

You Have an SIC... Now What?

Tom F. Hudson
SC-SIC Director of Program Services

Your school has held its School Improvement Council elections, and you're preparing to submit your member information to the SC-SIC Member Network database by November 15th. You've probably even held a couple of SIC meetings so far this year.

So now what? SICs are more than just holding meetings, having the right membership ratios and the like. SICs are in place in the state's 1,100-plus K-12 public schools for a vital reason: to help nurture a school climate that supports student success.



GOALS. Just like a football team, your SIC must have goals to have that winning edge. Perhaps one of the most important roles of the SIC is to provide input to the school's administration regarding the school's five-year strategic plan. Now, parent, community and student members aren't expected to be experts in educational strategic planning or matters of curriculum and instruction. But they do bring valuable personal insights, experiences and opinions to the table for long- and short-range planning processes.

Every member of the SIC should have a copy of the school's strategic plan. After all, you can't set goals from a document you've never seen. Most school strategic plans aren't what one would consider a "beach read." They're often lengthy and sometimes difficult for the average person to wrap their head around. That's where the principal, assistant principal and SIC teacher members come in. They

can give expert insight and help the SIC identify a few goals from the plan which the SIC is uniquely qualified to tackle. Set up committees with non-SIC members who have a particular interest or expertise in the goal areas you've identified.

Let them loose for a few months and have them report back to the full SIC at regular meetings.

Need some ideas on goals? Visit the "Awards and Recognitions" tab on the SC-SIC website, <http://sic.sc.gov>, to see what our Riley Award honorees have done in the past. Assistance with

meeting your goals may be found on our site's "Training and Resources" page.

MEETINGS. Speaking of meetings, SICs are encouraged to meet no more than eight times a year. This keeps members on task and the work on goals progressing forward. But if your meetings are long and lacking direction, you might find it difficult to have folks come back for a second meeting, let alone eight or more. Keep your meetings focused, scheduled at times most convenient for parents and community members, and of reasonable length. (If your parents become grandparents during your meetings, it's a clue that your meetings are probably too long!) Have published agendas and stick to them as much as possible. Supply snacks. (Free food has no calories.) And remember to keep adequate minutes of your meetings,

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SC-SIC Welcomes New Members to Board of Trustees

Charleston civic leader Rev. Joseph A. Darby, Jr., Greenville County educator Georgia A. Lash, and long-time upstate school volunteer Michael L. Guarino of Mauldin have recently joined the S.C. School Improvement Council Board of Trustees.

Rev. Darby and Ms. Lash were elected to three year terms and Mr. Guarino was appointed to fill an unexpired term on the Board, which is composed of 21 members from across the state and acts in an advisory capacity to the S.C. School Improvement Council. SC-SIC provides services to more than 15,000 members of local School Improvement Councils in the state's 1,100-plus K-12 public schools.

"These three outstanding individuals have a demonstrated passion for public education and the well being of our state's future," said Board Chairman Carlos Primus. "The SC-SIC Board of Trustees welcomes them and will benefit from their experience, dedication and ideas as we work to strengthen community involvement in all of South Carolina's public schools."

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Message from... the Executive Director

Cassie Barber, M.A.

The Beatles Had the Right Idea!

John Lennon and Paul McCartney wrote "With a Little Help from My Friends" back in 1967 – yes, I was a young fan then – and lately I find myself humming this one a lot. The lingering national recession coupled with record high levels of unemployment in South Carolina has resulted in drastically diminished resources and services for agencies and organizations - and misery for so many of our families.

It's times like these when we all need to pull together to make the most of what we have to work with and reach out to our friends and neighbors to give help and receive help. School Improvement Councils are all about relationships and people giving their time and talent for the benefit of our kids and communities.

This issue of Council News will introduce you to three of our new friends at SC-SIC: recently elected Board of Trustees members Georgia Lash, Simpsonville; Rev. Joe Darby, Charleston; and Michael Guarino from Mauldin (see page 1). I've said it before but it bears repeating - I cannot imagine how we would get along without the many gifts our volunteer Board members bring to our organization.

We've also reached out to our friends at state agencies and nonprofits in an unprecedented way that enables us to expand our capacity to bring services to your local school with the introduction of the SIC Resources Clearing House on our website at <http://sic.sc.gov/trainingandresources/>. Please read the article on page 6 to learn how you can access training and other resources to help your SIC achieve its goals.

Swine flu is all over the news these days and our friend, Kim McPherson, a school nurse in Newberry County gives us the straight scoop about this illness in our schools (see page 3).

And we are reaching out to you, our SIC friends, in a way we never have before by asking you to consider making a charitable donation to support the work of the SC School Improvement Council. See page 5 to learn how to make your tax deductible contribution.

SC-SIC is collaborating with a wide variety of other "friends" - including the business community - across the state and even beyond to continue to improve, enhance and expand the amount and quality of the services we provide to local School Improvement Councils so that they have the capacity to make important and lasting contributions in their neighborhood schools and communities. I hope to soon announce to you more exciting news resulting from alliances with new partners and organizations.

So hum along with me, "I get by with a little help from my friends... gonna try with a little help from my friends!"

Cassie



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H1N1: A School Nurse's Perspective

By Kim McPherson, RN, BSN, NCSN

In South Carolina flu season typically occurs late January through March. Most people, unless they had the flu in the past, rarely give the flu much thought.

All that changed April 26, 2009, when we learned that a group of private school students from Newberry County which had traveled to Mexico became ill with what appeared to be the "Swine Flu" – officially known as H1N1. Reports out of Mexico at the time indicated this novel virus was serious, often fatal.

In my 15 years as a school nurse, I had never dealt with anything that could compare with the challenges surrounding this new strain of flu which had come to our communities.

Schools across the nation and locally closed because of increasing numbers of absences due to Influenza-like Illness (ILI). Building staff and custodial crews dedicated themselves to cleaning surfaces with a new fury. School administrators and school nurses communicated constantly with local and state health officials searching for answers to questions and concerns from staff and parents.

Entire families were quarantined, a process our generation had never experienced. We anxiously waited for official reports from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the national Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as to what the next step should be when the dreaded first "confirmed" case was identified.

News media from all corners of the state flocked to the door steps of Newberry asking, "Are there many sick children?" or "Has there been a confirmed case in the district?" Treading on unfamiliar territory, school officials became aware of importance of epidemiology and surveillance procedures as well as the impact on education.

Today, six months later, the H1N1 flu is the "new normal" according to Michelle Myer with DHEC's Epidemiology Department. Based on facts presented to school nurses by Ms. Myer and Cathy Young-Jones, DHEC's School Nurse Consultant, H1N1 has been circulating since the spring. It is widespread in

South Carolina. The CDC is currently reporting 37 states with widespread influenza activity.



After the initial containment phase, the focus has shifted to prevention. Doctors are no longer identifying every case. If a person presents with a fever of 100 degrees and a cough or sore throat with no other known cause, the patient is considered to exhibit Influenza-like Illness (ILI), and most probably H1N1.

As a result of the widespread influenza activity in our state, some students will not be seen by their doctors unless the student has other underlying conditions or shows no significant improvement after several days. As a result of these changes, medical excuses are not currently being required to return to school. School administrators and school nurses are working together to enforce South Carolina's School Exclusion Law. Based on the standard of this law, students cannot return to school until they are fever free for 24 hours without any fever reducing medications.

School staff are now encouraging prevention measures such as covering one's cough and keeping students home when they are ill. "Social Distancing" (which means keeping sick people away from healthy people) is encouraged at the first sign of illness. These prevention measures are applicable not only to the school setting but to all other activities, such as shopping and social gatherings.

Epidemiologists tell us that these recommendations are more effective in preventing the spread of the flu than any amount of frantic cleaning. While hand washing and the cleaning of frequently touched surfaces are always important measures, when the flu virus is widespread, staying home when sick and covering coughs in

the elbow are more effective prevention strategies.

In the near future most districts will be working with DHEC and/or private providers to offer the H1N1 vaccine at school or at after school clinics. This is a voluntary vaccine and it is free to people of all ages. Target groups identified by the CDC will be immunized as soon as the vaccine becomes available. Parents should watch for communications from their school nurse with information on how to get the vaccine in each community.

So here are a few quick reminders about H1N1:

- While wholesale cleaning of surfaces might be great from the standpoint of tidiness, the best ways to limit contact with the H1N1 virus are frequent hand-washing, covering coughs and keeping clear from sick people.
- The word "pandemic" sounds scary. But it doesn't refer to the severity of the flu – just the fact that it's widespread. We are in a pandemic now because so many cases have been reported in so many areas.
- Your child's doctor may write an excuse for your sick son or daughter to stay out of school for a week or more. However, South Carolina's School Exclusion Law states that children should return to school after they have been fever free for 24 hours without medication. In terms of excused absences, the law is the accepted standard.
- H1N1 is the flu, and just like other strains of the flu, it can make people pretty sick and miserable. As with other flus, careful attention should be paid to any potential complications, especially for those with underlying medical issues.

DHEC and the United Way have established a Flu Information Line. Anyone can call "211" to ask questions or get more information concerning the flu. Information is also available on the DHEC website, <http://www.scdhec.gov/flu/novel-h1n1-flu.htm>.

The author is Chair of the South Carolina Association of School Nurses Legislation and Professional Standards Committee and is School Nurse Coordinator for The School District of Newberry County.

Has Your SIC "Got It"?

Apply for the Riley Award Right Now!

Has your SIC done some outstanding work in the past year? Do you believe your efforts are worthy of statewide recognition? Why not apply for the SC-SIC's annual Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award?

Last year's Riley Award winner, the SIC of Morningside Middle School in North Charleston, highlighted its successful efforts to bring more community engagement to the school. The SIC went from virtually non-existent to exemplary in three years – and it mobilized the whole school community to focus on school improvement.

Applications for Level One of the 2010 Riley School Improvement Award are due Monday, November 23, 2009. All SICs in South Carolina that have been convened for at least one year are eligible to apply.

A legendary couple in the Palmetto State, former U.S. Secretary of Education and South Carolina Governor Dick Riley and his late wife, Tunky, were honored in 2002 by the S.C. School Improvement Council Board of Trustees with the creation of this named award. The engraving on the inaugural award states: "In honor and recognition of two people who sparked the flame of education improvement in South Carolina."

Participating in this awards process is an opportunity for councils to celebrate their achievements, share strategies with other councils, ensure their compliance with state law, and provide much deserved recognition for hard-working volunteers. Additionally, SICs receive judges' feedback on their applications highlighting their strong suits and providing pointers on areas where additional work may be required.

In Level One of the Riley Award process, SICs tell the story of their accomplishments in the previous school year through a Case State-

ment. Level One applications count for 75 points. SICs scoring at least 65 points at this level will be entered on the SIC Honor Roll and will receive a certificate of achievement.

Up to 20 of the Honor Roll SICs will be chosen as semi-finalists to compete in Level Two, worth 35 points, which provides additional evidence that a council is in compliance with state law and SC-SIC guidelines.

Five of the semi-finalists will be chosen for the Winners Level. An independent panel of judges will evaluate the five finalists and choose the Riley Award winning SIC. The remaining finalists will receive Honorable Mention awards.

Application materials are available on the SC-SIC website, <http://sic.sc.gov>. The time line for this year's award is:

- **Level One applications** must be received in the SC-SIC office by 5:00 p.m. on **Monday, November 23, 2009**.
- SC-SIC will announce Honor Roll members and notify semi-finalists for Level Two on or before **Monday, January 11, 2010**.
- **Notebooks** from semi-finalists for **Level Two** must be received in the SC-SIC office by 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, February 5, 2010**.
- Five finalists will be notified on or before **Wednesday, February 17, 2010**.
- The winner of the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award will be announced during a special awards event **on a date to be announced**.

Join the many SICs that have applied and have been honored through the Riley School Improvement Award process. Submit your Level One application by November 23!



"Now What?"

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which should be readily shared with your school community. (A few notes jotted on a napkin might not be enough to keep an adequate record of work.)

RECORDS. Regarding your meetings and records of them, it's important to note that SICs are governmental bodies, not nonprofit organizations. The timely publishing of agendas, meeting times and locations, along with keeping official minutes (remember that they're called "minutes," not "hours") are vital to stay in step with public records laws. Make sure all these materials are readily available to the public by keeping them in a file in the school office and or posting them regularly to an SIC tab on your school's website.

BYLAWS. By the same token, make sure your SIC's bylaws are available, complete and up to date. (If your current bylaws are written on parchment or contain hieroglyphics, then it might be time to update them.) These are public records, too, and should clearly spell out your membership, terms of office, meeting times, and other pertinent details for SIC operations. You can update your bylaws the hard way (lock your SIC in a room for six hours to hammer them out), or the easy way (by using the sample SIC bylaws on our website, <http://sic.sc.gov>, which are fully aligned with statute and SC-SIC guidelines).

These are offered here as just a few pointers to help SICs jump start their work for the school year and to help them function more smoothly and effectively. A host of other ideas and materials are available on the SC-SIC website, and SC-SIC staff are always available for direct assistance at 1-800-868-2232.

Here's wishing you and your SIC a very fruitful school year!



“Three Join SC-SIC Board”

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A fourth generation minister with 32 years of pastoral experience, Rev. Darby is pastor of Morris Brown A.M.E. Church in Charleston, and serves in a variety of leadership capacities with African Methodist Episcopal church bodies. He is currently the President of the S.C. Christian Action Council and First Vice President of the Charleston Branch of the NAACP.



Rev. Joseph A. Darby

Rev. Darby previously served as a board member of the United Way of the Midlands, the Center for Religion in the South, the Columbia Branch of the NAACP, and was a member of the State Superintendent of Education's African-American Achievement Committee and the Racial/Cultural Advisory Council of the S.C. School Boards Association.

A 23-year educator, Ms. Lash is currently serving as Department Chair of Family and Consumer Sciences at Hillcrest High School in Simpsonville, where she has taught since 1999. She previously served as an educator in Ohio developing early childhood curriculum, planning and facilitating parent education workshops, and teaching career technology classes.

Ms. Lash currently serves as Teacher Liaison for the Hillcrest High School PTSA and as Student Council Advisor at the school. A past board member of the Mauldin High School PTSA, she has also served as past chairperson and member of the Hillcrest Middle School SIC and is a past member of the Greenville Technical College Advisory Council.



Georgia A. Lash

A technical support supervisor with Verizon Wireless, Mr. Guarino came to the upstate in 1998. He has served as Chairman of the Mauldin High School SIC and a member of the Mauldin High PTA. He has also been a member and President of the Mauldin Middle School Band Booster Club, the Mauldin Middle PTA and Executive Board, and the PTA of Bethel Elementary School.



Michael L. Guarino

He is a member of the Greenville, Simpsonville and Mauldin Chambers of Commerce, an Advisory Board member for SC Telco Federal Credit Union, has served for 10 years on the Greenville County Schools Curriculum Advisory Board, and is Board Chairman of Little Steps, a non-profit organization supporting teenage mothers to become more self-sufficient, healthy and confident parents.

Support SICs and SC-SIC with your Tax-Deductible Donation

Wish to help contribute to the promotion and support of civic engagement in public education and get a tax write-off to boot? Consider giving to the SC School Improvement Council Fund.

Funding for SC-SIC – and indeed for all state agencies and local school districts – has been drastically cut during the recent state and national economic crisis. (SC-SIC itself has seen net funding reductions over the past year in excess of 30 %.)



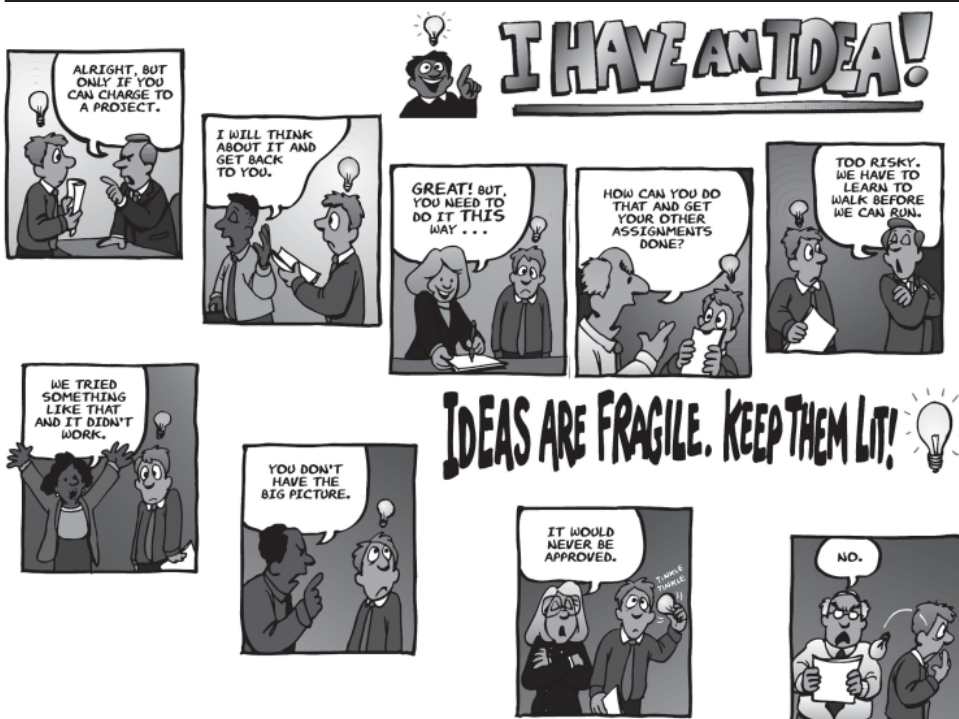
SC-SIC is not a paid membership association and its efforts historically have been supported almost entirely through state funding mechanisms. However, to meet growing needs with dwindling resources, SC-SIC must now become more entrepreneurial in order to continue to provide local SICs with vital, comprehensive and quality services.

While SC-SIC is seeking grant funds and has expanded collaborations with other agencies and organizations to broaden its capacity to assist SICs, support from local SIC members and others interested in quality public education is also vital. You can help with your tax deductible donations to the SC-SIC Fund through the USC Educational Foundation.

Demonstrate your commitment to parent and community involvement in our public schools by making your tax deductible contribution to SC-SIC today. Visit <http://sic.sc.gov/donatotscsic.htm> to donate online or send your check to:

University Development
c/o Gift Processing
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Columbia, SC 29208

Please indicate that you wish for your contribution to be directed toward SC-SIC.



Announcing New SC-SIC Resources Clearing House: Help Can Be Just a Click Away!

Finally, someone is putting together a list of resources offered by a range of groups dedicated to helping kids thrive into one convenient “clearing house”... a catalog of trainings, resources and descriptions that can help your SIC realize and implement its goals! Need new ideas? Help with a perplexing issue in your school? Find it with a few mouse clicks through the SC-SIC Training and Resources Clearing House.

On the SC-SIC website, <http://sic.sc.gov>, look under the “Training and Resources” tab to find lists of trainings and support from a variety of SC-SIC’s partner state agencies and organizations on subjects pertaining to public education. Grouped by topic area, content descriptions allow you to browse through timely and important themes such as internet and social media awareness, dating violence, college preparation, and character education. Agency and trainer contact information is available so that interested School Improvement Councils can schedule training or acquire materials.

We are working steadily to add listings, so check the website often as the clearing house continues to grow... you can access it directly at <http://sic.sc.gov/trainingandresources/>. Don’t see what you’re looking for? Contact the SC-SIC office and our team will help you search for trainings offered by agencies across the state. The resources are out there, and SC-SIC wants to help you find them!



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