

SC-SIC Council News

SC School Improvement Council

"Civic Engagement in Public Education"

Volume 37, Issue 3, 2015



Happy Holidays from the SC-SIC Staff!

Watch for the SC-SIC 2016 Annual Meeting date! Coming soon to YOUR Inbox!

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Sebuck joins SC-SIC Board of Trustees

Shari Sebuck of Mount Pleasant was recently named the SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees, Board Chair Michael Guarino has announced.

Ms. Sebuck was appointed as a representative from the Lowcountry to fill an unexpired term.

“Ms. Sebuck has a strong commitment to School Improvement Councils and the vital roles they play in the lives of schools and the students they serve,” said Mr. Guarino. “Additionally, her professional background in training, public relations, and marketing will be considerable assets to the Board and its work in supporting our state’s SICs.”



Shari Sebuck

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.

Ms. Sebuck has served as a parent member and chair of the School Improvement Councils at Laing Middle School of Science and Technology and Jennie Moore Elementary School, and was a member of the SIC at Cario Middle School, all in the Charleston County School District.

Currently Director of Marketing and Public Relations with RiverTowne Country Club in Mount Pleasant, Ms. Sebuck was previously Founder/Owner and Director of Marketing for Blackbeard’s Cove Family Fun Park in Mount Pleasant, a Consultant and Trainer with SkillPath Seminars in South Carolina and Florida, and Director of Recreational Tennis for the Florida Tennis Association.

In 1992, she was the recipient of the Miami (FL) Chamber of Commerce “Sports Achievement Recognition Award,” and was the 1991 Florida State Tennis Champion in Mixed Doubles.

Ms. Sebuck holds the Bachelor of Business Administration degree from East Tennessee State University.

Message from the Executive Director

Tom F. Hudson



The late Canadian philosopher of communication theory Marshall McLuhan once stated this: “We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us.”

In this column, I’d like to call your attention to a number of new toolkits and resources available on our website, <http://sic.sc.gov>. At SC-SIC, our mission is to provide the resources, training, and technical assistance needed by School Improvement Councils so that they can affect meaningful change in their school communities.

You may already have reviewed the latest edition of the SIC handbook, “This Is Your SIC – A Handbook for Effectiveness.” (If you haven’t personally received a copy, it is available in PDF format for download from the SC-SIC website.) I believe that this edition goes the extra mile in providing local Councils not only with the nuts and bolts on SIC operations, but in offering additional information on the practical matters which can help them be successful.

Stemming from the work on this handbook, SC-SIC staff took a look at what other resources we could provide to SICs to assist them in their important efforts. This fall, a series of straightforward and easy-to-use “toolkits” were posted online on a variety of topic areas specifically targeted to SICs.

SIC Elections Toolkit – This helpful resource provides additional guidance and suggestions on how to conduct annual SIC elections, including examples of various election materials such as nomination forms, ballots, and sample statements/bios so voters can get to know their SIC candidates. Also included is a customizable brochure so that your Council can work throughout the year to identify and cultivate potential new SIC members. Find it at <http://sic.sc.gov>.

Effective SIC Meetings Toolkit – Author and humorist Dave Barry has said: “If you had to identify – in one word – the reason why the human race has not achieved its full potential, that word would be ‘meetings’.” Your SIC meetings don’t have to be like that! This toolkit provides tips, examples, and other information on conducting meetings that matter, such as an effectiveness inventory, steps for planning the first SIC meeting of the year, and a sample agenda and planning calendar. Find it at <http://sic.sc.gov>.

SIC Bylaws Toolkit – Effective bylaws are essential for any organization, and so it is too for School Improvement Councils. Here you can find tips for updating or creating your Council’s bylaws, sample bylaws for elementary and middle school SICs and for high school SICs, as well as guides for adapting these samples for the specific needs of your SIC and school community. Find it at <http://sic.sc.gov>.

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Parents Launch Holiday Book Drive To Stop ‘Summer Slide’

By Rachael Ham, ColaDaily.com

Donations gathered this holiday season will benefit local students long after their winter coats and scarves are packed away.

Members of the Harbison West Elementary School Improvement Council (SIC) kicked off their Reading Heroes Project this month as a way to put books in the hands of more students at their children’s school. Other parents and community members are asked to donate \$15 and give the gift of reading.

“We know that many fourth grade students in the U.S. don’t achieve basic levels of reading proficiency and that achievement loss during the summer is equal to about one month of instruction. We also know we can do something about this,” said Bunnie Ward, Harbison West Elementary School SIC chair. “We wanted to officially launch this reading project during the holidays to remind parents and community members that the gift of reading lasts a lifetime.”



*People can easily be a hero for a child this Christmas.
(Photo courtesy of School District Five of
Lexington and Richland Counties.)*

SIC members have set a goal of sending each student home for the summer with three books – about 2,000 books total.

Parents with the means are asked to give \$15 to purchase their own children’s books, and donations will be collected for students in need. Each donor who supports the cause will receive an ornament to display at the school.

“At Harbison West Elementary, we work year-round to ensure our students continue the academic success they gained during the school year. This project is a continuation of our efforts to maintain high achievement,” said Principal Arthur Newton. “This wonderful project by our SIC shows the wide parental support we have at our school and our laser focus on reading and instruction.”

Students will choose books to take home during a special book fair this spring. Donations for the project will be collected up until the book fair.

“It’s a great way for us to end the school year and give them the good start they need to be ready next year,” SIC member Ava Dean said.

Visit the school website or GoFundMe to find more information on the Harbison West Elementary School Reading Heroes Project.

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Harbison West Elementary School: <http://www.lexrich5.org/HarbisonWest.cfm>

Harbison West Elementary School Reading Heroes Project: <https://www.gofundme.com/5m3y269s>

22 named to prestigious education policy program

Twenty-two leaders from across the state have been selected to participate in the SC Education Policy Fellowship Program (SC-EPFP) for 2015-16.

In South Carolina the program is coordinated by the SC School Improvement Council, with the assistance of the SC Department of Education’s Office of School Leadership.

Members of the SC-EPFP class for 2015-16 are: Jennifer Ainsworth, 2015 SC Teacher of the Year; Rita Allison, Chair, SC House of Representatives Education & Public Works Committee; Rhonda Caldwell, SC Chamber of Commerce; Lisa Corning, Richland County First Steps; Penny Cothran, APR, SC Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Baron Davis, Richland District 2; Don Doggett, American Institutes for Research; Dr. Shawn Haggerty, Sumter County Schools; Dr. Robin Hardy, Fairfield County School District; Traci Hogan, Horry County Schools; Col. James Houston, DDS, US Army; Suzanne Koty, 2016 SC Teacher of the Year; Angela Leon, Hewlett-Packard; Kathy Maness, Palmetto State Teachers Association; Dr. Christina Melton, Lexington-Richland District 5; Joel Mitchell, Williston District 29; Margaret Peach, Spartanburg District 7; Ryan Pool, Lexington District 1; Thomas Rhodes, III, Rhodes Graduation Services, Inc.; Charles Saylor, M.B. Kahn Construction Company; Gregory Scott, Greenville County Schools; Kimberly Wiley, Marine Corps Community Services.

For more info on SC-EPFP, visit <http://sic.sc.gov/sceducationpolicyfellowshipprogram/Pages/index.aspx>.

ParentCamp: Educators, Families, and Community Talking and Learning Together

by Karen Utter,
SC-SIC Coordinator of Council Services

One of the questions we hear the most from SICs is, “how can we improve the level of parent engagement at our school?”

There is no one single answer to this question that fits every school. One thing that we do know, however, is that parents are more likely to be involved if they have developed trusting relationships with teachers and administrators.

A new kind of relationship-building opportunity for parents and teachers is ParentCamp. It is catching on in schools and districts across the country.

ParentCamp – “An Unconference” – ParentCamp is different from a traditional conference event. Instead of holding sessions where a presenter stands in front of the room and talks to an audience, ParentCamp sessions are facilitated by a discussion leader who sits among educators, parents, and any interested members of the community. The discussion leader’s job is not only to share personal expertise on a topic, but to also draw out the many different kinds of knowledge and experience that participants bring to the session.

Unlike a traditional conference session, the topic is addressed not just from the view of a single presenter, but from the many perspectives represented by session participants. Discussions are driven not by what the presenter thinks is important but by the needs and interests of the participants.

What are the Goals of ParentCamp? – ParentCamp strives to provide a foundation for developing effective parent-educator partnerships, and to increase meaningful, two-way communication between school and families. It is also designed to build networks between families and between schools, families, and community, and help schools and families identify needs as well as new ideas and resources to address those needs.



What does a Typical ParentCamp Schedule Look Like? – The ParentCamp website, www.parentcamp.org, provides simple, step-by-step instructions on how to organize a ParentCamp in your school or district. A sample ParentCamp schedule using real-life examples provided on the site looks like this:

Sample ParentCamp Schedule –

Registration/Breakfast: 7:30-8:30

Welcome Session/Ground Rules: 8:30-9:15

Session 1: 9:20-10:00

- Future of STEM Education & Careers (led by engineering professor at local college)
- Substance Abuse -- One Father’s Story (led by parent)
- Transition to High School (led by teacher team)

Session 2: 10:05-10:45

- Growing Up in a Diverse World (led by director of local children’s center)
- Internet Safety (led by local law sheriff)

Networking Break 10:45-11:15

Session 3: 11:20-12:00

- The Medicalization of Misbehavior (led by local physician)
- Lifelong Learning at Your Library (led by local public librarian)

Closing 12:05-12:30

The schedule also includes an opportunity for participants to take the microphone and talk about what their take-away is from their day at ParentCamp.

Other Things to Know about ParentCamp – ParentCamps are intended to be free and open to the public. Their costs are low and can usually be covered by donations and sponsorships from local business partners or foundations. Many ParentCamps include roles for students as well, and social media such as Twitter can be used to facilitate communication by participants during the event.

Want to Find Out More? – Visit www.parentcamp.org, or contact the SC-SIC office by email at utter@mailbox.sc.edu or by calling 1-800-868-2232.

What Is Digital Citizenship?

by Claudia Parnell, SC-SIC Digital and Web Director

“Digital Citizenship” is the 21st century term for the informed, judicious, prudent, and responsible use of technology. Good digital citizens recognize that the necessity of appropriate and ethical online behavior is a key aspect of digital citizenship, but the concept goes much further.

The Digital Citizenship Institute, an organization of educators who have come together with a mission to help everyone navigate the digital world, has defined what it terms the “Nine Elements” of digital citizenship.



Digital Access – In a world exploding with technology, not everyone has an equal opportunity to use it. Informed digital citizens recognize that, in order to grow as a society that is increasingly connected, working to provide everyone with access to technology is necessary. Some may have limited or no access – we must bear in mind that other resources should be provided for those individuals.

Digital Commerce – Today a massive share of the global economy is managed electronically. The purchase and exchange of goods and services via technology has become both normal and widespread. At the same time, often illegal and risky commerce and activities are taking place. Wise consumers – and digital citizens – are mindful of the hazards as well as the convenience of digital commerce.

Digital Communication – We now have a wide assortment of communications choices: texting, email, smart phones, video calls, to name a few. As with correct letter-writing, there are appropriate practices to be observed when using each. Knowledgeable digital citizens abide by these practices.

Digital Literacy – Literacy in today’s digital environment goes beyond just reading and writing. The means in which information is processed, delivered, and received in our modern, connected world has evolved into a highly sophisticated system. The literate digital citizen is able to use digital tools and technology to locate, use, and create information, as well as interpret and evaluate new knowledge.

Digital Etiquette – Often the term “digital citizenship” is interpreted to focus on digital etiquette, the abuse of which is one of the most pressing problems among users of technology. Unseemly or coarse conduct is easily recognizable but not so easily dealt with. Sometimes policies are created or technology banned to stop inappropriate use, but this does not resolve the issue. Responsible – and polite – digital citizens practice tasteful behavior when utilizing technology.

Digital Law – There are ethical and unethical uses and practices of technology, and digital law deals with this in society. Theft of or damage to others’ identity, property, or work is a crime. These, along with hacking, downloading illegal media, creating damaging viruses, and other illegitimate activities are against the law.

Digital Rights & Responsibilities – We have the right to use all types of digital technology provided we use it appropriately. We have the right to privacy and freedom of speech in the digital world, but we also have the responsibility to use it in a principled fashion. In a digital society, users must address how to define rights and responsibilities and make them work together for the benefit of all.

Digital Health & Wellness – We all know that the world is not always a safe place. There are risks associated with the use of technology such as repetitive stress syndrome, eye safety, and sleep loss. Other physical problems associated with improper ergonomics include arthritis and complications arising from sitting too long. There are also psychological issues such as internet addiction which may manifest itself in a variety of ways. Healthy digital citizens are aware of the possibility of all of these and take appropriate steps to combat them.

Digital Security (self-protection) – Just as in our homes, we need locks and alarms in the digital world to provide a level of protection. Virus protection, data backups, and equipment surge control are some of the tools used to protect information. Digital citizens are aware of proper security methods and implement them regularly and consistently.

Practicing online safety is also a vital aspect of digital citizenship. Students, especially, should be taught internet safety rules

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and encouraged to exercise them. Included below are some resources that you can access to educate yourself and your children about online safety. Study them and consider applying the rules to yourself as well as your children.

In our digital society, digital citizenship is the responsibility of every technology user. It is not enough to create rules and policies. We must apply them and teach them to others.

Additional Resources:

Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Kids – Safety Tips”: <https://www.fbi.gov/fun-games/kids/kids-safety>

Child Rescue Network: <http://childrescuenetwork.org/keeping-children-safe/internet-safety/>

Family Online Safety Institute, “Seven Steps To Good Digital Parenting”: <https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/seven-steps-good-digital-parenting/?gclid=CODypIjFn8kCFdU6gQodWtoBJA>

Digital Citizenship: Resource Roundup: <http://www.edutopia.org/article/digital-citizenship-resources>

¹. Nine Themes of Digital Citizenship. (n.d.). From http://www.digitalcitizenship.net/Nine_Elements.html

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Other toolkits are envisioned to accompany these in the coming months on such topic areas as the Annual *SIC Report to the Parents*, SICs and the SC “Read to Succeed” Act, SICs and Social Media, and an SC-SIC “Riley Award for SIC Excellence” toolkit. Look for these soon!

Also new to the SC-SIC web site is an SIC Activities Resource Library which has been compiled from projects implemented by honorees in SC-SIC’s Riley Award process and designed to assist local SICs in identifying goals and project areas for the focus of their yearly work. These projects have been assembled into six volumes: Support for Student Learning; The School Environment; Family-School Partnerships; School-Community Partnerships; Health and Wellness; and SIC Advocacy Projects. I encourage you to take a look at these online as your Council identifies its goals and strategies for the school year. These may even inspire your SIC to apply for next year’s Riley Award for SIC Excellence! Find it at <http://sic.sc.gov>.

There’s another resource which is coming around the bend after the first of the calendar year – a revitalized SC-SIC website. In years past our website has been recognized for its quality, content, and user-friendliness. But we believe we can still up our game. Before the end of January 2016, <http://sic.sc.gov> will have a fresher look, easier navigation, additional resources, and I hope will be a staple for all SICs in their weekly, monthly, and yearly operations.

Freeman Dyson, the great theoretical physicist and mathematician put it this way: “There is a great satisfaction in building tools for other people to use.” At SC-SIC, it’s our pleasure – our calling, if you will – to provide the tools for School Improvement Councils to use to build up their SICs and their schools, and to assist in building better futures for the students of South Carolina.

Thank you for all you do. Build on!

