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*"Civic Engagement at Work for Public Education"*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Hilton Head Island High School Improvement Council named winner of 2023 Riley Award for SIC Excellence**

COLUMBIA – The School Improvement Council (SIC) of Hilton Head Island High School in the Beaufort County School District has been named the recipient of the 2023 Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence.

The award was presented Saturday afternoon during a SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) awards program and luncheon at the SC State Museum in Columbia.

The annual Riley Award for SIC Excellence was created in 2002 to highlight the significant contributions made to public education by the nearly 12,000 School Improvement Council members who volunteer in every public school in the state. The award is named in honor of the former SC Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education and his late wife, recognizing the couple's longstanding commitment to quality public education.

"The Hilton Head Island High School Improvement Council has accomplished significant work very deserving of this statewide recognition," said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Stewart Cooner. "The contributions of our SICs, in collaboration with their stakeholders, are vital to making positive and lasting change for our schools, students, families, and communities. The Hilton Head Island High SIC is a commendable example of what civic engagement at work for public education can achieve."

Previously a finalist for the Riley Award in 2018 and 2019, the Hilton Head Island High SIC was also the recipient of the Award of Merit for *SIC Report to the Parents* Excellence in 2021.

Presented with Honorable Mentions for their work last school year were: Belvedere Elementary SIC (Aiken County Public Schools); Greer High SIC (Greenville County Schools); Jennie Moore Elementary SIC (Charleston County School District); and Wilder Elementary SIC (Sumter School District).

Brief descriptions of the work of this year's Riley Award winner and Honorable Mention SICs are included with this release.

Part of the Center for Education Partnerships within the University of South Carolina College of Education, the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) was established in state law over 45 years ago to provide the member training, technical assistance, statutory accountability, and other operational resources necessary for the continued success of the community-based SICs in each of the state's 1,110-plus K-12 public schools. More information on SC-SIC's programmatic efforts can be found online at <http://sic.sc.gov>.

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## **2023 Finalists – SC-SIC Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence**

### **2023 WINNER – Hilton Head Island High SIC – Beaufort County School District**

The Hilton Head Island High SIC focused its work on four key issues: supporting students and teachers in improving academic re-engagement after the pandemic; oversight of its school's architectural improvements in bond referendum projects; increasing community awareness of the school and its impact; and increasing parental involvement. The SIC worked to evaluate current programs in place to improve test scores, resulting in an additional \$33,000 for tutoring authorized in 2021-22 and multiple other programs being implemented to address specific subject areas and student mental health. Following a \$344 million district bond referendum passed in 2019, the SIC was asked by the principal to serve in oversight of the approved projects for the school. Projects included future building renovation and various safety, security, technology, and athletic improvements. Multiple meetings were held to discuss improvements. Although there were work delays due to the pandemic and the supply chain issues, some improvements such as security changes were completed, and other work and project evaluation continues. To re-engage the community, the SIC also hosted a Career Day with many local business participants including a cardiac surgeon, a firefighter, and news anchor to name a few. The Hilton Head Island High SIC also prioritized engaging parents, facilitating and hosting a well-attended parent workshop prior on college scholarships, admissions, and instruction on completing FAFSA forms, as well as assisting in the creation of a school-specific parent's Survival Book of Knowledge for all current and prospective parents.

### **2023 HONORABLE MENTION – Belvedere Elementary SIC – Aiken County Public Schools**

Belvedere Elementary School serves over 600 students in grades 6-8. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on student achievement and school culture, the Belvedere Elementary SIC set a goal to increase the percentage of parents satisfied with school-home relations. The school's 2021 SC School Report Card showed 75.9% of parents were satisfied with school-home relations, and the SIC set a goal for 2022 to increase this by 10 percentage points. To achieve this, the SIC developed handouts for parent conferences that explained reading levels and math skills, and additional components for students with Individual Learning Plans (IEPs). Partnering with the PTO and the school's Title I Committee, the SIC worked with teachers to contact parents from their classrooms to invite them to join these conferences. By implementing these tactics, the Belvedere Elementary SIC was able to grow the number of parents satisfied with school-home relations to 88.7% according to the 2022 SC School Report Card, surpassing its goal of 85.9%. Additionally, the SIC worked to recruit parent and community members to increase the school's volunteer roster. The SIC also highlighted the school's four Mandarin language learning cohorts – through which students can work towards the standards of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate in world-class knowledge - as well as other programs focusing on life and career skills.

### **2023 HONORABLE MENTION – Greer High SIC – Greenville County Schools**

The Greer High SIC identified a need for more career-focused rhetoric and action to be taken at the school. Recognizing that not all their students planned to attend a college or university, the SIC acted to inform the school community of local technical and trade opportunities in the community. Data on the 2022 Greer High graduating class showed that 27% planned to attend a four-year college; 42% planned to attend an in-state two-year college or obtain an associate's degree; 26% planned to work full-time; 3% planned to obtain a certificate or attend another type of school; and 2% planned to enlist in the Armed Services. Although much of the school's focus had been to prepare students for higher education, review of this data indicated the need to communicate that success beyond high school did not exclusively mean attendance at a four-year institution. The Greer High SIC created the Greer High School CTE Summit, an event that invited students to learn about careers, opportunities, and successes from local professionals in manufacturing, agriculture, health sciences, supply chain, graphic design, business, and more. This event was planned with the SIC, Greer High staff, community leaders, and business partners. Following the summit, the number of Greer High students applying for CTE programs at the local career center increased 130% over the previous year. The event was held in high regard from student participants (97% saying they would participate again in 2023) and described as "rewarding" by presenters.

## **2023 Riley Award Finalists, continued**

### **2023 HONORABLE MENTION – Jennie Moore Elementary SIC – Charleston County School District**

Jennie Moore Elementary School serves 973 students in Mt. Pleasant, a suburban city in Charleston County. The school's SIC identified needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic: students and families navigating a new educational environment while learning virtually, and school involvement and participation as a community while socially distanced. To tackle these, the SIC developed the "JME Virtual Learning Parent Survey" to identify parent understanding and their knowledge and use of online resources. With this information, the SIC dedicated a sub-committee to compiling a list of resources to be shared with the school community. This list included educational websites, apps, and digital resources. Participation in the survey totaled 191 parents across all grade levels. This information is now available year-round for parents to supplement their children's education. Additionally, the SIC hosted two virtual escape room events focused on math centered and English Language Arts. These virtual escape rooms took participants through scenarios to answer grade-level appropriate math or ELA questions in a quest to find the missing school mascot, the Monarch butterfly. Students completing the escape rooms were eligible for prizes, random drawings for participation, and the highest percentage of participation earned pizza parties. 520 students participated in the math virtual escape room, and 530 took part in the ELA escape room. Through its work the Jennie Moore Elementary SIC strove to use challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic to bring their school together and foster meaningful educational and intrapersonal growth for students and families.

### **2023 HONORABLE MENTION – Wilder Elementary SIC – Sumter School District**

Wilder Elementary School, located in Sumter, has 371 students. Although the school has an extremely diverse population, this SIC recognized a need consistent amongst their entire school population – social emotional support in literacy, math, and behavior. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic left many students not excited to attend school, struggling to work in groups, and getting frustrated with their peers. To address this, the Wilder Elementary SIC set its sights on celebrating students. To implement performance goals from the School Improvement Plan, the school implemented the Accelerated Reader (AR) Program to assist with literacy. Thanks to donations from SIC members and business partners, the "Wild About Reading" store was established where students could earn "Wilder" money for meeting goals and could spend this money at the store. In addition to this, quarterly celebrations were held for students reading with at least an 80% average in their zone of proximal development. The school's SC Ready ELA score of students meeting or exceeding increased from 22.8% in 2020-21 to 36.3% in 2021-22. The SIC also sponsored a Math Bowl to emphasize the math portion of their improvement goals, and students displaying greater math fluency were rewarded. SC Ready scores for math increase from 21.1% in 2020-21 to 32.2% in 2021-22. Additionally, the SIC built upon the existing SOAR behavior system and created the SUPER SOAR token. Each class earning 10 SUPER SOAR tokens was awarded with a pizza and cookie party. Behavior referrals decreased from 178 in 2019-20 to 75 in 21-2022.

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*Created in 2002, the annual Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence was created to recognize the significant contributions made to public education by the over 12,000 School Improvement Council (SIC) members who volunteer on the 1,100-plus SICs across South Carolina. The Riley Award is named in honor of former SC Governor and U.S. 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 over 45 years ago to provide members with the tools, training, and technical assistance vital to the success of School Improvement Councils serving South Carolina's K-12 public schools.*

### **South Carolina School Improvement Council**

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