

NMSPA/NMAA Publications State Championships

2026 Competition Categories

Writing

- Newswriting
- Feature Writing
- Sports Writing
- Review Writing
- Editorial Writing
- Editorial Cartooning

Photojournalism

- Sports Action Photography
- Feature Photography
- News Photography
- Portrait Photography
- Photo Illustration

Yearbook

- Yearbook Double Page Spread
- Yearbook Cover Design

Literary Magazine

- Poetry Writing
- Short Story Writing
- Illustration

Broadcast and Podcast

- Broadcast News Story
- Broadcast Sports Story
- Broadcast Feature Story
- Broadcast Anchor
- Podcast Interview

WRITING

NEWSWRITING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will listen to a 20-minute presentation. After a question-and-answer period, write a news story that is no more than 350 words. It must be completed on your own 8.5-by-11-inch lined paper in blue or black ink. Follow the directions given on the prompt sheet and by the lead judge. You will be able to use information from the presentation and provided on the prompt.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

News writing style; informative lead hooks readers; use of facts instead of generalizations; use of direct quotes; pinpointing the news in the presentation and highlighting it with an effective angle; concise writing with good use of detail and description, well-organized story flow; accuracy; completeness; elimination of extraneous material; elimination of libelous statements; knowledge of AP style rules; few convention errors.

FEATURE WRITING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will listen to a 20-minute presentation. After a question-and-answer period, write a feature story that is no more than 350 words. It must be completed on your own 8.5-by-11-inch lined paper in ink. Follow the directions given on the prompt sheet and by the lead judge. You will be able to use information from the presentation and provided on the prompt.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Attention-grabbing lead; feature style as opposed to news style; colorful details; liberal use of direct quotes and anecdotes without stating the obvious; objective and fair; copy that appeals to the readers' interest; writing evokes emotional response; accuracy; completeness; elimination of

extraneous material; clear focus of the news peg; few convention errors; avoids passive voice; avoids clichés; variety of sentence beginnings; elimination of libelous statements and knowledge of AP style rules; few convention errors.

SPORTS WRITING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will watch a portion of a sporting event, and with your own notes and supplemental materials write a sports story that is no more than 350 words. It must be completed on your own 8.5-by-11-inch lined paper in ink.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Attention-grabbing lead; if story is a feature, the lead should be a feature lead; good story flow with effective transitions; colorful details; evokes emotional impact; use of informative direct quotes; accuracy; completeness; elimination of extraneous material; elimination of libelous statements and knowledge of AP style rules; few convention errors.

REVIEW WRITING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will watch a 20 to 30-minute presentation of one of the following: a one-act play, dramatic reading, dance, music, film, television, video. Write a review that is no more than 350 words. It must be completed on your own 8.5-by-11-inch lined paper in blue or black ink.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Persuasive lead that quickly reaches assertion and/or attention-grabbing lead; clear expression of opinions; strengths and weaknesses of event or performance are clearly noted; strong, effective voice; opinions supported with details and examples; use of colorful details; well-organized story flow with good transitions; facts rather than generalizations; avoids cliché; extraneous information and libelous statements eliminated; demonstrates knowledge of AP style rules; few convention errors. (A review is not an essay.)

EDITORIAL WRITING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will read a provided an article on a contemporary topic and write a convincing editorial of no more than 350 words using the facts presented. Knowledge of current events is beneficial in this contest. It must be completed on your own 8.5-by-11-inch lined paper in blue or black ink following the instructions from the moderator.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Writer's opinion is clear; background information used accurately and purposefully; does not ignore or distort facts; addresses the high school audience; writer makes good use of provided material sources; voice of the commentary encourages the reader to think about the subject in a new light; first person is used effectively; follows AP style; few errors in conventions.

EDITORIAL CARTOONING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will read an article about a controversial topic and draw an editorial cartoon taking a position. Artists may use any color/thickness of pencil, pen and/or marker for their cartoon. Submit the final copy on your own plain 8.5-by-11-inch white paper. No technology may be used to reference images.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

A simple and clear editorial statement; evidence of artistic ability; a novel approach; absence of trite and melodramatic imagery; wit; effective conveyance of a message; quality of drawing; simplicity of line.

PHOTOJOURNALISM

SPORTS ACTION PHOTOJOURNALISM (Display Printed Photos in Person)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit THREE sports action photos. Each photograph must have been or will be published (online, yearbook, newspaper, newsletter, etc.) during the current school year. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified. Entries must be printed and mounted with a tearsheet or screen shot on the back to show proof of publication. A screen shot of a yearbook page is acceptable.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Imaginative subject matter; technical quality and excellence; photo composition; visual impact; story told in each photograph; simplicity; cropping; and lighting. Judges also will look for a variety of sports-related images, not three similar images. Captions should be included.

FEATURE PHOTOJOURNALISM (Display Printed Photos in Person)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit THREE feature images, typically found moments or slices of life — NO PORTRAITS, NO SPORTS ACTION, NO SCHEDULED SCHOOL EVENTS. The photos should be from THREE different situations. Each photograph must have been or will be published (online, yearbook, newspaper, newsletter, etc.) during the current school year. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified. Entries must be printed and mounted with a tearsheet or screen shot on the back to show proof of publication. A screen shot of a yearbook page is acceptable.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Imaginative subject matter, technical quality and excellence; photo composition; visual impact; story told in each photograph; simplicity; cropping; and lighting. Judges also will look for a variety of images, not three similar images. This can include any aspect of student life. Quality of caption may also be considered.

NEWS PHOTOJOURNALISM (Display Printed Photos in Person)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit THREE news images from THREE different news events. Includes spot news – coverage of events for which no planning was possible – as well as of planned events. Examples include, but are not limited to, speakers on campus, news conferences, mock exercises and campaigns. While sports images are not allowed, events surrounding a sporting event (spectators, band, etc.) may be included. Each photograph must have been or will be published (online, yearbook, newspaper, newsletter, etc.) during the current school year. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified. Entries must be printed

and mounted with a tearsheet or screen shot on the back to show proof of publication. A screen shot of a yearbook page is acceptable.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Imaginative subject matter, technical quality and excellence; photo composition; visual impact; story told in photograph; simplicity; cropping; and lighting. Captions should be included.

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY (Display Printed Photos in Person)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit one portrait photograph, either a formal portrait or an environmental portrait. Each photograph must have been or will be published (online, yearbook, newspaper, newsletter, etc.) during the current school year. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified. Entries must be printed and mounted with a tearsheet or screen shot on the back to show proof of publication. A screen shot of a yearbook page is acceptable.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Imaginative subject matter; technical quality and excellence; photo composition; visual impact; simplicity; cropping; and lighting. The caption should include the name of the individual in the photograph with some identifying characteristics such as grade, major, sport or activity as well as some additional information about the person, perhaps a quote from the person. Students should not enter mug shots, sometimes called head shots, but students may enter portraits taken by them in a studio.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION (Display Printed Photos in Person)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit a photograph that has been manipulated through Photoshop or a similar program/app. This category is for photographs that have been altered or manipulated to make an artistic, graphic, or other point for the publication's design, NOT INFOGRAPHICS. This includes photographs that have been blurred/enhanced/alters by Photoshop. Students must also include written steps of the editing process as well as be prepared to explain this process. Each photograph must have been or will be published (online, yearbook, newspaper, newsletter, etc.) during the current school year. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified. Entries must be printed and mounted with a tearsheet or screen shot on the back to show proof of publication. A screen shot of a Yearbook page is acceptable.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Follows current design trends; visually communicates an idea; shows originality and innovation; shows creativity and artistic details. Clean and well-executed work; sophisticated use of software.

YEARBOOK

YEARBOOK DOUBLE-PAGE LAYOUT (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

Students will be given a theme and photos. They must lay out the page with photos, headlines, and placement of copy and captions. All students will sketch their designs on provided grid paper, marking photos, captions and fonts clearly. Instructions will be provided.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Adhering to instructions; designed as a double-page spread; using a dominant photo; effective positioning of headlines, copy blocks and captions; using current design trends; adhering to design rules; using effective fonts and point sizes for copy, headlines and captions; adhering to visual hierarchy and guiding reader through the spread; effectively balancing photos and copy blocks; using graphics that add to design; effective cropping of photos; including essential layout elements such as page numbers and folio design. Judging is on your design, not your sketching abilities.

YEARBOOK COVER DESIGN (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

Students will be given a theme and school information and will produce a cover of a yearbook utilizing graphics and cover information. They must also provide a written explanation of their design and how it will carry on throughout the book. All students will sketch their designs on provided grid paper, marking photos, captions and fonts clearly. Instructions will be provided.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Cover and endsheets reflect visual and verbal representation of the theme; design conveys theme; spine includes school name, city and state, volume, year, publication name; cover includes theme, publication name, year; instructions and rules followed; graphics add to theme; effective cropping of photos (if used); creative and visually attractive.

LITERARY MAGAZINE

POETRY WRITING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will write an original poem of 10-30 lines using the theme provided. It must be completed on your own 8.5-by-11-inch lined paper in blue or black ink. Title your poem and clearly indicate your lines through indentation and use of margins. You are to exhibit your understanding of poetry, its conventions, punctuation and potential to create a setting, convey a tone, connect to feelings and to delve beyond the surface.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Originality and creativity in developing theme, concise writing and word choice. Judges will consider use of concrete language, figurative language and imagery; use of literary devices (simile, metaphor, repetition); cadence, verb tense, and development of tone and mood to create an emotional impact. Few convention errors.

SHORT STORY WRITING (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will write an original short story of no more than 350 words using the theme provided. It must be completed on your own 8.5-by-11-inch lined paper in ink. Title your short story. Your writing should exhibit your understanding of theme, setting, plot development, tone and word choice.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Originality and creativity in developing theme, concise writing and word choice. Judges will consider use of concrete language, figurative language and imagery; use of literary devices (simile,

metaphor, repetition); cadence, verb tense, and development of tone and mood to create an emotional impact. Few convention errors.

ILLUSTRATION (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will prepare a piece of art to accompany a poem provided. You will have two hours to sketch and draw your final entry, which must be submitted on your own blank 8.5-by-11-inch paper. It may be vertical or horizontal. Contestants must supply their own art supplies and may use any medium they choose, including, but not limited to, pencil, pen, charcoal, markers, pastels, etc. You may use color and/or black and white. You may not use professional materials like art tape, screens, letters or construction paper.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Adaptation of the art to the copy; originality in interpretation that captures the spirit of the poem prompt. Students will exhibit their control of the medium, design and artistic techniques. The work is a simple, accurate design to illustrate the context of the copy.

BROADCAST & PODCAST

BROADCAST NEWS STORY (Online Submission)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit a news story that shows a clear reliance on the news values of timeliness, proximity, conflict, impact and prominence. A package is a prerecorded news story containing (usually) a reporter's voice-over, videotaped shots and sound bites. Total Running Time (TRT) 1:00 to 3:00 minutes.

Entries should be saved in a .mov or .m4v or .mp4 format and brought with you on a USB drive. The story must have been aired during the school year in some format/location. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Adherence to broadcast style (short sentences, present tense, conversational, clear). Contains all the necessary information and exhibits news judgment. Video sound bites are well-shot close-ups, relevant and interesting. A variety of shots are used and are steady and in focus. Editing is free of glitches and jump cuts, and natural sound is used effectively. Overall, the script and video complement each other, telling the story in an interesting and informative manner. The voice-over is effective and delivered with clarity. Time limit is met + or – 3 seconds.

BROADCAST SPORTS STORY (Online Submission)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit a broadcast sports story. Stories may be focused on a news event and be timely stories that address serious topics related to athletics. For example, these may include investigative reports about facilities, drug use, injuries, budgets, scholarships, rules and regulations, etc. Or, the story may be a feature that covers sports-related people, art or culture. This may include profiles, reviews or other sports stories related to community events, figures or places. A package is a

prerecorded sports story containing a reporter's voice-over, videotaped shots and sound bites. Total Running Time (TRT) 1:00 to 3:00 minutes.

Entries should be saved in a .mov or .m4v or .mp4 format and brought with you on a USB drive. The story must have been aired during the school year in some format/location. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Adherence to broadcast style (short sentences, present tense, conversational, clear). Contains all the necessary information and provides a new perspective. Video sound bites are well shot close-ups, relevant and interesting. A variety of shots are used, steady and in focus. Editing is free of glitches and jump cuts, and natural sound is used effectively. Overall, the script and video complement each other, telling the story in an interesting and informative manner. The voice-over is effective and delivered with liveliness and clarity. Time limit is met + or – 3 seconds.

BROADCAST FEATURE STORY (Online Submission)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will submit a broadcast feature story. A broadcast feature story is one that covers people, art or culture. This may include profiles, reviews or other stories related to community events, figures or places. A package is a prerecorded story containing a reporter's voice-over, videotaped shots and sound bites. Total Running Time (TRT) 1:00 to 3:00 minutes.

Entries should be saved in a .mov or .m4v or .mp4 format and brought with you on a USB drive. The story must have been aired during the school year in some format/location. All contestants must attend the mandatory critique session at the competition or the entry will be disqualified.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Adherence to broadcast style (short sentences, present tense, conversational, clear). Contains all the necessary information and provides a new perspective. Video sound bites are well shot close-ups, relevant and interesting. A variety of shots are used, steady and in focus. Editing is free of glitches and jump cuts, and natural sound is used effectively. Overall, the script and video complement each other, telling the story in an interesting and informative manner. The voice-over is effective and delivered with liveliness and clarity. Time limit is met + or – 3 seconds.

BROADCAST ANCHOR (Day-Of Competition)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

You will read a script provided at the competition. You will be evaluated on your delivery of the script. A teleprompter will be available but you may use your own teleprompter if you prefer.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

This is an anchor contest. Judges always lean toward performance and ability to deliver the news. Smooth transitions between stories; maintains eye contact; appropriate voice tone and inflection; professional delivery; strong on-camera presence and poise.

PODCAST INTERVIEW (Online Submission)

NATURE OF THE CONTEST

Students will submit their best interview podcast to be judged on format, journalistic content and technical merit. Entries should be saved in a .mov or .m4v or .mp4 format and brought with you on a USB drive. Interviews will be no more than four minutes in length and include a clear opening

and closing. Submissions may not include any material that infringes the intellectual property rights of any person. Please be respectful of copyright and trademark laws. All material must be original to the persons who create the podcast. Pre-recorded music may not be used.

WHAT THE JUDGES WILL LOOK FOR

Adherence to broadcast style (short sentences, present tense, conversational, clear). Contains all the necessary information and provides a new perspective. Questions are relevant and interesting. Editing is free of glitches and obvious cuts, and natural sound is used effectively.

REMINDERS:

1. Students must meet NMAA eligibility to compete. Advisers must submit forms to us on paper via email to Ron Gonzales at ronald.gonzales@gccs.k12.nm.us
2. Students may only enter ONE contest.
3. Each school may enter up to THREE students per contest category.
4. Photo and broadcast contestants will bring their printed photos and .mp4 or .mov broadcast stories with them to present to judges at the competition.
5. Lunch is provided and we have an afternoon of workshops before awards!