

**THE DICK AND TUNKY RILEY AWARD FOR SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL EXCELLENCE:**

A Collection of Selected SIC Activities

Volume IV

School-Community Partnerships Published Summer 2018



Message from the SC-SIC Executive Director

Dear SIC Member:

Across South Carolina each year, nearly 15,000 School Improvement Council members like you come together on 1,100-plus SICs with a common goal – to make a difference in the lives of the schools and students they serve.

Each school community (and each SIC) has its own unique personality, set of needs, and available resources to help their school be successful. But sometimes, local School Improvement Councils can wonder just exactly what they can do to make a real difference.

This series of six publications developed by the SC School Improvement Council is intended to provide examples of what some effective SICs have accomplished and to offer ideas in a number of topic areas so that your SIC can undertake its work in a planned, thoughtful, and meaningful fashion.

Presented in each of them are a variety of projects and endeavors of SICs that have been recognized through SC-SIC's *Dick and Tunky Riley Award for SIC Excellence* process. Many of these examples are applicable to most school communities, while others may be more specialized. Review them and identify those which might be a good fit for your SIC and school community.

As always, please consider the SC-SIC office as a ready resource to assist you in your efforts. We are only a phone call or an email away.

Thank you for your service on your School Improvement Council. Your dedication of time and energy to help your school and its students is valuable and appreciated.

You have my best wishes for a year of successful and significant SIC work!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom F. Hudson". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "H".

Tom F. Hudson Executive Director
SC School Improvement Council

I. Introduction

This volume is one in a series highlighting activities undertaken by *Riley Award* honorees since the inception of the Award in 2002. SC-SIC has collected and organized these activities by general topic areas.

These activities were selected from among case statements submitted by SICs who participated in the *Riley Award* process and were named to the Honor Roll, received an Honorable Mention award, or were named a *Riley Award* winner. The name of the SIC, the school district, and the *Riley Award* year follow each activity. This series is not intended to catalogue every activity undertaken by *Riley Award* honorees; activities were selected to provide readers with examples from a broad cross-section of topic areas.

In some cases, you will find additional resources listed at the end of a topic. These are only a sampling of the many resources available online or through universities, non-profits, and government agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. Please contact SC-SIC if you need assistance in identifying additional resources in a particular topic area.

II. How to Use the Information in this Collection

Identify Your School's Needs and Define Your Goals before Choosing Activities

This collection was prepared in response to SIC member requests for more information about *Riley Award* honoree activities from past years. It is important to remember, however, that SICs selected these activities based on their school's unique needs and goals for improvement.

To help ensure that your time and effort are directed toward activities that are appropriate for your school, consider the following questions before selecting, planning and implementing specific activities:

1. Are we addressing a need that was identified in our school's Five-Year School Improvement (Renewal) Plan?
2. If not, have we looked at other existing data or collected data ourselves in order to verify that the need actually exists? Have we confirmed that this need impacts student achievement either directly or indirectly? Do we have enough information to know what factors contribute to this need at our school?
3. Have we defined the goal that we hope this activity will help us achieve? Is our goal aligned with one or more goals in the School Improvement (Renewal) Plan?
4. Will this activity help us meet our goal by addressing one or more of the factors that contribute to the need we are working on?
5. Will this activity duplicate activities that are already being implemented by others? Is it a good fit for our school community?
6. What resources do we need in order to implement this activity with quality? Do we have these resources? If not, can we get the resources we lack through partnerships with other individuals or organizations in the school or community?

Lessons Learned from *Riley Award* Honorees

In reviewing the many case statements describing the experiences of Riley Award honorees, SC- SIC staff made several general observations that may be helpful to your SIC:

- It will likely take more than a single, one-time activity in order to achieve an SIC goal. Most Riley Award honorees undertook several, strategically linked activities which together were directed toward achieving one of their goals.
- It will likely take several years of sustained SIC effort in order to meet longer-term school improvement goals. For this reason, it's important that SICs plan ahead on how they will transfer information and responsibilities for key activities from year to year.
- Collaboration and partnerships are essential to SIC effectiveness. Riley Award honorees often worked together with various combinations of administrators, teachers, school staff, and other school and community organizations to implement school improvement activities.
- It's important to do your homework! Riley Award honorees took the time to review their School Improvement (Renewal) Plan and school performance data, gather input from stakeholders using surveys and other tools, and research what has worked for other schools like theirs by going out and visiting other schools, consulting with nearby universities or non-profit organizations, and using online resources.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help. Riley Award honorees often invited experts in to help educate themselves about their area of focus. They called on teachers, guidance counselors, dieticians, district staff, local law enforcement, traffic safety experts, marketing and communication professionals, college professors, pediatricians and school nurses, and others in order to better understand their schools' needs and find effective solutions.
- Effective SICs divide their work among committees that are organized around each specific goal or area of focus. Many Riley Award honorees reported that forming a committee was an important step in moving forward with work on their goals.

The staff at SC-SIC hope that you will find this collection of *Riley Award* activities to be a source of ideas and inspiration as you work through the school improvement process. More information about the *Riley Award* and recent *Riley Award* honorees is available on our website at <http://sic.sc.gov>. If your SIC needs individualized assistance in any area of your work, please don't hesitate to contact a member of the SC-SIC staff. We are here to help!

III. RILEY AWARD ACTIVITIES

School - Community Partnerships

1. School-Community Communications

Changing Community Perceptions. This SIC wanted to counter negative perceptions about their school that were caused in part by the fact that the school's attendance zone separated out a minority of students from feeder middle schools and sent a majority of their classmates to different high schools. As a consequence, students sought transfers to other schools in order to stay with their friends. Freshman enrollment at the SIC's school experienced a steady decline despite data showing that it was performing as well or better in many areas than other district high schools. In response, the SIC started an eighth-grade orientation for students coming from different middle schools and organized additional events off-campus to give these students an opportunity to meet and socialize together. In addition, school boosters organized a picnic for rising ninth graders at the spring exhibition football game. The SIC also used a combination of traditional newspaper ads and social media to regularly publicize its school's strengths and achievements to the whole community. (*South Pointe High SIC, Rock Hill School District 3, 2017*).

Faith and Fellowship Breakfast. To celebrate the contributions of local religious institutions to the well-being of students and families, this SIC held a Faith and Fellowship breakfast for over 30 clergy. The Council used the event to thank their guests for serving as positive role models for students, contributing to positive student character development, and assisting students and families in gaining access to food, shelter, and other basic necessities. In turn, clergy signed up to receive the school's electronic updates on a regular basis in order to keep up with school news and better respond to the needs of students and families. (*St. James Elementary SIC, Horry County Schools, 2017*).

Minister's Outreach Breakfast. These SICs, in partnership with the local faith community, hosted a Minister's Outreach Breakfast. They presented a video demonstration of the schools' leadership model and provided handouts and books on the subject. They also provided participants with information about state assessment tests. The group then discussed the need for volunteer mentors and additional resources for homeless and low-income families in the school community. The ministers were excited about sharing what they learned with their congregations and wanted to help provide clothing, food, and other services to families in need. The SICs plan to keep the ministers informed about their schools on an ongoing basis by regularly sending them copies of the newsletter and inviting them to quarterly meetings. (*Myrtle Beach Cluster SIC, Horry County Schools, 2015*).

Positive Promotions Committee. This SIC created a committee that was tasked with communicating the successes and true story of their school to the surrounding community. Committee members attended school board meetings to highlight student and staff accomplishments, submitted letters and articles to the district and local media, countered rumors and misinformation with accurate data and materials, encouraged administrators to submit announcements of student and staff awards to local newspapers and to the district for publication on its website, and developed a brochure highlighting the school's history, programs, accomplishments, and future direction. (*Irmo High SIC, School District 5 of Lexington & Richland Counties, 2014*).

International Baccalaureate program and public perceptions of school. This SIC worked extensively with school and district staff to promote the school's International Baccalaureate (IB) program throughout the community using billboards, print materials, and special IB interest meetings. With the help of a local marketing professional, the SIC also undertook to improve the school's overall image in the community through a "rebranding" program that would give the school a consistent, recognizable appearance. The SIC conducted a survey and focus groups to find out how the community viewed their school and why. Feedback from all stakeholders was used to develop a new school logo and tag line, which the school incorporated into all of its promotional materials. The school also returned to using its original school colors. (*Richland Northeast High SIC, Richland School District 2, 2013*).

Blazer Press Corps. This SIC, in partnership with the PTSO and school administration, created a Blazer Press Corps made up of faculty, administrator, and parent members. The group's purpose was to develop a consistent school "brand," improve the appearance of school communications, and publicize events and student/school achievements. The Corps worked with the school to improve its website, which is now updated regularly and contains numerous social media links and photos. The look of the newsletter was improved and eventually led to the creation of a blog complete with real-time school information. The blog has a link to lists of student successes and Principal and A/B Honor Roll students. The district's communications office now subscribes to the school's blog and receives daily news updates that are often forwarded to local media. At the request of the SIC, a school staff member designs and updates the website and oversees posting announcements on the school's now fully functioning marquee. (*Ridge View High SIC, Richland School District 2, 2014*).

Community-wide event celebrating release of annual *SIC Report to the Parents*. This SIC invited parents, residents of the surrounding communities, and federal, state, and local elected officials to a celebration on the release of the SIC's *Report to the Parents*. (*Blythe Academy of Languages SIC, Greenville County Schools, 2012*).

Realtor's Breakfast. This SIC, working with students, teachers, administrators, and the business community, sponsored a Realtor's Breakfast to highlight the school's accomplishments. The 60 realtors in attendance heard from speakers including the student government president, teachers, parents, and the athletic director. A brochure about the school and its offerings was provided to real estate agents for distribution to prospective homeowners. (*Wade Hampton High SIC, Greenville County Schools, 2007*).

SIC Public Relations Committee. The SIC formed a Public Relations Committee to showcase its school's successes and increase its visibility. The committee drew upon the expertise of staff and parents with PR experience to educate itself about public relations (PR) techniques. The SIC's PR initiatives included the distribution of school bumper stickers and window signs, updating the telephone system and fax cover pages to include a message about school achievements, welcoming new parents with a back-to-school breakfast, creating a "wall of fame" to display news clippings, honors and awards, and hiring a newsletter editor to upgrade communications with parents. (*Richland Northeast High SIC, Richland School District 2, 2003*).

2. School-Community Relationships

At Our Table. This SIC invited a local business person each month to dine "At Our Table" complete with a catered lunch and a tour of its school during one of its STEM builds or projects. This initiative was successful in recruiting local business partners who donated items needed for the school's STEM projects. (*Laing Middle School SIC, Charleston County School District, 2016*).

"In Our Own Backyard" walking field trips. This SIC conceived the idea of creating a series of neighborhood walking field trips called "In Our Own Backyard," to encourage school- community collaboration and connect students with the culture and history of their community. The SIC and school faculty created a list of local historic, civic, and cultural sites as well as natural resources and unique businesses that were located within 1 mile of the school. The town then developed a map listing these and other significant historic and tourist sites. Teachers researched the sites and aligned them to grade-level standards. Among the places that classes walked to include the police and fire stations, post office, wetlands, oyster factory, and senior citizens home. (*Port Royal Elementary SIC, Beaufort County Schools, 2014*).

Involving community in celebration of school's 100th anniversary. A committee of representatives from all parts of the school and community planned an event to celebrate the school's 100th birthday. Former students, principals, and teachers gathered with current students, families, and faculty to share stories illustrating the school's history and importance to the town over the preceding century. The event concluded with birthday cake, tours of the school, and opportunities for the school's students, families, and faculty from all generations to socialize. A local foundation donated a raised herb garden, and the committee hired a local artist to paint murals throughout the school depicting various time periods in its 100-year history. In an effort to sustain increased community awareness of the integral role the school has played in the community, the SIC's next project was to work with the Town Council and local historical foundation to have the school placed on the National Register of Historic Places (*Port Royal Elementary SIC, Beaufort County Schools, 2014, 2012*).

Community celebrates school's 60th anniversary. Key school stakeholders, including the SIC, partnered to sponsor a 60th anniversary celebration for their school. SIC members created a historical slide show featuring pictures and news articles from throughout the school's 60 years and created a CD of the show for the PTO to sell as a "Spirit" item. The SIC also helped publicize the event to former teachers and alumni as well as current teachers and families. An SIC member who was also an anchor for a local TV station hosted a live remote at the school the day before the event. Students wore costumes to represent the various decades of the school's life and performed dances from each decade. SIC committees recruited former students - now in middle and high school - to return and serve as tour guides. (*Brennen Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1, 2011*).

"Our Community School" campaign. This SIC partnered with school administrators and the local Chamber of Commerce to develop a campaign to build community support for their school. Named "Our Community School," the program sent National Honor Society and Beta Club students to visit local businesses and civic and faith-based organizations to talk about community building and to ask that these businesses and organizations display the school's decal as a show of support. The SIC also provided all students with a school decal to display on student/family vehicles using grant funds from a local business and the PTSA. (*Mauldin High SIC, Greenville County Schools, 2010*).

Community carnival. This SIC worked to strengthen the school's relationship with families and members of the surrounding community, as well as raise awareness about the importance of state assessment tests, through a community carnival. The carnival was named after the PACT test and held several weeks before tests were administered. A jump castle, local community entertainment, as well as participation by public service agencies such as the fire department helped to make the carnival a success. (*Morningside Middle SIC, Charleston County School District, 2009*).

Walk a Child to School. This SIC sought to increase local business and community recognition that the school was an asset to the community and deserved support. To this end, the SIC organized and supported a "Walk a Child to School" event that encouraged local area businesses to join with school families in a show of support. The event attracted approximately 900 participants. The SIC, school, and local community also worked together on Spring Fling, a spring celebration featuring games, crafts, and

food that attracted approximately 600 participants, and a school Veteran's Day Celebration that honored veterans and leaders from the community. (*Pineview Elementary SIC, Lexington School District 2, 2008*).

Saturday at the neighborhood movie theatre. This SIC partnered with a local movie theatre to sponsor "Saturday at the Movies," one Saturday in early December. All students and their families were invited to this off-campus school event to watch a family movie and get to know one another in a casual atmosphere. (*Chukker Creek Elementary SIC, Aiken County Public School District, 2007*).

Rededication of school to the community. This SIC and the PTA partnered to organize a Community Open House Celebration: "Honoring the Past and Preparing for the Future." The program included musical selections, remarks by past and present principals, remembrances of important moments in school history, and a rededication ceremony. (*A.J. Lewis Greenview Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1, 2005*).

Community forums on youth violence. Responding to concerns about the potential for increased youth violence at or near the school, this SIC invited a deputy from the local sheriff's department to educate the SIC about gangs, gang paraphernalia, and incidents of violence in the community. The SIC shared this information with other SICs in the district. As an outgrowth of these activities, SIC chairs were invited to present their concerns to a community organization called "Reconnecting Communities and Schools." The SIC was integrally involved in organizing and publicizing a series of three very well attended public forums on youth violence that focused on the roots of youth violence, gangs, law enforcement, and community services. (*Richland Northeast High SIC, Richland School District 2, 2003*).

Being a "good neighbor." Overflow school parking had strained this school's relations with area homeowners. This SIC worked with local and state officials to identify legal parking areas to reduce overflow parking in nearby front yards. This initiative led to discussions about how to get more members of the surrounding community involved in the school. The principal appointed a community member representative who was retired but had experience in working with volunteer programs. This member helped the SIC identify grandparents in the surrounding community who were willing to volunteer in the school and prompted the PTO to create a "grandparent" membership category to acknowledge these individuals. (*Satchel Ford Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1, 2003*).

Creating Opportunities for Students to Serve Their Community. This SIC developed several opportunities for students to contribute to their community. For example, the SIC collected over 700 new and gently used books to donate to The Hub, a non-profit aftercare program that assists students with school work and other needs. The SIC enlisted students in Language Arts classes to write summaries and recommendations for many of these books to help users select a book that they would enjoy. Students from Visual Arts and Careers in Technology courses partnered with the SIC to create and distribute holiday greeting cards for members of the military passing through the local USO station. Student members of the SIC partnered with the Student Council and the Red Ribbon Week program to collect more than 2,000 non-perishable items for the local We Care Center. (*Chapin Intermediate SIC, School District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties, 2018*).

Island Connections. One of this SIC's primary goals was to better educate both the local community and the media about the true value of education at their school. For a number of years prior, the school had held a Community Day and invited representatives of business, local government, the faith community, and other community stakeholders, but attendance had dwindled to only a handful of SIC and PTSO members. Instead of giving up, the SIC partnered with administrators to identify ways that the event could be revamped so it would attract more visitors and change community misperceptions by fully demonstrating the opportunities the school had to offer. The newly named Island Connections was

retagged as a business, community, and education forum. Based on suggestions from past attendees, the SIC recruited 5 students to speak on different aspects of their school and added a tour of the school as well. The SIC spent significant time planning the day and researching and refining their list of invitees from business and community organizations. Mailed invitations were followed up with individual phone calls. As a result of the SIC's efforts, attendance has risen and so have community partnerships. For example, the school's principal was invited to speak to a number of different community groups and several local professionals volunteered to hold a "Power Hour" workshop for students at the school. (Hilton Head Island High SIC, Beaufort County School District, 2018).

3. Community Resources for Schools

After school scholarships, school supplies, improvements to school grounds. In order to help meet the increasing needs of families during difficult economic times, this SIC formed a number of community partnerships to increase the resources available to families. A partnership with the local church community led to the churches' providing vouchers for uniforms and scholarships to the local YMCA after school program for needy families. Other local service groups and churches provided holiday meals for these families. A local apartment complex donated enough school supplies to take care of all students' needs for the year. A local church, in collaboration with over 100 community neighbors and the town, donated a morning to pull weeds, remove overgrown, hazardous shrubbery, and mulch garden areas. A community picnic in the park followed. (*Port Royal Elementary SIC, Beaufort County Schools, 2014, 2012*).

SIC Community Sponsors List. This SIC created a "Community Sponsors" list of businesses that had contributed time, materials, or monetary donations to the school for a specific or general use. The SIC then distributed this list to families twice yearly in each student's homework folder. The SIC also created a template to use when requesting and acknowledging donations of goods and services. (*North Augusta Elementary SIC, Aiken County Public School District, 2011*).

Basic classroom school supplies. Teachers came to this SIC for assistance during the second half of the school year because they were running out of basic supplies as a result of state and local budget cuts. In response, the SIC created Project Giving Tree. Teacher supply requests were written on placards shaped like large red apples and placed on a tree located in the main school hallway. Parents, community members, and local businesses were asked to visit the school, pick an apple, and leave the requested supply under the tree. Donors who left their names and addresses received hand written thank-you notes from students. Project Giving Tree was so successful that school supply closets were filled and the tree taken down before the end of the year. The SIC planned to continue the project the following Christmas - asking that instead of purchasing personal gifts for teachers, families fill teacher requests for supplies from the tree. (*Brookland-Cayce Grammar School 1 SIC, Lexington School District 2, 2010*).

School-Business Partnership Program. This SIC, working together with the PTA, supplemented school resources with donations from area business. Donations included monies to purchase additional classroom paper and reduce cost of field trips, dictionaries for all 3rd grade students, food for school events, and facility space for school meetings and events. (*Pineview Elementary SIC, Lexington School District 2, 2009*).

Sponsorships and volunteer mentors and tutors. This SIC developed "High Performance Partnerships" with local businesses such as Pepsi Bottling Company, Verizon, and Wachovia. These businesses provided sponsorships and employee volunteers who served as mentors and tutors for students. (*A.J. Greenview Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1, 2005*).

Contributions from the faith community. This SIC developed partnership relationships with several local churches. One church sponsored the school's back-to-school picnic for several years, providing food and entertainment to the school community. The churches also assisted the SIC in getting the word out about school registration and other school activities. They allowed the school to use parking lots for special event pick-ups, sponsored club activities for students, and formed an important communication link to parents. The faith community also enhanced the school's existing mentoring program by providing volunteers, trained by school staff, to provide long-term mentoring support for students. (*Satchel Ford Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1, 2003*).

Additional Resources

Tips for Businesses to Help Schools Succeed and *Tips for Communities to Help Schools Succeed* (SC Education Oversight Committee publications) (www.eoc.sc.gov).

Many thanks to the SICs whose work is featured in this Collection.

A.J. Lewis Greenview Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1
Blythe Academy of Languages SIC, Greenville County Schools
Brennen Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1
Brookland-Cayce Grammar School No. 1 SIC, Lexington School District 2
Chapin Intermediate SIC, School District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties
Chukker Creek Elementary SIC, Aiken County Public School District
Hilton Head Island High SIC, Beaufort County School District
Irmo High SIC, School District 5 of Lexington & Richland Counties
Laing Middle School SIC, Charleston County School District
Mauldin High SIC, Greenville County Schools
Morningside Middle SIC, Aiken County Public School District
Myrtle Beach Cluster SIC, Horry County Schools
North Augusta Elementary SIC, Aiken County Public School District
Pineview Elementary SIC, Lexington School District 2
Port Royal Elementary SIC, Beaufort County Schools
Richland Northeast High SIC, Richland School District 2
Ridge View High SIC, Richland School District 2
Satchel Ford Elementary SIC, Richland School District 1
South Pointe High SIC, Rock Hill School District 3
St. James Elementary SIC, Horry County Schools
Wade Hampton High SIC, Greenville County Schools