

Minutes of the 2023-24 Journalism Advisory Committee  
Tuesday, September 26, 2023

The IHSA Journalism Advisory Committee meeting was held via video conference call on Tuesday, September 26, 2023, beginning at 3:00 p.m. Advisory committee members in attendance: Division 2 Dane Erbach, McHenry; Division 3 Patrick DiFilippo, Oak Lawn (Community), Adviser; Division 4 Susan Bookless, Galena, Adviser; Division 5 Felicia Tufano, Urbana (H.S.), Adviser; Division 6 Karen Stevens, Washington, Principal; Division 7 Dana Donovan, Okawville, Adviser. IHSA Asst. Executive Director Matt Troha conducted the meeting.

**TERMS & CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. VIII. TOURNAMENT RULES - B. Use of Artificial Intelligence**

**Recommendation:** Add a new letter B. under VIII. and change all subsequent letters below it. The language under B. Use of Artificial Intelligence shall read:  
“The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT will be considered a form of plagiarism. Any participants’ use of AI before, during, or after the IHSA State Series competition to generate contest content, MAY result in being ranked last, disqualified, or having their advancement revoked.”

**Rationale:** The use of artificial intelligence presents a potential challenge to the integrity of the contest. Adopting this language, which is used in other IHSA activities, clearly prohibits the use of AI by competitors.

**2. VIII. TOURNAMENT RULES - 13. Headline Writing**

**Recommendation:** Change the language in this category to read:  
“Students will be provided with six (6) stories and will have to provide a main headline and secondary headline for each story as if each were the main headline of the newspaper on that day. Varying character limits will be provided for each main headline and each secondary headline. The headline categories will be two news stories, two features stories, one editorial story, and one sports story. Students will be judged on headline rules, creativity, and accuracy.

**Rationale:** There had been some feedback from advisors that the headline writing category was not occupying enough of the block time. By adding secondary headlines, it provides a real-world skill that will better fill the block time. The changes also guarantee a better variety of story headlines.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. Recommendation:** Change the process of submitting work for virtual Sectionals. Advisors, or another designated adult employee from the school will be charged with reviewing (but not editing) and collecting the work of all students who compete for their school in the IHSA Journalism Sectional and will submit the work to the IHSA through a pre-determined process provided by the IHSA. Additional time beyond the end of Block B will be provided to the submitting individual to allow time for upload or to navigate other tech or formatting issues.

**Rationale:** This process will be similar to the process used for virtual Sectionals in 2022 State Series and serves a number of purposes, including...

- 1) This will add a level of security to the contest. Advisors are best equipped to recognize their own students' style, thus helping to guard against the use of AI or any other outside influences.
- 2) Guards against any work being misplaced and not judged as a result of uncertainty if a student competed or not.
- 3) Allows the IHSA to turnaround work to judges more quickly, as it will not have to delay category judging while waiting for responses to see if a registered individual did in fact compete. This should also provide feedback back to students more quickly.

**2. Recommendation:** When Sectionals are conducted virtually, the Photo Story Telling prompt will be issued ahead of the Sectional date at the same time as the Video News prompt to allow students to better schedule photography opportunities based upon events happening on their campus that week.

**Rationale:** Some campuses have very little happening on the Sectional date, so providing them extra time as we do with the Video News event would produce better overall photos.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

1. The committee discussed returning Sectionals to being held in-person at high school or collegiate sites under the current format. Under a provided proposal of which no action was taken, all current aspects of the Sectional would remain the same (IHSA preparing all prompts, no judging or awards that day). Some committee members supported the idea of potentially returning to in-person Sectionals, but felt that it need to be the old format and held at college sites in order to be worthwhile for the time and organization it requires for advisors to travel to Sectionals.

2. The committee discussed a proposal seeking to change the scoring system for the IHSA State Series based on school size. No action was taken, as the IHSA already has participation thresholds in place for expanding classes and the committee felt like there was no precedence for adjusting team scoring systems based on school size in other IHSA sports and activities.

3. The committee discussed a proposal that would create a new category based around the idea that a team would create an in-depth report. No action was taken, as the committee felt like the time constraints of the IHSA competition would make this work more like a research

paper than an in-depth report.

4. The committee discussed instructions for proctors at the State Finals. Matt said he would look to hire an independent individual to oversee and be a resource for all proctors at the state finals.

5. The committee discussed what sports should and should not be used in the Sports Writing category in the State Series.

6. The IJEA asked about having a non-voting liaison on the IHSA Advisory Committee. Matt explained that this was done previously and they are welcome to have a member continue to serve as a liaison.

7. The committee discussed the turnaround time on Sectional feedback.

8. The committee discussed State Series judging and rubrics.

9. The committee discussed the process for finding judges, their background, and the need for more judges with yearbook backgrounds. Matt is going to try to recruit current yearbook advisors in other states to judge, as yearbook categories have been the most difficult judges to find.

10. The committee discussed the timing of the Sectional award ceremonies.

11. The committee discussed making it mandatory for students to compete in virtual Sectionals from their school.