



20th Annual Polk County Schools Video Awards



Judging Rubric for Category 8: Documentary

Videos entered in this category may explore important social issues within the Polk County Schools, the communities served by our schools, or our state, nation or world. Documentaries may also profile influential people or showcase the success of individuals or groups. They may follow traditional documentary style, which focuses on in-depth reporting, or the dramatic re-enactment style, which uses a short film to make a point about an important subject. Documentaries are limited to 10 minutes. Judging criteria are as follows:

Importance of Topic (25 points)

Although Polk Video Awards rules allow for a wide range of possible documentary topics, the eighteenth-year history of our competition has seen those projects which focus on influential people or serious issues enjoy the most success. A well-told story about someone who has made a significant difference in the lives of others clearly appeals to many hearts, while our diverse judges are more likely to be impressed by an issue-oriented documentary which focuses on a topic of concern to many people.

Clarity and Organization (25 points)

Ten minutes is a long time in video and the longer the project, the greater the chance that it will ramble or lose focus. Clarity is often achieved by keeping a topic simple. For example, the FBI would be far too broad a topic, while the hiring practices for special agents of that organization would be much more manageable. Documentary filmmakers also usually following a specific organizational method like chronological, categorical, spatial, cause and effect, etc. Using graphics and appropriate transitions can also signal viewers that your documentary is well organized.

Comprehensiveness (25 points)

Although our competition limits documentaries to 10 minutes, subjects should be treated thoroughly, which reiterates the necessity for narrowing a broad topic down to a manageable focused one. In-depth research is required to achieve comprehensiveness, although much of what is filmed may actually be left on the cutting room floor. Accomplished documentary editors have honed their powers of selectivity and know that all interviews, quotes, and b-roll clips are not equal, nor required to be included in the final edited version.

Technical Merit (25 points)

Judges will award up to five points apiece for each of the following technical elements:

- A. Sound clarity and volume
- B. Tripod-steady but often creative camera work, including proper framing and sufficient leadroom, noseroom, and headroom
- C. Appropriate lighting, including the avoidance of silhouettes
- D. Editing smoothness
- E. Graphics