

SNI EDITORIAL EVALUATION STANDARDS

1. Content Variety and Balance - Standard met when the content of the newspaper appeals to a variety of groups - diverse, young and old, men and women. Subjects reflect that diversity of interest and voice. The newspaper includes news of specialized interest as follows: Sports, features, business, religion, parenting and family life, education, health, personal appearance, obituaries, food, entertainment, crime and courts and government. (30 points)
2. Content: Relevance to Readers - Standard met when stories and sections reflect urgency. Coverage is timely and in step with the needs of readers. Southern Newspapers, Inc., is a group of COMMUNITY newspapers. Therefore, the focus of our news organizations is on local news and local people. Content should dig into community issues and reflect the interests of each community's diverse readership. (10 points)
3. Helpful Service Information - Standard met when newspaper publishes on an every-issue basis relevant calendar and service information, how-to guides, if-you-go features. Internet sites should supplement or expand printed information, providing data for readers to organize and prioritize their busy lives. (10 points)
4. Enterprise Reporting - Standard met when the newspaper publishes at least once a week a deep enterprise story or report that builds from staff initiative. Enterprise reporting is an in-depth look at a major topic of community interest, and it involves independent research, a local and regional or national source and a human example. It usually involves primary research (interviews) and secondary research (documents and Internet). It is always illustrated with photos, graphics or both. (30 points)
5. Reporting - Standard met when stories are accurate, fair, libel-free and in context, when best possible sources are used, when leads capture the essence of the news, and when the story answers the questions who, what, where, when, why and how much. Statistics, research, quotes and narrative are accurate. Information is properly attributed. (40 points)
6. Writing and Copy Editing - Standard met when edited copy and headlines demonstrate basic competence in grammar, spelling and usage

and are free of typos; when heads and copy are factually accurate and fair, organized in the correct sequence, and provide accurate context and perspective. Articles show exactitude and close attention to detail and strictly adhere to formal rules of spelling, grammar, punctuation and Associated Press style. (10 points)

7. Headlines - Standard met when headlines capture the essence and tone of stories. The headline writer recognizes the news peg and selects the headline based on the proper criteria, such as local impact, timeliness, prominence, uniqueness or conflict. Headlines are strong, clear, crisp, inviting and easy to understand. Headlines avoid jargon, minimize use of acronyms and use descriptive words and details to add dimension. Word play is used sparingly. (10 points)

8. Cutlines - Standard met when cutlines concisely, correctly and completely identify people and places in the photo, when they go beyond the obvious by including pertinent background information and context, when they explain potentially confusing details in the image or add new information. Attention in design has been paid to readability and optimal line length and people in the photo are identified whenever possible. (10 points)

9. Photos - Standard met when photos appropriately illustrate stories and provide important information. All photos are accurate representations of the situations they portray. Photos are properly exposed and cropped for maximum impact. Photo layouts identify key elements needed to tell the story. Photos are well composed and appropriately sized, show life and action and offer a variety of content, shape and detail. (10 points)

10. Informational Graphics - Standard met when staff regularly uses a variety of graphic elements to enhance and explain in more depth the context of the story. They include charts, maps, diagrams, pullout boxes and glance boxes. Graphics are informative, sized appropriately and never used as simple decoration. (10 points)

11. Reader Involvement and Participation - Standard met when readers are pulled directly into the newspaper through surveys and emails, through online editions and through social media and other solicitations. Multiple voices are heard regularly through letters to the editor, guest columns and repurposed internet forum or social media comments.

Reader access to the newspaper's columns must be welcomed by providing routine, clear invitations to submit material in all reader-participation areas. (30 points)

12. Editorial Page - Standard met when the editorial package has a mix of opinion with editorials on local topics dominating the page on an every-issue basis. Those editorials should be clear, frank and positive in the sense that they provide solutions as opposed to criticism only. The editorial pages should provide community leadership, identify key issues on the minds of local readers and drive an agenda. Appropriate space is devoted to letters to the editor. Local columnists are emphasized on the pages regularly. (40 points)

13. Sports — Standard is met when the newspaper consistently publishes articles and images of sporting events and sporting endeavors popular in its coverage area. The coverage should reflect attention to the Content Variety and Balance standard. It should include a mix of traditional school-centered team sports and participatory sports enjoyed by people in the coverage area. Newspaper should aid readers in using TV and other media to follow their favorite teams (TV broadcast times, radio coverage of HS games, etc.). It should include content about and relevant to a diverse audience — men, women, the young and the old. (20 points)

14. Layout and Design - Standard met when design is used as a tool to make things clear. Pages have a clear hierarchy of stories and a center of visual impact. Design elements and techniques further the communication of information to the reader. Where possible, regular features should be placed in consistent and standardized locations. Layout rules should be applied consistently across sections. Special attention should be paid to the top half of page 1A to provide a compelling sales tool for single-copy readers. (10 points)

15. Self-promotion - Standard is met when a portion of all platforms - print, web and social media - is set aside for promoting current and future editorial, advertising and niche content that demonstrates the publication's value to readers. All newspapers should self-promote by pushing headlines and breaking stories to readers by email and social media on a daily basis. (10 points)

16. Habit Forming Features - Standard is met when the newspaper in print and online offers a wide variety of standing features in each edition that become a regular and compelling part of the newspaper's content. Each such feature is typically intensely interesting to some but not all readers, and they include such things as comics, television coverage, crosswords and other puzzles, regular featured columnists, humor and inspiration. Recurring columns should be identifiable as regular features, with a tagline or other identifier. (10 points)

17. Internet - The standard is met when the newspaper's web site is updated five days per week for papers that print two or three days per week and seven days for papers that print five days per week. Site should also be updated with breaking news when it occurs. Web content should consistently and regularly enhance top stories by providing additional features and materials, such as edited story summaries, videos, graphics, photo galleries, lengthy documents, audio recordings of meetings and interviews. Headlines should be optimized for web use, rather than simply mirroring the print headline. (40 points)

18. Social Media - Standard is met when the newspaper regularly interacts with readers by means of social media in posts designed to create reader involvement, alert residents to breaking news, develop deeper content or drive traffic to the newspaper's paid products. As an extension of your newspaper's brand, all social media interactions should be in keeping with journalistic standards of fairness and accuracy. (10 points)

19. Magazines — Standard is met when magazines clearly communicate their intended target audience after first read and evoke a sense of place. Editorial and design content should be carefully aligned and supportive of engaging and developing targeted audience. Advertorial or sponsored content should be clearly labeled as such. Magazines should be aspirational, often highlighting the best of the people and places in a market. Production values (design, editorial content, photography, etc.) are to be consistently the highest quality and reflect positively on both the community and newspaper. Minimum frequency: quarterly. (10 points)

20. Planning — In order to more effectively manage a newspaper's resources for maximum productivity and quality, newspapers should have a weekly planning meeting and maintain a daily news budget that lists content expected to be included in upcoming issues. This is a fluid

document that changes as news breaks but encourages working ahead. News budgeting tools should be readily available to all department heads. Newspapers will submit to judges a written outline of what they do routinely to plan their paper, including examples.

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