

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT Council News

"Assisting Schools Statewide"

Spring 2005



A.J. Lewis Greenview Elementary School Wins Riley Award

About 200 SIC members from across the state rose to their feet as the A.J. Lewis Greenview Elementary School Improvement Council was honored with the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award during a special luncheon held at the Columbiana Hotel in Columbia. The award was presented by Ted Riley, son of Dick and Tunk Riley along with some help from his



Carlos Primus, SIC Chair, and Delores Gilliard, Principal of A.J. Lewis Elementary, accept the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award from Ted Riley and James Nixon

mentee, Dreher High School sophomore James Nixon. The tension in the room mounted as Mr. Riley read a short description of the accomplishments of each of the five finalists while photos of the schools flashed on a screen. The audience rose to their feet when James opened the envelope and announced the winner.

The A.J. Lewis Greenview SIC was chosen for the award in part because of their extraordinary efforts to involve every segment of their community in the school. "I really like their No Parents Left Behind program," said Ted Riley. "It's the perfect companion to the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. They made sure that everyone could participate in their school in some way and was encouraged to do so. The A. J. Lewis Greenview Elementary SIC is an exemplary council."

Programs instituted by the winning SIC included providing parents with PACT strategies and creating special opportunities for fathers, grandparents, and non-traditional guardians. The SIC also actively promotes

(continued)

See "Riley Award" on page 5

Riley Award Honorable Mentions

Lake Carolina Elementary – Richland District Two, Blythewood

Diversity is one of the greatest challenges facing this new school. The SIC created "Peace Flag" activities to celebrate and respect the differences among their students in a peaceful environment.

Martha Dendy Sixth Grade Center and Bell Street Middle- Laurens County District 56, Clinton

This unique SIC serves two schools that are really one. They have come up with an unusual idea for engaging the community: they hold "Greet, Eat and Meet" events in their local grocery store.

River Springs Elementary- Lexington/Richland District 5, Irmo

This very busy council takes a sophisticated organizational approach to achieving their goals. Their teamwork allowed them to effectively resolve some contentious building and rezoning issues affecting their school.

Saluda Trail Middle- Rock Hill District 3, Rock Hill

Recognised as the top SIC in their district, this SIC successfully instituted a standard code of dress. Not an easy task in a middle school!

SIC Advocates Honored

Each year the SC-SIC Board of Trustees recognizes someone who has really stepped up to the plate as an advocate for school improvement councils with the SIC Advocate of the Year Award. Supporters of SICs on the state, regional and local levels are considered for the award. This year a team effort between a



Gail Phillips (c) presents the SIC Advocate of the Year Award to Jeff Nicholson and Al Leonard

professional educator and a parent volunteer was honored.

A couple of years ago, Al Leonard was principal of Saluda Trail Middle School and Jeff Nicholson was chair of the School Improvement Council. Together they set about making the Saluda Trail SIC into an exemplary council. The Saluda Trail SIC was recognized as the best in their school district and received Honorable Mentions for the Riley Award two years in a row.

(continued)

See "Advocates Award" on page 5

In This Issue...

- Code of Dress. pg. 2
- Riley Award Winners . . pg. 3
- Conference Speakers . . pg. 4
- Reading Initiative pg. 5
- SIC Timeline pg. 5
- Film & Legislation . . . pg. 6



POINT OF VIEW

SC-SIC Board of Trustees
Comments and Commentary

Instituting a Standard Code of Dress

by Jeff Nicholson

There has been a lot of discussion in the media and the state legislature about the relationship between discipline and school uniforms. I serve on the Saluda Trail Middle SIC in Rock Hill and I'd like to share our experience with this issue.

In an effort to reduce detention time with dress related infractions, and to increase classroom time for students, the Saluda Trail SIC discussed implementation of a "standard code of dress." During an 18 month process from the initial discussion to realization, the SIC utilized numerous fact finding steps. We conducted interviews, read published news articles, and visited other schools where dress codes were already in place. The SIC polled the faculty for their approval/opinions prior to forming a larger committee consisting of PTO, faculty and community representatives. This committee compiled all the factual information required to present a proposal to the school board and parents of the students. The change in dress policy was approved by 66% of parents.

As mentioned earlier, our main reason for this policy was to keep the students in the classroom. With the ever increasing emphasis on testing, every minute in the classroom is invaluable to both students and teachers.

The SIC recently compared discipline referrals for disruptive behavior at Saluda Trail Middle School to last year's pre dress code numbers. This year's tabulation has shown a 40% reduction in discipline referrals. We can not say that this drastic reduction in referrals was due entirely to the institution of a standard code of dress, but we do believe that it had a significant impact on the numbers.

Teachers have commented that students appear to be more attentive and less disruptive in class since the dress code was instated. Student compliance with the new dress code is 100%. We feel that having a standard code of dress has been a truly positive experience in our middle school. - *Jeff Nicholson is employed by Laboratory Design & Equipment, Inc., in Fort Mill. Mr. Nicholson serves on the Saluda Trail Middle School SIC and was elected to the SC-SIC Board of Trustees in 2004, where he chairs the Membership Committee. You can reach Mr. Nicholson at 803-548-0067 or at jeffn@cetlink.net.*

NEED HELP

Writing the Report to the Parents?

Video "Writing the Report to the Parents" available:

- SIC district contact has a CD of the video; request a copy of the CD be sent to your school.
- Streaming video on the SC-SIC web site: www.ed.sc.edu/sic, click on 'Tool Kit' and select the title needed.
- Contact SC-SIC office for a copy of the video on VHS or CD format.

Contents: Information about what is required to be in the report, how to organize the information, and examples of how to put together the contents in a way parents and community members will want to read about your school.



SC-SIC Board of Trustees

- Patrick Cobb, Chair - Columbia
 Nell Steward, Vice Chair - Greenville
 Bob Zuercher, Past Chair - Myrtle Beach
 Wilbur Cave - Allendale
 Gigi Dawson - Columbia
 Dr. Bruce Field - Columbia
 Orlando Gonzalez - Greenville
 Nancy Hanley - Anderson
 Candy Leggett - Sumter
 Rev. Dr. Wilmot T. Merchant II - Little River
 Richard Mock - Charleston
 Jeff Nicholson - Rock Hill
 Gail Phillips - Aiken
 Thomas Richardson - Moncks Corner
 Thessa Smith - Greenwood
 W. Reed Swan - Barnwell
 Maria Gregory Taylor - Simpsonville

SC-SIC Staff

Jean M. Norman, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Cassie Barber
Associate Director

Weldon Horne
Operations Manager

Diane Jumper
Council Specialist

Claudia Wolverton
Project Specialist

COUNCIL NEWS . . . is an award winning publication of South Carolina School Improvement Council. Circulation 17,500. Your comments and articles are welcome. Contact Cassie Barber, Editor at:

USC College of Education
Wardlaw Bldg., Suite 001
Columbia, SC 29208

Phone: 803-777-7658
Toll Free: 800-868-2232
E-mail: sic@gwm.sc.edu
Web address: www.ed.sc.edu/sic

The University of South Carolina system provides affirmative action and equal opportunity in education and employment for all qualified persons regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or veteran status.

2005 DICK AND TUNKY RILEY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

**“For
Exemplary
Civic
Engagement
in Public
Education”**



Carlos Primos, SIC Chair, accepts the Riley Award for A.J. Lewis Greenview Elementary School, Richland 1, Columbia. Principal Delores Gilliard (l) looks on



Ted Riley (l) and James Nixon (r), presenters of the Riley Award, at the 2005 SIC Conference, Columbia



Principal James Ann Lynch and SIC Chair Mary Anne Grant (l) accept Honorable Mention for Lake Carolina Elementary School from Ted Riley and James Nixon (r)



Saluda Trail Middle School principal Brenda Campbell and SIC Chair Ernest Gibbs, Jr. (l) accept Honorable Mention from Ted Riley and James Nixon (r)



Bell Street / Martha Dendy Middle School Principals Wanda Isaac and David O'Shields (l) receive Honorable Mention from Ted Riley and James Nixon (c) along with SIC Chair Cindy Long



River Springs Elementary School receives Honorable Mention. (l - r) Lynn Robertson, principal, Debra Iacono, Ted Riley, Patrick Cobb, SIC Chair, and James Nixon

Many Thanks to SIC Conference Sponsors

The SC-SIC Board and staff express their appreciation to the sponsors of the six regional conferences for their generous support. Voices for South Carolina's Children subsidized the conference packets and all the materials participants received. AARP underwrote the Riley Award and luncheon presentation enjoyed by all. A special thanks goes to the Center for Truancy and Drop-Out Prevention at the SC Department of Education for the scholarships provided to SIC members from unsatisfactory schools. The sponsors contributed to a challenging and motivating experience for everyone. We couldn't have done it without you!

Message from . . . the Executive Director



Spring Conference Speakers Inspire Action

Don't settle; take a risk; take action.

These were the challenges heard by those SIC members attending regional conferences in Mt. Pleasant, Greenville, and Columbia



Jon Butzon in Mt. Pleasant

this spring. Here's a brief summary of the three challenges.

In Mt. Pleasant...Jon Butzon, Executive Director, Charleston Education Network.

The title of Jon Butzon's speech, 'Public Education – You Get What You Settle For,' was the first indication that conference participants would not be listening to boring platitudes. He got everyone's attention immediately when he asserted that 'quality education in SC is optional, not mandatory.'

Using the analogy that he was *interested* in losing weight, he thinks that South Carolina is *interested* in quality education. But he has not *committed* to changes in diet or exercise, just as the state has not committed to funding and support to achieve a quality education. To illustrate his point, Butzon pointed out that the current appropriations bill is only the sixth time the General Assembly has proposed to fully fund education since 1977.

School Improvement Council members were challenged to use their role in the planning and monitoring of school improvement to determine what it would take to move all of their students to the proficient level, work for that end result – and not settle – for anything less.

Council News - Spring 2005

In Greenville...Mike Fanning, Executive Director, Olde English Consortium.

Mike Fanning stirred his audience's imagination using an exciting personal story to demonstrate passion, vision, commitment, and the courage to act. His passion to interest a college co-ed to date him and his vision of their time together moved him to participate on a ski trip even though he did not know how to ski! His commitment to that vision was strong enough that he was willing to risk, and had the courage to act. Fanning challenged his listeners to take a risk and follow their passion for quality schools in South Carolina.

Fanning warned of competing visions using the proverbial pea in a shell game. Keeping your eye on the 'pea' or your vision for your school is easier when shared with others who can join the effort. SIC members were challenged to keep track of the issues in



Mike Fanning in Greenville

their local community and the General Assembly and not be distracted by other shells. Reminding everyone that "nothing great ever happened without risk;" we should follow our passion for good schools in our state, committing our efforts to achieve that vision.

In Columbia...Cindi Ross Scoppe, Associate Editor of The State newspaper.

Playing the role of the lead character in the movie 'Network,' Cindi Ross Scoppe asked participants to remember his statement about how mad he was and his position "...and I'm not going to take it anymore." She challenged SIC members to get mad citing several conditions South Carolinians had reason to

be mad about: infant mortality rates, domestic violence, the number of teen smokers, deadly highways, and staggering incarceration rates, ending the list with education of all of South Carolina's children.

Although she charged the General Assembly with the responsibility and capacity to *fix* these conditions, Ross Scoppe indicated that the people have the ultimate responsibility. "When the General Assembly fails, it is because we have failed. If we demand better, they will deliver." Having the courage to take action is the antidote to just being mad according to Ross Scoppe. She urged SIC members to meet their legislator personally, inform them of their position and ideas, answer their questions, and be firm about what you want.

Concluding that most South Carolinians might be mad, she also concluded that they are still taking it. The 'Network' audiences never got past yelling. Ross Scoppe assured the conference audience that legislators listen to their constituents most so if we believe in the enormous potential of South Carolina then we must demand change. "We don't have to take it any more. Not if we are willing to do our job as citizens."

Participants at the three events noted the three speakers moved and inspired them to act. One SIC member evaluating Ms. Ross Scoppe wrote, "The speaker opened my eyes to the impact my silence has had on getting things done..." We hope you are inspired to take action on behalf of your public school and all our children.

Jean M. Norman



Cindi Ross Scoppe in Columbia

EOC Launches Reading Initiative

by Dana Yow

"There is something we can ALL do. We can promote reading and literacy through becoming tutors, becoming mentors, or just simply encouraging reading in our own homes. Reading can open up so many worlds for us all, particularly young people."

— Cathy Hughes, Publisher, Orangeburg Times and Democrat (speaking at the launch of PAIRS on February 15, 2005)

On February 15, 2005, the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC) launched a new reading initiative, Parents and Adults Inspiring Reading Success (PAIRS).



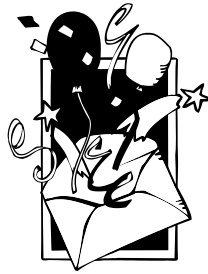
PAIRS serves as the umbrella-organization for an initiative designed to encourage and support the achievement of grade level reading literacy for every child in South Carolina by energizing broad collaboration and involvement in local communities. PAIRS is a project of South Carolina's 16 daily newspapers and is administered by the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC).

PAIRS offers encouragement, support materials, resources, and connectivity through which affiliate organizations can improve on or implement an effort grounded in local needs and capacity, link their efforts to other SC programs, and create synergy to improve student performance in reading.

Between September 2004 and August 2004, the EOC held community meetings in each of South Carolina's 46 counties. These meetings, known as "Conversations with the EOC," revealed three strong areas of consensus: 1) the success of students depends upon activities that reinforce and extend learning acquired in school; 2) SC has a significant resource in people and groups who want to be involved, but are not certain how to get started or may not be connected to other efforts; and 3) there is a synergistic impact when these individuals and groups work together. Ultimately, these meetings identified a critical need for all citizens to actively reinforce and support the mission of schools, particularly in the area of reading.

Dana Yow is the EOC Director of Communications. To learn more about PAIRS visit www.SCPAIRS.org or contact Ms. Yow at 803-734-6164 or danay@eoc.state.sc.us

Council News - Spring 2005



"Riley Award"

Continued from page 1

good health awareness for the entire school community and has fostered strong community partnerships to help them achieve these programs and more.

The Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award was created by the SC-SIC Board of Trustees in honor of former SC Governor and US Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and his wife, Tunky, in 2002. The annual award recognizes School Improvement Councils for outstanding achievement and civic engagement on behalf of their school.

Patrick Cobb, Chair of the SC-SIC Board of Trustees said, "We are so proud of all the winners. Each of them makes a unique contribution to public education in their local communities."

"Advocates Award"

Continued from page 1

But the team of Leonard and Nicholson didn't stop with making improvements in their own school and community; they took their show on the road. Al shared his expertise on convening effective school improvement councils with other principals in his district. Together Al and Jeff presented an SIC workshop to principals from across the state at the SC School Administrators Summer Leadership Conference.

Advocacy for their school and for public education in general was a special focus of their council's activities. Al and Jeff shared their advocacy expertise with other SICs in one of the state SIC office's Council Update programs, which was broadcast state wide. The team also presented advocacy workshops at all of the spring regional SIC conferences for the past two years. Clearly these two dedicated volunteers embodied the definition of "advocate," which according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary means "one who defends or maintains a cause." - Cassie Barber

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 elections of SIC parent members (optional)

May

- Draft narrative for the Report Card with the principal
- Compile progress reports about each school improvement plan
- Conduct elections for new SIC members (optional - may be held in the fall)
- Identify and recruit community members to serve on the SIC next 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 Report Card, the survey results for parents, teachers, and students and/or the recommendations from the ERT - External Review Team (for schools rated unsatisfactory only)



FYI...

Do You Understand the Put Parents in Charge Bill?

A hot debate about the "Put Parents in Charge" bill is raging across South Carolina. Legislation proposed by Governor Mark Sanford and some members of the legislature would allow individuals and businesses to receive state income tax credits in return for dollars spent to pay tuition for students to attend private schools. Proponents of the bill talk say *school choice* should be available for all parents and that the legislation could actually provide more money for public education. A stated purpose of the bill is to "expand educational opportunities for children of families living in poverty." Those opposed to the bill say it would do just the opposite; cut funding for public schools and leave poor children behind in under-funded schools while helping the wealthy to send their children to private schools. They say the bill is *unproven, unaccountable and unaffordable*.

You are encouraged to determine the truth for yourself. First, visit www.scstatehouse.net, type in H3652 and read the bill. Next, visit Web sites of organizations on both sides to learn more details. Proponents include the SC Policy Council (www.scpolicycouncil.com) and South Carolinians for Responsible Government (www.scr.gov.org). Opponents of the bill include Choose Children First (www.choosechildrenfirst.org) and the Alliance for Quality Education in Greenville (www.allianceforqualityed.org). A step by step explanation of the bill can be found at www.ed.sc.edu/sic on the Legislation/Advocacy page. Do the research, decide for yourself, then let your legislators know where you stand.

"Corridor of Shame" Released

A new documentary about the conditions of South Carolina schools, 'Corridor of Shame,' chronicles the testimony of the witnesses for the plaintiff school districts in the Abbeville vs. State of South Carolina lawsuit over adequate funding. The documentary is introduced by Pat Conroy, author of *River is Wide* and *Prince of Tides*, and includes interviews with teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders. There is footage of US Senator Lindsey Graham, Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, and others.

Over 125 hours of filming and interviewing have been condensed into a powerful 58 minute documentary. John S. Rainey is executive producer; Bud Ferillo directed.

It will be shown at Francis Marion University on April 18, and dates for Wofford, Lander, and Dock Street Theatre are planned. ETV will air it on May 22 and 29; times to be announced.

In mid April, 1,000 free universal DVD plus Rs of 'Corridor' will be distributed to the General Assembly, education and community groups, public libraries and other venues. To find out about screenings near you, visit the website for dates, locations, posters, and other information about the documentary: www.corridorofshame.com

Do not miss "Corridor of Shame: the neglect of South Carolina's rural schools."

