

2016 Finalists

SC School Improvement Council

Dick and Tunky Riley Award for SIC Excellence

2016 WINNER – Ebinport Elementary School SIC – Rock Hill Schools/York District Three

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 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 with other SICs in its district.

2016 FINALIST – H.E. McCracken Middle School SIC – Beaufort County School District

After a period of inactivity, a new school administration and several committed SIC members have breathed new life into this SIC and sparked impressive growth in SIC membership. The SIC selected two areas of focus: family and community engagement and school safety. The SIC worked to increase parent capacity to engage in their children's education through a series of four Parent Universities attended by approximately 300 parents. The series consisted of approximate 50 breakout sessions on issues such as school culture, teen behavior, drug and gang trends, school of choice options, and college preparation. Many of these sessions were led by community partners. The SIC also partnered with its school's PTO in sponsoring "Student of the Month," recognitions for students and their families during monthly SIC meetings. Concerns regarding school safety led the SIC to institute an annual inspection of the school building and grounds by SIC members and students. During its first inspection, the SIC identified structural damage to the overhang outside the bus loop that, once reported, received immediate attention from the district. In response to concerns expressed by parents and staff, the SIC also initiated an advocacy campaign that has resulted in several changes to lessen hazards associated with overcrowded and aging buses and to decrease wait time and unsafe student crossings in the car line.

2016 FINALIST – Jennie Moore Elementary School for the Creative Arts SIC – Charleston County School District

As its school prepared to move to a new building, this SIC renewed its commitment to integrated arts education. An SIC committee conducted a classroom needs assessment and formed an arts education steering committee that successfully applied for a Strategic Arts Planning Grant through the SC Department of Education. The SIC committee also developed partnerships with organizations such as "Engaging Creative Minds," that brings local artists into the classroom and the Charleston Museum, which is partnering with JME teachers to create "traveling trunks" filled with materials to supplement classroom instruction at JME and other Charleston district schools. At the same time, the SIC continued to build and improve on existing SIC communications initiatives such as monthly informal meetings between parents and administrators, and its "Welcome Wagon" of information and outreach to new families. The SIC also partnered with its feeder middle school's SIC to develop a "Bridge" transition program for 5th graders and their parents. In addition, the SIC focused on building healthy habits and safety skills for students through initiatives such as the annual bike rodeo (in partnership with MUSC's Safe Kids), a bike/walk to school day, a bike/walk safety poster contest, and, in partnership with Safe Routes to School, maps of safe bike/walk routes to school.

2016 Finalists, Riley Award for SIC Excellence (continued)

2016 FINALIST – Laing Middle School of Science and Technology SIC – Charleston County School District

This SIC focused on building community partnerships and spreading the word about their school's accomplishments in science and technology. The SIC worked to educate families and the community through an evening of events that included a "Meet and Greet" with local school board candidates, a debate among the candidates for state Superintendent of Education, and an information session on an upcoming school bond referendum. To build partnerships with local businesses, the SIC invited business leaders to have lunch and tour the school during STEM builds. This program, called "At Our Table," resulted in the donation of STEM supplies such as safety glasses, pvc pipe, and caps so that more students could actively participate in STEM builds rather than just watch and record results. The SIC also worked together with its feeder elementary school's SIC to develop a "Bridge" transition program for 5th graders and their parents. Finally, the SIC worked to ensure its school was recognized by the media and state legislators upon its winning recognition as one of the top STEM programs in the nation.

2016 FINALIST – South Florence High School SIC – Florence Public School District One

This SIC organized much of its work within the framework of an action plan it developed with the assistance of a representative of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). In the area of academic achievement, the SIC wrote a successful grant proposal to fund the purchase of USA TestPrep resources for Algebra 2 students and sponsored a workshop for families at which students showcased their work and teachers explained the importance of Algebra 2. The SIC's NNPS plan also called for initiatives to promote two-way communication with families such as a series of dinners and educational family sessions that were held at a subsidized housing community center, home visits, and an additional school "open house" during the spring semester. It also collaborated with the National Alliance for Mental Illness to provide a course for families and the community addressing behavioral and emotional challenges faced by children and adolescents. In addition, an SIC search for additional scholarship monies resulted in a donation from the alumni association that allowed five seniors to attend summer school and graduate that year. Finally, the SIC partnered with alumni, the parent/teacher/student association, the athletic booster club, and student organizations to raise the \$7,500 needed to paint the school motto ("Simply the Best") and school logo on a water tower overlooking the campus.

The annual Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence was created in 2002 to recognize the significant contributions made to public education by the nearly 15,000 School Improvement Council (SIC) members who volunteer on the more than 1,100 SICs across South Carolina. The Riley Award is named in honor of former SC Governor and US Education Secretary Richard Riley and his late wife, Tunky, and recognizes the couple's longstanding commitment to quality public education.

A core partner in the Center for Educational Partnerships at the University of South Carolina College of Education, the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) was established in state law nearly 40 years ago to provide the member training, technical assistance, statutory accountability, and operational resources vital to the continued success of the community-based School Improvement Councils serving each of South Carolina's K-12 public schools.

South Carolina School Improvement Council

"Civic Engagement in Public Education"

USC College of Education, Suite 001, Columbia, SC 29208

803-777-7658

800-868-2232

<http://sic.sc.gov>