

SC-SIC Council News



"Civic Engagement at Work for Public Education"

Volume 38, Issue 5, 2018

Dr. Traci Young Cooper Named 2018 SIC Advocate of the Year

Dr. Traci Young Cooper, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Extended Day Programs for Richland School District One, has been named 2018 *SIC Advocate of the Year* by the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) Board of Trustees.



Dr. Traci Young Cooper

The award was presented April 14 during the SC-SIC Annual Meeting at the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia.

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Walhalla High SIC Named Winner of 2018 Riley Award for SIC Excellence

The School Improvement Council (SIC) of Walhalla High School in the School District of Oconee County has been named the recipient of the 2018 *Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence*.

The award was presented April 14 during the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) Annual Meeting in Columbia.

The annual *Riley Award for SIC Excellence* was created in 2002 to highlight the significant contributions made to public education by the over 13,000 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 Secretary of Education and his late wife, recognizing the couple's long-standing commitment to quality public education.



L to R: Olivia Timms, Cooper Timms, Student Member Chair Rachel Twitty, Maddie MacLachlan, Brij Patel, SIC Vice Chair Elliot Wechter, SIC Co-Chair Lorilei Swanson, SIC Co-Chair Jessica Duke, Tricia Burgess, Ted Riley

"Walhalla High SIC has done outstanding work well-deserving of this statewide honor," said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Amelia B. McKie. "Parents, educators, students, and community members working collaboratively on their School Improvement Councils are vital in making significant, positive, and lasting impact for our schools, our students, their families, and our communities."

Presented with Honorable Mentions for their work last school year were: Chapin Intermediate SIC (*School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties*); Hilton Head Island High SIC (*Beaufort County School District*); Saluda High SIC (*Saluda County Schools*); and South Florence High SIC (*Florence County School District One*).

Message from the Executive Director

Tom F. Hudson



Well, we've pretty much reached the end of another school year and summer is fast approaching. While the few months ahead can be a time for renewal and recreation, it can also be a time when our local School Improvement Councils begin to look ahead to the upcoming months when school is back in session for 2018-19.

Here at SC-SIC, we encourage Councils to take this time to start thinking about their plans and ideas for the coming year. What goals do they want to strive for to help their schools and students? Are there any goals left over from the past year? How did things work out – do they need to make some adjustments based on results they've reviewed? Did these efforts tie into the school's Five-Year Plan?

By asking such questions while school is out, SICs can be better prepared to jump right in as soon as the school bell rings again in August.

Now is also a time for local SICs to plan for their upcoming member elections and appointments, and, working with their SIC District Contact, to schedule training for Council members. The SC-SIC staff is 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/Pages/SICTrainingDatesandLocations.aspx>.

Summer is also the time for district superintendents to designate their SIC District Contact for the coming school year. Superintendents can expect a letter and appointment form from the SC-SIC office in the coming months asking them to name their District Contact for 2018-19.

And we're also taking this time here at SC-SIC to plan ahead for the coming school year, reviewing the resources and materials we provide local SICs, and seeking more effective and efficient ways in which we can assist them. Look for more on this in the months ahead.

Thank you all so very much for your SIC work this year. Local School Improvement 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 wonderful summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom F. Hudson'.



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Council News is an award winning publication of the South Carolina School Improvement Council. Circulation 16,000+. Your comments and articles are welcome. Contact **Claudia Parnell, Editor**, at:

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Laurens District 55 High SIC Awarded for Annual Report to the Parents

The School Improvement Council of Laurens District 55 High School, made up of members Brandon Addy (*Assistant Principal*), Susan, Carlay, Nancy Coleman, Jami Reese Darling, Josh Dawkins, Evelyn Duncan, Billy Dunlap, Faith Fulmer, Debbie Fulton (*Assistant Principal*), Chas Hayes, Jimmy Huff (*Chair*), Willa Johnson, Melinda Kirk, Matthew Lafond-Favieres, Chris Liner, Meredith Liner, Renee Madden, Autry Martin, Zaikayla Miller, Chris Moore (*Principal*), Jennifer Nelson, Debbie Simpson, Audrea Speaks, Walt Summers, and Brooke Yarbrough, has been named the recipient of SC-SIC's first *SIC Report to the Parents Annual Award of Merit*.

The 2018 award was presented at SC-SIC's 2018 Annual Meeting April 14 in Columbia.

"This award is a new one in SC-SIC's lineup of recognitions and is intended to award quality and stress the importance of the *SIC Report to the Parents* to their school communities," said SC-SIC Executive Director Tom F. Hudson in presenting the award. "We congratulate the Laurens District 55 High SIC on its outstanding efforts as it worked to fulfill this required aspect of state law."

Over the past five years, SICs have been asked to not only produce these *Reports* for their local communities but to also post them electronically as part of their accountability process to SC-SIC's online *Member Network*. Under the "View the SIC Members (Read-Only)" link, *Reports* are readily available to anyone wishing to read more about School Improvement Councils' work and efforts to achieve progress for their schools and students.

Helpful tips and resources to assist SICs in preparing these *Reports* are also available to them on the SC-SIC website at <http://sic.sc.gov/Pages/SICReporttotheParentsToolkit.aspx>.



SIC Stuff To Remember!

Don't forget to share your *SIC Report to the Parents* with the world! SC-SIC asks that you upload your *Report* to the *Member Network* by June 1. *Member Network* account holders can log into the site and upload a PDF version of their SIC's *Report*. Directions and tips for uploading the *Report* can be found on the SC-SIC website at <http://sic.sc.gov/Pages/SICReporttotheParents.aspx>. Also available on the website is an *SIC Report to the Parents Toolkit*; you can access it at <http://sic.sc.gov/Pages/SICReporttotheParentsToolkit.aspx>. Remember that each *Report* is unique to each school and SIC and differs from other reports issued by the school or the district. It is developed by the SIC along with the principal and highlights the needs, goals, actions, and results achieved by the SIC specifically. The *Report* reflects the current school year.

Attention SC-SIC *Member Network* users! User accounts will be reset on July 1 and passwords must be reissued. Users can submit an account request from the *Member Network* login screen or contact Digital and Web Director Claudia Parnell at cparnell@mailbox.sc.edu for a new password.

Coming soon! This year's *Riley Award for SIC Excellence* was such a success that SC-SIC is already receiving inquiries about the 2019 award! Information, tips, and examples of winners' case statements can be found on the SC-SIC website at <http://sic.sc.gov/SICInformation/Pages/SICsSICLeaders.aspx>. Scroll down the page to find the *SC-SIC Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence* heading and click on the link below it to access the 2018 application; the 2019 application will be available soon.

SC-EPFP to Begin Accepting Applications for 2018-19 in June

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 – will begin accepting applications in June through mid-August for the 2018-19 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.

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 March.

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/Pages/SCEducationPolicyFellowshipProgram.aspx>.

Help Make Parents Feel Welcome All Year Round

From NSPRA's *PRincipal Communicator*, May 2018

When a family is new to the community or is simply moving from an elementary school to a middle school, you can help them learn as much as they can about your school. Taking the extra steps to make parents feel welcome will pay big dividends in the form of parent and engagement and support.

Welcome packets with 'everything they want to know'

Develop a welcome packet that answers most questions. It's a great way to greet new parents and students. If you don't have a welcome packet, consider developing one as you plan your communications activities for the upcoming year. The packet contents also can be placed on your school's website so that you can easily refer parents to it if they have lost their original packet.

Welcome centers connect new parents with those who value your school

Some principals have even started welcome centers that greet parents by appointment. Typically these are staffed with parent volunteers. New parents sit and talk with other parents, who know and value the school. The host parent can review welcome packet materials and answer any questions parents have about their new school and community.

Checklist for welcome packet information

- Welcome letter from the principal and parent group president [and your School Improvement Council].
- Curriculum/standards for each grade level.
- School contact information, particularly phone numbers, emails, website, and social media.
- Calendar for the school year, school hours, and transportation schedules.
- Opportunities for assistance for non-English speaking parents, military families, and families who may need to connect with local community organizations.
- Staff list of names, titles, room numbers, phone numbers, and email addresses.
- Cafeteria information, with costs and free lunch program information, as well as where parents can find menus.
- What to do when parents want to share a concern or idea.

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Whose Responsibility Is It to Facilitate Digital Equity?

by Matthew Lynch, Editor of *The Edvocate* and *The Tech Edvocate*

Technology is becoming a significant component of classroom curriculum and education in general. Computers, tablets, and mobile apps all promote learning on a deeper level for students. While this edtech certainly can help to promote better grades and deeper understanding, schools are now facing issues with digital equity. Students from high-income families have far more access to the technology needed to succeed than those from low-income families.

The major disparity is both shocking and widespread. One of the most prevalent issues is that children from low-income families are four times more likely to be without internet than their middle-income counterparts (<https://cosn.org/blog/scoping-digital-equity-problem-or-homework-gap>). This limits their ability to perform research, complete school projects, and perform other assignments issued by teachers. We are perpetuating the cycle where low-income students remain behind due to inequality. However, we often wonder just whose responsibility it would be to facilitate the much-needed digital equity.



photo source: <http://www.thetechedvocate.org/whose-responsibility-is-it-to-facilitate-digital-equity/>

Many people believe that it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that all students have access to the necessary resources at home. After all, it is public school teachers who are assigning homework that requires access to the internet in this digital age. Doesn't the school bear some responsibility in providing this for the students who lack it?

In reality, digital equity requires a team effort to make sure that all students are given the tools they need to succeed. While the internet and computer access are necessary for their grades right now, having access to these items can increase their digital literacy for the future. This will be considered an essential skill as they are entering the workforce in the coming years. We will need to form a cooperative approach that fosters more digital equity with a number of companies and sectors.

Internet Companies

Some equity attempts have already been made across the country with initiatives like Connect2Compete (<https://www.cox.com/aboutus/connect2compete.html>). They work with telecommunications companies to issue internet to children in local school districts who were lacking, but they provided it at a substantial discount. This made internet services more affordable to parents who were already on a strict budget.

Charitable Organizations

With the internet becoming more affordable, many families still face the dilemma of affording the technology necessary to use it. Charitable organizations can help by offering discounted computers, tablets, or laptops to help offset the cost. Families who struggle to make these purchases often have to sacrifice a great deal, including other major purchases or daily luxuries like cable (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED555584.pdf>). Companies and organizations who can come alongside school districts to offer discounts for low-income families could help to solve the digital equity dilemma.

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Facilitating Digital Equity

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Training Organizations

The school and other community organizations need to sponsor training sessions. If children and their parents did not grow up around technology, they may need assistance to use it. Offering public training can help parents learn why the internet should be a priority for their child (<https://www.seattle.gov/tech/initiatives/digital-equity>). It can even teach them how to harness its power for themselves.

Digital equity is a growing problem for school districts, but it is going to take a multi-faceted approach to put an end to it. Other companies must get on board with the school in order to help minimize the disparity between low-income families and middle- to high-income families. Educators need to start speaking out and advocating for these partnerships in their local community to make a difference. In the end, digital equity is everyone's responsibility so we can ensure that our students are given all the tools they need for future success.

Reprinted with permission from the April 28, 2018 edition of *The Tech Advocate*, an online magazine created to advocate for education equity, reform, and innovation.
<http://www.thetechadvocate.org/whose-responsibility-is-it-to-facilitate-digital-equity/>

Dr. Young Cooper Named 2018 SIC Advocate

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The *SIC Advocate of the Year* Award recognizes exemplary efforts on behalf of School Improvement Councils across South Carolina by individuals going above and beyond in actively supporting and promoting the work of SICs within their particular spheres of influence. Previous award recipients have included state and district education leaders, state legislators, and local SIC chairs and members.

“Dr. Cooper’s efforts on behalf of School Improvement Councils for her district and across the state are truly outstanding and very much appreciated,” said SC-SIC Executive Director Tom F. Hudson. “She has been a consistent and unwavering voice for the roles and impact that our Councils play in the lives and success of their schools, students, and communities.”

Dr. Cooper is a past chair and member, representing the Fifth Judicial Circuit, of the South Carolina Board of Education, and she served two consecutive terms as a member of the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC). A former secondary English language arts and curriculum resource teacher, and assistant principal, she was South Carolina’s 2002 State Teacher of the Year. She was also a 2007 “National Afterschool Ambassador” of the National Afterchool Alliance, a national Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher, and is a graduate of the SC Education Policy Fellowship program, coordinated in the state by SC-SIC.

A graduate of Georgetown University, she holds the MAT degree from the University of South Carolina, and the Ed.S. and the Doctor of Education degree from SC State University.

