



S.C. School Improvement Council

“Civic Engagement in Public Education”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saturday, March 24, 2012

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Baron DeKalb Elementary SIC named winner of 2012 SC-SIC Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence

COLUMBIA – The School Improvement Council (SIC) of Baron DeKalb Elementary School in Camden (Kershaw County School District) has been named the recipient of the 2012 Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence.

The award was presented Saturday afternoon by former SC Governor and US Education Secretary Dick Riley at the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) Annual Meeting and Awards Celebration 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 Governor Riley and his late wife, Tunky, and recognizes the couple’s longstanding commitment to quality public education.

“The Baron DeKalb School Improvement Council has undertaken some very meaningful work well-deserving of this recognition,” said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Sylleste Davis. “This Council truly exemplifies what SICs are all about – parents, educators and community members working together to make a positive impact on the lives of the schools and the children they serve.”

In the last school year, the Baron DeKalb SIC worked to identify and obtain funding for the construction of a more secure main entrance to the school for student and staff safety. It also spearheaded grant-writing efforts for the creation of an outdoor classroom to enhance teaching and learning in various subjects, and coordinated the creation of a special committee of parents, staff and community members to maintain the classroom space and school grounds. The SIC also partnered with the United Way of Kershaw County’s “Hand in Hand Together” mentoring program to recruit volunteers to assist selected fifth grade students with academic and behavior challenges, resulting in student gains in math and reading Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores and a 40% reduction in disciplinary referrals.

Presented with Honorable Mentions for their work last school year were: Blythe Academy of Languages SIC, Greenville (Greenville County Schools); Burton-Pack Elementary SIC, Columbia (Richland School District 1); Jennie Moore Elementary SIC, Mount Pleasant (Charleston County School District); and Port Royal Elementary SIC, Port Royal (Beaufort County School District). A brief description of the work of each of these SICs is included with this release.

Located in the University of South Carolina’s College of Education, the SC-SIC was established in state law over three decades 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 in each of the state’s 1,100-plus K-12 public schools.



SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees ***Dick and Tunky Riley Award for SIC Excellence***

2012 Winner - Baron DeKalb Elementary SIC, Camden (Kershaw County School District)

This SIC undertook various efforts, working with its local school board and district administration, to identify and obtain funding for the construction of a more secure main entrance to the school for student and staff safety. The SIC also spearheaded grant-writing efforts for the creation of an outdoor classroom to enhance teaching and learning in various subjects, and coordinated the creation of a special committee of parents, staff and community members to maintain the classroom space and school grounds. The SIC also partnered with the United Way of Kershaw County's "Hand in Hand Together" mentoring program to recruit volunteers to assist selected 5th grade students with academic and behavior challenges, resulting in student gains in math and reading Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores and a 40% reduction in disciplinary referrals.

Honorable Mention - Blythe Academy of Languages SIC, Greenville (Greenville County Schools)

Advocacy was this SIC's primary goal for the school year. The SIC took steps to learn more about the challenges facing public education and the legislative process, share knowledge with the school and greater communities, and to meet with elected officials regarding the strengths and needs of public education. The SIC sponsored advocacy trainings for its own members, PTA representatives, and other SIC/PTA members throughout the school district. It participated in several advocacy events held by the group Public Education Partners, SC School Improvement Council, and the SC School Boards Association, and organized a telephone and email tree to share information on key education issues and legislation. SIC members also took part in meetings with various elected officials on the state and Congressional levels to support public education.

Honorable Mention - Burton-Pack Elementary SIC, Columbia (Richland School District 1)

This SIC sponsored activities to provide tutorials for families to strengthen math and reading skills at home, resulting in increased parental involvement in teacher conferences and other programs, additional parent volunteer hours at the school, and significant increases in students' Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) reading and math scores. The SIC also assisted with obtaining a four-year \$690,000 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant for an extensive afterschool program, a \$4,940 Healthy Fruits and Vegetables grant, and sponsored family fitness nights. As the school serves four low income housing developments with high rates of student transience, the SIC took the lead in providing incentives for student attendance at school and afterschool functions and assisted with providing information and materials to families on effective parenting, student mentoring, and conflict resolution.

Honorable Mention - Jennie Moore Elementary SIC, Mount Pleasant (Charleston County School District)

This SIC undertook efforts to raise awareness among the school community of the valuable resources available through the SIC. The SIC sponsored a number of activities including a community math night and a tax information seminar, which also highlighted the roles and objectives of the SIC. The SIC sponsored monthly meetings for parents and school administrators to improve communication and provide an additional way to share information, ideas and concerns. These meetings supplemented other communication methods used by the school and established occasions for families to strengthen their working relationships with school leaders. Additionally, the SIC provided information to the community regarding what became a successful sales tax referendum which funded building and renovations at the school and others in the district.

Honorable Mention - Port Royal Elementary SIC, Port Royal (Beaufort County School District)

Working with a local church, this SIC established scholarships for afterschool care for needy students at the nearby YMCA. The SIC also developed new community contacts to provide enough school supplies for a year, and sponsored a clean-up day involving another a local church, over 100 community members and the Town of Port Royal, followed by a community picnic. The SIC also created a mentoring program for "at promise" students by using community volunteers and resources. Faced with the recommended closing of the school due to district budget shortfalls, the SIC undertook a successful informational campaign with the community, local media, elected officials, and others. These actions contributed to the school board's decision to not close the school and greatly increased ongoing community engagement and support of the SIC and its neighborhood school.