



# 20th Annual Polk County Schools Video Awards



## Judging Rubric for Category 7: Reporting and Interviewing

Entries in this category showcase 10 clips taken from reports and interviews broadcast on the school's daily news show. Five minutes is the maximum for any one clip. The purpose of this category is to promote high standards of professional journalism, since on-location reporting is much more effective than talking studio heads are. At least five clips should feature reporters on camera themselves although those reporters can be a variety of people.

### Script Smoothness & Preparation (25 points)

A well-written script is invaluable in both films and television programs. Even though the visuals will tell the story more powerfully than words ever will, most of the time those visuals are based on the script, which should be written in an organized, informative, and, where possible, entertaining manner. Attention-getting lead-ins, effective transitions to and from segments and interviewees, and an appropriate conclusion are all elements of a good script. Reporters should never, however, follow a script so meticulously that they sound like programmed robots devoid of any spontaneity and not responsive to what their interviewees are saying. Winging it from scratch while reporting on location might promote spontaneity but ideal reporting combines spontaneity with preparation. Researching a topic thoroughly so a reporter knows the best questions to ask will impress interview subjects and viewers. Television is often accused of being a shallow medium, an accusation solidified by reporters who ask only superficial questions. Anticipating the complexities of a subject and thinking about the kinds of things viewers want to know about that subject will help in the production of a polished, informative report.

### Natural Sound & B-Roll (25 points)

It is amazing, really, how powerful even the simplest sound or most complicated soundtrack can affect our emotions. Think about that "shark under water" low rumble made famous in *Jaws*, for instance. A video showing a frantic basketball rally that includes the natural sounds of a gymnasium crowd whipped into a frenzy has a dramatically different effect on viewers' emotions than showing the same edited clips with no natural sound. Natural sounds can imaginatively whisk viewers to a remote location far more effectively than just their eyes can. Radio tells but television *shows*. The *talking head syndrome*, which features reporters or their interview subjects standing (or sitting) and talking for long stretches at a time with nothing else to look at, is anathema to all reporters because viewers will tune them out in droves. Reporters themselves, camera operators, and field producers all need to pay very close attention to scripts and interview content to make sure they have sufficient b-roll to cover at least 80 percent of the talking in most situations.

### Voice Inflection and Clarity (25 points)

If eye contact is number one, then voice inflection and clarity are a close second. Although movie and television actor Ben Stein has made a handsome living speaking in a monotone as a spokesman for Visine and as a teacher in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, his success is the exception and an integral part of his comedic style. Polished anchors and reporters speak clearly, slowly and with significant inflection in their voice.

### Importance and Variety of Topics (25 points)

Reporters should move beyond simple, superficial topics and questions and delve into issues of importance within the school, community, nation and world. Likewise, a variety of reporting topics is more likely to hold viewers' attention.