Middle School Journalist of the Year

Comments by Sarah Nichols, MJE

What exceptional candidates for this year's Middle School Journalist of the Year recognition! Each student demonstrated a passion for journalism along with grit and drive to tell important stories, especially from home during their quarantine experience. Not only are these three honorees talented yearbook editors and skilled writers, photographers and designers — they're also compassionate leaders.

Will's portfolio is a wonderful example of how to showcase and organize student work. It can be time-consuming to develop an online portfolio, but the process is like its own storytelling exerciseI and the attention to detail paid off. Think about your story and the best way to tell it. For any type of portfolio, using any tool or presentation method, candidates should proofread carefully, test links from Google Docs to double-check sharing permissions and include all necessary components (work samples, essay, recommendations, etc).

It's wonderful to see clean, eye-catching theme pages and people-driven copy. All three honorees have a strong command of how to execute verbal and visual components of a yearbook theme for a layered, unified and reader-relevant effect. Seeing Luci's additional experience in broadcast journalism was impressive. It was great to see facial expressions in the photos each journalist chose for their portfolios, along with commentary about reaction shots being powerful storytelling photos when covering sports.

Congratulations to Will, Morgan and Luci! What struck me in particular is the character and commitment each journalist demonstrated in their work producing stories and spreads and in their roles as leaders. As Morgan said, "Leadership is supporting those who you are working with." The ability to reflect on each experience with a growth mindset and see ways to keep improving models lifelong learning, and it will serve these journalists well in their high school careers.