



“The Basics” For Effective SICs

What Is An SIC?

A School Improvement Council (SIC) is:

- a broad-based group
- advisory in nature
- focused on school improvement
- required at every K-12 public school by law
- Parents – Teachers – Community Members
- Students – Administrators – School Leaders

SICs in South Carolina

SICs were established in state law 40 years ago. Ensuing legislation through the years has strengthened SIC roles and responsibilities.

- 1977 – Education Finance Act (EFA)
- 1984 – Education Improvement Act (EIA)
- 1993 – Early Childhood Act (Act 135)
- 1998 – Education Accountability Act (EAA)
- 2014 – Read to Succeed Act

What Do SICs Do?

- Actively participate in development of school's Five-Year Improvement plan & annual updates
 - Includes School Reading Plans required under Read to Succeed Act
- Assist in implementing school improvement activities
- Monitor & report on school's progress toward improvement goals
 - Write annual *SIC Report to the Parents*.
 - With the principal, write the narrative for the annual *SC School Report Card*.

SIC Membership

Elected: Parents – Teachers - Students (Grades 9-12)

- Elected to staggered two-year terms
- No term limits unless stated in bylaws

Appointed: Community Members

- Length of term established in local SIC bylaws

Ex-Officio: Principal (required by law)

- Other individuals by virtue of their position, knowledge or experience as listed in local bylaws
- Examples include Assistant Principal, PTO Rep, Business Partner, Past SIC Chair, Title I Parent Advisory Rep

SIC Membership

Statute sets a minimum for members:

- Two (2) parents – Two (2) teachers
- Two (2) students (Grades 9-12)
- Half as many appointed community members

While there is no maximum set, SICs should be manageable in size & reflective of the population & diversity of their schools

Selecting Members & Officers

By law, annual election of SIC members must be completed by **October 15**

Parents, teachers & students elect peers;
principal appoints community members

Balloting can be conducted in a variety of ways

SIC officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary) should be elected by the SIC itself prior to **November 15** reporting deadline

See SIC Election Toolkit for more information & example

Outline Your SIC Year

- SIC Calendar
- Highlights main SIC tasks & timeframes
- Tailor it to fit your SIC – bylaws, goals, projects, etc.
- Be mindful of statutory deadlines

See SIC Handbook for Sample Overview of SIC Year

“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.’”



Dave Barry, Author & Humorist

Plan Your SIC Meetings

- Agenda and purpose
- Set time limits on the agenda
- Encourage all to participate
- Stick to items listed on the agenda
- Start and end meetings on time
- Distribute draft & approved versions of meeting minutes in a timely fashion

Plan Your SIC Meetings

- Sample SIC Agenda
- Effective SIC Meeting Tips
- SICs are statutorily constituted bodies – their business is the public’s business
- Openness is the always best policy

See SIC Effective Meetings Toolkit for more information & examples

SIC Meeting Minutes

- Minutes should be a record of SIC action, not a transcript of the meeting
- Capture votes or any actions taken & brief descriptions of any discussion
- Record SIC members present & absent
- Circulate draft to all SIC members & vote on minutes at next SIC meeting
- Maintain copies of approved minutes

Developing SIC Bylaws

- Bylaws are your SIC's rules of thumb
- Keep your bylaws handy & up-to-date
- Bylaws should cover the following:

Purpose – Membership – Election/Appointment
Tenure – Officers/Duties – Meetings – Voting
Training – Amendments

See SIC Bylaws Toolkit for more information & example

SICs & the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

SICs are considered “public bodies” as defined by South Carolina law (Title 30, Chapter 4)

Meetings are open

Post notices of Meeting Schedules & Agendas

Records are open: Bylaws, Minutes, Membership

Keep SIC records on file

Setting SIC Goals

Learn about your school's needs & strengths

Five-Year Plan

- Academic performance & school climate data
- Additional input from stakeholders using surveys, small group discussions, or town hall meetings

Decide on area of focus & set 1 to 3 SIC goals for improvement that are aligned with Five-Year Plan goals

Selecting SIC Activities

- Select activities that are most likely to help achieve school/SIC goals for improvement
- Consider modeling your activities after successful activities used by schools similar to yours
- See what resources are at your disposal. What do you need? What do you have? Who do you know?
- Pick an activity that matches the culture and values of your school community
- Make sure that you are not duplicating what others are already working on

See SIC Activities Resource Library online for more information & examples

Using Committees to Help Organize SIC Work

Committees formed around SIC areas of focus or goals

Committees do research, tend to details & logistics, and prepare recommendations to submit to the full SIC

Committees report on their work regularly to the full SIC

Committee members don't have to be SIC members

SICs can also form standing committees for ongoing work in areas such as member recruitment, publicity or advocacy

“What lies in our power to do
lies in our power not to do.”

Aristotle, Greek Teacher & Philosopher



Reporting on SIC Work

- SIC issues (by April 30) the *SIC Report to the Parents* outlining progress for the current school year
Needs – Goals – Actions – Results
Examples available on SC-SIC website
- With the principal, the SIC writes the annual narrative for the *SC School Report Card*
Briefly describes the school & notes goals, successes & challenges for the year reported
- Tells the story statistics alone don't tell

Inclusive Leadership

If all voices are not heard, the whole story is not told.

Are parents, students, teachers & community members truly engaged in our schools?

~ OR ~

Is community engagement just another requirement to check off the list?

Keys for Effective SICs

- Balanced, in compliance SIC membership (reported to the *Member Network* by November 15)
- Access to a copy of the SIC Handbook, *This Is Your SIC*
- SIC member training (Basics, Leadership, Goal-Setting)
- Knowledge of school's needs & goals (Five-Year School Improvement Plan)
- Engage the greater school community (surveys, focus groups, forums)
- Established SIC goals & committees

Keys for Effective SICs

- Regularly scheduled meetings – at least 8 annually (held at times convenient for parent & community members)
- Up-to-date local SIC bylaws
- Published meeting notices, agendas, minutes (SICs are public bodies subject to FOIA)
- Communicate the work of their SIC (Web presence, emails, *SIC Report to the Parents*)
- Support from the principal & district

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.”



Alice Walker, Author

Real Value in Real Time

Last year, nearly 15,000 SIC members in 1,200-plus schools turned in nearly \$4 million in unpaid volunteer hours serving on their local SICs

“We now know from the research that engaging families and community partners is an essential ingredient to the improvement of schools.”

- Dr. Karen Mapp, Harvard University

Such engagement efforts can have the same impact on student achievement as spending an additional \$1,000 per pupil annually.

- Houtenville, A.J. & Conway, K.S. (2008)

Dick & Tunky Riley Award for SIC Excellence

Presented annually by SC-SIC to recognize
outstanding & effective efforts of a local SIC

Submit application, Case Statement & supporting materials

Three-level judging process

Single winner & four Honorable Mentions

Other SICs can receive Honor Roll status

2016 Riley Award Honorees

Winner – Ebinport Elementary SIC
(Rock Hill School District 3)

H.E. McCracken Middle SIC
(Beaufort County School District)

Jennie Moore Elementary SIC
(Charleston County School District)

Laing Middle School of Science & Technology SIC
(Charleston County School District)

South Florence High SIC
(Florence Public School District 1)

SC-SIC Services

- Website (sic.sc.gov) with free downloadable materials, resources & information
- Electronic newsletter (*Council News*) for SIC members
- Periodic email updates (*In the Loop*) touching on SIC related topics, educational issues, legislation
- Social Media – Facebook & Twitter
- Variety of training opportunities statewide
- Technical assistance via telephone, email & on-site visits

SC-SIC Vision and Mission

Vision

“To promote and support civic engagement for
quality public education in South Carolina.”

Mission

“SC-SIC facilitates meaningful parental and
community involvement in our state’s public schools
by providing resources, tools, and strategies
to local School Improvement Councils
and other stakeholders group.”

“Never doubt that a small group of
thoughtful, committed citizens can
change the world. Indeed, it is the only
thing that ever has.”



Margaret Mead, Anthropologist

Contact Information

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