**Honors Journalism Proposal**

South Carolina Scholastic Press Association supports the movement to offer honors credit for advanced journalism students.  After a review of the state of this initiative in South Carolina high schools, SCSPA would like to offer the following information to advisers who are in the beginning stages of seeking support in their respective schools to offer honors-weighted credit to advanced journalism students.

***Getting started…***

In order to offer honors credit to advanced journalism students, the adviser will need the support of the administration.  If the district is small with only one or two high schools, enlisting the support of the principal, and in some cases the guidance department and/or the school curriculum resource teacher, may be all that is needed.  In larger districts, the support of the administration of the individual school may be a start, but contacting the district ELA curriculum coordinator to get the request to the correct administrators at the district level may be necessary.

In a school where an established journalism program already exists and is respected, the adviser(s) have already nurtured a productive working relationship with administration that should be helpful in facilitating this request whether at the school level or the district level.  New advisers and advisers in schools where the journalism programs are in the developmental stage are encouraged to contact SCSPA for suggestions and for names of advisers in your area who could provide help and support.

***Providing support for the request for implementation…***

**A.**  The following **rationale** comes from the *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Honors Course Implementation Guide* and was prepared by Kay Windsor as part of the 1997 Honors Journalism Proposal for Forsyth County [NC] Schools:
“Although journalism courses offered in grades 9-12 are part of the language arts curriculum, the courses are interdisciplinary; they offer students a chance to understand freedom of communication as a necessity in a free society, to use mass media to understand current history, humanities, science, technology and other significant aspects of contemporary life, to gather, verify, interpret and evaluate relevant news, to use various learning styles to achieve a tangible and saleable product, to explore a vocation and to strengthen skills in independent and group work. Instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and thinking are consistent with the communication skills outlined in the standard course of study.

Students who have succeeded in the beginning levels of journalism and have been recommended for the advanced levels should receive honors level credit if they achieve the standards and competencies outlined in [the proposal].”

[***NCstandards***](http://schopressonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NCstandards.pdf)***(pdf)***

**B.**  The following is a description from the *South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy* (January 9, 2007) reprinted in *Activity Coding System for the Student Information System, 2014–2015,* in May 2014, on page 72, specifically item C about Honors weighting for courses outside English, mathematics, science, and social studies:

***Honors Courses***
Honors courses, which extend and deepen the opportunities provided by courses at the high school level, are designed for students exhibiting superior abilities in the particular content area. The honors curriculum places emphasis on critical and analytical thinking, rational decision-making, and inductive and deductive reasoning.

School districts may designate honors courses and give the assigned weighting under the following conditions:

a. An honors course must have a published syllabus that verifies rigor sufficiently beyond the College Preparatory (CP) requirements.

b. Textbooks and other course materials must be differentiated and more rigorous than those used in CP courses.

c. Honors courses may be offered in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Honors weighting may be designated in other content areas for the third and fourth level of the courses, provided that the two above standards are met. Honors weighting may not be designated in any physical education courses.

***[Copy of Activity Codes](http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/file/programs-services/124/documents/CourseActivityCodesrevisedJune2015.doc%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) (pdf)***

**C.** Knowing the state-approved course titles and code numbers will be helpful.

These codes are the state codes for journalism that are added to the district codes in addition to a letter that designates honors credit for third and fourth year course numbers (depending on the designated first year course and the number of years of journalism courses offered at the school level) offered at the school and at the district level.  For example, in a school that offers 4 years of Journalism, if Journalism 1 is the first year course offering, Journalism 2 would be the second year course offering, Newspaper Production-Honors (or Yearbook Production Honors) could be the third course, and Newspaper Production 2-Honors could be the fourth year course offering.   If the school only offers three years of Journalism with Journalism 1 as the first year course offering, Newspaper Production-Honors could be the second course, and Newspaper Production 2-Honors could be the third year course offering. Schools on block scheduling which offer more than three or four courses in journalism are challenged to work out an “in-house” solution to structuring the number of honors credits given.

***Creating a syllabus for the honors course…***

The documentation required for approval of honors credit may differ with each South Carolina school district.  Some districts may require a syllabus as part of the process.  Producing a syllabus for an honors journalism course does not have to be an overwhelming task if the adviser uses the resources available. Excellent proposals have already been submitted by several teachers and have received approval from their districts.  If part of the process of getting honors credit approved is providing a syllabus for the proposed course, the adviser may find the following resources helpful.  Cindy Koon of South Pointe High School in York County prepared the following proposal that includes a detailed course description, rationale, standards, essential questions and assessments.

[South Pointe Course Proposal Journalism 4 Honors](http://schopressonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/South-Pointe-Course-Proposal-Journalism-4-Honors.doc) (Word Doc)

***Using fellow journalism advisers as a resource…***

Other journalism advisers can be the most valuable resources.  The following advisers are in South Carolina districts and/or schools that offer honors credit for journalism courses beyond the first year:

* Stella McCombs <Mccombsstella@bcsdschools.net>
* Janice Hoch at Travelers Rest HS <jhoch@greenville.k12.sc.us>
* Amy Medlock-Greene at Dutch Fork High School <AMedlock@lexrich5.org>
* Deborah Gascon at Dutch Fork High School  <dgascon@lexrich5.org>

- See more at: http://schopressonline.org/honors-journalism/#sthash.RSnb1KnE.dpuf