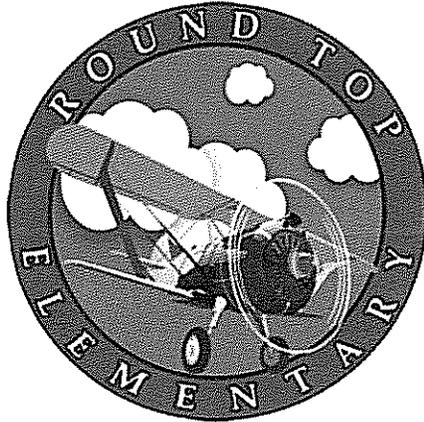


Round Top Elementary
School Improvement Council



Dick and Tunky Riley Award 2020
Level Two Application

SC-SIC 2020 Riley Award Application

Round Top Elementary

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Blythewood, SC 29016

Richland School District 2

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Case Statement

The Round Top Elementary SIC has been a supportive advisory group to the administration and teachers of the school but felt a call to “harness the energy” of its members to “better the education – and the educational environment” of Round Top¹. During the annual SC-SIC meeting in April 2018, there was a call for Education Advocacy. The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) spoke of issues with teacher recruitment and retention, not just in immediate future, but long term as well. South Carolina is facing a teacher shortage, and CERRA called upon SICs to be partners in teacher retention efforts. Specifically, for new teachers at a school, SICs can intentionally welcome and support teachers which will contribute to teachers staying at the school and in the profession. Understanding this necessity, Round Top SIC looked into its own data from the school climate survey to dig further into the issue of education and teacher advocacy. The RTE SIC felt results of that survey could provide insight to where Round Top teachers felt they needed the most support. In the spring of 2018, the administration shared the results of the 5th grade students and parents State Report Card survey. One question asked how satisfied the respondent was with home-school relations. On the 2017 report card, 100% of the teachers responded with 100% satisfaction, while only 84.5% of responding parents indicated satisfaction. The 2018 surveys indicated an increase for parent satisfaction with home-school relations up to 93.4%, but given the amount and variety of ways communication was provided to students' homes, an opportunity presented itself to improve in this area. While it seemed the teachers did not need direct support here, the SIC believed engaging parents to foster what they perceived as better home-school relations would further support the whole child education efforts of Round Top teachers.

To more fully understand how to best support and advocate for Round Top teachers, the SIC wanted to know more about its student population. The data showed that Round Top saw a growth in student enrollment from 568 students in 2017-2018 to 632 students in 2018-2019. Growth in enrollment naturally brings growth in student challenges. Data from our school guidance counselor pointed to an increase in guidance referrals for students with severe behavioral issues and a general inability to self-regulate their emotions. Anecdotal information from teachers, when asked about these particular issues with students, indicated that they saw a connection between some of the behaviors and the amount of (self-reported) time on digital devices at home. Coupled with this overall student growth, and student emotional challenges, came a District reorganization of resources for students with special needs. Round Top gained the student Behavior Support Program, adding to the diversity of the student population, and the diversity of our student needs. Additionally, Round Top saw an incremental increase in the number of students living in poverty, with 22.2% in 2015 – 2016, increasing to 25.6% in 2016-2017, and another increase to 26.3% in 2017-2018.

The RTE SIC saw an opportunity to tie these things together in support of a Teacher Advocacy theme for 2018-2019 SIC year work. Our theme focused on building and enhancing the family relationship at home that would hopefully translate into better teacher-student

¹ Hudson T. and K. Utter (2015). Foreword. *This is Your SIC – A Handbook for Effectiveness*, pg. 1. Retrieved from: https://sic.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/SIC%20Information/Handbook_for%20website%20updated%2011-29-2017.pdf

relationships and overall academic, and personal, success of our Round Top students. To enhance our efforts, the SIC explored research on the effects of technology on young children as it pertains to behavioral issues, social-emotional development, and academic success. With the increased prevalence of all types of technology available and accessible to so many people regardless of background, or age, the SIC wanted to share the research findings of the impacts of technology on school-age children, and how that translates into their behaviors, relationships, and overall success at home and at school. This research served as the platform for the bulk of the SIC teacher advocacy activities in 2018-2019.

RTE SIC efforts began with American Education Week in November 2018. Our theme was "Digital Detox" and the SIC asked Round Top families to "Sharpen the Saw" that week by participating in activities designed to support teacher advocacy and increase student engagement. All week long, families and students were encouraged to put away their electronic devices and engage in intentional time together to foster meaningful connections. During that week, a blog was sent out daily with "fun facts" on the impact of screen time on school-aged children. One fact shared stated, "For school-aged children and adolescents, moderate media use is permissible unless it interferes with other healthy behaviors like outdoor activity, sleeping, and eating well."² Another fact shared with families stated, "The American Academy of Pediatrics found kids who spent two to four hours each day using digital devices outside of schoolwork were 23% more likely of "always or usually" not finishing their homework compared with children who spent less than two hours consuming digital media."³ The digital detox challenge came with the opportunity to win a prize pack of board games for students who filled out a simple reflection piece on what they liked, and what they found challenging, during the detox. The overall response from families, and teachers, on this event was positive as evidenced by the comments made on social media and the level of participation.

RTE SIC continued its teacher advocacy and family connection work with other events. Throughout the year, one of the SIC members, who is a trained professional of the parent-to-parent team at Fort Jackson, hosted "Parent University" sessions as part of the Military Child Education Coalition efforts. These sessions were designed to support students' academic and social needs as well as providing parents with resources to help their children grow and succeed at home and in school. Topics included Growth Mindset, bullying, and time management.

In December, the SIC created "conversation placemats" for the PTO spirit night at CiCi's pizza which again encouraged students and parents to put away their digital devices and engage in conversation and fun activities while dining out in support of the school. By January, a student of one of the SIC members volunteered to create a "cell phone box" for the visitor's table in the cafeteria to encourage visitors (mostly parents) to have a "No cell phone zone" during lunch and fully engage in conversation with their students. January also provided an opportunity to advocate for teachers by sending out a response to the South Carolina Schools' State Report Card, released in November of 2018. The SIC crafted a letter to parents, enclosed in the second quarter

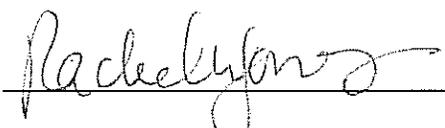
² *Research confirms screen time is hurting children's school performance* By Ananya Bhattacharya . Retrieved from: <https://qz.com/816454/how-much-time-should-kids-use-smartphones-research-confirms-screen-time-and-video-games-hurt-childrens-school-performance/>

³ Ibid.

student report card jackets, providing parents with resources about how to read and understand the report card and asked them to offer a strong voice to support the school and teachers' efforts and provide feedback to the state on the report card process and metrics.

February saw the SIC members providing more direct support of teachers by taking on lunch duty, allowing teachers to eat their own lunch away from the students for a much-needed time of renewal in their very busy day. For the end of the third academic quarter, the SIC created template "thank you notes" that were sent home in every student's report card jacket. The instructions asked parents and students to write a simple thank you note to teachers as an expression of gratitude, showing their appreciation of teachers' efforts. The SIC used the end of school year to make one last push for increased engagement at home through two specific resources. First, the SIC created "conversation cards" that would provide various conversation prompts for parents and students over the summer. This was sent home in the students' final report card jacket of the year. Second, the SIC sponsored a board game giveaway during the last six days of school. Every student in each grade, including pre-kindergarten, had the opportunity to win one board game, with a winner announced each day, doing one grade per day. The emphasis was on non-digital engagement for families at home during the summer, providing another opportunity for meaningful connection.

RTE SIC saw our work pay off, as the school climate survey showed positive results. For the 2018-2019 school year, the percent of parent respondents satisfied with school-home relations increased to 96.3%. The SIC continues in the 2019-2020 academic year to work on teacher advocacy for its Round Top teachers, building a bridge between home and school to better the educational environment and the educational outcomes of our students.



SIC Chair, 2019-2020 (signature)

2019-2020 RTE SIC Efforts

The Round Top Elementary School Improvement Council continues its teacher advocacy efforts in the current school year. There is a continued need to recruit new teachers into the profession and retain teachers to sustain the profession. The RTE SIC wants to do its part to maintain a quality educational environment for our students and provide a quality work environment for faculty. This year's RTE SIC advocacy efforts focus on relationship building between students and parents, parents and teachers, and students to students. The desired outcome is to better the educational environment and the educational outcomes of our students.

To build on the success of increasing the parent satisfaction of school-home relations in 2018-2019, the SIC created an "In the Know" resource sheet to enclose with the 2019 first quarter report card jacket. It was an infographic detailing how parents can stay connected with RTE through resources like the Flight Status blog, twitter, and the Round Top website. Keeping parents informed, SIC created a brief "Upcoming Events" half-sheet to include in the second quarter report card jacket in January 2020 that featured The Great Kindness Challenge, sponsored by the Guidance Department, and a "Talk at the Table" night at Chick-fil-a hosted by the RTE SIC. To continue parent communication and engagement with the school, the creative talent of one of our SIC members was tapped to create some short, school themed procedural videos. They are designed to educate Round Top parents about the expectations for their students. Topics include safe carpool and bus procedures, classroom behavior, cafeteria behavior, recess behavior, and hallway transitions. Sharing these purposeful and fun videos helps parents mirror the expectations set by our teachers for their students at home.

The SIC also continues its emphasis on relationship building by encouraging students and families to put away their electronic devices and engage once again in intentional time together. The SIC sponsored another Digital Detox event during American Education week in November 2019. Following the previous year's format, the SIC created another Detox Challenge family activity sheet to encourage parents and students to get creative on how they spent time together that week. Families were asked to share the activities they did together on social media, but only to take a quick picture with a short caption before getting back to that quality time. Another opportunity to put away the devices and simply talk at dinner was provided by the SIC on February 3, 2020, with the "Talk at the Table" event at Chick-fil-A. Families could put their cell phones in containers on the tables, and if they kept them away for their entire dinner, they could win an ice cream cone.

The SIC continues to work on other projects and collaboration to strengthen support for our teachers. December was the annual joint meeting with the PTO, designed as a time for SIC members to fellowship with PTO members and for each group to celebrate the successes of the events that bring together the Round Top community. A new effort is underway to help enhance the educational outcomes of students, led by one of our SIC members. He is establishing a mentoring program for students to provide consistent, positive role models for them while also strengthening the leadership within our community. Mentors will work with teachers to provide emotional and educational support for the students in the program. While the process is long to create this school and community partnership, it will certainly be a "win-win" in the end. Having other positive role models in our students' lives supports our teachers' efforts in the classroom. The SIC continues to plan for end of the year events that promote communication, connection, and engagement for all of our Round Top community, supporting our teachers in their efforts to educate life-long learners and future global citizens.