Evans, Horton, and Jacques join SC-SIC Board of Trustees

Bill Evans of Beaufort, Sherri R. Horton of Clifton, and Allison Batten Jacques of Columbia have recently joined the SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees, Board Chair Michael Guarino has announced.

Dr. Jacques, Assistant Dean for External Partnerships at the University of South Carolina's College of Education, was named as the College's representative to the SC-SIC Board. Ms. Horton, Coordinator of Public Information for Spartanburg School District 3, was elected to a full three-year term representing the Upstate. Mr. Evans, Chair of the Beaufort County Board of Education, was appointed to fill an unexpired term representing the Lowcountry.

Dr. Allison Batten Jacques

"These three individuals have tremendous commitment to and understanding of public education and its importance to the health and future of South Carolina," said Mr. Guarino. "Our Board is truly fortunate to have their shared experience and insight, and we look forward to their contributions in assisting the SC School Improvement Council as it

Sherri R. Horton

provides vital services to our schools, our children, and our communities."

The SC-SIC Board of Trustees is composed of 21 members from all corners of South Carolina and acts in an advisory capacity to the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC), which serves nearly 15,000 members of local School Improvement Councils in the state's 1,100-plus K-12 public schools.

Mr. Evans has served on the Beaufort County Board of Education since 2011 and as Chair since 2013. A retired educator, he was an elementary and middle school teacher in Pennsylvania early in his career and later served as a middle

Bill Evans

school assistant principal and principal in California. He retired from the Beaufort County School District following 24 years as a high school principal and district administrator, including service as that district's SIC District Contact, Athletic Director, Ombudsman, Science Coordinator, and Director of Secondary Programs.

In the community, Mr. Evans is a past president of the Rotary Club of the Lowcountry, Community Investment Committee Chair for United Way of the Lowcountry, and a member of the North Regional Planning Board.

Seven local SICs named to SC School Improvement Council Honor Roll for 2015

The School Improvement Councils (SICs) of seven South Carolina public schools have been named to the SC School Improvement Council's (SC-SIC) 2015 Honor Roll for their significant efforts to foster civic engagement in public education.

These Honor Roll SICs will continue in the running for SC-SIC's annual Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence. Named for the former US Secretary of Education and South Carolina Governor and his late wife, the Riley Award was created in 2002 to recognize the vital contributions made by more than 1,100 local SICs and their nearly 15,000 SIC members across the state.

The seven School Improvement Councils named to the SC-SIC Honor Roll for 2015 are:

Message from the Executive Director

Tom F. Hudson

One thing that I find refreshing and encouraging about working in education is that we have the opportunity to begin each year fresh – not once, but twice.

The new school year starts in August, filled with the sharpened pencils of excitement and blank tablets of hope. Then, just several months down the road, a new calendar year begins with all of the anticipation and promise only it can hold for the 12 months ahead. Two fresh starts within the span of a few cycles of the moon.

T.S. Eliot, one of the last century's major poets, put it this way: "For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning."

The year 2015, as it pertains to education in our state, indeed brings us new voices and new beginnings. And while many of the challenges facing our schools, our students, and their futures remain from previous years, this year brings us some important changes.

We have a new State Superintendent of Education, Molly Spearman. Several statewide education organizations (such as the SC Association of School Administrators, SC School Boards Association, and SC-SIC) have new leadership. The 121st Session of the SC General Assembly began earlier this month with a new House Speaker, Rep. Jay Lucas (Darlington), a new President Pro Tem of the Senate, Sen. Hugh Leatherman (Florence), and new chair of the House Education and Public Works Committee, Rep. Rita Allison (Spartanburg).

Last fall's SC Supreme Court decision in favor of some of our state's more rural school districts will no doubt lead to some focus and discussion in the coming months on what education funding equity means and how it can best be accomplished. In her Executive Budget, Governor Haley has called for an increase in the Base Student Cost (BSC) from the current $2,120 to $2,200 (a good start), as well as $30 million in technology initiatives, $6.4 million to expand the reading coach program in elementary schools, $3.5 million to train and certify reading coaches, and $1 million for the state's Read to Succeed office, which provides professional development, program coordination, and technical assistance to districts.

And so begins 2015 on the South Carolina education front.

Many make New Year's resolutions, whether to eat less, exercise more, find a better work-life balance, or what have you. I would ask that our state's School Improvement Council members add to their list of resolutions to do all they can – individually and collectively – to help their SICs

Increasing SIC Effectiveness by Using
What Works for Others

by Karen Utter,
SC-SIC Coordinator of Council Services

Once your School Improvement Council has decided on its goals for improving your school, the next question is, "How will our SIC go about meeting its goals?"
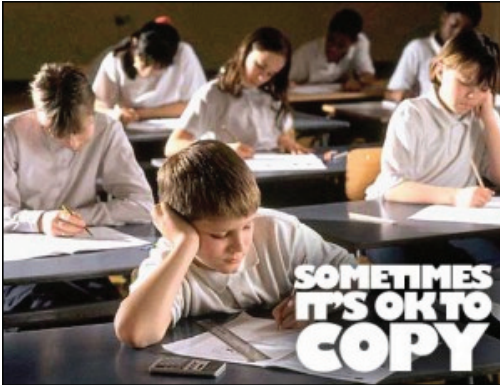
Chances are that other schools and districts have goals for improvement that are similar to yours and have already learned something about what works and what doesn't it. It is well worth your SIC's time to do a little research to find out what has worked best at schools similar to your own. Why reinvent the wheel if you can adapt an existing program or practice that is already known to be effective?

For example, many SICs are working on goals to increase family engagement in their schools. By doing a little research, your SIC can find out what kinds of family engagement models have worked for schools similar to your own. The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project has developed a model for conducting teacher home visits that has been successful in helping to build trusting relationships between teachers and parents. The Academic Parent-Teacher Team is a program that has had success in increasing parent knowledge and skills in how to help their children meet important academic goals.

With the passage of South Carolina's "Read to Succeed Act" last year, SICs will be asked to consult with their schools about plans to educate and support families to promote student literacy. In carrying out this new duty, it will be important for SICs to research and learn about programs and practices that have been most successful for schools similar to their own. This information will allow SICs to better evaluate the quality of their own schools' plans and give helpful feedback.

Your SIC can find what worked for others by conducting online research, as well as by talking to professionals in your school, your district office, local universities, or respected non-profit organizations working in the field. One place to start is the US Department of Education's "What Works Clearinghouse" (*http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc*), supported by the Institute for Education Sciences. The Clearinghouse has evaluated a variety of programs and identifies successful initiatives. Another similar resource closer to home is the "What Works SC Education Clearinghouse" of The Riley Institute at Furman University (*https://riley.furman.edu/education/whatworkssc-clearinghouse-expert-papers-and-case-studies*). Your SIC can also ask a parent or community member with special expertise in your SIC's goal areas to help you with this research (they can chair a committee whether or not they are a formal member of the SIC).

When doing online research, look for programs and practices for which there is reliable and valid evidence of effectiveness with students and families similar to those at your school. These are often referred to as "evidence-based" programs or practices. You may also want to search for "best practices," which are practices that have not been evaluated by the same rigorous scientific standards as "evidence-based" programs or practices, but they have been adopted as standard in the field based on the success that others have had with them.

It is important to remember, however, that there is no one standard for determining whether something is "evidence-based" or a "best practice." For that reason, be sure to use reliable sources when you conduct your research. Websites sponsored by the federal or a state department of education, school district, university, or respected non-profit organization are usually good places to start. You can also contact SC-SIC for help if you have questions about this.

Your SIC should also think carefully about whether an "evidence-based" program or "best practice" is a good match for its particular school population. Was the program or practice found effective for schools with the same grade levels as yours? In the same type of community setting (urban, rural, suburban)? With children and families that have similar cultural and language backgrounds to those at your school? If not, do you think that these differences are likely to affect how well the program or practice will work at your school? It may be possible to change certain things about the program or practice in order to make it a better match for your school, but sometimes changing a program or practice makes it less effective. If your SIC or school has questions about this, contact SC-SIC at 803-777-7658 or *sic@mailbox.sc.edu* and our staff will try to connect you with the expertise you need to answer these kinds of questions about a specific program.

While your SIC may not by itself have the authority or the resources to select and implement most evidence-based programs or best practices, your SIC can work in partnership with your school to see that it adopts the most effective programs and practices available. SICs

Why Social Media? And What?

by Claudia Parnell,
SC-SIC Digital and Web Director

Social media can be an effective bridge to your school community, used to create a personal connection with people.

Why? Because relationships are important. They are vital in helping your SIC demonstrate its purpose and plan for your school and school community.

Amy Jo Martin, social media consultant and education platform specialist, says this: "We all want to be seen and heard by others. We want to be valued for what we can offer others. We all want to belong to a community of others who value what we value – who are, in some important way, like us. What happens when a brand fulfills these wants? People stick around for more."

Your social media strategy should focus on navigating your way from ho-hum, boring sameness – even obscurity – into a space of influence and impact. Social media is a conversation. By using it effectively, you define your voice and let it be heard.

This article will look at the use of Facebook by SICs and discuss some of the particulars.

Facebook: Page or Group?

A Facebook Page is a place on the web for organizations, businesses, and public figures to post stories, add photos, invite people to events, and more. Facebook users who have "liked" a Page will see the Page's updates in their News Feeds. Anyone with a Facebook Profile can create a Facebook Page. Individuals who create the Page are the owners, but they can add other administrators to help manage the Page.

Having a Facebook Page is the best way to promote your SIC. You can share plans, ideas, success stories, and make announcements. Here's where you can build your SIC's fan base. Facebook's Pages are optimized to look the same across mobile devices such as smartphones and tables, as well as laptops and PCs.

However, before embarking on the launch of an SIC Facebook Page, make sure you're fully knowledgeable of your particular school's and/or district's policies and guidelines regarding the use of Facebook.

Unlike Groups, Pages have features that enable owners and administrators to track and manage messages, scheduled posts, and notifications. A section called "Insights" shows how your Page is performing and who is connecting to your Page. Demographics are broken down so you can better see who comprises your fan base. Administrators have the power to choose whether or not people are able to post to the Page, change visibility, enable messages, and set up filters (such as profanity filters).

Similar to discussion forums, Facebook Groups allow a defined set of people to share updates, photos, and links. They are useful for connecting people with shared interests, enabling users to ask and answer questions and engage in conversations about topics of interest. (Imagine, for example, a large family reunion.) Groups have the added advantage of allowing an administrator to send mass messages to Group members' Facebook inboxes.

Groups have three privacy options: Public – anyone can join or be invited by a member; Closed – anyone can ask to join or be invited by a member; Secret – anyone can join, but they must first be added or invited by a member.

Facebook Groups do not have the same amount of administrative control or available Insights that Facebook Pages do. While they can be set to allow members to post or to only allow administrators to post, they are vulnerable to spam, which may discourage people from joining. There is also less opportunity to control visuals, such as photos, than with Facebook Pages.

Facebook Pages are designed specifically to promote an organization's brand and share information and visuals. This, combined with the controls and analytics available, make a Facebook Page more desirable than a Facebook Group for an SIC's social media purposes.

Karen Utter Named SC-SIC Coordinator of Council Services

Karen Utter, previously a Council Specialist with SC-SIC, has been named to the position of Coordinator of Council Services. Her responsibilities will include coordinating the development, implementation, and assessment of programs to help local SICs be effective catalysts for school improvement and successful advocates for increased family and community engagement in their schools. She will spend a portion of her time in the field delivering training and technical assistance directly to SIC members, and will assume responsibility for coordinating the Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence program.

"We are very fortunate to have someone with Karen's capability and passion on our staff," said SC-SIC Executive Director Tom F. Hudson. "Her strong commitment to the work of SICs and the impact they can have on the lives of their schools are vital assets which we can now more fully utilize for the benefit of Councils across the state."

Karen Utter

Ms. Utter joined the SC-SIC staff in a part-time capacity in 2010. She developed and piloted "Engagement for Outcomes," a program designed to strengthen the capacity of local SICs to achieve their goals.

She previously resided in the Washington, DC area where she practiced environmental and labor/employment law. She earned her B.A. in Political Science from Kalamazoo College and her J.D. from the Washington College of Law at American University in Washington, DC. She also has training in mediation and meeting facilitation, and has studied theories and methods of organizational change and program evaluation through a series of graduate-level courses in community psychology in the University of South Carolina's Department of Psychology.

Ms. Utter currently serves as an elected member Lexington Middle SIC in Lexington One School District.

Save the Date – March 7, 2015 – SC-SIC Annual Meeting

SC-SIC's Annual Meeting will take on a different look in 2015. On Saturday, March 7, the Annual Meeting will be held concurrently with Share Fair Nation, a full-day professional development conference for educators sponsored by the Morgridge Family Foundation and hosted by the University of South Carolina's Center for Educational Partnerships. The events will be held at Lexington One School District's River Bluff High School.

As part of the day, those attending the SC-SIC Annual Meeting will have the opportunity to participate in the STEMosphere, an interactive educational event for learners of all ages highlighting STEM-inspired creations of engineers, educators, scientists, artists, students, and other innovators. And of course, a highlight of the SC-SIC Annual Meeting will be the presentation of the 2015 Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence.

Both the STEMosphere and the Annual Meeting will be free of charge to attendees, but advance registration will be required.

So mark your calendars for Saturday, March, 7, 2015, and make plans to attend. Watch your email, the SC-SIC website, *http://sic.sc.gov*, and future SC-SIC publications in the coming weeks for additional details on registration and the day's agenda.

Dick and Tunky Riley
Award for SIC Excellence

"Three join SC-SIC Board of Trustees"

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biological Sciences/History from Rutgers University (NJ), a Masters of Education in Teaching and Curriculum from Penn State University, a Masters of Education in Educational Administration and Doctor of Education degree (abd) in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern California.

Ms. Horton has served Spartanburg School District 3 in various capacities for the last 15 years, most recently as Coordinator of Public Information since 2007. She also serves as that district's SIC District Contact. Before joining the district, she served as Dean of Admissions for Spartanburg Methodist College, and as Alumni Director, Director of Admissions, and later Vice President for Student Services at Limestone College. She previously worked as a recruiter for Spartanburg Methodist College and North Greenville College.

She currently serves as president of the SC Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (SC/NSPRA), is a member of United Way of the Piedmont, and has served as a local board member of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Ms. Horton holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion/Theatre Arts from Limestone College and a Master's degree in Education focusing on Student Personnel Services Administration from the University of South Carolina.

Dr. Jacques has served as an Assistant Dean at the USC College of Education since 2013, and also serves as co-director of the College's Center for Educational Partnerships. An elected parent member of the Irmo Elementary School Improvement Council, she previously served as director of the SC Department of Education's Office of Educator Certification, Preparation and Recruitment, and the Office of Educator Preparation, Support and Assessment. Earlier in her career, Dr. Jacques was a department chair and teacher at Pine Ridge Middle School (Lexington School District 2), assistant principal for Irmo and Crossroads Middle Schools (Lexington-Richland District 5), assistant principal at Brookland-Cayce High School (Lexington District 2), and principal of Brookland-Cayce High. In 2005, she was named the South Carolina Secondary Principal of the Year by the SC Association of School Administrators.

She holds four degrees from the University of South Carolina: a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Arts Education, a Master's degree in Educational Administration, a Education Specialist degree, and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration.

"SC School Improvement Council Honor Roll"

- Blythewood High SIC (Richland School District 2)
- Greendale Elementary SIC (Aiken County Public School District)
- Harbison West Elementary SIC (School District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties)
- J.L. Mann High SIC (Greenville County Schools)
- North Augusta High SIC (Aiken County Public School District)
- Myrtle Beach Primary/Elementary/Intermediate Cluster SIC (Horry County Schools)
- Rudolph Gordon Elementary SIC (Greenville County Schools)

"These School Improvement Councils demonstrated their hard work and commitment to supporting the success of their schools in the last year," said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Michael Guarino. "We congratulate them and their efforts as Honor Roll SICs and we salute all of our School Improvement Councils across South Carolina for the lasting and positive impact they have on their school communities."

Five finalists from this year's list of Honor Roll SICs will be selected next month, with one to be announced as the winner of the annual Riley Award for SIC Excellence in early March.

More information on SC-SIC, the Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence, and award winners from previous years can be found online at *http://sic.sc.gov*.

"Why Social Media?"

On any social media platform, you have a group of interested clients out there listening. SICs can learn from them, as they bring their own sets of experiences and knowledge. Share your ideas and get feedback. By identifying your most engaged followers, you can reach out with specific questions. Experiment with different platforms and content to find out how you can generate the most interest among various groups.

In the next issue of Council News, we'll take a look at another social media platform and compare it to Facebook. What works for one community may not be as successful in another, but don't give up! With all the social media outlets available today, there is a fit for your SIC!

"Using What Works for Others"

can use their influence and access to bring new research findings and successful programs and practices to the attention of administrators and can advocate for their use. They can also support the successful implementation of such programs and practices by finding needed funding or other types of resources, taking active steps to encourage high levels of participation by parents, students, and teachers, and by monitoring and publicizing results. An SIC that identifies and brings effective "evidence-based" programs and "best practices" to its school and supports their implementation can have every bit as much impact on improved student achievement as an SIC that focuses on activities that it can carry out itself.

Find More Information on This Topic Through SC-SIC!

Our staff can help you find effective programs and practices in your SICs specific area of interest. Call or send an email to Karen Utter, SC-SIC Coordinator of Council Services, at 803-777-7658 or by email at *utter@mailbox.sc.edu*. You can also visit our website at *http://sic.sc.gov*.

Find More Information Online!

For the Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project, visit the Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project website at *http://www.pthvp.org* and read an article about the project on the Harvard Family Research Project website at *http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/the-parent-teacher-home-visit-project*.

For Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, visit the WestEd website at *http://www.wested.org/service/academic-parent-teacher-teams-aptt-family-engagement-in-education* and read an article about the program on the US Department of Education website at *http://www.ed.gov/oese-news/innovative-model-parent-teacher-partnerships*.

Examples of Additional Online Resources:

For Family Engagement
National Network of Partnership Schools, *Promising Partnership Practices* (access online via the Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty) at *http://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=102&ltemid=123*.

Ohio Department of Education - *Research-Based Practices and Programs in Family Engagement* at *https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=research+based+practices+and+programs+in+family+engagement+in+education&ei=UTF-8&hspart=Mozilla&hsimp=yhs-001*.

For Family Engagement in Literacy
Read Aloud 15 Minutes, *Read Aloud, Every Parent, 15 Minutes, Every Day* at *http://www.readaloud.org*.

Library of Congress, *Literacy Awards 2013: Best Practices* at *http://read.gov/documents/literacy-awards-2013-best-practices-web-version-12-5-13.pdf*.

Reading Rockets, *http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents*.

"Using What Works for Others"

U.S. Department of Education, *Helping Your Child Become a Reader* at *http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/reader/brochure.html*.

For Dropout Prevention
National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University, *Effective Strategies and Model Programs* at *http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies* and *http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms*.

For Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices* at *http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/Index.aspx*.

For Mentoring
University of Massachusetts Boston, *The Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring* at *http://chronicle.umbmentoring.org*.

For Education Generally
Johns Hopkins University School of Education's Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education, *Best Evidence Encyclopedia* at *http://www.bestevidence.org*.

U.S. Department of Education, *What Works Clearinghouse* at *http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc*.

Riley Institute at Furman University, *What Works SC Education Clearinghouse* at *https://riley.furman.edu/education/whatworkssc/whatworkssc-clearinghouse-expert-papers-and-case-studies*.

"From the Executive Director"

become stronger and more impactful in the lives of their schools. We have over 1,100 SICs across the state and many are undertaking wonderful projects in support of their schools' Five-Year Improvement Plans. (Among these are our seven Honor Roll SICs named in this issue of *Council News*.) How about yours?

While the school year may be half over, a new calendar year has just begun. There's still time. What is your SIC doing particularly well? In what areas could your SIC become stronger? Is your SIC truly an active force in your school community as called for by state statute? By asking these questions, and looking to SC-SIC for assistance, all of South Carolina's School Improvement Councils can make a difference and bring about positive change.

T.S. Eliot stated it well. But a 21st century poet, singer-songwriter, Taylor Swift, also puts it this way: "This is a new year. A new beginning. And things will change."

So let us work together this new year, with its new beginnings and changes, to do all we can for stronger SICs, stronger schools, and stronger futures for the students we endeavor to serve.

It's Not Too Early to Begin Work on Your SIC's Report to the Parents
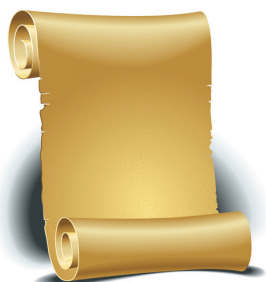
While the annual *SIC Report to the Parents* for 2014-15 isn't required to be issued until April 30 at the latest, it's not too early to begin working on them! This *Report*, mandated by state law to be distributed each Spring, is to be written by local SICs to outline their work and accomplishments, as well as progress on SIC and school goals for the current school year. Examples and templates for these *Reports* are available on the SC-SIC website, http://sic.sc.gov. Local SICs are also to upload an electronic PDF copy of their *Reports* to the "SC-SIC Member Network" by June 1 annually. If you have questions or need assistance, contact the SC-SIC office at 1-800-868-2232 or email SC-SIC Digital & Web Director Claudia Parnell at *cparnell@mailbox.sc.edu*.