

Make the most of your SIC this year!

As the fall semester rapidly makes way for winter, your school has held its School Improvement Council elections, you've submitted your member information to the SC-SIC Member Network database, and your meeting schedule is well under way.



So what's up for the year ahead? SICs are more than having the right membership ratios, holding meetings, receiving updates from their principals, etc. SICs are in place and empowered in South Carolina's 1,100-plus K-12 public schools for a very important reason: to help nurture climates in our schools that support student success.

SICs must have a strong foundation to ensure they are working effectively on behalf of our students. The following tips can help:

GOALS. SICs need to have identified goals if they are to make a difference in the lives of the schools they serve. One of primary responsibilities set forth in statute for your SIC is to provide input to the school's administration regarding the school's five-year strategic plan. Parent, community

and student SIC members aren't necessarily expected to be experts in educational strategic planning, matters of curriculum and instruction, or even staffing. But these people bring valuable personal insights, experiences, and opinions to the table for long- and short-range planning processes.

Every member of your SIC should have a copy of the school's five-year plan. After all, you can't know where you're going until you know where you are and from whence you've come. You can't set goals based on a document you've never seen. Most school strategic plans aren't particularly light reading. They're often lengthy and sometimes difficult for the average person to interpret. That's where your principal, assistant principal and SIC teacher members come in. They can give expert insight and help your 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

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Three join SC-SIC Board of Trustees

Jason S. Fulmer of North Augusta, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Justin F. Blum of Florence, and Mr. Joshua Stroman of Columbia,



LTC(R) Justin F. Blum



Jason S. Fulmer

have recently been named to the S.C. School

Improvement Council Board of Trustees.

"These three gentlemen have a keen interest in public education and its vital and direct link to the future of South



Joshua Stroman

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Message from... the Executive Director

Cassie Barber, M.A.

Twitterpated?

Every time I think I have a handle on the machinations of my desktop computer or the intricacies of Facebook the technology morphs into something new and I am back on the learning curve! While the constant improvements -well at least they are intended as improvements ☺ - seem to be taken in stride by our children and youth (who were apparently born knowing how to use an iPad), for some of us who were alive when dinosaurs roamed the Earth the changes can feel like someone is poking us with a stick! However I confess that once I take a deep breath and determine that I will learn whatever the current application or upgrade or new interface is, I do see the benefit!

This is my long winded prologue to inviting you to take a moment to visit our website, <http://sic.sc.gov>, to reacquaint yourself with all the oldie-but-goodie pages like “Training and Resources” or “Leadership and Advocacy” and also to check out some new buttons and delve into a few pages you probably haven’t visited yet.

“Policy News You Can Use” provides direct access to documents that will help you understand important issues like education funding and legislative activity. “Social Media” helps you get on board with the latest communications technology such as Twitter and Facebook to keep you in the loop with SIC members, elected officials and, well, just about everyone! Burgess Elementary in Horry County won the 2011 *Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award* in part because they effectively utilize Facebook and other social media to ensure their connectivity with the greater school community and beyond. We encourage you to explore this cutting edge technology and find new ways to reach out.

Under the “Awards and Recognitions” button you will find the “SIC Spotlight” page where we will highlight accomplishments and best practices from SICs around the state. Do you have

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A Dollar Can Make a Difference for SICs

by Sylleste Davis, Chair
SC-SIC Board of Trustees

It's not news to anyone with a family that our state and nation has seen some of the most challenging economic times in recent memory these last few years. We all have had to make due with less, stretch every penny, and find innovative ways to meet our financial obligations.

The same is true for the S.C. School Improvement Council. Over the last four years, SC-SIC has faced budget cuts of nearly 35 percent through reduced state funding. And yet now, more than ever, with local schools seeing budget constraints of their own, the involvement of parents and community members through their SICs is vital.

For this important work to continue, SC-SIC must have the funding and support necessary to provide local SIC members with the training, resources and assistance they need to effectively serve their schools and their children. Research has shown that the direct involvement of parents and community members in the lives of their schools – such as is provided by our state's School Improvement Councils – has a significant positive impact on the success of our students.

The SC-SIC Board of Trustees – 21 individuals from all walks of life and all areas of South Carolina – recognize the value of such involvement and the real need for additional financial support of SC-SIC. SC-SIC staff, with the support of the Board, has identified cost efficiencies, grants and other funding sources to improve the program's bottom line. And now the Board is supplementing those efforts by turning to businesses, organizations and individuals to be "Council Champions" for 2012 through their tax-deductible giving.

The various giving levels are: Circle of Champions - \$5,000 and up; Gold Medalists, \$2,500 to \$4,999; Silver Medalists, \$1,000 to \$2,499; Bronze Medalists, \$500 to \$999; and Blue Ribbon Supporters, Up to \$499. Even a single dollar can make a difference for SICs. Through your donation, you can help support local training offerings, technical assistance, producing electronic and printed publications and materials, sharing information on best and next practices for School Improvement Councils, and developing

partnerships with other state-level agencies and organizations to give voice to the interests of parents and community members in your local schools.

If every SIC member across South Carolina were to give just a dollar, SC-SIC would realize an additional \$15,000 to support these important efforts for the year.



So consider giving. Encourage your employer or civic organization to consider giving. More information on making a tax-deductible donation to the S.C. School Improvement Council is available on the homepage of the SC-SIC website, <http://sic.sc.gov>. Just click on the "Donate a Dollar...It Does Make a Difference" button on the lefthand side of the page to learn more.

Your support can help empower families and communities – one SIC at a time – to continue to make a positive and lasting impact on the lives of their schools.

Ms. Davis is a public school parent and volunteer from Moncks Corner who serves as Manager of Nuclear Contract Administration for Santee Cooper.

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interest or expertise in the goal areas you've identified. Put these volunteers to work with a goal and a timeline 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.

MEETINGS. SICs are encouraged to meet no fewer than eight times a year. This keeps your members on task and working on goals progressing forward. But if your meetings are long and unfocused, you might find it difficult to have members come back for a second meeting, let alone eight or more. Keep your SIC meetings defined and on-task, scheduled at times most convenient for parents and community

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Carolina,” said SC-SIC Board Chair Sylleste Davis. “We look forward to their input and insights on the Board as we help the S.C. School Improvement Council in providing essential services to our schools, our children, and our communities.”

The SC-SIC Board is composed of 21 members from all corners of the state and acts in an advisory capacity to the S.C. School Improvement Council (SC-SIC), which serves more than 15,000 members of local School Improvement Councils in the state’s 1,100-plus K-12 public schools.

Fulmer, who in 2004 was South Carolina’s Teacher of the Year and was one of four finalists for National Teacher of the Year, began his career as a third grade teacher, Elementary Induction Teacher Coach and Title II Coordinator for Professional Development in the Aiken County School District. Since 2006, he has served on the staff of South Carolina’s Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) at Winthrop University. Beginning at CERRA as a Regional Teacher in Residence recruiting the best and brightest to the teaching profession, Fulmer now serves as that organization’s Program Director for Mentoring and Teacher Leadership.

LTC(R) Blum has over three decades of experience in counseling, personnel management, training and operations, and instruction. Following a 21-year career in the U.S. Army, he has served as Senior Army Instructor for the Marlboro County High School Army JROTC since 1996 and is currently the Senior Army Instructor at the S.C. Youth Challenge Academy. He is the recipient of numerous awards for his service, including National JROTC Instructor of the Year (2011, 2003), the Department of the Army Commander’s Award for Public Service, the Great Comebacks Tony Snow National Award for Public Service, and the South Carolina Board of Education Volunteer of the Year Award.

Mr. Stroman is Instructor of Religion at Benedict College in Columbia. A candidate for Columbia City Council’s District 2 seat in 2010, Mr. Stroman was previously an analyst with the S.C. Department of Commerce’s Rural Planning and Development Division, and is the former President and CEO for Greater Works for South Carolina. He also served as an intern with the S.C. Department of Commerce, the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority, the South Carolina Governor’s Office of Executive Policy and Programs, and Wilbur Smith Associates, and served as a Tutor/Counselor with the Upward Bound-TRIO programs at Benedict College, monitoring the academic and social growth of youth ages 14 to 17.

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something interesting, inspiring or challenging to share? If so, please send it to us for posting on the site. We’ve also begun to review books and articles you might find helpful under the “Publications and Downloads” button on the “Good Reads for SICs” page. First up is a review of “Engaging All Families – Creating a Positive School Culture by Putting Research into Practice,” by Steve Constantino. This excellent book explains in detail how to help everyone feel welcome and engaged in your school. Contact us for a complimentary copy while supplies last!

The mission of the SC-SIC is: “To facilitate meaningful parent and community involvement in our state’s public schools by providing resources, tools and strategies to local School Improvement Councils and other stakeholder groups.” One of these tools is the SC-SIC newsletter, *Council News*. You may note that this issue of *Council News* has been sent to you electronically, rather than by mail. We regret that we can no longer print copies of this newsletter due to budget reductions and we invite you to print out a few copies to share with your members who may not have Internet access.

Please visit our website today and “like” us on Facebook. But first, how about a little Tweet?

Cassie

twitter



SC Teaching Fellows Wins First WhatWorksSC Award

The South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program was named the first recipient of The Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSC Award on October 26. The award was presented by Furman University's Riley Institute and the nonprofit organization South Carolina Future Minds.

The award includes a \$10,000 prize for program development courtesy of BB&T.

The Teaching Fellows Program, run by The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) at Winthrop University, was one of three finalists for the award that honors highly effective initiatives in the state.

The University of South Carolina's College of Education is one of 11 Teaching Fellows institutions in the state.

"This award truly belongs to all Teaching Fellows Institutions, their campus directors, current Teaching Fellows, and all Teaching Fellows graduates," stated Program Director Jenna Hallman.

The Teaching Fellows Program was established in 1999 by the General Assembly to address the need to recruit high quality teachers for South Carolina's classrooms. Teaching Fellows receive up to \$24,000 over four years to pursue a degree in education at one of the Teaching Fellows Institutions across the state. While participating in the program, Fellows receive advanced professional development, partner with businesses and communities, and explore opportunities to refine their leadership skills.

Fellows agree to teach one year in a South Carolina public school for each year he or she receives the Fellowship. Fellows have five years following graduation to satisfy the teaching requirement or be obligated to repay the appropriate portion of the award.

"I am very happy to see this program get the acknowledgement it deserves," said Kim Smoak, clinical instructor with USC's College of Education and Teaching Fellows Campus Director at USC. "The recognition this award brings gives the current Fellows a sense of pride in being part of a program that is innovative and effective in its approach to preparing teachers for classrooms in South Carolina."

Currently Teaching Fellows serve in 75 different school districts across the state. Of the 261 Teaching Fellows who have satisfied their loan through service, nearly 85 percent are still teaching. The program is funded through the South Carolina General Assembly, and as such the number of students admitted to each year is contingent upon the availability of funds appropriated by the General Assembly.

Teaching Fellows are identified through a rigorous selection process that includes an online application, an interview in front of three educators, and a written response to an education-related topic. Program eligibility and application information is available online at www.cerra.org.

The other finalists for this year's WhatWorksSC award were The American Reading Company's 100 Book Challenge at Clinton Elementary School and The Reading Recovery Training Center at Clemson University.

Has Your SIC Reported its Membership?

All SICs are reminded that the statutory deadline for reporting local SIC membership information to the SC-SIC office through the online *SC-SIC Member Network* was **November 15th**. If your SIC has yet to submit its information, please do so as soon as possible.



If they have not already done so, *Member Network* accountusers will need to update their

log-in and password information for the current school year. Directions for this are available on the *SC-SIC Member Network* site accessible through the SC-SIC website, <http://sic.sc.gov>, or by contacting SC-SIC Public Information Director Claudia Wolverton by email at wolverto@mailbox.sc.edu.

Also, if your school is a new or re-organized school not listed in the *SC-SIC Member Network*, please email Ms. Wolverton to assist you in getting your SIC established in the database.

Reporting your SIC members through the *Member Network* is not only an accountability requirement of state law, but assists the SC-SIC office by providing the data needed to contact local SIC members throughout the year.

Remember to Upload Your SIC Report to the Parents

All SICs statewide are required by state statute to issue their annual *SIC Reports to the Parents* by April 30th each year. In addition to producing hard copies of these *Reports* for the school community, SC-SIC asks all local Councils to post an electronic version of their *Reports* on their school websites.

In addition, SICs statewide were asked to submit (by June 1st) electronic copies of their *Reports* directly to the SC-SIC office via a new online upload tool on the *SC-SIC Member Network*. SIC Chairs and principals are requested to check the *Member Network* to see if their *Reports* have been posted online. If not, please upload the *Report* as soon as possible.

Have questions or need assistance? Contact SC-SIC Public Information Director Claudia Wolverton at wolverto@mailbox.sc.edu.

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members, and of reasonable length. Have published agendas and stick to them. Supply snacks if you're able. (Feed them and they will come.) And remember to keep adequate minutes of your meetings, which should be readily shared with your school community as soon as possible via email or posting to your school's website.

RECORDS. 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 of your SIC's actions are vital to stay in step with the state's public records laws. Make sure all of these materials are readily available to the public by keeping them in a permanent file in the school office, or better still, posting them regularly to an SIC tab on your school's website. Having your SIC's records and documentation is not only important from a sense of transparency, but is vital for your SIC to have some historical perspective on the work it has accomplished.

BYLAWS. Also make sure your SIC's bylaws are available, complete, and up to date. Your SIC bylaws 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 sample bylaws are posted in a Word document format so that you can “tweak” them somewhat to fit the particular needs of your school and SIC.

TRAINING. For your SIC members to feel particularly informed and engaged in their duties, they need to have a good idea what those duties entail. SIC trainings, whether conducted by the state SC-SIC office or by your local SIC District Contact, are an effective means to give your SIC members useful tools and insights into their responsibilities. While SIC “Basics” training is important for new SIC members, more advanced training, such as “Leadership and Advocacy,” can be helpful to more seasoned SIC members. If your SIC members haven't already attended one of these sessions, check the “SIC Training Dates and Locations” page on the SC-SIC website, <http://sic.sc.gov>, to see if there's a session scheduled near you. Want a training session in your district? Get in touch with your SIC District Contact or the SC-SIC office to schedule one.

These tips are offered to help your SIC jump start its work for the school year, to help it function more smoothly and effectively, and to provide some guidance so that you and your fellow SIC members can take a truly active role in the life of your school. A wide variety 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.



SC-SIC wishes you a joyous holiday season!