

SC-SIC Council News



"Civic Engagement at Work for Public Education"

Volume 37, Issue 5, 2016

2016 SIC Advocates of the Year Named

Lorilei Swanson and Dora Leonard, School Improvement Council (SIC) parent representatives in the School District of Oconee County, have been named the 2016 SIC Advocates of the Year by the SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees.

The award was announced during the SC-SIC Annual Meeting at EdVenture Children's Museum in Columbia on March 19.

Ms. Swanson is the current Chair, and Ms. Leonard the Secretary, of the Walhalla High School Improvement Council.

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Ebinport Elementary SIC wins 2016 Riley Award for SIC Excellence



(Left to right) Tom Hudson, Ted Riley, Lily Riley, Kelly Scott, Jessica Adamson, and Kelly Sebastian

The School Improvement Council (SIC) of Ebinport Elementary School in Rock Hill District 3 has been named the recipient of the 2016 Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence.

The award was presented at the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) Annual Meeting March 19 in Columbia.

The annual Riley Award for SIC Excellence was created in 2002 to recognize the significant contributions

made to public education by the nearly 15,000 School Improvement Council members who volunteer in every public school in the state. The award is named in honor of the former SC Governor and US Education Secretary and his late wife, and recognizes the couple's longstanding commitment to quality public education.

"The Ebinport Elementary SIC has done some outstanding work that is well-deserving of this statewide recognition," said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Michael Guarino. "When parents, educators, students, and community members come together as a School Improvement Council, identify the needs of their school, and take meaningful steps to meet them, it has a lasting and impact on schools, their students, and their families."

This SIC made improvements to ongoing programs and implemented new initiatives in several areas of focus. The SIC's literacy projects include an "Eagle Eyes" buddy mentor program that pairs 4th and 5th graders with kindergarteners who start school with below average readiness in reading. Teachers report that participating kindergarteners show increases in letter identification and other literacy-related skills and that both mentors and mentees benefit from the experience. In partnership with local businesses, the SIC

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Message from the Executive Director

Tom F. Hudson



Another school year is in the books and we enter into the hazy days of summer. And while this season can be one of relaxation and renewal, it can also be a time when local School Improvement Councils can look ahead to the new academic year – which will be upon us before we know it.

At SC-SIC, we encourage Councils to begin thinking about their work in the coming year. What goals do they want to set for 2016-17 to help their schools and students? Are there any goals carried over from 2015-16? How did their strategies work – is there need for adjustment based on reviewed results? How readily did these efforts tie into the school's Five-Year Plan?

Asking these questions now, while school is out, can help SICs be better prepared to jump in with both feet as soon as the doors open again in August.

Now is also the time for local SICs – working with their district's SIC District Contact – to plan for training Council members. Whether it's "SIC Basics" training or more advanced offerings such as "SIC Leadership" or "SIC Goal Setting," SC-SIC staff stand ready to conduct district-wide and some individual sessions to help local members with their SIC work. SIC Chairs and/or principals can get in touch with their District Contact to arrange such training, and can check the statewide training schedule posted online at <http://sic.sc.gov>.

This is also the time for district superintendents to appoint their designated SIC District Contact for the coming school year. Often this will be the same district-level staff member as last year, but personnel situations do change. Superintendents can expect a letter and a designation form from the SC-SIC office very soon asking them name their District Contact for 2016-17.

And we're also taking the summertime here at SC-SIC to plan ahead for the coming school year, reviewing the resources and materials we provide local SICs, and looking for fresher and more effective ways in which we can assist them in their very important work.

Earlier this year SC-SIC introduced its updated website, with newer information and tools for SICs. We hope Councils have found the site even more user-friendly and helpful than before. On the site for fall, SICs can look for additional guides, toolkits, and other publications for use as they conduct their work in 2016-17. Keep an eye out for

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Rep. Mia McLeod Named 2016 SIC Legislator of the Year

State Representative Mia S. McLeod (D – District 79, Richland) has been named the 2016 SIC Legislator of the Year by the SC-SIC Board of Trustees.



In presenting the award at the SC-SIC Annual Meeting March 19 in Columbia, SC-SIC Executive Director Tom F. Hudson noted Rep. McLeod’s “significant and longstanding support of education and South Carolina’s School Improvement Councils.”

“Rep. McLeod, whether in her role as a legislator, as a parent or as a local SIC member, has been a clear and consistent voice for quality and equitable education in our state,” Hudson said. “We appreciate her passion and dedication to what School Improvement Councils can do for their schools.”

First elected to the SC House of Representatives in 2011, Rep. McLeod is a communications consultant and president of McLeod Butler Communications LLC in Columbia. A graduate of the University of South Carolina and the USC School of Law, she previously served as Director of Government Affairs for the SC Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services; as Director of the state Office of Victim Assistance; and as Director of the SC Attorney General’s Violence against Women Act (VAWA) Project.

A past member of the SC Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Rep. McLeod was Co-Chair of the Richland School District Two 2008 Bond Referendum Campaign, was a member and Chair of that district’s Rice Creek Elementary SIC and longtime member of the Ridge View High SIC.

She has been a Liberty Fellow, a Diversity Fellow of The Riley Institute at Furman University, an Early Fellow, and a Fellow of the SC Education Policy Fellowship Program (SC-EPFP) coordinated in South Carolina through SC-SIC.

Share the Word About Your SIC on Your School Website!

by Claudia Parnell, SC-SIC Digital and Web Director

Does your school have a page on its website dedicated to the School Improvement Council? It should! Unlike paper newsletters or notices, the SIC’s online presence won’t get lost or crumpled into the bottom of a child’s backpack. Instead, parents and community members have access to information at a keystroke.

How to get started

To get started, a designated SIC member or committee should discuss the site with the principal and the district’s network administrator or webmaster. Your SIC District Contact can provide assistance with setting up a meeting with any district personnel that should be briefed on your plans. Determine how the SIC will provide the content and how information will be updated. It is unlikely that the district will allow an SIC member access to its server, so be prepared to devise a method of providing material to the appropriate district employee and ensuring that the content is posted in a timely manner. Ask about any restrictions the district has in place for its website. Issuing public information is a complex process and your school district will have certain protocols established. Be prepared to work within district guidelines.



Make your info readable

You may discover that your biggest problem is having too much information to share! Remember that reading online is uncom-

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SC-EPFP Now Accepting Applications for 2016-17

The SC Education Policy Fellowship Program (SC-EPFP) – a 10-month professional development program for established and emerging leaders in education and related fields designed to work toward the implementation of sound education policy and practice in South Carolina – is now accepting applications through August 12, 2016, for the 2016-17 academic year.

SC-EPFP operates under the auspices of the national Education Policy Fellowship Program (<http://epfp.iel.org>) of the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Washington, DC, which oversees Fellowship programs offered through 16 state sites and in the District of Columbia. In South Carolina the program is coordinated by the SC School Improvement Council, located in the University of South Carolina's College of Education, with the assistance of the SC Department of Education's Office of School Leadership.

SC-EPFP meets monthly September through June (primarily in Columbia) for a full day of dialogues, interactive exercises, small group projects, book discussions, and more. An overnight Leadership Forum is scheduled in the fall and a four-day Washington Policy Seminar hosted by the Institute for Educational Leadership is held in the nation's capital in April.

Educators may qualify for recertification or certificate renewal credits, and graduate credits may also be available.

For more on SC-EPFP, including additional program information, application materials, tuition and travel costs, and scholarship opportunities, call the SC-SIC office at 1-800-868-2232 or go online to <http://sic.sc.gov/sceducationpolicyfellowshipprogram/Pages/index.aspx>.

New Family-Friendly Guides to SC Standards Now Available

The SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC) recently announced that the *Family-Friendly Guides to the SC Academic Standards* have been updated and are now available online ready for educators and parents.

These *Guides* provide information for parents and families about what their children should be learning in school based on the K-12 standards established in South Carolina. They are excellent resources for families to use during the summer months to prepare for the coming school year, as well as for use during back-to-school events in the fall.

The *Family-Friendly Guides* available for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Guides translated into Spanish are available in Science and Social Studies. ELA and Math translations will be available later this summer.

To access the *Guides*, visit www.scfriendlystandards.org.

The EOC is an independent, nonpartisan group made up of 18 educators, business people, and elected officials appointed by the SC General Assembly and Governor. It is charged with encouraging continuous improvement in state public schools, approving academic content standards and assessments, and establishing the state's educational accountability system.



SC-SIC Annual Meeting Presentation on Outreach Inspires a Local SIC to Action

by Karen Utter, SC-SIC Coordinator of Council Services

We are always grateful when local SICs tell us their stories so that we can share them with the greater SIC and school communities.

The winner of the 2016 Riley Award for SIC Excellence, Ebinport Elementary SIC in Rock Hill, recently shared a story about their successful outreach initiative to Latino families that was inspired by their experience at the 2016 SC-SIC Annual Meeting in Columbia.

Among the speakers at the Annual Meeting were two wonderful teachers and advocates from the Latino community. Dr. Myriam Torres, with the University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health and Director of the Consortium for Latino Immigration

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Attention SC-SIC Member Network Users!

SC-SIC *Member Network* users are reminded that all accounts and passwords will be reset on July 1. Following that date, designated users will have to reactivate or apply for a user account and new password to update their SIC's member information for the 2016-17 school year. SIC membership will also be adjusted to "not updated" in preparation for the reporting of new membership; the membership records will be shaded to indicate that they have not been updated for the new school year.

Visit the SC-SIC website at <http://sic.sc.gov/Pages/SC-SICMemberNetwork.aspx> for more information or call the SC-SIC office at 1-800-868-2232 for assistance.



"2016 SIC Advocates of the Year"

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The SIC Advocate of the Year Award recognizes exemplary efforts on behalf of School Improvement Councils and is presented annually to individuals who go above and beyond in supporting and promoting SICs in their particular spheres of influence.

"We are grateful for the exceptional leadership demonstrated by Ms. Swanson and Ms. Leonard and their commitment to strengthening SICs and parent engagement in their school district," said SC-SIC Executive Director Tom F. Hudson. "It is dedication such as that exemplified by these involved parents that assists local SICs to have the meaningful impact that they do on behalf of their school communities."

Prior to taking on leadership roles in the Walhalla High School SIC, Ms. Leonard served as Chair of the Walhalla Middle SIC and Ms. Swanson served as Secretary, as well as co-chair of that SIC's family engagement committee.

"At both schools, we found an incredible team of parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives who were committed to utilizing their SIC to improve outcomes," said Ms. Leonard upon receiving the award. "But like many Councils, we were unsure how a small committee meeting 10 times a year could really improve our school.

"However, with the assistance of SC-SIC staff and by drawing on diverse knowledge and skills our members brought to the table, we found that we could successfully develop goals and objectives, track our progress, and achieve real results."



Lorilei Swanson

"We both felt an obligation to 'pay it forward' by taking everything we learned from our valuable experiences at Walhalla Middle and sharing it with the Walhalla High SIC this year," said Ms. Swanson. "Working in partnership with our principal, we have been able to organize the many people who wanted to be involved but just needed help finding a place to start."

Both were actively involved with the Walhalla Middle SIC's participation in the SC-SIC "Engagement for Outcomes" project last year, which works directly with self-identified local SICs in capacity-building to assist them in becoming more effective.

Ms. Swanson currently has a 9th grader at Walhalla High School. She is a mental health counselor and family therapist for the School District of Oconee County. Ms. Leonard has a 9th and 10th grader enrolled in Walhalla High.

She is a senior communications professional with more than 20 years of experience in public relations and crisis management.



Dora Leonard

“Presentation Inspires SIC Action”

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Studies, discussed the diversity of the Latino population in the U.S., its history, and some of the unique characteristics and strengths of South Carolina’s Latino families. Ms. Mayra Garcia, an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) facilitator with the Saluda County School District, spoke to the needs of ELL (English Language Learners) at the school and classroom levels. (You can obtain a copy of the presentation by contacting Karen Utter at utter@mailbox.sc.edu.)

The presentation inspired Ebinport SIC members to follow up on a positive parenting event held earlier in the year with a similar parent event geared particularly toward Latino families. The SIC partnered with a local church that holds weekly ESL (English as a Second Language) classes to host the event and it circulated invitations in English and Spanish to Ebinport families (focusing on ESOL families), as well as members of the church and ESL class who had students enrolled in Rock Hill schools.

Ebinport’s three Spanish-speaking teachers and its ESOL teacher worked together to create a brief presentation that focused on welcoming parents and providing them with tips on helping their children be successful students. A local native Spanish-speaking pediatrician (who is also an SIC community member) and a native Spanish-speaking Rock Hill police officer assisted in facilitating the event. A free dinner and child care were provided.

This event was so successful in engaging the Latino families in attendance that the Ebinport SIC shared the results with the SC-SIC office. The results have motivated the SIC to plan another event this fall in partnership with a nearby elementary and middle school that have relatively high ESOL populations.

For SICs that are interested in sponsoring a similar event, the Ebinport SIC has shared a copy of the event advertisement and the slides (in English and Spanish) from their parent presentation. SICs can also find additional tips for effective outreach to Latino families in our online *Council News* archives, Volume 37, Issue 2, or by contacting Ms. Utter.

We hope that SICs will find this information helpful and that other SICs across the state will be encouraged to tell us their stories so that we can share them and learn from one another.



“Ebinport Elementary SIC Wins 2016 Riley Award”

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established five “Little Free Libraries” in low income areas within its school’s attendance zone, giving students easy access to leveled reading books during evenings and weekends.

In the area of student health, the SIC continues to work with school staff to sustain the teaching garden established by the SIC. Led by an SIC member/Master Gardener, all students have an opportunity to learn, touch, and taste their work every spring and fall through activities that are aligned with SC classroom standards.

After a review of school climate data indicated that both staff and students were noticing behavioral issues that disrupted learning, the SIC collaborated with the school on a Social and Emotional Learning pilot project targeting students’ social and emotional skills. The SIC is continuing to spearhead the expansion of this effort and is actively working to share information about the program.

Presented with Honorable Mentions for their work last school year were: H.E. McCracken Middle School SIC (Beaufort County School District); Jennie Moore Elementary School for the Creative Arts SIC (Charleston County School District); Laing Middle School for Science and Technology SIC (Charleston County School District); and South Florence High School SIC (Florence Public School District One.)

More on the efforts of these SICs can be found online at <http://sic.sc.gov>. Applications for the 2017 Riley Award for SIC Excellence will be accepted starting in the fall of 2016.

“Share the Word”

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comfortable for many people, so break up text with headings and subheadings. Keep your content short and **highlight key words** in a bold or colored font. Your school district’s webmaster can tell you about the text styles and designs used within the district’s website, so be sure to ask about them in your initial meeting. It’s important that the SIC’s name be displayed prominently on the page in an effective position, such as at the top of the page. Include the school logo along with your name: “Myschool Elementary School Improvement Council.”

Keep your content up-to-date

Your SIC page is the perfect place to publicize SIC activities. Keep the content fresh by adding “breaking news” and updating your readers on progress achieved with ongoing projects. Use pictures, especially of students and parents that may not ordinarily get exposure in the school community. (Discuss any confidentiality issues in the initial meeting with the principal and district personnel.) Remember that you’re promoting involvement and reaching out to everyone, not just a core handful of people who are always engaged. Thank and acknowledge your volunteers! Provide links to a “Past Activities” archive section and move older articles and photos there. Publicize upcoming events and include an “About SIC” section where you explain what the Council does and how to get involved. Include an email address link to your school or district’s volunteer coordinator or your SIC Chair so parents and community have a convenient and comfortable way to explore becoming a part of the Council. Post the SIC members’ names and, if desired, photos of each, as well as the meeting schedule.

Add links to your SIC’s documents

Upload PDF documents of the SIC bylaws and meeting minutes and provide links to them. The SIC member assigned to monitor the site and provide content should periodically confirm that all links are still active. And certainly, be sure to post the annual *SIC Report to the Parents*, due out to the community by April 30. This is an indispensable and state-mandated SIC message, and is the yearly record of SIC success. Include past *Reports* in the “Archive” section of your site.

Promote your page

Promote your SIC page by including an article in the school newsletter. Provide the name and contact information for the SIC web coordinator in charge of the site in the article. Ask that the web address be included in the school handbook and in pertinent materials sent home in backpacks.

Keep it going!

Remember - consistency is everything in web production. Broken links and old information will turn off the most dedicated of audiences. To avoid the problem of a site withering away, place responsibility for site maintenance in the hands of a committee that will retain at least one SIC member from year to year. A regularly updated and dynamic site is more than just an information stream, it’s an essential marketing tool that can and will keep parents and the greater school community engaged and involved.

Have questions?

Contact SC-SIC’s Digital & Web Director Claudia Parnell at cparnell@mailbox.sc.edu.

“From the Executive Director”

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these, as well as online video mini-trainings for use during SIC meetings, a Spanish translation of the SIC Handbook, and more.

We thank you for your SIC work this past school year, and we look forward to working along with you again for 2016-17. Local Councils do important things for their schools and students year in and year out – and SC-SIC is proud to help in those efforts.

Have a great summer!

