a new-to-the-sport wrestler. Nicely balanced with comments from subject, teammates and coach.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST SPORTS NEWS STORY

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** 'Unbelievable' catch helps Central to victory over No. 2 Lyons Township

**Entry Credit:** Lola Schwerha

**Judge Comment:** Nice in-game analysis and vivid description of the "unbelievable" catch. It could be even more impactful if that was swapped with the lede to have that good imagery at the top of the story so it can hook the reader right away.

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Naperville Central falls to DeKalb in conference clash

**Entry Credit:** Marina Micic

**Judge Comment:** A nice analytical piece that looks at a team that needs improvement but doesn't do it in an insensitive way. Instead, using team quotes to look at where the improvement is needed helps readers understand where they feel they can up their game.

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School

**Entry Title:** Flag football debuts this year

**Entry Credit:** Izzy Borissova

**Judge Comment:** Nice and informative story on the launch of a new program and the excitement that comes with it. Including some of the challenges that come with starting up a new program would help balance out both the excitement and difficulties attached to beginning something new.

**Competition Comment:** This competition included several pieces that showed a strength in analyzing how a team is doing, whether they were thriving or looking for areas to improve. Nice job overall!

**BEST SPORTS PHOTO**

<p><b>Place Name:</b> First Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Edwardsville High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Dance Comp</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Casey Stover</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Excellent framing capturing the energy of the routine. Well-done!</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Second Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Edwardsville High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Steven Moore Stiff Arm</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Reyez Hangsleben</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Nice, sharp image. Love the lighting/exposure, and the captured moment of the play.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Third Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> 'Unbelievable' catch helps Central to victory over No. 2 Lyons Township</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Jay Deegan</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Great play captured with good framing and sharpness.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Central falls in 15-20 semifinal against York</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Kate Johnson</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Unsure of which image was the entry, however, they're both good! Really like the second image with goal post in the background.</p>
<p><b>Place Name:</b> Honorable Mention</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Niles West High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Boys and Girls Varsity Basketball Fall Short Against Niles North</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Holly Korzun</p> <p><b>Judge Comment:</b> Good shot showing the power and athleticism of the players.</p>
<p><b>Competition Comment:</b> See judge comments.</p>

**BEST STAFF EDITORIAL**

<p><b>Place Name:</b> First Place</p> <p><b>Contestant Name:</b> Naperville Central High School</p> <p><b>Entry Title:</b> Melissa Kelley Black: Be a better board member</p> <p><b>Entry Credit:</b> Central Times Editorial Board</p>
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**Judge Comment:** Awesome, awesome job here. You didn't shy away from what could be a contentious issue, especially when it relates to a school board. Great work!

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School

**Entry Title:** Editorial: Media Center Funds Stun, Refresh

**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney, Zach Kennett

**Judge Comment:** This is very strong and I love how you tied a national issue back to your school. That's no easy feat but you did so seamlessly!

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** A call for collective accountability on casual racism

**Entry Credit:** Central Times Editorial Board

**Judge Comment:** Very good work here! I think you do a great job of defining your issue at hand as well as the clear next steps needed to fix it.

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Editorial: Teachers, Please Stop Giving Unit Tests Before Finals

**Entry Credit:** Khadija Khan, Leila Meseljevic

**Judge Comment:** Awesome speaking out about an issue at your school! I hope that this gets read by your intended audience and that you're able to make change.

**Competition Comment:** Excellent work here by excellent young journalists! Don't be afraid to push the envelope and speak out about specific issues at your school. Those make for the best editorials!

## BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

**Place Name:** First Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Niles West News Instagram

**Entry Credit:** Holly Korzun

**Judge Comment:** None

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School

**Entry Title:** @phs.cutlass

**Entry Credit:** Karim Melek

**Judge Comment:** None

**Place Name:** Third Place  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Niles West News TikTok  
**Entry Credit:** Holly Korzun  
**Judge Comment:** None

**Competition Comment:** Overall, consistency is key. Consistently posting, consistent design, and consistent captions!

## BEST VIDEO STORY

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Lights, Camera, Action: A Day Behind the Curtain in High School Theatre  
**Entry Credit:** Lizzie Keane  
**Judge Comment:** Love the concept behind this video! The length is just right. The pace is fast. The first minute is really strong, with good audio and interesting b-roll. But then the technical quality of the audio noticeably declines and some of the b-roll looks shaky. What do you think caused these changes? Also, the ending feels abrupt. But overall, this is a solid video!

**Place Name:** Second Place  
**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School  
**Entry Title:** Crochet, Culture and Confidence: Junior Emilia Rydzewski Does It All  
**Entry Credit:** Lizzie Keane  
**Judge Comment:** This had the potential to be an outstanding video, but three things undercut it: (1) It's too long; it should be cut in half. (2) It tries to cover too much ground; a focus on only one of Emilia's activities, such as her crochet business, would have been the right move. (3) There's too much footage of Emilia as a talking head; we really need more b-roll. But again, lots of potential here! For future videos, remember to give careful attention to the three things mentioned above: length, focus, b-roll.

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.

## BEST WEBSITE

**Place Name:** First Place  
**Contestant Name:** Edwardsville High School  
**Entry Title:** Tiger Times Online  
**Entry Credit:** Sami McKenney, Zach Kennett, Lillian Grave, Izzy Robinson, Logan

Szymanski, Mary Morby, Atticus Ball, Sean Henson, Kaela Johnson, Kaitlyn Lemanski, Maggie Moseley

**Judge Comment:** Nice header, footer, and main navigation. Homepage has clearly defined sections. Consider editing down lists to most recent 4/5 articles. Nice interactive poll. Story articles need more internal/external links and tags. Try to avoid using "Click Here" for links. Try more descriptive text that defines the call to action, such as Read More or Submit Application. Responsive mobile design. Passed core web vitals on desktop & mobile. Good job, Edwardsville!

**Place Name:** Second Place

**Contestant Name:** Niles West High School

**Entry Title:** Niles West News

**Entry Credit:** Khadija Khan, Leila Meseljevic

**Judge Comment:** Nice header with newsletter call to action. Homepage layout is good. Current content in every category with images. Robust multimedia section with a variety of content. News articles contain internal/external links & tagging. Good job including a contact form, newsletter, and advertising info. Consider adding these to your footer. Site has responsive mobile design. Passed core web vitals for desktop & mobile. Well done, Niles West!

**Place Name:** Third Place

**Contestant Name:** Naperville Central High School

**Entry Title:** Central Times

**Entry Credit:** Central Times Staff

**Judge Comment:** Nice header with date, social links, and search bar. Homepage layout is nice with good use of the announcements ticker to solicit reader-generated content. Consider adding some spacing between the navigation bar & the announcements ticker. Nice work utilizing pull quotes, internal/external linking, and flourish interactive graphs. Consider tagging stories. As a best practice, your site should showcase online content. News should be one of the first items in the menu and consider moving the E-Newspaper to after Media. Responsive mobile design. Great job, Central Times!

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Glenbard West High School

**Entry Title:** The Glen Bard

**Entry Credit:** The Glen Bard Staff

**Judge Comment:** Thoughtful homepage layout. Organized main navigation bar. Nice featured article layout. Consider adding a more robust multimedia category with podcasts (or podcast recommendations), photo galleries, music playlists, and more video elements (long & short-form videos). I like the music playlist on homepage as it adds some interactivity. Some story articles have a good use of internal/external linking. Responsive mobile design. Good job, Glenbard West!

**Place Name:** Honorable Mention

**Contestant Name:** Palatine High School

**Entry Title:** PHS Cutlass

**Entry Credit:** Karim Melek, Aishvir Kaur, Grace Wang, Anika Tsau, Didrik Caleja, Genevieve Jennings

**Judge Comment:** Very clean header with good contrast and easy to find social links & search bar. Nice to see submit form to publish reader-generated content. Sports ticker breaks up the content on homepage well. I like the right rail with newsletter subscribe, translate, and trending stories. Nice about section with links to engage reader submissions for Letter to the Editor. Consider adding a multimedia section for photo galleries, podcasts, playlists, & videos. Responsive mobile design. Passed desktop core web vitals. Good job Palatine!

**Competition Comment:** See judge comments.