

RUNNING HEAD: HIGH SCHOOL SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM

Applying Solutions Journalism to the High School Newsroom

John Stran

Kent State University

A paper submitted in partial completion of the Master's Professional Project

### **Abstract**

When high school students enroll in a journalism course, it should be expected that they gain the skills and experience to help them become better critical thinkers and pursue journalism at the collegiate or professional level if they desire. One necessary skill to make this transition is the ability to tell a complete story — identifying an issue or concern and covering the responses to these issues. This, in essence, is the practice of solutions journalism or rigorous, compelling coverage of responses to social issues (Solutions Journalism Network, 2017). This oftentimes long-form journalism could be rewarding for high school journalists and beneficial to a school community if projects are published. With that, solutions journalism does require guidance and training on how to narrow a topic and determine who is effectively making change. This project will provide all who are interested, specifically high school journalism advisers and instructors, with an [online resource](#) to better understand and teach solutions journalism.

URL: <https://johnstran.weebly.com/masters-professional-project.html>

### **Applying Solutions Journalism to the High School Newsroom**

High school journalists have long proven their ability to create meaningful investigative articles. From reviewing financial reports of a school board member and finding falsified documents (Cedar Blueprints Staff, 2020) to utilizing an open records request to obtain public materials which revealed a police department's aggressive training materials that included quotes from Adolf Hitler (Walton & Walton, 2020), scholastic journalists continue to take initiative in covering the underlying issues of their communities. Articles like these are necessary to keep a community informed but the more controversial topics can lead to negative reactions from a community. The cycle is vicious, as Van Dalen (2019) explains "to fulfill a watchdog function vis-a-vis political institutions, the media need legitimacy, which they derive from public trust" (p. 1).

In a time when public distrust in media is increasing and just 36 percent of Americans have "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of trust in mass media (Gallup, 2021), student publications should be researching and experimenting with different journalistic approaches that appeal to readers and still fall within the watchdog role. This may help combat an additional factor scholastic journalists must contend with: Although they are required to work with this growing distrust of the media, there is also the worry or threat of censorship or prior review from their administrations.

Because of these potential barriers, students need to be introduced to an agreeable form of journalism that makes the public aware of uncovered problems and provides readers with satisfactory resolutions to these problems. An historically agreed-upon form of reporting may be

achievable through solutions journalism. Currently, there are many examples and resources available on this journalistic approach. However, there is a distinct lack of information specifically defining how high school journalists should practice solutions journalism or how advisers can teach it. At the high school level, there should be, at the very least, lessons on solutions journalism that define and encourage students to consider how they can enhance their reporting.

This project's course material aims to be that introductory lesson and more. It will include a variety of both collegiate and professional examples and describe how these examples have created effective change. It will also include lessons on how to incorporate multimedia into solutions journalism with allotted time for discussion, where students can form groups and brainstorm current community issues that could benefit from solutions journalism and activities that allow students to begin their own solutions journalism projects within their student media organizations.

It is the goal of this project to be both an educational guide for advisers and a self-learning tool for students who want to pursue a more complete form of reporting through solutions journalism. Students who appreciate and practice investigative reporting will have the opportunity to continue their important work through a solutions journalism lens, while their solutions journalism products will inform their communities about steps being taken to create positive change. Ultimately, from these lessons students will gain an improved ability to think critically about current issues and the ability to research revelatory ways to solve these issues, as well.

### **Literature Review**

The unit plans that stem from this project aim to teach students the effectiveness of solutions-driven journalism as a means for making social change. To do this, students will learn what is and is not solutions journalism, review examples of solutions journalism in professional media and develop their own solutions-driven work. In the process, students will also gain a better understanding of current events through the consumption of pertinent news articles and classroom discussions. The research in this literature review will provide the informational background for these lessons and help explain the need and benefits of this content in a high school setting. It will also define solutions journalism, its effectiveness and discuss how more journalists are pursuing this form of journalism. Examples of educators teaching this topic will also be discussed in the research to highlight some successes and setbacks when covering this topic.

### **Defining Solutions Journalism**

Solutions journalism is defined as rigorous, compelling coverage of responses to social issues (Solutions Journalism Network, 2017). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2021) state that a focus on solutions makes journalism more accurate, useful, and relevant (p. 173). An example of this type of reporting would be an article detailing mental health issues within a school district and then providing examples of how other schools are successfully addressing these issues.

The Solutions Journalism Network (Learning Lab, 2022) lists four criteria to determine if an article is solutions driven:

- (1) It “focuses on a response to a social problem and how that response has worked or why it hasn’t;”

(2) it offers “insight about how the world works and, perhaps, how it could be made to work better;”

(3) it “looks for evidence — data or qualitative results that effectiveness or lack thereof,” and

(4) it reports on “limitations” — revealing “a response’s shortcomings” then covering “what does not work about it.” (Learning Lab, 2022).

Solutions journalism should not be confused or equated with the following types of articles, defined separately by SJN: (1) hero worship articles that praise individuals without explaining the ideas the individuals exemplify; (2) silver bullet articles that might describe a new item or a monetary value as cure all; (3) favor for a friend articles that read similarly to an advertorial and highlight the works of an organization — seemingly written by said organization; (4) think tank articles that propose solutions that do not yet exist; (5) instant activist articles that ask readers to be the solving factor by supporting or donating to a specific cause; (6) the afterthought article that briefly mentions a solution with little to no explanation — usually a couple of sentences at the end of the article and (7) the heart-warmer article that explains the good deeds of one person impacting the life of another person without explaining the societal issues that led to the good deed (Learning Lab, 2022).

Solutions journalism is not feel-good news that skims over concerns related to a given issue or topic—it should present readers with the W.H.O.L.E story (Solutions Journalism, 2017), which stands for What response does it address; How it works, the “howdunnit;” Offers insight; Limitations included, and Evidence of impact (para. 3):

It's not about making people feel good or advocating for a certain policy or balancing out the "doom-and-gloom." Instead, solutions journalism is about what journalism has always been about: informing and empowering people. We're just asking journalists to do that in a more complete way, by investigating what has worked just as rigorously and relentlessly as what hasn't. (Wise, 2017, para. 5)

### **The Effectiveness of Solutions Journalism**

To define its effectiveness, regarding solutions journalism's ability to create or begin a movement that leads to social change, it is important to review solutions-driven articles. Many historic examples exist of traditional journalistic reporting and writing leading to social change. A prime and prominent example is the Watergate investigation by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. The journalists decided to continue pursuing a story about a 1972 break-in at the Democratic National Committee's office when other media outlets believed the "third-rate burglary" narrative created by the White House (Mielke, 2003). Through continued coverage and with the help of an anonymous source, Deep Throat, they uncovered the true motive of the break-in as an attempt by some of former President Richard Nixon's closest aides to sabotage political opponents. The investigation's eventual mainstream appeal would build up to Nixon's resignation in 1974 (Mielke, 2003).

In assessing the effectiveness of solutions journalism, it is rational to examine current examples, such as *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* reporter Meg Kissinger's coverage of mental health (2013). In 2013, Kissinger produced a series titled "Chronic Crisis," which contained three solutions-driven articles. These articles described how patients were dying of abuse and neglect and explained methods for reforming Milwaukee County's mental health system. Once the series was published, the city put an end to political control of mental health policy and

created a nonpartisan Milwaukee Mental Health Board led by mental health experts. The city's new budget also provided an increase for mental health care (Learning Lab, 2017).

The effectiveness of solutions journalism can also be measured by its ability to connect with and engage an audience. In “*Transitioning to Solutions Journalism: One Newsroom's Shift to Solutions-Focused Reporting*,” Lough and McIntyre (2021) studied a daily newspaper, the *Montgomery Advertiser*, as the publication's newsroom dedicated its full focus to enterprise and solutions journalism. In a one-page summary, the researchers described the results of their study as mixed:

Audience perceptions from the survey data revealed less engagement over time.

However, the newspaper saw an increased number of page views and longer engagement times on their solution-oriented news stories compared to their traditional stories.

Sentiment analysis of the social media data showed a significant increase in positive sentiment and significant decrease in negative sentiment (p. 1).

An additional quasi-experiment by Curry and Hammonds (2014), the results of which were published in *The Power of Solutions Journalism*, studied solutions journalism's ability to meet the needs of both the audience and organizations. Study findings showed participants who read solutions-driven articles were more likely to: perceive they gained more knowledge about the issue in the article; indicate they felt better informed about the issue; respond that the article had increased their interest in the issue; believe they could contribute to a solution to the issue; believe that there are effective ways to address the issue; said that the article influenced their opinion about the issue, and indicated that they felt inspired and/or optimistic after reading the article (Curry & Hammonds, 2014).



Solution journalism's ability to combat feelings of depression, stress, and inefficacy among news consumers was discussed at the 2018 International Online Symposium, when Lough presented research from an article written by McIntyre and himself (2018) that covered journalists' perceptions of solutions journalism. In the presentation, Lough identified some of the reported effects people experienced when reading articles that incorporated solutions. These study respondents reported having more favorable attitudes, more knowledge about the topic, self-efficacy, behavioral intention to get involved or donate, and having more general, positive feelings that led them to spend more time with a story than "when no solution or an ineffective solution was mentioned" (Lough, McIntyre, 2018, para 8).

### **Student Interest in Solutions Journalism**

In the study reported in *How Students Engage with News*, study authors found that the student audience is reporting feelings of being overwhelmed (Head et al., 2018). Further, Head, et al. (2018) claim that 51 percent of students surveyed "agreed that it was difficult to tell what the most important news story of a given day was" (p. 9). As a recommendation, Head, et al. (2018) suggested bringing the value of news context back to news coverage, or "provide the stories that give as much of the complete picture as possible, so that consumers have the context they crave" (p. 35). One such way to accomplish this might be through solutions journalism, described as a promising trend that answers some of the respondents' sense of helplessness in the face of the barrage of crisis coverage (Head, et al., 2018). Additional research supports the notion of readers feeling significantly more positive after reading a solution-oriented news story as opposed to a conflict-oriented story (McIntyre, 2017; McIntyre & Sobel, 2017).

Some student audiences have specifically expressed interest in receiving news that discusses potential answers to problems. Audience research from the BBC (Kasriel, 2016) found

51 percent of 16- to 18-year-olds in the UK “agree or strongly agree” that they want news to also provide solutions. In a BBC blog post, Emily Kasriel (2016) provided insight into this view:

The researchers found that audiences don’t want news organizations themselves to solve the problems of the world, but rather to move beyond looking at ‘what happened’ and ‘why’ to also include ‘what next’ and ‘how have these problems been tackled in other parts of the world.’ (para. 11)

Although there is not much published that discusses high school journalists’ experiences with solutions journalism, there are a plethora of examples where professional media covered a high school-related issue and provided a solution to said issue. A *New York Times* article by Dana Goldstein (2021) discusses the ALICE Training system used to prepare a school population during an active shooter situation — the article was published shortly after a gunman entered Oxford High School in Michigan, killing four students. Goldstein (2021) highlighted the lack of evidence proving the program is helpful and described the negative impact it can have on students’ mental health. Goldstein (2021) continues with interviews from different mental health and education specialists who suggest “an emphasis on overall safety and listening to adults in unusual circumstances, instead of the specific threat of gun violence” (para. 20).

### **Educator Experiences Teaching Solutions Journalism**

Outside of the professional news setting, college-level media outlets have also pursued solutions journalism to report on their respective schools and communities. Colleges such as Kent State University, The New School in New York City, and the University of Oregon, just to name a few, have introduced courses dedicated entirely to the topic. A former journalism major at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Nallah Brown (2019), worked on a solution

article her senior year that highlighted a fellow student who created an exercise program for people identifying as LGBTQIA+ who were experiencing isolation-related issues. Brown's article (2019) won a 2020 Sunshine Award from the Florida chapter of the Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ) for best story about the LGBT community.

Programs considering a solutions journalism course should be aware of the potential rewards and challenges that will be faced. Both rewards and challenges are discussed in Thier's (2016) *Opportunities and Challenges for Initial Implementation of Solutions Journalism Coursework*, which detailed experiences from undergraduate instructors in five U.S. journalism schools that were introducing solutions journalism courses for the first time. Thier (2016) explained that what the instructors found rewarding after teaching the course was an opportunity to educate students on an emerging form of journalism. One instructor described herself as "fueled" by the students' enthusiasm and passion (Thier, 2016, p. 334). Thier (2016) explained instructors also stated that students "credited solutions journalism for improving their understanding of journalism and writing in general" (p. 340).

Because there was a novelty with the course, Thier (2016) explained instructors expected and experienced challenges. One agreed-upon challenge instructors faced was teaching students, with minimal reporting experience, to report on the "how," which is essential for solutions journalism. Additionally, some instructors found it difficult for students to distinguish between feedback on general reporting versus solutions journalism reporting. Based on these responses, Thier (2016) suggests institutions considering a solutions journalism course select instructors "who feel personally committed to solutions journalism before creating coursework in it" (p. 341). Thier (2016) encourages these instructors to consider creating a list of solutions journalism stories for students to better understand the different facets of this reporting style.

Additional advice for teaching this course was provided by instructors in Wise's (2017) article, *Here's What You Should Know About Teaching Solutions Journalism*. In Wise's (2017) article, seven U.S. solutions journalism instructors provided the following tips: Distribute handouts students can reference describing the elements of solutions journalism; allow students to select from a couple of topics, then divide the work amongst them; invite professional solutions journalists into the class; immediately explain to students the rigor that goes into the course; allow ample time for students to analyze published professional solutions stories and make sure the students' final pieces have a place to be published.

What high school students without extensive ethical journalism training must be wary of is taking that step into extensive advocacy. Bowen (2018) states scholastic media can utilize solutions journalism as a strategy to report on problems from the angle of how members of the community are seeking to solve those problems. Taking this approach may appease concerned administrators. Shine (2017) suggests that solutions journalism might be a solution to building a better relationship with teachers and administration who view school coverage from media outlets as negative and inaccurate while avoiding the role of public relations practitioner for the school. Scholastic journalists have the benefit of knowing these teachers and can potentially spend more time than a professional journalist investigating school-related issues and reporting on potential solutions.

Solutions journalism also pairs well with investigative journalism, which high school journalists should already be learning about, explains Walth, et al. (2019):

Although investigative reporting seeks to have impact, stories that only shine light on a problem without offering a solution can leave audiences with feeling of depression, stress, and inefficacy. Solutions journalism works off of a shared and informed

understanding of the problem, thus illustrating Kovach and Rosenstiel's argument that journalists have a duty to push beyond the exposure of problems. (p.181)

### **The Suitability of Solutions Journalism for Multimedia Platforms**

Student journalists should be aware of the photography that accompanies a solutions journalism article and be sure it too relates to the solution of an issue. When the message of an image and text do not align, the interpretation process becomes more difficult (Geise & Baden, 2015). McIntyre, Lough and Manzanares (2018) note the following:

Photos in news stories have been found to have certain dominating effects on readers based on their visual nature, but also can simply contribute to the gestalt meaning of all of the components. In many instances, photos affected print media because of their influence on an individual's levels of involvement, emotion, and attitude. (p. 6)

Photos have the ability to convey the message of an article and can either provide more context or lead the reader to ask more questions about the issue (Cope, et al., 2005). McIntyre, et al. (2018) highlighted three types of photography that might be associated with a solutions-driven article: "One congruent with the solution, one incongruent, and a photo considered neutral" (p. 6). An incongruent image for a solutions piece might be an image that depicts the conflict and not, for example, those successfully working to combat the issue. A neutral photo might be an image that presents the subject neither as good or bad and might not depict the subject at all, instead choosing something like a building.

What McIntyre, et al. (2018) found was stories paired with a solutions-oriented photo created more positive feelings for readers. When incongruent images were used, study participants reported negative feelings but also felt more of a need to act on the issue. When

solution-oriented stories were paired with a neutral photo, study participants reported feeling significantly more interested in the story. McIntyre, et al. (2018) suggest that the neutral photo that kept readers' attention provided just enough context "to bring the viewer in yet not enough to distract them from the story" (p. 14). Their other suggestion was the neutral photograph did not provide enough detail and the reader was more encouraged to search for meaning through the text:

The results suggest both scholars and practitioners have more to learn, but that journalists should be aware that the decisions they make in pairing photos with solution-oriented stories affect readers. Specifically, pairing a solution-oriented story with a conflict-oriented photo could lessen some of the positive effects of the story. (McIntyre, et al., p. 15)

Although McIntyre, et al.'s (2018) study findings show some readers are more interested in a story if the photo is neutral or may feel more of a need to act if the image is negative, additional research from Shah, et al. (2007) suggests that an abundance of negative messaging can make readers feel bad about the negative information they are consuming and refrain from seeking additional information. Photojournalism groups such as the World Press Photo Foundation have, in the recent past, advocated for a solutions approach to photography by capturing images that explain the next steps necessary for managing an issue.

Even if a photojournalist successfully captures a solution in an image, it still might be difficult for the reader to interpret the solution just by looking at the photo. Jones (2020) explains that "photography is about the symbolic moment rather than the full perspective" (para. 13). Therefore, effective caption writing is important when attempting to provide complete coverage. Jones (2020) further describes how captions can add depth and nuance to a photo essay and that

one approach to caption writing for solutions photojournalism is to include statistics that provide readers with background knowledge regarding the issue.

Examples of solutions journalism thus far have all been images and text reporting. Because broadcast news can consist mainly of breaking news and the average local news segment is 41 seconds (Pew Research Center, 2012), it is not always practical or possible to provide the whole story. However, there are examples of multimedia journalists creating solutions journalism video pieces when given a little more time. Heyward (2020) explains that WBBM-TV in Chicago released a series of solutions videos titled *Left in the Dark* that investigated the Chicago Police Department's use of body cams with legal experts describing how body camera programs can be more effective in determining how officers interact with the community. For broadcast journalists who want to and can pursue this type of work, WBBM-TV news director Jeff Harris suggests starting with stories they are already working on and applying a solutions approach (Heyward, 2020). Seth Geiger, president of the research firm SmithGeiger, further described the types of broadcast pieces that align best with this style (Heyward, 2020):

These are stories that have an elongated shelf life, where finding the solution, creating the accountability, reporting on outcomes over time, is not something that you quickly button up. Part of the balance in broadcast news, whether it's local or network or cable, is to be able to serve the news cycle, to deliver the urgency and the breaking reporting. But for many, many stories, we need to stay on that beat, we need to be able to provide new information and context, and then ultimately, in this particular iteration, a level of accountability and solution. (para. 13)

Podcasting and other audio platforms are also suitable for solutions journalism with programs like "People Fixing the World," "Mental Health Mosaics" and "Solutions Desk"

currently following the approach (Frost, 2022). Frost (2022) posits that professional podcasters from these programs offered advice to those who are new to the medium and want to pursue a solutions piece. They encourage newcomers to “stay focused on one angle of one aspect of one topic” (para. 4); be clear about what stage the solution is in; practice interviewing, structuring, scripting and presenting; find people “who are prepared to give you good, clear, constructive feedback” (para. 8) and “Be realistic about how much you’ll be able to work on the podcast” (para. 9).

### **Explanation of Project**

The deliverable for this project is a [web-based](#) solutions journalism course, created within a Weebly website, that includes five unit plans containing handouts, lessons, rubrics, and videos for high school journalism educators who want to teach a course on solutions journalism. Considering the rigor of the course, it is intended for advanced or experienced student journalists with an interest in the topic, but sections of the project can be used to introduce entry-level journalists to the concept of solutions journalism. There is no required textbook for the unit plans but teachers may need to purchase certain multimedia equipment or instead teach students to collect video and audio with their phones.

The information provided within the course serves as a guide for teachers who want to teach a long-form journalism course that is not solely issue-focused and helps students better define, understand, and practice solutions journalism. Students who utilize the unit plans will be involved in an engaging, interactive project that ends with the creation of a solutions journalism product (i.e., a solutions journalism-focused news article) with potential impact expanding beyond the classroom and into the community. If the final project articles are shared with students’ community residents in some facet, either through a school or professional publication,



or an opportunity emerges to redesign and enhance the local media landscape by introducing an emerging form of journalism produced by students who are driven to make positive change, then the class will also gain first-hand experience interacting with readers and better understand how they utilize timely information.

Students who complete this course will further their knowledge of in-depth reporting and be introduced to the idea of reporting on responses from a solutions journalism perspective. For example, early activities in the course will include analyzing current investigative pieces and determining how they could become solutions-driven, as well as present examples of solutions journalism articles that have led to some form of positive societal change.

As explained previously in this section, the course itself is separated into five unit plans. Each unit contains a week of lessons that progressively explain how to include responses to issues in long-form articles. Each lesson aligns with the creation of a group solutions article to be completed as a final project. The first unit defines solutions journalism and ties it into the general roles and responsibilities of a journalist. Doing this will involve reviewing the code of ethics for the school publication and other prominent codes of ethics, such as the SPJ Code of Ethics, and learning about the importance of accuracy, objectivity, and thoroughness in the reporting and news storytelling process.

In the second unit, students will review and discuss investigative and solutions journalism examples and learn about covering the “howdunnit” (Learning Lab, 2022) of a topic. There is also a discussion portion about what issues can be localized and further investigated to determine potential remedies. One of the issues will become the focus of the final projects developed by the group of students.

The third unit teaches interview techniques and explains how to collect appropriate sources for an investigative and solutions story. Examples of appropriate sources would include experts in a field related to the topic, any person or group responding to an issue effectively, and those benefitting from successful solutions. Educating students about finding appropriate sources for solutions journalism news stories will also include teaching them to conduct research through sourcing proper documentation and finding outliers in data sources that might lead to answers or additional sources that can provide answers on a particular issue.

The fourth unit further explains how to structure a solutions journalism article. Solutions Journalism Network (2017) lists four types of solutions story structures: One that explores a positive deviant, or a person or group in a data set that is a successful outlier, one that explains a big new idea, one that discusses an experiment in progress, and one that explores how a location has transformed. Students are introduced to each structure with time allotted for determining what structure might work best for in-class articles.

The final unit is focused on how to reach an audience with the group's final solutions-driven article. The whole purpose of this course is to create published solutions journalism works. Whether the works are published on a website created specifically for the course, within an established student publication at a school, or even in a professional outlet; if students create content with vital information, the public should have the opportunity to read it. This final unit discusses what options are available for publishing and how students in the class can best promote what they have created. Additionally, students will learn how communities have reacted to solutions journalism articles in the past and further discuss what effective, positive changes a solutions journalism article can create within a community.

Each unit is created with the goal of meeting Ohio Learning Standards, specifically OLS ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7: conducting short as well as more sustained research projects, gathering relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources and OLS ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10: writing routinely over extended and short time frames. Meeting these standards makes the units classroom-ready for high school journalism educators. Throughout all units, students will be conducting interviews with previously defined appropriate sources and speaking with professional journalists, potentially journalists who practice solutions journalism, to receive advice and feedback.

### **Methodology**

Students must sharpen their critical thinking and their problem-solving skills to be successful in whatever career path they choose. What became clear through researching solutions journalism is that the act of creating solutions journalism pushes students to develop both their critical thinking and their problem-solving skills. The critical thinking process in solutions journalism involves developing questions that narrow down the topic being covered, then determining what sources will provide background information for the topic being covered, and which sources will offer examples of progress. Problem-solving skills are required when learning how to use different multimedia tools and determining how to best structure an article (Wise, 2017).

Based on other courses taught in solutions journalism, teaching the topic can be as rewarding as it is challenging (Wise, 2017). Because of this, students will be allowed to work as a group to develop articles created as a product of completing the course. Based on advice from journalism educators received via interviews and through research (Wise, 2017), students will work as a class or in two groups to develop solutions journalism content. Students will be

divided within their group to handle certain tasks such as reporting, videography, research, or graphic design. Throughout the course, students will switch roles to allow for a fresh perspective on each task and allow students to enhance their skill development in different areas related to solutions journalism creation.

### **Limitations**

As stated earlier, there is not much in terms of research or documentation of high school journalism advisers teaching solutions journalism or high school journalism students creating solutions journalism. Because of this, it is difficult to determine how students would grasp the concept. With this in mind, it may be useful to reach out to some high school journalism advisers and see what they know about the reporting style. Another limitation is possibly time, specifically the time it would take a high school adviser to work their way through the course with their students, and the challenges this may present to that adviser and their students in terms of completing solutions journalism products for production or publication.

### **Conclusion**

Readers are looking for more out of the information they consume — they want the answers to communal issues that might affect their daily lives. Additionally, student audiences are being turned off by the news because of its inclination to, at times, be negative (Wenzel, et al., 2016). Although being a journalist is not about portraying serious issues in a positive manner, it is important to maintain an audience through reporting that provides the full scope of a topic. Solutions journalism has proven to be engaging for audiences while refraining from becoming ‘good news’ journalism.

As solutions journalism becomes more prevalent in collegiate and professional media environments, those who are introduced to this concept early on, such as in their high school media courses or publications and productions, will have a stronger foundational knowledge of the concept if they choose to pursue journalism as a career. Those who don't pursue a career in journalism will still benefit from learning about solutions journalism because they will have a better understanding of the news they consume in the future, and can use the critical thinking and problem-solving skills they developed in the course developed through this project to be more solutions-oriented in their respective career paths. By meeting the previously stated Ohio Learning standards, students will improve their ability to short and long-term assignments — a skill necessary for many professions beyond journalism. While performing the roles of a journalist, students will improve their media literacy and gain an appreciation for the investigative process.

As Jones (2020) explains, it is important to not wait to teach students about solutions journalism, even if the educator feels the students do not yet have enough reporting experience to complete an entire solutions journalism article. Her reasoning is that students' reporting is better for it, even if the final product is not technically solutions journalism.

Although there is not much document-based evidence depicting high school media utilizing solutions journalism, this reporting style is no longer a brand-new teaching trend. There are numerous journalism professors who have taught the course willing to share their experiences for educational purposes, making the learning curve to teach the concept less difficult to overcome. Along with this support, educators who are interested in solutions journalism and feel strongly that their students have a passion to help the community may also be able to utilize the resources present in the course developed through this project.

## References

- Assad, S., Hacker, C., & Savini, D. (2020, November 15). *Left in the dark*. ArcGIS StoryMaps. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3603ef8cc492488c847cffbe03ad0f1d>
- Bowen, J. (2018, October 29). Student journalism is not public relations. *JEA Scholastic Press Rights Committee*. <https://jeasprc.org/student-journalism-is-not-public-relations/>
- Brenan, M. (2021, November 20). Americans' trust in media dips to second lowest on record. *Gallup*. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/355526/americans-trust-media-dips-second-lowest-record.aspx>
- Brown, N. (2019, October 29). *Student creates Trans Fitness Organization*. Journey Magazine. Retrieved October 7, 2022, from <https://jmagonline.com/articles/student-creates-trans-fitness-organization/>
- Catania, S. (2021, February 20). Dear journalism students: Feeling dispirited? Try covering more than just problems. *Medium*. <https://thewholestory.solutionsjournalism.org/learning-solutions-journalism-to-combat-news-fatigue-and-connect-with-communities-27784a10a81c>
- Cedar BluePrints staff. (2020, February 19). Staff editorial: Antwon Stephens should step down. *Cedar BluePrints Magazine*. <http://cedarblueprints.com/2020/02/18/staff-editorial-antwon-stephens-should-step-down/>
- Cope, J., Fifrick, A., Holl, D., Martin, M., Nunnally, D., Preston, D., . . . Tedesco, A. (2005). Image impact in print media: A study of how pictures influence news consumers. *Norman: Department of Communication, University of Oklahoma*. <https://www.ou.edu/deptcomm/dodjcc/groups/05B/paper.pdf>

- Curry, A., & Hammonds, K. (2014). (rep.). *The Power of Solutions Journalism*. Solutions Journalism Network. Retrieved October 10, 2022, from [https://mediaengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ENP\\_SJN-report.pdf](https://mediaengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ENP_SJN-report.pdf).
- Frost, A. (2022, March 16). How to make a solutions journalism podcast-6 pointers from 3 experienced podcasters. *Medium*. <https://thewholestory.solutionsjournalism.org/how-to-make-a-solutions-journalism-podcast-6-pointers-from-3-experienced-podcasters-b1c5faecc52e>
- Geise, S., & Baden, C. (2014). Putting the image back into the frame: Modeling the linkage between visual communication and frame-processing theory. *Communication Theory*, 25(1), 46-69. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12048>
- Goldstein, D. (2021, December 2). After Michigan killings, students praised shooter drills. But do they really work? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/02/us/school-shooting-drills-oxford-high.html>
- Head, A., Wihbey, J., Metaxas, P. T., MacMillan, M., & Cohen, D. (2018, October 16). How students engage with news: Five takeaways for educators, journalists, and librarians. *Educause*. <https://library.educause.edu/resources/2018/10/how-students-engage-with-news-five-takeaways-for-educators-journalists-and-librarians>
- Heyward, A. (2020, December 17). A new research study puts solutions journalism to the test. *Cronkite News Lab*. <https://cronkitenewslab.com/broadcast/2020/11/19/new-research-puts-solutions-journalism-to-test/>

- Jones, L. W. (2020, January 24). Lessons from one semester of solutions journalism photo essays. *Medium*. <https://thewholestory.solutionsjournalism.org/lessons-from-one-semester-of-solutions-journalism-photo-essays-c95720da941>
- Kasriel, E. (2016, August 31). Why we need solutions-focused journalism. *BBC Academy*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/academy/entries/be8991c7-c1c7-42e6-a371-f40278838fa2>
- Kissinger, M. (2013). Chronic crisis: A system that doesn't heal (multi-part series). *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. <https://archive.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/chronic-crisis-a-system-that-doesnt-heal-milwaukee-county-mental-health-system-210480011.html#!/emergency-detentions/>
- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2021). Independence from faction. In T. Rosenstiel & B. Kovach (Eds.), *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect* (pp. 156-196). Crown.
- Learning Lab. (2017). Solutions journalism: The basic toolkit. *Solutions Journalism Network*. <https://learninglab.solutionsjournalism.org/en/courses/basic-toolkit>
- Lough, K., & McIntyre, K. (2021). Transitioning to solutions journalism: One newsroom's shift to solutions-focused reporting. *Journalism Studies*, 22(2), 193-208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1843065>
- Lough, K., & McIntyre, K. (2018). Journalists' perceptions of solutions journalism and its place in the field. *International Symposium on Online Journalism Journal*, 8(1), 33-52. Retrieved April 30, 2022, from <https://isoj.org/research/journalists-perceptions-of-solutions-journalism-and-its-place-in-the->



[field/#:~:text=We%20found%20that%20journalists%20familiar,objectivity%20concerns%20journalism%20is%20facing.](#)

McIntyre, K. (2019). Solutions journalism: The effects of including solution information in news stories about social problems. *Journalism Practice*, 13(1), 16-34.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1409647>

McIntyre, K., Lough, K., & Manzanares, K. (2018). Solutions in the shadows: The effects of photo and text congruency in solutions journalism news stories. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(4), 971–989. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018767643>

McIntyre, K., & Sobel, M. (2018). Reconstructing Rwanda: How Rwandan reporters use constructive journalism to promote peace. *Journalism Studies*, 19, 2126-2147.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1326834>

Mielke, S. (2003). Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein: University of Texas at Austin. *Harry Ransom Center*. Retrieved October 7, 2022, from

<https://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/findingAid.cfm?eadid=00365>

*Ohio's learning standards for English language arts*. Ohio Department of Education. (2017).

Retrieved October 20, 2022, from [https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-](https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/English-Language-Arts-Standards)

[Ohio/English-Language-Art/English-Language-Arts-Standards](https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/English-Language-Arts-Standards)

Pew Research Center: Journalism & Media Staff. (2012, July 16). Video length. *Pew Research Center*.

[https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2012/07/16/video-length/#\\_ftn1](https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2012/07/16/video-length/#_ftn1)

Proulx, N. (2019, May 9). Should schools be allowed to censor student newspapers? *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/09/learning/should-schools-be-allowed-to-censor-student-newspapers.html>

- Shah, D. V., & McLeod, D. M., Kim, E., Lee, S. Y., Gotlieb, M. R., Ho, S. S., & Breivik, H. (2007). Political consumerism: How communication and consumption orientations drive “lifestyle politics.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 611(1), 217-235. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002716206298714>
- Shine, K. (2017). ‘Everything is negative’: Schoolteachers’ perceptions of news coverage of education. *Journalism*, 21, 1694-1709. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917743827>
- Solutions Journalism. (2018, September 11). What is solutions journalism? *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@soljourn/what-is-solutions-journalism-c050147bb1eb>
- Thier, K. (2016). Opportunities and challenges for initial implementation of solutions journalism coursework. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 71(3), 329–343. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695816666078>
- Van Dalen, A. (2019). Journalism, trust, and credibility. In A. Van Dalen (Ed.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (356–371). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315167497-23>
- Walth, B., Smith Dahmen, N., & Thier, K. (2019, May 15). A new reporting approach for journalistic impact: Bringing together investigative reporting and solutions journalism. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 40(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/07395329198349>
- Walton, S., & Walton, C. (2020, October 30). KSP training slideshow quotes Hitler, advocates 'ruthless' violence. *Manual RedEye*. <https://manualredeye.com/90096/news/local/police-training-hitler-presentation/>
- Wenzel, A., Gerson, D., & Moreno, E. (2016). Engaging communities through solutions journalism. *Tow Center for Digital Journalism*. <http://towcenter.org/research/engaging-communities-through-solutions-journalism>

Wise, H. L. (2017, November 30). Here's what you should know about teaching solutions

journalism. *Medium*. <https://thewholestory.solutionsjournalism.org/teaching-solutions-journalism-6a4010e45f48>