

# SC-SIC Council News



"Civic Engagement at Work for Public Education"

Volume 40, Issue 3, 2020

## Dr. Luanne L. Kokolis Named 2020 SIC Advocate of the Year

Dr. Luanne L. Kokolis, Chief of Strategic Planning, Engagement, and Program Support for Rock Hill Schools, has been named 2020 *SIC Advocate of the Year* by the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) Board of Trustees.

The *SIC Advocate of the Year Award* recognizes exemplary efforts on behalf of School Improvement Councils across South Carolina by individuals actively supporting and

(continued)  
see "2020 SIC Advocate of the Year"  
pg. 5

### In this Issue

- From the Executive Director.....pg. 2
- Chandler Creek Elementary SIC Honored for Annual SIC Report to the Parents....pg. 3
- "Septima Speaks" Podcast.....pg. 3
- Parenting Through COVID-19 School Closings.....pg. 4
- Why Aren't More Schools Teaching Students How to Balance a Checkbook?.....pg. 5

## Chapin Middle School Improvement Council Winner of 2020 Riley Award for SIC Excellence

The School Improvement Council (SIC) of Chapin Middle School in School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties has been named the recipient of the 2020 *Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence*.

The award was announced by the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) in early May.



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 U.S. Secretary of Education and his late wife, recognizing the couple's longstanding commitment to quality public education.

"The Chapin Middle SIC has undertaken significant work worthy of this statewide recognition," said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Dora Leonard. "The efforts of our School Improvement Councils – involving all stakeholders – is vital in making positive and lasting change for our schools, students, families, and state. The Chapin Middle SIC is a shining example of such meaningful collaboration."

Receiving Honorable Mentions for their work last school year were: Flowertown Elementary SIC (Dorchester School District Two); Millwood Elementary SIC (Sumter School District); Pontiac Elementary SIC (Richland School District Two); and Round Top Elementary (Richland School District Two).

# Message from the Executive Director

*Tom F. Hudson*



We are currently facing some radically unprecedented times. That sentence may classify as one of the greater understatements in recent memory.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made an impact on all aspects on our communities, our institutions, our families, and yes, our children. While the virus itself is damaging enough (claiming over 107,000 lives to date in the U.S. alone), the disruption and uncertainty it leaves in its wake are something else again. Our collective sense of normality has been turned upside down. And we know not when we will see a reprieve.

We do not yet know when our schools will reopen, or what “school” will actually look like when we reach that point. Hopefully, we will all receive some guidance in the coming weeks as various task forces wrap up their work and provide their recommendations.

What we have seen over the last several months is a certain sense of strength and resilience. Our educators – teachers and administrators – seemingly reinvented the way we do schooling overnight, in ways that I think would make MacGyver proud. And schools and districts have provided meals and Wi-Fi hotspots on top of that.

We’ve seen parents and other family members stepping into roles as at-home educators, helping their children with lesson packets and online modules, all while holding down their regular jobs or, in too many cases, while having lost a job in a field seriously impacted by the pandemic and resultant closures.

We have seen communities, schools, and boards of education across our state stage neighborhood parades, socially-distanced events, and place special signs of recognition in the yards of graduating seniors – a Class of 2020 whose commencements may not commence in a time-honored format.

And we’ve seen local School Improvement Councils come together virtually to not only continue their work as they can, but to look at what additional steps they can take in this time of crisis to best assist the students, families, and educators in their school communities.

I am grateful that we have – and that I know – such people as each of these who, while having the weight of the world on their shoulders, seem to have both the lightness of heart and the brightness of hope to

*(continued)*

*see “From the Executive Director”*

*pg. 5*



## SC-SIC Board of Trustees

**Dora Leonard, Chair - Seneca**

**Bob Grant, Vice Chair - Orangeburg**

**Mary Anne Byrd, Secretary - Camden**

**Amelia B. McKie, Immediate Past Chair - Columbia**

**Jessica Adamson - Rock Hill**

**Shannon Bedenbaugh - Hilton Head Island**

**Dr. Sallie Cooks - Trenton**

**Stewart Cooner - West Columbia**

**Rose Choice - Estill**

**Carol Hill - Florence**

**Dr. Trevor T. Ivey - Sumter**

**Bonnie King - Manning**

**Jeff Nicholson - Rock Hill**

**Shari Sebuck - Mount Pleasant**

**Rev. Thessa G. Smith - Greenwood**

### SC-SIC Staff

**Tom F. Hudson**  
Executive Director

**Karen Utter**  
Associate Director

**Claudia Parnell**  
Digital and Web Director

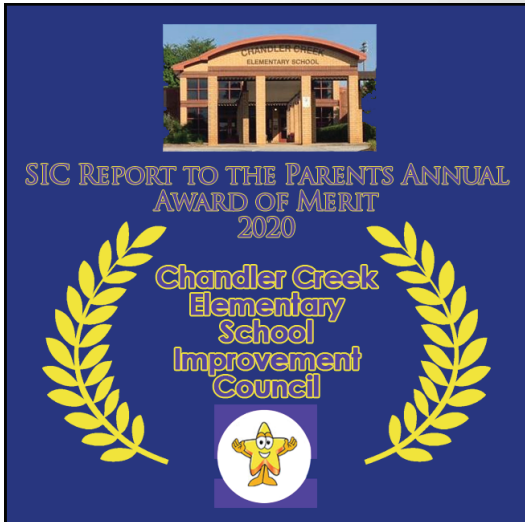
*Council News* is an award winning publication of the South Carolina School Improvement Council. Circulation 20,000+.  
Your comments and articles are welcome.  
Contact **Claudia Parnell, Editor**, at:

UofSC College of Education  
Wardlaw Bldg., Suite 001  
Columbia, SC 29208  
Phone: 803-777-7658  
Toll Free: 800-868-2232  
Email: [sic@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sic@mailbox.sc.edu)  
Website: <http://sic.sc.gov>

The University of South Carolina system provides affirmative action and equal opportunity in education and employment for all qualified persons regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

# Chandler Creek Elementary SIC Awarded for Annual Report to the Parents Excellence

The School Improvement Council of Chandler Creek Elementary School (Greenville Schools) has been named the recipient of SC-SIC's third annual *Award of Merit for SIC Report to the Parents Excellence*.



The Chandler Creek SIC previously ranked as one of the five finalists for SC-SIC's annual *Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence* in 2019.

South Carolina statute requires that each SIC prepare and disseminate a *Report to the Parents* each spring to inform their school communities of the school's and SIC's work and progress toward established improvement goals.

"This award is intended to recognize *Report* content, clarity, and design appeal, as well as to stress the importance of the *SIC Report to the Parents* to school communities," said SC-SIC Executive Director Tom F. Hudson. "We congratulate the Chandler Creek SIC on its outstanding efforts in fulfilling this required aspect of state law."

Local SICs not only produce these *Reports* for their local communities but are requested to also post them electronically as part of their accountability process to SC-SIC's online "*Member Network*." There, *Reports* are readily available to anyone wishing to read more about their School Improvement Council's work and efforts to achieve progress for their schools and students.

Staff and state Board of Trustees members of SC-SIC review all *SIC Reports to the Parents* posted online and through consensus determine an annual award recipient.

Helpful tips and resources to assist local School Improvement Councils in preparing these *Reports* are also available to them on the [SC-SIC website](#).

---

## "Septima Speaks" Podcast

Listen to stories of family engagement from cradle to career while you are on the go with the Carolina Family Engagement Center's (CFEC) new "Septima Speaks" podcast.

The podcast is named as a salute to the pioneering black educator and social justice advocate, South Carolinian Septima Poinsette Clark (1898-1987).

Tune in for conversations with students, families, school personnel, and community partners on happenings around the state of South Carolina. The first podcast features University of South Carolina senior Nakia McCloud and his reflections on pivotal educational experiences. You can listen [here](#).



CFEC is a federally funded grant program providing high-quality and collaborative resources and assistance to parents, students, educators, and communities fostering meaningful and lasting family engagement. CFEC is located within the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) in the U of SC's College of Education.



# Parenting Through COVID-19 School Closings

by Sara Metzger, Life Coach, Vista Coaching Services  
and Lorilei Swanson, LMFT, LPC, PhD, Carolina Family Engagement Center

Parents are under stress trying to balance the changes related to the social distancing and stay in place requirements related to COVID-19. We are all in this together and are collectively experiencing an overload of stress related to changes in routine, economic setbacks, school and work closings, and loss of our social and emotional supports. Families who may have previously relied on schools to promote their child's healthy development and academic achievement now find themselves in a position where they are required to be fully engaged in their child's learning process.

Many questions arise for parents during this unexpected and unfamiliar life experience. What can we do to encourage our child's learning? How do we use our limited time and energy to motivate our children to engage in the learning process? How do we avoid power struggles and make learning fun? And finally, how do we find balance and maintain a healthy perspective during these uncertain times?

So much is happening in the world right now and our lives look completely different than they did two months ago. We are faced with a new reality the likes of which we have never faced before. There are no rules, no previous situation to draw experience from, and the amount of uncertainty can be overwhelming for many parents who may feel stressed, anxious, and unsure of how to proceed. Remember that you are not alone, and these feelings are normal during unexpected and uncertain times.



image credit:  
<https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/3/25/21193142/coronavirus-covid-19-kids-work-from-home-child-care-school-cancellations>

First, take a deep breath to reset your nervous system. As parents, our children are looking to us during this time to see what we model in terms of mindset and behavior. When we are triggered, we can become angry, overwhelmed, or completely shut down. Noticing the early warning signs is vital to regulating our emotions. Take a moment to check in with your body, thoughts, and emotions. If your breathing is shallow, your shoulders are tense, and you feel irritable or angry, practice these calming techniques:

1. Scan your body to notice where you are holding tension and breathe into those areas;
2. Concentrate on your feet pressing into the floor, breathe in and out while feeling the earth support you;
3. Focus on external sounds or sights until your breathing slows down;
4. Breathe in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 2, and breathe out for a count of 4; and
5. Repeat a phrase that soothes you, "I'm OK in this moment" or "For now everything is OK."

All these techniques help us reset our nervous system and put us in a calm, resilient state. From this state of being, parents are better able to meet daily challenges and model coping techniques for their children.

It is important for us to be self-compassionate during this time. Recognize that this moment in time is difficult and we are all doing our best. We are all human and need to forgive ourselves for mistakes we make as we are learning new things and taking on new roles. Another important thing to consider is looking for ways to recharge yourself so you can care for others. Think of ways you can block off personal time for yourself to engage in mindfulness or other calming activities. If we are successful in doing this, we set a great example for our children and help them begin to build their own healthy lifelong habits.

Just as we are facing difficult times our children are confronting their own set of challenges. The world as they knew it has changed completely. Their behaviors may change and what is anxiety or depression may show up as defiant behavior or acting out. Children may have physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches, or they may seem needy and clingy. Sometimes moodiness and irritability show up. These can all be manifestations of anxiety and uncertainty.

(continued)  
See "Parenting Through COVID-19"  
pg. 6

# Why Aren't More Schools Teaching Students How to Balance a Checkbook?

by Annie Holmquist

Last fall, the “Adulting School” in Portland, Maine opened its doors for the first time. Its mission? To teach young people the practical life skills they never learned growing up, including handling financial matters and cooking a decent meal.

That such skills are a necessity for a life of responsible adulthood is undeniable. The question is, why have so many young people risen to the ranks of maturity without knowing how to do these things?

There are many places where the blame could be laid, but one high school in Massachusetts in ensuring that when it comes to financial literacy, the blame won't be placed on them.



According to local news station WWLP, the last nine years have seen Chicopee Comprehensive High School annually set aside a day for students to take a crash course in financial literacy:

“It is called the ‘Financial Literacy Day Challenge.’ They learn about making a household budget; paying the mortgage, the grocery bills, and when they marry, the cost of day care.

image credit:  
<https://www.aol.com/article/finance/2014/04/01/financial-literacy-high-school-courses-problem-unqualified-teachers/20859609/>

School administrator Kara Blanchard wishes her generation had had an opportunity to receive this kind of real life preparation.”

Reports from students enrolled in the course suggest that it has taught them how to do taxes, given them a greater awareness about the importance of staying out of debt, and drilled home lessons about wise spending.

Several years ago, the OECD (the organization which operates the international PISA exams) produced a report on the state of financial literacy amongst students in developed nations. Per usual in match-ups of this type, the U.S. came in with a mediocre score.

Such a mediocre score might be more understandable if the subject was advanced math or rocket science. But it's not. Simply put, basic financial skills like balancing a checkbook, creating a budget, and learning how to manage a savings account aren't all that hard to teach or learn.

Would more schools be wise to carve out a little time to teach these important “adulting” skills before kids graduate and move on to college and the allegedly responsible life of an adult?

Reprinted with permission. Annie Holmquist is the editor of Intellectual Takeout, a program of Charlemagne Institute. Charlemagne Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, educational organization dedicated to laying the intellectual groundwork for a great awakening. Original publication date: March 3, 2017.  
<https://www.intellectualltakeout.org/blog/why-arent-more-schools-teaching-students-how-balance-checkbook/>



# 2019 SIC Advocate of the Year

*continued from pg. 1*

promoting the work of SICs within their spheres of influence. Previous award recipients have included state, district, and school-level education leaders, state legislators, and local SIC chairs and SIC members.



2020 SIC Advocate of the Year,  
Dr. Luanne L. Kokolis

“Dr. Kokolis’ efforts on behalf of SICs through the years have been significant and are very much appreciated,” said SC-SIC Executive Director Tom F. Hudson. “Whether working on behalf of the many School Improvement Councils within her district or those statewide, she has been a consistent voice for the impact that our SICs have on the lives and success of our schools, students, and communities.”

A former two-term member of the SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees, Dr. Kokolis joined Rock Hill Schools in 2006 as Executive Director of Student Services. In her current position, she is responsible for strategic planning, accreditation, student serves, nursing services, School Improvement Councils, athletics, alternative education and adult education services, and community partnerships.

Dr. Kokolis is a former high school teacher, and she has also served as an assistant principal and principal at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She holds a B.S. degree from Robert Morris University (PA), and a Master’s and Doctorate from Indiana University (PA).

---

## Parenting Through COVID-19

*continued from pg. 4*

It is important to have open and honest conversations about how your children are feeling. Acknowledge the losses they are experiencing and allow space to grieve. It is also helpful to recognize what we can’t control (the pandemic) and what we can control (like wearing masks and washing our hands). Some kids really respond to a daily routine that includes time for schoolwork, physical activity, healthy meals, screen time and virtual interaction with friends. If you have teens and young adults, allowing them extra time on their devices helps them stay connected to their peers. You may also want to talk to them about family rules regarding social distancing and safety.

When you encounter a situation where your child isn’t motivated to do schoolwork, try to avoid getting into a power struggle. Instead, encourage your child to do what they can and to do their best. This may mean taking an extra break or coming up with a fun way to achieve the same learning outcome. It is important to be flexible during these unusual learning circumstances and look for opportunities to engage your children in new ways.

This may be a unique opportunity to nurture new skills in your children by taking on new projects around the house or helping people in your community. Help children engage in a positive way to help them gain a sense of control over the current circumstances. When we feel like we are helping or contributing we create a more positive mindset and strengthen resilience.

Most students left their teachers, friends, and school communities behind without an opportunity to say goodbye or to prepare for weeks apart without their usual academic and social supports. Explain to your children that teachers and schools still care very deeply about them and understand that families are in unusual and sometimes challenging circumstances. Ultimately, teachers will be able to help students catch up on any gaps in learning. Most importantly, help your children feel safe and loved by their family and school community. If possible, think of ways that your child can connect with his or her teachers on a personal level to maintain established relationships and foster resilience in your child.

Finally, establish a time for all family members to talk about their feelings and grievances in a mindful and respectful way. Try to allow every family member an opportunity to contribute to creative solutions to family problems. This may also be the time to talk about activities that family members want to do together for much needed relaxation and shared fun.

Also, ask yourself, “Who do I want to be during this time?” and “How can I use this experience to develop positive changes in my life and in my family?” Remember, this too will end. If we can build resilience and persevere during this unprecedented time, we will be stronger individually, as families, and collectively moving forward.

## *From the Executive Director*

*continued from pg. 2*

help us all through these most challenging of times. They model behavior, spirit, and commitment for all our young people. And that perhaps is one of the greatest lessons our students – or any of us – can receive.

We don't know where this public health crisis is leading, or leaving, us. That is unsettling. We have all heard news of business and economic impact, which in turn can have profoundly personal impact. Some states, such as New York, Michigan, and Ohio, have already forecast and forewarned that education budgets could realize cuts of 20 to 25 percent – a greater shock than the Great Recession of a decade ago from which many budgets have yet to recover. What this will translate to in the Palmetto State we have yet to learn.

But this I believe we can count on: our students, families, educators, and communities – and our School Improvement Councils – will need all the strength, resilience, support, commitment, and innovation that we can individually and collectively muster. And I believe we can do it. For even as we are now having to stay apart, we have come together in so many impactful ways.

Thank you. Stay safe and be well.

