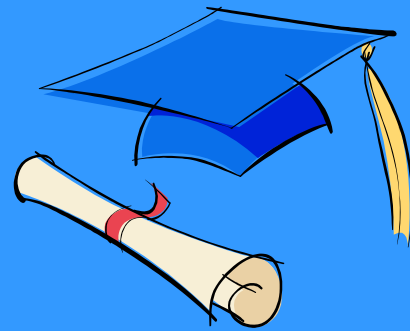# SENIOR PROJECTS

## PERILS, PITFALLS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES:  A MEDIA COORDINATOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE PROCESS

## Carla Shinn

## Asheboro High School

cshinn@asheboro.k12.nc.us

# Senior Project = Graduation Project

# According to NCDPI…

- **NCDPI calls it NC Graduation Project**
- **It is "a performance-based exit assessment that provides students with a vehicle to demonstrate their knowledge and skills as they prepare to graduate from high school."**

**(http://www.ncpublicschools.org/graduationproject/)**

# Who has to complete a Project?

**The graduation project is required for high school graduation of all students beginning with the entering freshmen in the 2006-2007 school year (class of 2011).**

# What are the requirements?

**The project consists of four parts:**

- **a research paper**

- **a product**

- **a portfolio**

- **and an oral presentation**

**On block schedule since 1993**

**Involved with senior project since the 2000-01 school year**

– **About 100-200 seniors per semester**

**All seniors, all ability levels complete a project**

– **Over 1500 students to date have completed senior project**

# History

- **Initial steering committee**: AP, 1 media coordinator, 2 teachers attended SERVE training in Orlando (Summer '00)
- **Senior handbook created** during summer
- **Presentations were given to the community** to aid with understanding and to create a buzz for potential mentors (NAACP, School Board, Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.)

# Faculty Buy-in

- **Teacher from a Senior Project school presented to faculty in '99-00**
- **Steering Committee gave presentation during faculty meeting at start of '00-01 school year**
- **Faculty required to attend Senior Board Night**
- **Faculty allowed to serve as mentors**
- **Initially, faculty served as 2nd rough draft editors (viewed for content)**

# In the Beginning . . .

- **We began with basic requirements**
- **any topic as long as there is a "learning stretch"**
- **8-10 page research paper (unwritten rule "B" level was allowed 5-6)**
- **15 hours working on product; at least 3 face-to-face meetings with mentor**
- **Portfolio**
- **6-8 min. presentation with visual to faculty and community members**

# Our Process

- **Color coded\* handbook (in a 3 ring binder) given to students with:**
    - **-rubrics**
    - **-explanations and guidelines**
    - **-deadlines/calendar**
    - **-letter to parents from principal**
- **Media Center Exploration for 2 days the 1st week of school**

    **\*blue(explanation), salmon (samples)**

      **beige (final portfolio), white (general notes)**

# Our Process, cont.

- **Project Proposals are submitted to Advisory Board;** Senior English teachers do NOT serve on Advisory Committee; Committee approves proposals
- **Letter of Intent**:  contract between student and teacher with **ethical statement/honor code**

# Project Advisory Board

- Should consist of faculty and staff members that have a **wide knowledge of the students**

- Purpose: To approve project proposals and to discuss any concerns during the process

# Letter of Intent

1. Describe the **general** area of interest.

2. Discuss the specific focus of the **research.** List some of the **resources**.

3. State specifically what the **project** will be. Include who is involved, potential cost, and time estimated to complete project.

4. Explain and define **plagiarism** and the importance of avoiding the act. Give the consequences of plagiarizing.

# Consent Forms (three)

- **Mentor Consent** (with parental consent to work with mentor)


- **Volunteer Registration Form**


- **Parent Consent** to work on project **(statement releasing liability)**

# The Research Paper

- **2 rough drafts→  #1 peer editing**

    **#2 teacher evaluation**
- **Final Paper graded by Senior English teacher**
- **Eight to ten typed pages, double-spaced**

    **Five sources minimum (no general encyclopedias)**

    **Use variety of sources, mentor MUST be a source**

    **MLA style documentation (examples are provided in the handbook)**

    **Works Cited page**

# The Commitment Poster

final decision or "commitment" for *product* phase; displayed in the Media Center

- **8 ½ x 11" paper**
- **Include topic title**
- **Photo or clip art**
- **Description of product/topic of research**
- **Student's name**

# The Product/Project

- **Fifteen hours minimum** outside class work
- **Log/journal** documenting time, cost, task or activity
- **In-class product check ups:** product map/plan, journaling, pictures
- **Mentor Log and Product Evaluation (Product Grade)** from mentor due the same day. Evaluation must be returned in a sealed envelope w/ mentor's signature across the seal

# The Portfolio

- Three ring binder
- Cover page for front of portfolio
- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Letter of Intent
- Research Paper (clean copy)
- Log/Journal
- **Pictorial Progress** (include pictures of mentor and student, dated with descriptions)
- **Mentor Verification Form** with letter from Mentor
- **Any other items that pertain to the project** including receipts, blueprints, drafts, and acknowledgements to those involved.

# Final Preparation

- **Self-evaluation**/Letter to the Judges
- **In-class speech practice**; Audio/Visuals are a daily grade and a requirement for presentation
- **Opportunities to practice** before other classes, teachers and staff
- **Portfolio** counts a test grade in final six weeks

# Senior Board Night

- **Sr. Board Night held from 6-7:30 PM** for all students doing Senior Project that semester

- **2 teachers, 3 community members on panel of judges; 5 scores are averaged for Presentation grade**

- **SP grade (paper, product, presentation) = Exam Grade (25%)**; Seniors are exempt from a final exam because of Senior Project

# The Presentation

- NHS members serve as **pages**
- **Judges** review portfolios
- Total time per student is about **fifteen minutes**.

-Formal presentation

(6-8 min.)

-Judges' questions.

# Safety Nets

- **Paper**:  4 days of **in-class researching**, 1 week of **in-class drafting**, bib/note cards, 2 rough drafts
- **Media Center** extended hours
- **Handbook**:  contains all rubrics, calendar
- **Product**:  parent consents to project/product idea and the actual mentor
- **Presentation**:  weeks of in-class practice

# Safety Nets for School

Parent Contact

- **Letters to parents** at start with **timeline** and **requirements**
- **Parental Consent Form**
- **Calendar** of dates each part of project is due.
- **Letter to parents** if paper deadlines not met

# Reflections on the Process

– **Each semester, we reflect on the process**

– **Each year, we rework the handbook to fix any issues, make any changes, deletions, or updates**

# What Makes Us Successful?

- **A Plan!**
- **Student Choice**
- **Continual reflection/improvement**
- **Consistency among classes**
- **Supportive Central Office and administration**
- **Supportive community as mentors and judges**
- **Supportive media; increased resources/technology**
- **Supportive teachers (serving as mentors, listening to speeches)**
- **Dedicated support departments (ESL, EC, etc.)**

# Impact on Our Students

- Job offers
- Create career goals
- Explore talents
- Boost of self-confidence

# Impact on Our Community

- **Give students chance to be productive citizens**
- **Create and build for our community**
- **Allows community to see students in a different light**

# Impact on Media Center

- **Usage of facilities, equipment, materials**
- **Schedule**
- **Book Orders**
- **Technology**

# Media Coordinator Role

- **Support** for students and teachers
- Member of the **project advisory board**
- **Instruction** in how to utilize school media center **online and in-print resources**
- **Instruction in MLA format** procedures
- **Identify and order resources** needed for future classes
- Assistance in provision of needed sources not available in school media center
- **Organize equipment** for presentations
- **Technical Support**

# Senior Project Coordinator

(This is a media coordinator job in some schools)

- **Paperwork**
- **Organize judges**
- **Student room assignments**
- **Prepare rooms for presentations**
- **Orient judges**
- **Organize celebration**

# Perils and Pitfalls

- **Technology**
- **Resources stretched thin**
- **Consistency among classes**
- **Advisory Board input, advice**
- **Mentors**
- **Visuals**

# QUESTIONS???