

# SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT Council News

"Assisting Schools Statewide"



Spring 2004

## Manchester Elementary School Wins Riley Award

Ted Riley read a brief description of the five finalists for the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award named in honor of his parents, former US Secretary of Education and SC Governor Richard Riley and his wife, Ann, while photos of the school were projected on a screen. Riley bent down and passed an envelope to his mentee, James Nixon, a ninth grader at Dreher High in Columbia. "And the winner is..." said James, tearing the envelope open, "Manchester Elementary!"



Ted Riley and James Nixon present Riley Award to Shawn Rearden and Marilyn Adams, from Manchester E.S.

The crowd of nearly 200 people attending the awards luncheon rose to their feet as the Manchester SIC Chair Shawn Rearden and Principal Marilyn Adams came forward to accept the award. "Our SIC has definitely worked very hard and the results are obvious to everyone at Manchester Elementary," said Ms. Adams. "By bringing new ideas to the table, we have discovered many new ways to improve communication and pride within our school and community." Ted Riley congratulated them and noted how proud his parents are to have this award given in their names. The Riley Award was created by the South Carolina School Improvement Council Board of Trustees to recognize outstanding achievement and civic engagement by school improvement councils. "Manchester Elementary's SIC is a model for other councils across the state," Riley said. "Working together with their principal they surveyed their school community to identify problems and then they set out to solve those problems."

Manchester Elementary is located in Pinewood, SC, a small, rural community in

Sumter School District #2. The SIC managed to develop innovations that significantly increased parent involvement, improved academic achievement by instituting new programs that provide targeted assistance to both struggling and gifted students, and successfully beautified the school, which improved the overall climate and morale. The SIC Suggestion Box in the school lobby ensures that new ideas from the school community are brought before the SIC monthly.

### Four SICs Receive Honorable Mention:

#### North Elementary -

#### Lancaster School District - Lancaster

The North SIC realized that PACT reading scores needed improvement, so they initiated a targeted program that brought those scores up - AND got the entire North family reading together.

#### Ridge View High -

#### Richland School District #2 - Columbia

In order to deal with the diversity of issues facing a large and ever-expanding population, the Ridge View SIC focused on a number of goals exploring new and innovative ways to achieve education excellence.

#### River Springs Elementary -

#### Lexington/Richland #5 - Irmo

Opened in 1997, River Springs has been challenged with rapid growth, exceeding its student capacity every year. To meet these challenges the SIC employed advocacy and excellent communication with parents and teachers.

#### Saluda Trail Middle -

#### Rock Hill School District #3 - Rock Hill

Members of the Saluda Trail Middle SIC have worked hard to become education advocates and have successfully made their voices heard and respected in their community.

To learn more about the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award and this year's winners, visit [www.ed.sc.edu/sic](http://www.ed.sc.edu/sic) and click on The Riley Award. - Cassie Barber

## SC House Members Honored

Webster's dictionary defines an advocate as "one who pleads for another." Each year the SC-SIC Board of Trustees recognizes an individual who has gone the extra mile to promote School Improvement Councils with the SIC Advocate Award. This year twin awards were presented to Representative Bill Cotty (R-Richland) and Representative Joel Lourie (D-Richland) of the SC General Assembly.



Wilbur Cave (center) presents the SIC Advocate Award to Rep. Joel Lourie and Rep. Bill Cotty, holding grandson Ty Cason.

Wilbur Cave, SC-SIC board member and former state representative, presented the award and explained why Cotty and Lourie were named winners. "The budget for the SC-SIC office in Columbia is about \$250,000 and with our state facing very tight funding this year, the budget was in danger of disappearing," said Cave. "Without the support of the SC-SIC office,

See "SIC Advocate" pg. 5

### In This Issue...

- Message from E.D. . . . pg. 2
- Tools You Can Use! . . . pg. 2
- Mentoring . . . . . pg. 3
- Opera of Health . . . . . pg. 3
- Point of View . . . . . pg. 4
- SIC Action Timeline . . . pg. 5
- New Materials . . . . . pg. 5
- FYI . . . . . pg. 6



## Message from... the Executive Director

### “Learning and Celebrating: SICs in Action”

Congratulations to Manchester Elementary SIC (Sumter #2), the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award winner for 2004. The five finalists are all outstanding examples of what school improvement councils can achieve. Plan now to apply for the Riley Award for your SIC next year. Check out the SC-SIC web site for 2004 winners and the criteria for the award.

Learning and celebrating were the action bywords for the three regional conferences sponsored by SC-SIC and partner organizations. Participants learned how to design practices to improve attendance, create a mentoring program, write the report to the parents, advocate for your school, and increase family involvement in school. Three SICs from each region shared their activities and successes on a panel at lunch. Now it's time to translate that information into action.

Use the new resources available to help you move into action: video version of the SIC Handbook, Council Updates (see below), and SC-SIC web site along with the telephone hot-line and printed materials we publish for you. SC-SIC will be working to add more services and improve training opportunities for next year. If you have ideas, please let us know how we can serve you better.

Keep learning and celebrating your successes. Your actions make a difference for the students in your school.

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## Tools You Can Use!

### Council Updates\*

Thirty minute videos of live interviews and presentations.

1. Understanding Your School Report Card
2. Your Voice Matters! (Advocacy)
3. Applying for the Riley Award
4. Understanding AYP and Accountability
5. Your Voice in Action! (Advocacy)
6. Crafting the Report to the Parents

### SIC Video Handbook\*

A 35 minute videotape to be used in conjunction with the SIC Handbook "The Basics."

### SIC Handbook PowerPoint Presentations

1. Full length version contains 117 slides taken from the Video Handbook.
2. Mini-Handbook Workshop contains 39 slides and presents a brief overview of SICs. Each presentation is fully scripted and can be used for group trainings or viewed individually. See the SC-SIC Web site\*\* to download.

### Printed Handbooks

1. "The Basics" is the primary resource for SICs. Ask your District Contact for a copy, contact the SC-SIC office\*\*\* or download a copy from the SC-SIC Web site.\*\*
2. A Spanish translation of "The Basics" is available on the SC-SIC Web site.\*\*
3. "Creating an Education Foundation for Your School" is also available on the Web site.\*\*

\*Call your SIC District Contact or your local DELC (Distance Education Learning Center) for your copy.

\*\*Visit [www.ed.sc.edu/sic](http://www.ed.sc.edu/sic)

\*\*\*Contact SC-SIC at 800-868-2232 or [sic@gwm.sc.edu](mailto:sic@gwm.sc.edu)



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# Mentoring - The Value of Time and Attention

by Susan Russell-Speight

Sally became a mentor to Lameka when Lameka was in the fourth grade. Their relationship blossomed, but at age 14, Lameka had a baby. Not one to give up, Sally became the godmother to that baby and four years later, Lameka graduated with honors, had a full scholarship to college, and she and the baby (then 4 years old) were heading off to college!

Steven's father died when he was in kindergarten, but when Steven entered the first grade, a young man named Bill became his mentor. Today Steven is in the tenth grade. Through his friendship with Bill, Stephen has learned how to restore old cars and catch fish - Bill even assisted with Stephen's scout troop. While Bill is no substitute for Stephen's father, he has been able to offer support and guidance, and teach Steven many of the things men share with their sons.

Marian was frustrated when after two years, her mentee, Dominic, was still two grade levels behind. After much consideration, Marian and her husband took out a loan to send Dominic to the Sylvan Learning Center. As a result, Dominic graduated from elementary school on grade level with his peers.

Over a five year period, Mr. Williams followed Terry through more than 28 foster care moves - each time resulting in a new school. During that time, Mr. Williams was the *only* consistent adult in Terry's tumultuous life.

While these examples may be a bit unique, they represent the hundreds of dedicated adults who are in our schools every day spending time with children.

After twelve years of coordinating school-based mentoring programs in a variety of settings, I have concluded that mentoring is one of the most hopeful solutions we have to offer our children. School-based mentoring brings the community back to school to see first-hand the challenges facing our educators today. Mentors come face-to-face with the very children we must not leave behind. Their hearts and minds are changed and they begin to understand the issues at a gut level. When people become involved on a personal level they become advocates for children, teachers and schools.

Look at these statistics from the Lexington #3 School District mentoring program - what else could produce such positive results in just **three months time!**



*Susan Russell-Speight (r) paired James Nixon (c) with his mentor, Ted Riley (l), nine years ago.*

•64% of the students improved classroom behavior, were less disruptive, and demonstrated a more cooperative and respectful attitude.

•61% of the students showed more confidence in themselves, took more responsibility for their behavior, engaged in less conflict and improved relationships with peers.

•35% began to work harder on assignments, turned in homework on a regular basis, participated more in class and showed more interest in doing well.

•27% showed a marked improvement in grades.

How do the 187,275 children living in poverty in South Carolina (Children's Defense Fund 2003) begin to define a positive future for themselves if they have never been outside the rural community where they live; how do they know what the possibilities are if no one in their family has ever graduated from high school much less gone to college?

Teachers alone cannot do this for them, but nurturing, caring adults from the community *can* and in many places *are*.

The conclusion of a study done years ago on the Positive Effects of Mentoring Economically Disadvantaged Students sheds light on the subject.

The study concluded that "all successful students have a vision of their future. Less successful students think that their future lies in someone else's hands. IQ and family background many times do not play as important a role in a student's success as having a vision of where they want to be as an adult."

New tests and accountability guidelines are fine, but until students see a positive vision for their future, many will still be left behind. A nurturing caring adult in a child's life can make the difference.

*Susan Russell-Speight is a school-based mentoring consultant. You may reach her at 803-604-9934 or sudysp8@direcway.com.*

## The Opera of Health

by Phyliss Thornthwaite

Want to make nutrition education exciting in your district? Try adding a little opera to the recipe.

The "Opera of Health" is a mini musical opera about good health that is so... funny and entertaining. A grant from the American Cancer Society provided the funding for the "Opera of Health" to perform at nine elementary schools in Berkeley County. What a performance it was!!!

"Too Bee," the honeybee, opens the show by teaching us basic nutritional rules and the benefits of exercise and fitness. "Vadalian", an alien from the planet Vadalina visited us earthlings to tell us we were mistreating vegetables and they were going to strike if we didn't do better. The Great Chef of Naples, "Mario", helps us learn a variety of delicious ways to eat correctly, especially pasta. Last, but not least, "Carmen the Snacker", shares that the smarter snack is fruit, rather than candy or junk food, to a Latin rhythm.

In order for a school to be chosen to participate, the school had to make a commitment to choose a nutrition activity such as taste testing a healthy snack through food services, coordinate an exercise program for their staff, and/or use the free Dole software for their students. The cost is about \$600 per show. Teachers varied in their opinions regarding grade level. It was very entertaining for all, with lesson plans and activities to be implemented in the classroom. The basic information is introduced to the younger children and reinforced for older elementary students. This diverting activity amuses as it encourages students to develop good eating habits.

Bon Appetite! If you would like to stage the Opera of Health at your school, call 877-711-2643 or visit the website at [www.theangels.com](http://www.theangels.com).

*Phyliss Thornthwaite is the Coordinator for Health Education and Programs for At-Risk Students for the Berkeley County School District.*



# POINT OF VIEW

SC-SIC Board of Trustees Comments and Commentary

## Learning the Culture Curve by Orlando Gonzalez

The border between South Carolina and Latin America continues to get closer during the twenty-first century. The impact of the Latino immigrants is leaving an imprint on the family members left behind and the South Carolina population as well. A spotlight on the new migrant's culture curve reveals an exchange that takes *hip-hop* to the Mexican and Central American indigenous people and the Latino popular music to the Palmetto State. Instead of assimilating themselves into the South Carolina culture, the over 100,000 new Hispanic immigrants are generating a new culture that affects both groups of people. Latin America and South Carolina are beginning to share much in common!

In our globalized and information-age society, South Carolinians are encouraged to keep up with this new immigration wave. Part of learning the culture curve of the new immigrants requires that we become familiar with some specific beliefs and practices shared by many Central American and Mexican Latinos.

The most fundamental of these is known as the "Razalógia Process." This concept views life as a cycle where accomplishments take place within the process instead of the outcome; it also places an emphasis on trust as a prerequisite for effective intervention. While most of us were brought up within a Judeo-Christian "linear" philosophy of life, many of these Latinos developed their beliefs and values according to a Mayan-Aztec "cyclic" and "holistic" approach.

This second view believes that people are born in a premeditated position in life with not much power to break the cycle. This almost fatalistic view of life accepts social and medical conditions as the "will of God" or the fate of destiny, refusing to accept personal responsibility for one's health and social condition, and glorifying suffering as a means to find God's favor. Events tend to be classified as those that are "natural" and those that are "supernatural." Therefore, many Latinos of

Central American and Mexican origin tend not to view preventive healthcare and educational achievements as a valuable part of their lives.

Keeping this in mind, when working with Latinos, the educator and healthcare provider should focus on those Latino values that inspire decision-making and positive actions. Expressed respect and deference will develop the critical trust that is necessary to win the immigrant's commitment along the process of the educational and medical encounters.

For Latinos, the "whole" is more important than the "part"; what is best for the entire family is more important than the individual's desire. Consequently, the educator and healthcare provider should emphasize the importance of planning for the future and health prevention and treatment as a means to protect and provide for the *family*. Out of appreciation for the relationship with the educator and provider, the immigrant will respond favorably to sound advice and even comply with the prescribed regimes.

This "new culture" shared by the new immigrants becomes a special interest when working with school-age Hispanic immigrants. Besides dealing with the developmental challenges faced by every South Carolina child and teenager, these unique students have to deal every day with language and cultural barriers, the development and adaptation to multiple identities, and/or social and intellectual hostility.

In some instances, at school, new immigrant students are expected to keep up with academic disciplines while they learn a different language. Moreover, their family members expect these same students to hold on to their cultural roots and values, requiring that they preserve their language and customs. Consequently, young immigrants quickly learn to mold themselves according to various identities in order to fit in the appropriate role. To the surprise of many, recent studies demon-

strate that these behaviors result in well-adjusted and productive individuals!

Educators are reminded that the acquisition of a new language and culture as well as the adaptation to multiple identities are signs of students with highly developed cognitive, emotional, and affective skills. Many grammarians argue that the process of learning a new language enhances the student's ability to reason, analyze, and solve problems as well as his/her communication skills.

An individual who maintains his/her own culture of origin while acquiring a second culture is considered to be a bicultural person. Bicultural individuals report the most adaptive behaviors with higher levels of quality of life, affect balance, psychological adjustment, social interest, and family commitment and support. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to design and integrate "bicultural coping mechanisms" into their lesson plans.

A "bicultural coping mechanism" is any knowledge or skill that will help a student preserve and develop his/her bicultural and bilingual abilities. Some examples include maintenance and improvement of both languages (reading, writing, understanding, speaking), increased knowledge and pride of historical, geographical, economic, and social facts as well as appreciation for the literature and arts of both countries.

As they master the computer and the Internet, the students will have easy access to their countries of origin by virtually visiting their home towns as they do research and read their newspapers and magazines "back home" while they develop an appreciation and respect for South Carolina culture.

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*Orlando Gonzalez is the president of Acculngua Communications & Consulting Services in Greenville. Mr. Gonzalez joined the SC-SIC Board of Directors in 2001. You may reach him at 864-322-6615 or [acculngua@earthlink.net](mailto:acculngua@earthlink.net).*

## Sign Up for Free South Carolina Education Newsletter!

How would you like to receive timely, useful news about South Carolina's public schools? EdBlast! is the South Carolina Department of Education's new electronic newsletter, and it can be delivered directly to your e-mail address at no charge to you. Each EdBlast! will be an easy-to-read digest of education-related news that will frequently include Internet links to more extensive information. Regular features will include:

- Curriculum tips and resources tied to current events.
- Grant opportunities for teachers and administrators.
- Details about upcoming events and professional development opportunities.
- News releases from the State Department of Education.
- Links to web-based news items of general interest to South Carolina educators and school supporters.

The State Department of Education will transmit EdBlast! to subscribers at least twice monthly. Although we think you will become a regular reader, you can cancel your subscription at any time if you decide that the newsletter isn't helpful to you.

Click on the sign-up link <http://www.myschools.com/edblast> to be offered a choice of four EdBlast! newsletters customized to a specific interest: district superintendents, school principals, teachers, and supporters of public schools. SIC members may wish to choose the principal's version because of its schoolwide focus.

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## New Materials from SC-SIC

### Answers to Your Questions About NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND in SC...

is a new brochure designed specifically for parents and other concerned citizens in our state who want to understand the effects of this sweeping federal legislation on our schools. The development and production of this brochure was a collaborative effort between SC-SIC, the SC Department of Education, and Parentwise, a program of Voices for SC's Children. A copy of the brochure has been mailed to everyone in the SIC database. Additional copies can be obtained by downloading them from the SC-SIC Web site ([www.ed.sc.edu/sic](http://www.ed.sc.edu/sic)); limited copies are available from the SC-SIC office.

### New SIC Training Video Available

SC-SIC has made a brand new *Council Update* video, "Crafting the Report to the Parents," available through your SIC District Contact or local DELC (Distance Education Learning Center). School Improvement Councils are required to write a report to the parents about the progress their school is making to achieve their goals by April 30 each year. Learn what content to include in the report and how to create a document that parents will want to read and proudly share with the community. For a complete list of SIC training videos and other materials, see page 2.

## SIC Action Timeline



### APRIL

- Complete the Report to the Parents and distribute by April 30.
- Committees gather and analyze information about improvement goals.
- Make plans for spring SIC elections (optional).

### MAY

- Draft narrative with the principal for the School Report Card.
- Compile progress report about each school improvement plan strategy.
- Draft recommendations for the annual update of the school improvement plan.
- Conduct elections for new SIC members (optional).
- Identify and recruit community members to serve on the SIC next school year.

### JUNE

- Complete Report Card narrative with the principal.
- Submit recommendations for update of school improvement plan.
- Elect officers and assign committees if elections were held in the spring.
- Establish study groups to work over the summer to analyze information from the School Report Card, the results from parent, teacher, and student surveys or the recommendations from the ERT (External Review Team – only in schools that have been rated Unsatisfactory.)

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### *"SIC Advocates" cont. from page 1*

local SICs would soon be gone and the voice of parents and community members in schools would be seriously diminished. Two legislators stepped forward to testify before a House Ways and Means subcommittee to make sure that did not happen. They helped other legislators understand the value of SICs. If not for these two advocates, the state SIC office might have closed next year," Cave said.

Representatives Cotty and Lourie received a standing ovation from the crowd as they accepted their awards. Representative Cotty nodded toward his small grandson whom he held in his arms and asked, "Isn't this what it's all about? We should have been talking about increasing the SIC budget, not cutting it." Representative Lourie thanked the group for the honor and noted that "public education needs people who serve on SICs." Both men have served on school improvement councils. - *Cassie Barber*

*Conference photos by A & B Photo Service*

# FYI...

## Help for Special Needs Children

Family Connection of South Carolina, Inc. is a statewide non-profit organization that facilitates a network of parents working with community professionals to provide parent-to-parent support and assurance which strengthens families with children of all ages that have special needs. Family Connection also seeks to increase awareness among the general public and specific groups about persons with disabilities and their families, and to foster connections between family members and professionals.

Family Connection of South Carolina offers support groups for parents and families, which include ADD/ADHD, OCD, Asthma, Autism, Parent's Hope, Up on Downs, Father's Network, playgroups, and many more. Family Connection also offers a variety of programs, such as the Family Partner Program, Outreach Initiative, Family Social Events, Respite Cooperatives, and Kid Connection, which offers siblings of children with special needs the opportunity to meet with other siblings and participate in activities together. To learn more about Family Connection of South Carolina and the support groups and programs offered, please visit [www.familyconnections.org](http://www.familyconnections.org) or e-mail: [info@familyconnections.org](mailto:info@familyconnections.org), or call 1-800-578-8750.

## SIC Lapel Pins For Sale

SIC members who have attended conferences sponsored by SC-SIC have received lapel pins with their conference materials. Many have remarked how much they have enjoyed wearing the blue pins in the shape of the state of South Carolina with the initials "SIC" in gold. You can order a lapel pin for everyone on your council for only \$1.00 each plus \$2.50 to cover shipping and handling, no matter how many pins you purchase (one pin for \$3.50; ten pins for \$12.50). Make your check payable to SC-SIC and mail to: SC-SIC, College of Education, Wardlaw Bldg., Suite 001, USC, Columbia, SC 29208

## School Health Index - Free Copies!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Adolescent and School Health will mail you free copies of The School Health Index (SHI): A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide. The SHI addresses school policies and programs related to physical activity, nutrition, and a tobacco-free lifestyle and is designed for use at both the elementary and middle/high school levels. Request by e-mail: [healthyyouth@cdc.gov](mailto:healthyyouth@cdc.gov); by phone: (888) 231-6405; or by toll-free fax: (888) 282-7681. When ordering, specify elementary or middle/high school version.

## Keeping Up With The General Assembly

Want to know what is happening with education legislation in the SC General Assembly? Sign up to receive a legislative update from one or more of the education related associations in South Carolina. The updates are sent by email, sometimes the on the same day as the actions occur. Simply send an email to the organization(s) below and ask them to add you to their legislative email update list.

- The SCEA [ccahoon@thescea.org](mailto:ccahoon@thescea.org)
- SC School Boards Association [sandyp@scsba.state.sc.us](mailto:sandyp@scsba.state.sc.us)
- SC Association of School Administrators (SCASA) [betsy@scasa.org](mailto:betsy@scasa.org)

## Effective Schools Conference

Dr. Lawrence Lezotte, well known in SC as a preeminent spokesperson for effective schools research and implementation, is hosting an Effective Schools Institute in Myrtle Beach on June 9-11. Topics include: Identifying Components of an Effective School; Identifying Areas of Improvement and Opportunity; and Planning and Implementing School Improvement Strategies. CEU's, Graduate and Administrative credits available. For more information visit [www.nesonline.com/Public/conference.asp](http://www.nesonline.com/Public/conference.asp) or call 800-733-6786.

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