Best of Mississippi
Scholastic Journalism Awards
S P R I N G

**Winners will be announced at the MSPA statewide high school journalism convention at Ole Miss in late March.
Publications must be MSPA members to compete. Contact MSPA director R.J. Morgan for more information.**

Best of Mississippi

Rules and Regulations

DUE FEB 15

ELIGIBILITY AND COST
All contests are free to enter. The only requirement for eligibility is that your publication be a member of MSPA ($25 annual dues).

TYPES OF AWARDS
MSPA awards excellence in five different areas of scholastic journalism. The contest calendar breaks down like this:

FALL	SPRING
Yearbook	News Publication (paper/magazine/site)
Literary Magazine	Broadcast
	Podcast/Streaming

* There are other Spring awards open to any student or publication (details included in this packet).

Within each of the above areas, our contests break out into **Publication (PUB)** and **Individual (IND)** categories. For Publication Categories, schools submit examples of the staff's abilities in a given area, and awards are issued in the name of the publication. For Individual Categories, schools submit strong individual works for recognition, and awards are issued in the name of the student.

CONTEST STRUCTURE
Judges will select up to five finalists, and from those one winner.

DIGITAL SUBMISSION
We've tried to make submitting your work as uniform as possible, thus we no longer take paper submissions. Only pieces submitted properly (and on time) will be considered in each category. Once you have shared your submissions, you may not make any further edits to the files/entries.

To submit digitally, begin by creating a Dropbox or Google Drive account (Google Drive is preferable). Both of these are free and user-friendly.

1. Once you've created an account, create a "[School Name] Submissions [Year]" folder in your account. This is where all your files will go.

2. Now you're ready to stock your Submissions folder with all the files you plan to enter. DO NOT use subfolders. Your files will automatically sort alphabetically by the category codes in the file name.

   FILE NAMES – All file names should follow the same format: **CategoryCode_School_StudentName**. If submitting multiple entries from the same student in the same category, tack on a 1, 2 or 3 at the end of the filename.

   FILE TYPES – Submit all entries as individual PDFs. Please crop pages down to only the elements being judged in that category.

3. Include one PDF with a composite list of entries, ordered by category with a total file count. This list helps us ensure all submissions were received.

4. Once all your files are in your submissions folder, simply share that folder with **mississippischolasticpress@gmail.com**. The office will download the files as soon as they are uploaded, and advisers will get an email confirming the submissions have been received. If you do not receive an email notification within 24 hours of submission, please email MSPA director R.J. Morgan at morgan@go.olemiss.edu.

If you have any questions about the submission process, call or email for clarification.

** All entries become the property of the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association and may be for promotional purposes, etc. Because of time and financial constraints, printed entries cannot be returned. **

Are you one of the best high school journalists in Mississippi?

Regardless of publication type or size, MSPA wants to recognize those high school journalists who have demonstrated truly exceptional work during their high school careers. Using the comprehensive portfolio criteria list below, MSPA will select an elite group of All-Mississippi students for statewide recognition. Further, from _within_ that group, MSPA will also select and recognize:

- The Mississippi High School Journalist of the Year (must be a senior, advances to the national JEA JOY competition)
- The Orley Hood Award for Excellence in Sports Journalism (best high school sports reporter in Mississippi)

To apply, candidates should create an online portfolio (i.e. a website) showcasing/explaining examples of their best work:

- All staff members at MSPA-member publications are eligible to submit, regardless of age, grade or experience level. There is no cap on the number of candidates per school.
- Portfolios should be cumulative of the candidate's scholastic journalism career and should showcase areas where the candidate excels and/or how they have progressed over their time as a student journalist.
- There are no minimum or maximum limits on examples, however students should endeavor to show judges only their very best work. Samples may be written, linked or embedded on the site. Broadcast/video samples should be no longer than 15 minutes in length.
- Each work sample should be accompanied by some contextual information, including evidence of usage/publication, awards/contests entered/won and an explanation/reasoning for including the sample in the portfolio. This might include a description of the reporting process, difficulties/special circumstances encountered or lessons learned. Explanations should be 25-50 words in length, easy to read and should explain why the entry is important, was chosen for the portfolio.
- Candidates may use any available web platform to create their site. Popular choices include Wordpress, Wix, Adobe Spark, Google Sites, etc. The important thing is that the portfolio be online and shareable via hyperlink.
- The design/concept of the portfolio site is entirely up to the candidate, but attractiveness & ease of navigation do factor into judging.
- Whatever the site's theme/design, work samples should be organized onto separate pages/tabs using the following categories:

• Design & Editing	• News Gathering
• Marketing & Entrepreneurship	• News Literacy
• Law and Ethics	• Photography
• Leadership & Team Building	• Sports Journalism
• Literary Content (Poetry/Prose)	• Web
• Multimedia Broadcast	• Writing

- Some pieces may be cross-listed (ex: a sports story might go under writing, but also sports journalism). Candidates are NOT required to submit examples in all 12 categories (however the more areas in which a candidate excels, the better). Judges will consider both depth and breadth of skills in their evaluations.

To submit, simply send us a PDF link to the candidate's portfolio using the file name format: AMS_School_StudentName.

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MSPA ADVISERS OF THE YEAR

Good journalism advisers are the most critical part of a program's success. They are more than just teachers; they're managers, motivators, mentors and sometimes even mediators. They are asked to simultaneously be visionaries and micro-managers, helping their students navigate through a variety of daily struggles. These are the people who make scholastic journalism possible, and MSPA seeks to honor those Mississippi advisers who excel at their craft.

SELECTION:

Our Adviser of the Year selection is **a two-step process.** A link to the online nomination form will be distributed via the MSPA listserv sometime in early January. Nominations should explain why the nominee is deserving of the honor and may be submitted by anyone, including principals, colleagues, other advisers, students, parents, etc., or the nominee themselves. A committee of judges will evaluate all nominations and narrow the field to five (5) finalists, each of whom will be prompted to complete a more detailed self-reflection form before the normal Feb. 15 spring contest deadline. Any adviser at an MSPA-member school is eligible, regardless of school size.

AWARD CYCLE:

SPRING

JoAnne Sellers Newspaper Adviser of the

Broadcast Adviser of the Year

FALL

Caroline Fair Yearbook Adviser of the Year

Literary Magazine Adviser of the Year

1. Scholastic Press Ally Award

A publication where students have the power and responsibility to cover their school accurately and fairly usually requires a lot of support from outside the classroom. Whether that support comes from an administrator, parent or counselor, a diligent IT worker, community member or local business, or any number of other sources, MSPA wishes to honor one of these scholastic press allies with statewide recognition. To nominate your greatest ally, submit a PDF with up to three (3) support letters or artifacts.

Category Code: SPA

2. Best Social Media Presence

Modern journalists are increasingly using social media to connect with their audience, promote content and report on events in real time. Developing a staff presence on sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat is an important strategy for high school media outlets to utilize and for MSPA to honor. To enter, list/link all of your staff's social media accounts on one PDF, or submit a curated link to what you feel like are some of the best examples of your work using Wakelet or a similar site. Judging will be based on the combined effectiveness of the accounts in informing an audience.

Category Code: PSM

3. Best Integrated Marketing Campaign

One key facet of the modern media field is being able to understand, engage and persuade your consumers. How does your staff do this? Usually through some type of coordinated marketing effort. Whether it's selling yearbooks, launching a reader or viewership drive or just trying to spread the word about your new Snapchat account, we want to see your best marketing skills at work. To enter, submit a PDF portfolio that includes a narrative description of the campaign along with any photos, screenshots, videos (use links), etc. that you feel best illustrate the specifics and/or success of the campaign. Promotion and branding should be evident. Creativity and Innovation are key. Special attention in judging will be given to trendsetting/following and unique approaches.

Category Code: IMC

Newspapers and news magazines have long been the foundation of American journalism. In recent decades, these institutions have adapted to modernity and added online news sites to the arsenal of tools they use to deliver information to their audiences. MSPA encourages scholastic journalism programs to do the same. Below is a list of the guiding principles our judges will use for evaluating quality in this division, followed on the next page by a comprehensive list of individual and publication categories honored. All entries should be published this school year.

NEWS PUBLICATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Coverage:
• Publication functions as a source of ACCURATE information for the student body and school community.
• Stories report on recent events, happenings and issues that affect the high school student. When state and national news are covered, they have a local angle.
• News elements like impact, proximity, timeliness, unusualness and human interest clearly guide content decisions.
• Coverage is organized logically into sections such as news, sports, opinion and entertainment.
• Coverage presents specific, objective information, avoids vague words, and addresses all sides of each story with multiple sources and various points of view.

Writing:
• Compositions are clear, concise and factual, written from a third-person neutral point of view and are edited effectively and adhere to basic rules of grammar, usage, and mechanics.
• Editorializing is avoided except in opinion writing that is clearly labeled as such, or in direct quotes.
• Writers primarily use action verbs and active voice, avoiding vague words like "many," "some," "several," "many," "most," etc..
• Leads are written in a purposeful and journalistically appropriate manner. The type of lead should conform to the type of story: feature, hard news, opinion, etc.
• Direct quotes should convey sources' opinions and perspectives, and should always be attributed.
• A consistent stylebook is followed. The most common for scholastic journalism staffs is the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook.

Visuals
• Photos, graphics and type work together to create a cohesive story and enjoyable reading experience in a way that enhances the visual appeal of the paper.
• Photography consists primarily of candid, well-composed action shots that aid in telling the story visually. Posed photographs are limited or avoided. Photographs showing facial features and emotions are prioritized.
• Label photo illustrations (manipulation beyond basic cropping/color correction) as such. Clip art & stock visuals are discouraged.
• All photos should include a photo credit and a focused, detailed cutline. Each person in the photo should be identified. Cutlines should generally be at least two sentences.
• Infographics are appropriately designed and are used to draw the readers' attention to articles and information in clever, meaningful ways based on solid, documented research. Sources should be cited, designers credited, templates noted.

Layout and Design:
• The overall design establishes a unique personality for the paper and shows an awareness of design trends.
• The nameplate emphasizes the name of the publication rather than the name of the school or mascot. It includes the specific date of publication and the issue/volume number.
• Inside pages have a complete folio denoting section, page number, publication name, and date.
• The publication use a consistent set of fonts for headlines, body copy, bylines and cutlines.
• Design elements (bylines, pull quotes, columns, logos, rule lines, etc.) are consistent across the issue/issues.
• Policies, social media accounts and contact information are listed, including how to advertise or submit letters to the editor.

Online Presence:
• Website is well-organized and easily navigable.
• Social media accounts are used effectively for distributing information and engaging audience.
• Both web and social are updated regularly in an effort to build and sustain a digital audience.

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News Publication Division

DUE FEB 15

PUBLICATION AWARDS

These are awarded in the name of the publication. Submit PDFs of your **three** best issues from the current school year **plus** a PDF link to your online news site (if applicable) using **category code NP and your school name (**Ex: NP_Brownsville1, NP_Brownsville2, NP_Brownsville3, NP_Brownsville4). Online-only publications can simply submit a PDF link to their site. Judges will use this same pool of entries to judge all publication categories.

(NP)
1. **News & Feature Writing**
2. **Sports Writing**
3. **Opinion Writing**
4. **Print Layout and Design (if applicable)**
5. **Online Presence (if applicable)**
6. **News Publication of the Year (Highest Honor, all-inclusive)**

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS (LIMIT 3 ENTRIES PER CATEGORY, PER SCHOOL)

Each entry (not category) should be its own PDF (File Name Example: INS_Brownsville_AbigaleBagwell).

1. News Story (NNS)
Articles entered should report new facts on planned or past actions or developments. Judging will be based on clarity, organization, attention to detail, quotes, attributions and thoroughness.

2. Depth Reporting (NDR)
Special category for entries in which a writer/writers has completed extensive research on a large, complicated topic (think school safety or local economy). Such stories often involve comprehensive surveys and investigations. Judging is based on depth of effort and clarity of presentation.

3. Feature Story (NFS)
Features differ from news stories mainly in that features do not necessarily have a time element. They may be about people, events or other topics; they are generally more descriptive than straight news. Judging will be based on clarity, descriptions, attention to detail, quotes, attribution and thoughtfulness.

4. Opinion Piece (NOP)
These are opinion articles that lay out a clear stance on a given issue. They may also be columns or commentaries on sports or culture with no specific conclusions drawn or solutions presented. Entries will be judged on clarity, reasoning, organization and thoughtfulness.

5. Staff Editorial (NUE)
These are unsigned opinion articles that represent the thoughts of the entire staff. This is the voice of the paper. Entries will be judged on clarity, reasoning, organization and thoughtfulness. Though the article is unsigned, the adviser must designate the name of the actual student writer for recognition.

6. Review (NRV)
These are opinion articles that critique a topic (books, movies, music, food, etc.). Judging is based on clarity, reasoning, organization and thoughtfulness.

7. Editorial Cartoon (NEC)
Any single cartoon or series, humorous or other, which was student-drawn and printed during the contest period is eligible. Judging will be based on

the artist's skill in visually and verbally conveying a message. Editorial cartoons differ from "comics" in that they do present a message.

8. Sports Story (NSS)
All copy that reports on athletic contests or issues is eligible for entry. Judging will be based on clarity, organization, attention to detail, quotes, attributions and thoroughness.

9. News Photo (NNP)
News photos capture actions or reactions to a news event. Any single photo that appeared in a member publication and was taken by a staff member is eligible. Judging is based on composition, focus and contrast - how effectively the photographer conveyed the reason for taking the picture.

10. Feature Photo (NFP)
Feature photos are more posed or artistically framed than news photos. Any single photo that appeared in a member publication and was taken by a staff member is eligible. Judging is based on composition, focus and contrast - how effectively the photographer conveyed the reason for taking the picture.

11. Sports Photo (NSP)
Sports photos capture actions or reactions involving athletic events or athletes. Any single photo that appeared in a member publication and was taken by a staff member is eligible. Judging is based on composition, focus and contrast - how effectively the photographer conveyed the reason for taking the picture.

12. Page Design (NPD)
The entire page or spread must be entered. It does not matter whether the designer wrote any of the stories or took any of the pictures on the page. Judging will be based on the attractiveness and effectiveness of the design, including the clarity and placement of headlines and other elements.

13. Infographic (NIG)
Infographics are graphic visual representations of information, data or knowledge intended to present information quickly and clearly. Judging will be based on the attractiveness and effectiveness of the design, including the clarity and placement of headlines and other elements. Please denote use of a template or graphic generator.

School newscasts are the fastest-growing area of journalism in Mississippi. Each year, more and more schools are giving their students control of the airwaves and allowing them to deliver quality audio and video programs to their student body. Below is a list of the guiding principles our judges will use for evaluating quality in this division, followed on the next page by a comprehensive list of individual and publication categories honored. All entries should be published this school year.

NEWSCAST GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Coverage
•   All elements of the broadcast are student-led and student-produced.
•   The broadcast functions as a source of information for the student body and school community.
•   Story packages report on recent events, happenings and issues that affect the high school student and address a variety of topics in a fresh and creative manner. When state and national news are covered, they have a local angle.
•   News elements like proximity, consequence, conflict, emotions, unusualness and human interest clearly guide content decisions.
•   Coverage presents specific, objective information, avoids vague words, and addresses all sides of each story with multiple sources and various points of view.

Audio
•   Audio levels are correct and consistent with an appropriate use of natural sound without static and noise.
•   Voiceover narration uses short sentences and action verbs in a conversational style to convey the facts of the story,
•   Sound bites are used appropriately as narration, conveying the perspectives and opinions of the sources.
•   No copyrighted music is used without specific written consent from the artist.
•   Correct mic usage is evident.

Visual
•   Interview and studio shots are framed correctly using the rules of thirds, look-space, and headspace.
•   B-roll footage use a variety of shot types: close ups, medium shots and long shots.
•   Video possesses a storytelling quality and matches the accompanying audio.
•   Video focuses on natural action, avoids posed shots. Do not stage the news.
•   Video features adequate and appropriate lighting.

Editing & Graphics
•   Editing and pacing are fluid and appropriate.
•   Video packages use sequences (matched action shots edited together) to advance the story.
•   Graphics are clear and easy to understand, enhancing the story.
•   Lower thirds are used for appropriate identification.
•   Titles and credits should be easy to read; use appropriate typeface and speed.
•   Transitions are primarily cuts unless fades are used to indicate passing of time.

Talent
•   The reporter should be appropriately dressed for the situation and location.
•   The reporter DELIVERS the news instead of just reading it.
•   The reporter is poised, professional, energetic and confident.
•   The reporter makes eye contact and speaks in a straightforward manner without bias or personal opinion.
•   Phrasing, diction and pace demonstrate professional broadcast style.

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Broadcast Division

PUBLICATION AWARDS

These are awarded in the name of the publication. Submit a PDF with links to up to 20 minutes of your best <u>whole</u> broadcasts from the current school year using **category code BCN and your school name** (Ex: BCN_Brownsville). This might be only 1-2 weekly shows, but might be 4-5 daily shows. Whatever works for your program. Either way: whole shows, no more than 20 minutes total. Judges will use this pool to judge ALL categories 1-7.

(BCN)

1. **Opening Sequence** (1-minute max run time)

2. **News Coverage**

3. **Feature Coverage**

4. **Sports Coverage**

5. **Creativity** (PSAs, hype videos, weather reporting, creative contests, etc.)

6. **Daily Newscast** (if applicable; please use BCND for your entries instead of BCN to denote this)

7. **Newscast of the Year (Highest Honor, all-inclusive)**

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS (LIMIT 3 ENTRIES PER CATEGORY, PER SCHOOL)

Each <u>entry</u> (not category) should be its own PDF (File Name Example: BNP_Brownsville_AbigaleBagwell)

1. News Story (BNS) – This category is for your program's best individual student news reports. Any breaking news, events, in-depth pieces, etc. are permissible. Maximum length of 3 minutes per entry.

2. Feature Story (BFS) – This category is for your program's best individual student feature reports. Good features can be lighthearted, serious, emotional or in-depth. Maximum length of 3 minutes per entry.

3. Sports Story (BSS) – This category is for your program's best individual student sports reports. Any sports-related previews, recaps, features or exclusives are admissible. Maximum length of 3 minutes per entry.

4. In-Studio Anchor (BAN) - Are you the best in-studio talent in MS? Submit your highlight reel to find out. Maximum length of 5 minutes per entry.

5. News Reporter (BNR) - Are you the best on-air news talent in MS? Submit your highlight reel to find out. Maximum length of 5 minutes per entry.

6. Sports Reporter (BSR) - Are you the best on-air sports talent in MS? Submit your highlight reel to find out. Maximum length of 5 minutes per entry.

7. Weather Reporter (BWET) - Are you the best on-air weather reporter in MS? Submit your highlight reel to find out. Maximum length of 3 minutes per entry.

8. PSA Video (BPSA) - This category is for public service announcements and videos that argue for a specific cause or action. Only student-produced entries will be accepted. Maximum length of 3 minutes per entry.

9. Hype Video (BHYP) - This category is for videos that excite or engage the student body ahead of a sporting event or school function. Judging will be based on difficulty and effectiveness. Maximum length of 2 minutes per entry.

10. Longform Story (BLS) - This category is for lengthy in-depth pieces on a singular topic. For example, a 30-minute look at the history of integration in your town/school. Or a behind-the-scenes documentary-style look at your football team's season. Judges will look for innovation, effectiveness and excellence. No maximum length.

Student-produced podcast/streaming shows are gaining popularity in a growing number of school newsrooms across the country. This 21st century medium is MSPA's youngest division, but one where we're excited to encourage student experimentation. Below is a list of the guiding principles our judges will use for evaluating quality in this division, followed on the next page by a comprehensive list of individual and publication categories honored. All entries should be published this school year.

PODCAST/STREAMING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Podcast Content
• Podcast functions as a source of information or entertainment for the student body and school community.
• The personality of participants is clear and evident and shines through the information.
• Episodes report or relay stories about events and issues that affect the high school student and address a variety of topics in a fresh and creative manner.
• Each episode has a coherent, consistent theme or topic throughout.

Live-Stream Content
• Live-stream functions as a source of broadcasting live events (sports and/or arts) for the student body and local community.
• Coverage should be student-driven and include student commentary.
• Camera should be focused and steady on the main action.
• Camera angles and framing should provide the best view of the event.

Audio
• Audio levels are correct and consistent with an appropriate use of natural sound without static and too much background noise.
• Titles and credits should be easily understood; use appropriate speed and diction.
• Voiceover narration uses short sentences and action verbs in a conversational style to convey the facts of the story.
• Sound bites are used appropriately as narration, conveying the perspectives and opinions of the sources.
• No copyrighted music is used without specific written consent from the artist.
• Correct mic usage is evident.
• Submissions should use natural sound or music in creative and appropriate ways.

Editing & Graphics
• Editing and pacing are fluid and appropriate.
• Transitions are thoughtfully placed and used to further the flow instead of interrupt it.
• Titles and credits should be easy to read; use appropriate typeface and speed (if video).
• Information and conversation should be thoughtfully and creatively edited to make sure the main ideas are conveyed clearly and to avoid repetition or unnecessary information.
• For live stream the scoreboard is accurate (if applicable).
• Sponsorship logos for live stream are inserted at the appropriate time and remain on the screen for an appropriate amount of time.

Talent
• The on air talent is knowledgeable, poised, professional, energetic and confident.
• Phrasing, diction and pace demonstrate appropriate style.
• On air talent should be easily heard.
• The on air talent for live stream calls the game as an unbiased party and correctly relays the on screen action to the viewers.

PUBLICATION AWARDS

These categories are awarded in the name of the publication. For podcasts, a publication = multiple episodes of a named, branded show concept, such as "Kate's Cooking Corner" or "Brownsville Sports Roundup." Schools may choose to operate all their podcasts under one name ("Bobcat Podcasting") or have several different podcast "publications" living under one roof. Either way, the name/concept is what we consider the defining characteristic of a publication, and different name/concepts will be treated as separate brands/entries in our contests.

What does all that mean for you? It means that in each of the publication categories below, we consider the term "podcast" to represent "Kate's Cooking Corner" as a whole, not just as a single episode. To enter your podcast, submit one PDF with links to up to 20 minutes of that podcast's best whole episodes from the current school year (could be anywhere from 1-10 episodes depending on length) using the **category code + school name + show name** as the file name (Ex: PNS_Brownsville_BrownsvilleSportsRoundup). If you have more than one podcast concept that fits each category, submit them as separate entries. Judges will evaluate winners based on the quality and effectiveness of their storytelling, strength of their on-air talent, and their technical execution.

1. Best News Podcast (PSN) - These podcasts seek to inform and/or offer commentary on local, state or national news items of interest to the intended audience.

2. Best Culture/Entertainment Podcast (PSC) - These podcasts seek to inform and/or offer commentary on issues related to cultural trends, entertainment, or other related items that may be of interest to the intended audience.

3. Best Sports Podcast (PSS) - These podcasts seek to inform and/or offer commentary on sports-related topics of interest to the intended audience.

4. Best Live-Stream Program (PSL) - Live-stream programs are student-produced broadcasts (audio or video) of sporting events or school programs of interest to the intended audience. Note: as these events can vary greatly in length, judges will use no more than the first 20 minutes in their considerations.

5. Podcast of the Year (POD) - Highest Honor, all-inclusive.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS (LIMIT 3 ENTRIES PER CATEGORY, PER SCHOOL)

For these categories, an entry consists of one individual link to a specific episode or student highlight reel. Each entry (not category) should be submitted as its own PDF using the **category code + school name + show name OR student name** as the file name (Ex: PSLT_Brownsville_JosephBagwell or PSNE_Brownsville_BrownsvilleSportsRoundup1)

1. Best News Podcast Episode (PSNE) - An individual podcast episode that seeks to inform and/or offer commentary on local, state or national news items of interest to the intended audience.

2. Best Culture/Entertainment Podcast Episode (PSCE) - An individual podcast episode that seeks to inform and/or offer commentary on issues related to cultural trends, entertainment, or other related items that may be of interest to the intended audience.

3. Best Sports Podcast Episode (PSSE) - An individual podcast episode that seeks to inform and/or offer commentary on sports-related topics of interest to the intended audience.

4. Best Live-Stream On-Air Talent (PSLT) - Are you the best student live-stream commentator in MS? Submit your highlight reel to find out. Maximum length of 5 minutes per entry.

5. Best Podcast On-Air Talent (PSPT) - Are you the best student podcast personality in MS? Submit your highlight reel to find out. Maximum length of 5 minutes per entry.