



MIDWEST MEDIA
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

2026 FESTIVAL PACKET

MMEA Members:

This packet contains all of the information necessary for participating in the 33rd Annual High School Video Festival. As rules, guidelines, categories, etc. can change from year to year, please be sure you are reading through this packet carefully as we expect each school to follow the guidelines/rules for the competition.

Here are a few items worth noting for this year's competition:

-The 33rd Annual festival will be held on May 1, 2026 at Neuqua Valley High School.

-Deadline for entries this year will be Friday, February 20, 2026 at 10:00pm.

-All monies (membership fee, entry fees, and festival attendance fees - if applicable) will be due no later than March 17, 2026. If fees are not paid by this deadline, the school's entries will not be eligible to move on to judging. Payments can be made by check or via PayPal- that info will be forthcoming in February.

-All videos submitted to the festival must meet MMEA standards. If you have questions about this rule contact Mark Ciesielski- mciesielski@hf233.org.

Any questions or concerns regarding the festival and the entry forms please call Mark Ciesielski (219-629-0297) or email mciesielski@hf233.org.

We look forward to a great contest this year!

Thank you,
Mark Ciesielski
President MMEA

FESTIVAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Phillip Ash
Julie Benca
Brendan Chambers
Mark Ciesielski
John Gelsomino

Michael Lynch
Todd Rubin
Mason Strom
Lisa Traut

MMEA ADMINISTRATION

President
Vice President
Treasurer
Secretary
Judge Coord.

Mark Ciesielski
Brendan Chambers
John Gelsomino
Lisa Traut
Julie Benca

BROADCAST STANDARDS

All videos submitted to the festival must meet these broadcast standards and may not violate in-school rules and expectations. Videos may not include the following content (implicitly or explicitly):

Drugs, drug paraphernalia, drug use, alcohol:

Not permitted, except in the non-fiction categories- PSA, Documentary, News Package, News Program, Talk Show, Cinematography if shots were used in a previously entered video)

Nudity, partial nudity:

Not allowed

Sex:

Videos may not contain scenes showing the act of, or implying some type of sexual act has taken place

Profanity:

Not allowed; bleeping of words is not acceptable; deleting the audio but still being able to see the mouth form the words is not acceptable.

Violence/Weapons:

No act of violence with a weapon can be seen on camera, but images of weapons (guns, knives, etc.) are permitted on screen.

Copyright Music:

There are NO restrictions in any category regarding copyright music. Copyrighted music can be used for any video in any category, but it is the entering school's responsibility to make sure the music is not blocked if it is submitted via Youtube or Vimeo. If a video is blocked and the judges cannot see it, the video will be DQed.

If you have a question about material in a video before you submit it to the contest, feel free to email any questions regarding possible violations to Mark Ciesielski (mciesielski@hf233.org).

VIOLATIONS

If you feel a video entered into the festival has violated any of the above standards, please fill out the information requested in the Google form that was shared with the membership in the email regarding this year's festival. The Festival Committee will review the information shared, discuss the possible violation, and vote as to whether they feel the video violates the above standards or not.

If the majority of the committee feels the video violates the standards, it will be disqualified from the video festival and the school that produced the video will be notified. If the majority of the committee feels the video does not violate the standards, it will not be disqualified from the video festival.

All decisions are final and entry fees will not be refunded should an entry be disqualified.

RULES FOR ENTRIES

Deadline for Entries is 10:00pm, Friday, February 20, 2026

-Only entries produced by currently enrolled high school students (2025-2026 school year) are eligible and the entries must have been produced between February 14, 2025 and February 20, 2026 (this includes the work submitted within the Cinematography entries).

-All entries must be submitted online via YouTube, Vimeo or Google Drive link. Please check the submitted video link to ensure playback of the entire video. If the judge cannot play the video via the link provided, it will be disqualified. All YouTube entries must be listed as "Public" from February 20 thru May 8. All Google entries must have "Anyone with the link can view" as their permission settings from February 20 through May 8.

-Do not include student name or school names in the online entry title. When uploading your video online, please title it with the same title that is entered on the entry submission page. Do not include slates on the uploaded videos. You do not need to include the category of the video in the title. Please keep titles of entries to under 30 characters.

-All entries must meet the requirements of school broadcast standards and practices in relation to language and visual content. By uploading the video, the faculty advisor assumes all responsibility for the material contained in the entry. See cover page for detailed definition of MMEA School Broadcast Standards.

-All entries must be the original work of the student producer including scripting, directing, videotaping, editing, and graphics. The only exceptions would be Documentary, News Program, Talk Show, News Package and Natural Audio News Package categories. These categories allow copyrighted images or video for historical purposes, and may include content not produced by the student, as long as it is attributed to the original owner.

-Work that was produced either in part or in full by a faculty member is not eligible to be entered.

-Only one entry will be allowed per student per category and a maximum of four students may be listed as producers for each entry.

-Content from a video entry may not be entered into more than one category (with the exception of Cinematography, Movie Trailer, News Program, and Talk Show.)

-All entries must be in English, or submit a typed, scripted translation to Mark Ciesielski (mciesielski@hf233.org) by the entry deadline.

-Each entry has a specific time requirement (listed after the description). Any submissions over that time requirement will be disqualified.

Entries may be:

- 1) ...an excerpt of a show
- 2) ...a highlight reel consisting of the best segments (*with the exception of the Live Event Sports, Live Event Non-Sports, and Talk Show categories*)
- 3) ...a full program (within the time requirements)

-Due to the complex judging process, an entry entered in the wrong category will not be judged. Questions regarding category placement, call Mark Ciesielski at 219-629-0297.

CATEGORIES

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Maximum length: 2 minutes Entries Per School: 3

For outstanding achievement in cinematography demonstrating the use of shot composition, movement, lighting, focus, and directing the viewer's perspective. Entries may contain a single example or a composite reel.

COMEDIC NARRATIVE

Maximum length: 5 minutes. Entries Per School: 2

Entries must be based on an original comedic script (not the taping of a stage production).

COMMERCIAL

Maximum length: 1 minute Entries Per School: 3

Entries advertise a real or fictitious product or service in a new way. All aspects of the commercial must be produced by the students. Students can use the static logo, but not in a way that has been previously produced.

DEMONSTRATION

Maximum length: 3 minutes Entries Per School: 3

Entries can be training videos or a demonstration of a process which should provide clear instruction to the viewer.

DOCUMENTARY

Maximum length: 5 minutes Entries Per School: 2
Copyright Images/Video can be used with credit given

Entries can focus on a compelling event, societal issue, person or group. Mockumentaries are not acceptable in this category.

DRAMATIC NARRATIVE

Maximum length: 5 minutes Entries Per School: 2

Entries must be based on an original dramatic script (not the taping of a stage production).

LIVE EVENT - NON SPORTS

Maximum length: 3 minutes Entries Per School: 3

A multi-camera, live-to-tape production of a live event (performing arts show, variety show, school board meeting, assemblies, etc). Entry must represent an unedited, *continuous* sample of the work, and **MUST** be student directed, switched, and shot. Compilation entries will be disqualified.

LIVE EVENT - SPORTS

Maximum length: 3 minutes Entries Per School: 3

A multi-camera, live-to-tape production of a sporting event. Entry must represent an unedited, *continuous* sample of the work, and **MUST** be student directed, switched, announced, and shot. Compilation entries will be disqualified.

MOVIE TRAILER

Maximum length: 2 minutes Entries Per School: 3

Entries can promote either a real or fictitious student-produced movie and should contain elements of a traditional movie trailer (preview screen, title graphic, release date, etc).

MUSIC VIDEO

Maximum length: 5 minutes Entries Per School: 2

Entries must demonstrate a link between the music and original images shot and edited by students. Original music is encouraged but not required.

NATURAL AUDIO NEWS PACKAGE

Maximum length: 2 minutes Entries Per School: 3

Produce a story on any topic using b-roll, sound bites, and natural sound only. No reporter introduction, narration tracks, or music is permitted.

NEWS PACKAGE

Maximum length: 2 minutes Entries Per School: 3
Copyright Images/Video can be used with credit given

Entries should present a report focused on a topic or event. Stories should contain traditional elements of a news package (b-roll, sound bites, voice over and/or stand-up). Shortened versions of documentaries are not permitted in this category.

NEWS PROGRAM

Maximum length: 10 minutes Entries Per School: 1
Copyright Images/Video can be used with credit given

An anchor-based newscast which could include packages, weather, sports, commentary, interviews, etc.

P.S.A.

Maximum length: 1 minute Entries Per School: 3

Public Service Announcement entries that promote awareness of a social or civic issue, or an organization.

SCHOOL PROMOTION- SPORTS

Maximum length: 2 minutes Entries Per School: 3

This category celebrates the adrenaline-fueled artistry of sports hype videos – short-form films that ignite passion, intensity, and anticipation for athletic competition. Submissions should showcase dynamic editing, high-energy soundtracks, and compelling visual storytelling that elevates the spirit of sports. Whether highlighting a team, athlete, event, or fan culture. Ideal entries will blur the line between promotion and cinematic experience, leaving viewers inspired and energized.

SCHOOL PROMOTION- NON-SPORTS

Maximum length: 2 minutes Entries Per School: 3

Short-form films that ignite passion, intensity, and anticipation for your school's academic, fine arts, activities, community, and/or culture. Submissions should showcase dynamic editing and compelling visual storytelling that elevates the spirit of your school culture.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Maximum length: 30 Seconds Entries Per School: 3

Showcase your school's academic, sports, or fine arts, activities, community, and culture in a video that would be shared on your school's social media channels. Entry must be shot and edited in a vertical format.

TALK SHOW

Maximum length: 5 minutes Entries Per School: 3
Copyright Images/Video can be used with credit given

Entries must be of 1 of 2 formats - 1) an interview-based show (with a host and guest(s) in a studio or on location, or 2) multiple anchors having a discussion about a particular topic (unscripted). Entry must represent a continuous sample of the work. Entry **MUST** be student directed and **MUST** be hosted by a student and represent one singular episode (although highlights and cutaway segments may be included). Compilation entries will be disqualified.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING ENTRIES

On the **evening of January 15th**, the primary instructor at each school will receive an email containing the login and password that is specific to your school. There will be 1 login for student entries and 1 login for the primary instructor (who will have deleting abilities for that school's entries). Teachers should NOT share the primary login/password with the students.

Deadline for Entries is 10:00pm, Friday, February 20, 2026

UPLOADING

1- Upload entry video to YouTube or Vimeo. (any of the entries are allowed to be uploaded via Google, not just the Music Videos)

2- Title it with the same title you will enter on the Video Festival Entry site. **Please keep titles to under 30 characters.** YouTube - entry must be listed as Public. Google - entry must be listed as "Anyone with the link can view".

3- Copy the URL

4- Login to the Video Festival Entry site (**fest.mmea.tv**) using the username and password provided to you in the January 16th email (if you have lost your login info contact Lisa Traut (lisa_traut@ipsd.org))

5- Click on "Submit Entry"

6- Fill out the entire form completely. If there is no 2nd, 3rd, or 4th Student Producer, please leave that information blank.

7- For the "Description" section, be sure to accurately describe the video and provide information you feel is necessary for the judges – they will see this when they are watching the video.

8- Enter the TRT for the video that is submitted. Please be mindful of the maximum time limits for each category.

9- Click "Submit Entry" on the bottom

10- Entries may be deleted up until the entry **deadline time (10:00pm, Friday, February 20, 2026)**. To do this, go to the main page that shows the entries for your school. Click on the entry you wish to delete. Under the video, click "Remove Entry". It will ask you again if you wish to remove the entry. Once it's removed, there is no way to get it back – you will have to resubmit the entry by the deadline.

11- Prior to the February 20 deadline, it is your responsibility to make sure your entry has not been blocked by Youtube or Vimeo and to make sure the video on Google can be viewed by anyone. If video is blocked by Youtube or Vimeo or cannot be viewed on Google after the deadline, the video will be disqualified.

12- You will be charged the entry fee for any entries still on the site after the deadline. Any mistakes, duplicates, etc. MUST be deleted by the entry deadline.

SUBMITTING PAYMENT

•All monies (membership fee, entry fees, and festival attendance fees [if applicable]) will be due no later than **March 17, 2026**. A form will be sent to all schools in early February with complete directions regarding payment. If fees are not paid by this deadline, the school's entries will not be eligible to be judged.

•Schools will be able to pay their fees one of two ways – via PayPal or with a check.

•**For schools paying via PayPal: -\$15 fee added to festival fees to cover administrative costs**

MEMBER SCHOOLS

If you do not see your school in the list below, please notify Mark Ciesielski (mciesielski@hf233.org) prior to Feb. 1st.

Antioch
Back of the Yards
Barrington
Batavia
Bremen
Crown Point
Deerfield
Elk Grove
Geneseo
Geneva
Glenbrook North
Glenbrook South
Hersey
Highland Park
Hillcrest
Homewood-Flossmoor
Huntley
Joliet Catholic
Lake Forest
Libertyville
Lockport Township
Lyons Township
Maine East
Maine South
Maine West
Marist
Metea Valley
Morton East
Morthor McAuley
Mundelein
Neuqua Valley
Oak Forest
Oak Park River Forest
Richards
Riverside-Brookfield
Shepard
South Elgin
Tinley Park
Vernon Hills
Waubonsie Valley
Wheaton North
Wheaton Warrenville South
Wheeling
York

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging procedure for this year's festival has been redesigned based on feedback from both MMEA members and the professional judges. For this process to work and be successful, it will require effort from every member of MMEA. Please read thru the directions below.

- All entries will be due by 10pm on Friday, February 20th
- Every MMEA member will be assigned 1-2 categories and the member will watch all of the video entries and determine their top 15 videos for each category assigned.
 - Categories will be determined prior to January 20th
- Members will have from February 21st thru March 9th to watch the videos in their assigned categories, and determine their top 10-15 videos for each of the assigned categories.
- Members will bring their list of top 10-15 videos in each of their categories to the Spring meeting on March 10. Details on this meeting will be forthcoming.
- During the meeting on March 10, members will meet in small groups with other members who judged the same category, and as a group, will determine the top 10-15 videos from that particular category that will move on to be judged by the professional judges.
 - MMEA members will be providing written feedback on the videos in their category. The feedback must be posted on the festival site no later than April 30, 2026.
- After the Spring meeting, judges will receive the list of the top 10-15 videos that they are to watch. 3 judges (per category) will judge those videos and score them. Feedback from those judges will be encouraged, but will be optional.
- The scores from the 3 judges will be averaged together to determine the top 5 videos in each category. Those top 5 videos in each category will be announced at the Video Festival on May 1.

DIRECTIONS TO NEUQUA VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Address: 2360 95th Street, Naperville Phone: (630) 428-6000

FROM I-355 OR I-294:

- I355 or I294 to I-88 west/Aurora
- Take Rt. 59 South
- You'll be on Rt. 59 for a while...past Fox Valley Mall, past 75th street, past 87th street...
- Left on 95th street.
- At the 3rd stop light, turn right (main entrance to the school)
- Continue straight towards the front of the building – Auditorium is on the east side of the front “U” driveway
- Please direct your bus driver to park in the identified area on the parking map

FROM I-55:

- I-55 to Weber Road and go north on Weber
- Left on 111th Street
- Right on Book Road
- Left on 95th Street
- 1st stop light, turn left (main entrance to the school)
- Continue straight towards the front of the building – Auditorium is on the east side of the front “U” driveway
- Please direct your bus driver to park in the identified area on the parking map

Information will be forthcoming in a separate email in April regarding bus drop off locations, parking for buses, as well as parking for activity buses/vans.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If my school is not a MMEA member, can we enter our projects into the Video Festival?

Only current MMEA member schools are allowed to enter their students' projects. If you are not a current member and you plan on paying your membership dues in March with your festival fees, that is acceptable.

If my school is not entering any videos to the festival, can we still attend the Video Festival?

Yes, as long as your membership is current. Please complete the Submission Summary Report and submit your payment by the due date.

I have a video that a student created, but I'm not sure which category it would fall into. Can I enter the same video into two categories?

No, you may not enter the same video into multiple categories. Even if it is a different section of the same video, you may enter it in one category only. Please contact Mark Ciesielski for assistance in placing the video in the proper category.

I only requested 10 tickets on my Submission Summary sheet. Can I bring 5 extra students with me to the festival in April and pay when I check in?

No, all ticket requests must be made when you turn in your Submission Summary sheet. You may not bring extra students with you on the day of the festival. If another school has extra tickets they have already purchased and are not using, you may purchase them from that school (Please notify John Gelsomino of any exchanges so an accurate record of school tallies can be kept). Please use the list-serv (mmea-list@listserv.ipeds.org) to notify all schools if you have extra tickets that you have already purchased.

Can I submit a request for extra tickets before the festival in April?

All ticket requests must be made on the Submission Summary Report that is submitted no later than March 17th. Each school can bring up to 20 students to the festival. If a school wishes to bring more than 20, they must place a request for more tickets on the Submission Summary Report. Do not include the amount for the extra tickets in your check or in your online payment. If there are extra tickets available, you will be notified by John and then a separate check will need to be submitted prior to the video festival in April.

I have a video that is originally 12 minutes long, but the category limit is 5 minutes. Can I upload the entire 12 minutes and just hope that the judges will stop watching after 5 minutes?

Please do not upload any extra video to the website beyond the time limit for that particular category. If the category limit is 5 minutes, please upload only 5 minutes. If you upload more than the category limit, it will be disqualified.

My students produced an entry that contains one piece of footage shot by a teacher. Since it's just a small part of the video, is this still acceptable?

No. Any video shot, directed, or edited by a faculty member is not allowed in any entry.

Do I need to include a slate at the beginning of the video?

No, slates are no longer required at the beginning of each video.

What is the student-to-teacher ratio for the Video Festival?

It is recommended that for every 10-15 students, you have one teacher/staff member in attendance.

Can our school/district use a credit card to pay for our entry fees & membership?

Schools may pay their fees via a school check or via PayPal. All fees must be paid no later than March 17, 2026. Details regarding how to pay will be forthcoming in early February. Please note there will be an additional charge for using PayPal (this helps to offset the fees that MMEA receives from PayPal).

Are parents allowed to attend the Video Festival in April?

No, this event is for students and staff only from MMEA member schools. The festival will be streamed live and that link will be provided to member schools, which can then share it with their communities if they wish. There is not enough room in the Auditorium to allow extra guests.

Will we receive actual tickets for the Video Festival?

No, you will not need an actual ticket to attend. Each school will need to check-in when they arrive at the festival stating how many students they have in attendance. Information regarding the agenda for the day along with parking and food information will be sent out to schools via email prior to the festival.

Since lunch will not be served at the video festival, will the students/staff be sitting the entire time or will there be breaks in the program?

Approximately three breaks will be scheduled during the video festival. Each break will be 5-10 minutes in length and will occur approximately every hour so students will not be sitting for more than one hour at a time.

If I misplace this packet, where can I find it and/or the forms?

A copy of this packet and all the necessary forms can be found under the "Video Fest" tab on the MMEA website – www.mmea.tv

We are bringing an Activity Bus/van to the festival. Is there a special place to park?

Information regarding parking will be sent via email in April to all participating schools in advance of the video festival.

I have a student with a medical condition that requires him/her to eat every couple of hours. Can they bring food with them?

While most schools that host have a no food/no drink policy for their auditorium, it will not be a problem for that student with a medical condition to eat or drink in the lobby of the auditorium. There will be breaks throughout the festival to accommodate these types of needs. If you have a serious concern, please contact the MMEA member from the host school.

Is there a dress code for the festival?

There is not a dress code for the festival. We ask teachers to remind students to wear clothing that is school appropriate. Since many schools have a no hat policy, we also ask that teachers remind students not to wear hats. Many students do wear business casual clothing, but that is certainly up to the discretion of the school and is not required.

The video festival event in April starts and ends when?

The Video Festival is on Friday, May 1 at Neuqua Valley High School and the program will begin **promptly at 9am**. Registration will begin at 8:30am. Schools are **strongly** encouraged to aim to arrive at 8:30am. The Video Festival will conclude no later than 1pm.