School Improvement Council HANDBOOK

- The Basics -
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About SC-SIC

SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) provides training and services to more
than 16,500 parents, teachers, students, and community members serving on South
Carolina's School Improvement Councils. Located in the College of Education at
the University of South Carolina, SC-SIC sponsors regional and state training
events. A newsletter is distributed regularly throughout the year to all SIC
members. In collaboration with SC ETV, SC-SIC uses technology to maintain
timely communications with SIC members, such as video updates on current topics,
a "Basics" video, and the SC-SIC website. A toll-free telephone line is available for
all members to receive assistance, and request materials, services, and training.
Priority assistance is provided for schools receiving an "unsatisfactory" rating on
their school report card.

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History of South Carolina School Improvement Councils

South Carolina initiated School Improvement Councils through legislation as a means of assuring the influential voice of parents and community members in the education of their children. Over more than 20 years, the SC General Assembly has passed four pieces of legislation that established the councils, and subsequently expanded and extended their role and responsibilities for planning, monitoring, and evaluating improvement at the school level. The education accountability process has recently increased the influence and responsibilities of councils.

Four pieces of legislation have affected the composition of School Improvement Councils, their role and responsibilities, and the growing importance of the councils in South Carolina's education improvement efforts.

"America's future will be determined by the home and the school. The child becomes largely what it is taught; hence we must watch what we teach it, and how we live before it."
–Jane Addams

1977   The Education Finance Act (EFA) was passed to create a structure and formula for state financed education in South Carolina. To ensure local awareness and review of how the state funds were spent, each local school board was directed to establish a School Advisory Council at each school composed of parents, teachers, community members, and students (in schools with grades 9-12). The assigned responsibility was to advise the principal.

1984   The Education Improvement Act (EIA) amended the EFA to outline a series of specific programs or actions to be achieved by the SC Department of Education, local districts, and schools. To pay for these new programs, the funding came from a penny sales tax to be dedicated every year to funding innovation and improvements in the state's education system.

The EIA changed the name of the School Advisory Councils to School Improvement Councils. Responsibilities were specified and their role in the improvement process was based on effective schools research. Their responsibilities included assisting in a newly created three-year planning process, assisting in the monitoring and evaluation of the annual improvements, assisting the principal in writing a summary report to the parents about the school's annual improvement progress, and advising on the spending of incentive award funds.

1993   The Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act (Act 135) amended the EFA by altering the funding formula to account for the effects of poverty on children, and directed that funding be spent on timely academic assistance, family literacy programs, parent involvement initiatives, and innovative teaching methods and organization. A five-year strategic planning process was required for schools and districts to achieve the goal of improved student achievement.

School Improvement Council (SIC) responsibilities were expanded. SICs were directed to be active participants in the five-year strategic planning process and in writing annual updates of the plan. They were also required to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of innovations and improvements. In addition, councils assumed the responsibility of writing the summary report to the parents and community about the progress made to achieve the goals and objectives of the school and district. The council would advise on the spending of incentive funds should the school receive an award. (Incentive awards are subject to the availability of funding from the General Assembly.)

1998   The Education Accountability Act (EAA) established a system of curriculum standards, measured by a state test, and reported by a report card which rated the schools and districts. Each district was required to create an accountability system that would be included in the district strategic plan. A system of awards and consequences were also outlined. The Education Oversight Committee (EOC), composed of business, education, and legislative representatives, was established to review the accountability process.

School Improvement Council responsibilities were expanded to include writing the narrative on the school report card in conjunction with the principal. If a school were to be rated unsatisfactory, the council would participate in writing a revision of the school improvement plan outlining how the school would better improve student achievement.

School Improvement Council
Roles and Responsibilities

Each School Improvement Council (SIC) member needs to have an understanding of the role of the SIC and the specific responsibilities the SIC is required to fulfill by state law. New members need a period of orientation to learn this information and should expect the principal and/or the district to provide appropriate training to help them. SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) provides training materials and services to all SIC members. Call the toll free telephone number or access the Web site (see title page) for more information. This publication is an example of the services provided by SC-SIC.

PARTICIPATE in the development of the five-year school improvement plan. (Act 135)
Each school is required to have a school improvement plan (also known as the school renewal plan) that contains strategies or goals to improve student achievement in a five-year period. The plan is reviewed and revised every year.

The school district may establish the planning process to be used by the schools, create the timetable for it to be completed, and provide resources to the school to facilitate the planning process and the writing of the plan. Act 135 requires SICs to be "active participants" in the planning process.

How can the SIC participate in planning?
- The SIC acts as the core of the planning team and others are added to ensure a broad representation of the school community, enlarging the group up to 25 or 30 members. The SIC is involved in all stages of the development of the plan using this method.

- The district may require that a specially organized planning team be named for each school. Selected SIC members serve as representatives on the planning team and act as a liaison for information sharing with the full SIC on all stages of the planning process.

- A broad-based team develops the strategies for improvement as the initial stage of the planning. In this design, the SIC members serve as representatives on action teams for each strategy to plan the specific steps to be accomplished for each year of the five years.

"Service to others is the rent which you pay for your room here on earth."
*–**Muhammed Ali***

"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor."
*–**Vince Lombardi***

- A combination of the two previous designs might be used. A large broad-based planning team is named, selected SIC members act as representatives on the planning team, and all of the SIC members have an opportunity to participate on one of the action teams to develop specific actions to implement the plan.

NOTE: The district may choose to substitute the SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) plan for the Act 135 five-year plan. The SIC participates in the planning process in the same way.

ASSIST in implementing the plan and evaluating the outcomes. (Act 135)

Once every five years council members are involved in planning; most council members spend time on the implementation of the plan strategies. A main function of the SIC is to gather information about the actions taking place and the progress on achieving the goals. A major portion of the monthly meetings will be spent reporting the information.

How can the SIC monitor implementation?

- The school improvement plan can be monitored solely by SIC members if the Council is large enough (at least fifteen members). Plans often have three to seven strategies. For example, a strategy for improving reading, or one for improving parent involvement, or one for Healthy Schools would require a committee for each strategy. The number of SIC members on each committee will vary according to the work of the strategy.

- Each SIC member chairs or co-chairs a committee that monitors implementation of one strategy of the plan. Members for the committee may be recruited from among parents, teachers, students, and community members interested in and committed to working on a particular strategy of the plan, but not serving on the SIC. The number of people on the committee will vary according to the amount of actions to be monitored.

- The SIC as a whole reviews information from the administration and faculty committees, forming subcommittees as needed to gather the information about the strategy's implementation.

- The faculty may be organized into implementation teams. Each SIC member chooses to become active with one of the faculty teams by attending their meetings, communicating with the chair of the team about progress, and reporting the progress to the whole SIC.

The number of SIC members and the number of improvement plan strategies will affect how the membership is divided up to do this function of the SIC. No matter how the SIC organizes itself, it is important to create some structure to focus the SIC's attention on the monitoring function and share the workload. When every SIC member has an assigned job and responsibility, the result is an effective SIC.

ASSIST in the writing of the annual updates. (Act 135)
At the end of each year, information about how well each strategy of the school improvement plan was implemented must be compiled, analyzed, and evaluated by the school administration and SIC. The information is written into a report called an annual update and submitted to the district. Each district sets their own deadline for this update.

Each strategy committee will be able to make a contribution to the development of the annual update based on the implementation information collected. During the year the SIC may have created and distributed surveys to parents, interviewed teachers, and/or observed programs to gather information about progress being made on the plan. All of this information will contribute to the writing of a useful document that will provide the basis for the next year's actions.

ADVISE on the spending of incentive funds if the school receives an award. (EIA, Act 135, EAA)
Incentive funds are awarded to schools based on the rating the school receives on the School Report Card. The award categories are Gold and Silver, and may include a cash award if funds have been allocated by the SC General Assembly for this purpose. The SIC represents the many groups interested in the school and can provide informed input about how the money could be spent to implement the improvement plan better or faster. The signature of the SIC Chair on the budget submission form verifies the participation of the SIC to the SC Department of Education.

WRITE the Report to the Parents about the progress of the school and district to achieve the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. (Act 135)
The SIC is charged with the responsibility of preparing a report to the parents of the school about the progress being made to achieve improvements by April 30 of each year.

"Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, — the balance-wheel of the social machinery."
– Horace Mann

"Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."
–Martin Luther King, Jr.

Include:
- brief summary statement about each strategy
- amount of progress made during the previous year
- actions planned for the current year
- information about programs, activities, awards, and recognitions for students and teachers
- test scores other than PACT results

The SIC may appoint a writing committee for the whole report or form small teams to write sections of the report. The final product should be designed to attract attention to it and draw the reader's interest to the information in it. Visit the SC-SIC Web site (www.ed.sc.edu/sic) to view some sample reports.

Consider these suggestions:
- include the school mission statement
- write a brief "letter" or introduction about the report
- use the school mascot as a graphic theme throughout the report
- print it on colored paper
- use letter size paper and fold it making a brochure of 4 or 6 pages
- use various size fonts and graphics for emphasis
- indicate SIC member names and phone numbers
- see examples on SC-SIC website
- send a copy of your report to the SC-SIC office in Columbia

WRITE the narrative to the School Report Card in conjunction with the principal. (EAA)
The School Report Card requires the principal and the SIC to provide information about the school, the challenges it faces, and the strategies developed to address those challenges. Limited space on the report card allows for approximately 425 words to describe the school. The narrative is submitted to the SC Department of Education through their Web site during May and early June of each year as part of the summer data collection for the report card.

"Information is the currency of democracy."
–Thomas Jefferson

PARTICIPATE in the revision of the school improvement plan if the school is rated unsatisfactory on the School Report Card. (EAA)
The district will provide direction and procedures for the revision of a school's improvement plan in conjunction with the SC Department of Education. The SIC is required to participate in the revision of the current plan and help identify strategies that will better support improved student achievement.

School Improvement Council Membership

Membership requirements for the School Improvement Council (SIC) were first set out in the Education Finance Act (EFA) in 1977. Ex-officio members were required by Act 135 in 1993. Information about the membership and elections procedures should be outlined in the SIC bylaws. Participation on the SIC is an important contribution to public education and should be treated as a high status position in the school.

ELECTED
The elected members of the SIC represent two-thirds of the SIC. (EFA, EIA)

Parents
- A minimum of two parents are required to be elected by the parents of students in the school. (EFA, EIA)
- A parent may not serve as an elected representative of parents if their child graduates or transfers and no longer attends the school. (EFA, EIA)
- Most schools have more than the minimum number in order to increase the base of representation.
- In deciding the number of parents serving on the SIC consider the number of grades in the school or the number of communities represented in the school.

Teachers
- A minimum of two teachers are required to be elected by the teachers in the school. (EFA, EIA)
- Most schools have more than the minimum number elected to reflect the representation of the grades, subject area or age groups of the students.

Students
- The students in the school with grades 9-12 are required to elect a minimum of two students. Schools with other grades may also elect students to the SIC if they desire. (EFA, EIA)
- Most high schools have more than the minimum number elected to reflect the number of grades in the school.

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."
–Anne Frank

APPOINTED

The appointed members of the SIC represent one-third of the SIC.
(EFA, EIA)

Community members

- The principal appoints members of the community to serve on the
  SIC to represent the non-parent portion of the population, which is
  usually about 75% of the community.
- The appointments may include business and industry
  representatives, civic and social organization leaders, grandparents,
  retirees, social service agency and local government representatives.
- Attention is to be given to creating a balanced representation by
  gender, race, age, and location in the community when making these
  appointments. If schools want to increase the number of community
  representatives on the SIC, then the number of elected members
  must also increase in order to keep the required ratio in balance.

EX-OFFICIO

- These members of the SIC are included *by virtue of the position*
  they hold in the school or an organization associated with the
  school. The principal is automatically considered ex-officio on the
  SIC.
- Act 135 does not set limits on the number of members in this
  category, but makes suggestions about what positions a school
  might include: business partner, Teacher of the Year, president of
  parent-teacher organization, chair of Title I parent advisory council,
  previous year's SIC Chair. The reason this category is included is
  to bring all interested parties into the discussion and planning for
  improvement at the school.

VOTING

The SIC bylaws should indicate the voting status for the principal and
other ex-officio members, under what circumstances voting occurs and
when consensus is used, and what percent is a majority vote when
voting is used.

TERMS

Elected

- Elected members are required to serve a minimum two-year term.
  (EFA, EIA)
- Law places no limits to the number of terms a member may serve,
  but the school or district may choose to set limits through SIC
  bylaws or district policy.
- Elections occur each year for a minimum of one member in each
  category of elected membership to maintain a staggered election
  process.

Appointed

- Appointed members of the community are often willing to commit to one year at a time, but are encouraged to serve for two years just like elected members.
- Recognition of the demands on their time and the importance placed on being a member of the SIC will contribute to their willingness to participate.

Staggered

- Elected members serve staggered terms, providing continuity of membership and knowledge of the SIC's actions from year to year.
- A new school and newly organized SIC * will conduct elections for the total number of members on the SIC. State law indicates that members will "draw lots" to determine which member(s) will serve only one year in the first year in order to get the staggered system started. Drawing straws or numbered pieces of paper with a "1" and a "2" on them meets the intent of the law to "draw lots."
- Example: if the SIC has four parents elected, two parents will serve for one year and two parents will serve for two years in the first year of the SIC. All elected members will serve two-year terms in the following years.

* This procedure is also appropriate when the SIC is found to be inactive or non-functioning and the need to reorganize is recognized by a new principal or district staff.

CONDUCTING ELECTIONS

Elections for each of the categories of SIC membership take place to ensure that as many people as possible can participate in the election. When and how elections take place will vary from school to school based on what they have found achieves the most participation.

When?

Elections for SIC members are required by law to take place *no later than October 15* of each year.

- Fall elections take place early in the school year (August – early September) to provide time for the SIC to organize and begin its work before too much of the year is past.
- Some schools decide to hold elections in the spring (May) so the SIC can organize over the summer and is ready to work when the school year begins. If this option is chosen, a process for including the parents of rising students from feeder schools needs to be in place to give those parents the opportunity to participate.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has!"
*–**Margaret Meade***

How?

For **teachers**, conduct the election when the whole faculty can be present.

- Teachers have been nominated and the faculty has been made aware of the names of the teacher(s) willing to serve on the SIC.
- Sequence these events during the days prior to the opening or closing of school.
- Conduct the election during a faculty meeting with ballots.
- Teachers completing their term supervise the counting of the ballots and announce the faculty's selection.

For **parents,** be sure to be inclusive and find ways to offer all parents the opportunity to run for the SIC.

- Nominations are solicited through the school newsletter or other communication, at student registration activities prior to the start of school, or at end-of-year events.
- Conduct elections in conjunction with an event or activity that has a high level of parent participation.
- Students can deliver and return ballots if that is a well-established practice of communication.

Practices that help parents make informed choices about their representatives include:

- Each person who has been nominated and agreed to run for election writes a brief (2-3 lines) statement about why they wish to serve and publish it in the newsletter.
- Scan the picture of those nominated into the newsletter, on the ballot sheet, or a flyer announcing the election date, time, and place.
- Introduce the nominees at the chosen event and provide ballots for parents present. The voting is conducted by the outgoing members of the SIC.
- To ensure that as many parents vote as possible, a ballot box needs to be available to parents the day before and/or after the event in the school office or other place convenient for parents.
- When the balloting is completed and the votes counted, the principal should contact the newly elected members to notify and immediately congratulate them on being selected.
- Parents need to know who was elected as their representative. Use multiple ways for communicating who the new SIC members are:

    1. List the new members' names in the school newsletter.
    2. Place their pictures on the school lobby bulletin board.
    3. Announce the new members in the local newspaper.

"If you want to be listened to, you should put time in listening."
–**Marge Piercy**

For **students**, elections are held when other class and student body officers are chosen. Nominations by grade level or at large are made.

Practices that help students make informed choices about their representative include:

- Nominated students write a brief statement indicating why they wish to serve on the SIC and include the statement with their picture in the school newspaper, an information flyer, and/or on the ballot.
- Introduce students at an assembly or other event so those students voting get to know the students who are running. This is especially helpful if the school is large and the class votes on its own grade representative or the whole school votes for several SIC members.
- Conduct voting when elections for other student offices occur, or conduct voting through homerooms. The outgoing students and teachers on the SIC count the ballots.
- Announce the new members at school, in the school newsletter, on the marquee, and in the local newspaper.

SIC MEMBERSHIP DATABASE

The collection of the SIC members' information at the beginning of each school year is done by the SIC District Contact in the school district office. State law requires membership information to reach SC-SIC *no later than November 15* of each school year (Act 135). Report your membership information to the SIC District Contact to meet this deadline. Also report any changes of information throughout the school year to your District Contact.

Membership information will be provided to SC-SIC by the District Contact via an online Internet data entry system. The District Contact will access the master database to edit, add and delete records for all schools within his or her district. At the school level, the principal (or other designated individual) will be able to view and print out their school's membership information. (The school's principal must contact the SC-SIC office in Columbia for access rights.)

Membership data is vital to the SC-SIC office in order to distribute newsletters and other important information. The names and mailing addresses of those serving on SICs are public information and the database may be shared with other agencies and organizations that have information to share with SIC members.

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."
–Henry Ford

School Improvement Council Officers

Leadership is an important ingredient for all successful organizations and the School Improvement Council (SIC) is no exception. At a minimum, SIC officers include a Chair and a Recorder/Secretary. Many effective SICs also have elected a Vice Chair, some have Co-Chairs.

Both the elected and appointed members elect the SIC officers. Some of the ex-officio members are officers in other organizations associated with the school (such as PTA) and should not be considered eligible as an officer of the SIC. The SIC bylaws will state how and when the election of officers occurs and who is eligible to vote for the SIC officers.

Other leadership roles are taken by members to chair a subcommittee or study group that the Chair has appointed. Other members will provide leadership coordinating a project, event, or activity for the SIC.

"Above all, try something."
–Franklin Delano Roosevelt

SIC CHAIR DUTIES
- Direct the monthly SIC meetings.
- Finalize the monthly agenda in collaboration with the principal.
- Act as spokesperson for the SIC when working with the faculty, parent or community groups, and the district staff.
- Sign documents assuring SIC participation, such as the annual Report to the Parents and the budget submitted to the SDE for incentive award expenditures.
- Appoint SIC members to serve on committees as needed.

Monthly Activities
- Conduct monthly meetings of the SIC, directing the action of the meeting through the agenda, and appointing committees as needed.
- Prepare the agenda with the principal well in advance of the monthly meeting to allow time for the Secretary to mail it to all members prior to the meeting.
- Communicate regularly with the subcommittee, project, and task force leaders to support their activities and prepare them for reporting progress at the meetings.

VICE CHAIR DUTIES *
- Assist the Chair during meetings, assuming the leadership for a discussion period or for the entire meeting if the Chair is unable to attend.

- Assume leadership of a standing committee, task force, or project of the SIC.
- Assist with the development of the agenda, committee activity, and general support of SIC initiatives.

Monthly Activities
- Coordinate with the SIC Chair to identify the actions needed.

* The Vice Chair duties vary and will be stated in the bylaws to suit the needs of each SIC.

SECRETARY/RECORDER DUTIES

- Maintain a set of records at the school for the SIC including bylaws, copy of the "Report to the Parents" for the current year, past year's SIC minutes/record of actions plus current year's to date, latest School Report Card, and current year portion of the improvement/renewal plan.
- Assure the agenda is mailed to all members 7 – 10 days prior to the next meeting, working with the SIC Chair and the school staff.
- Record attendance at each meeting.
- Make a record of the actions taken at each meeting. The SIC secretary can use the agenda as a guide for reporting actions taken, giving summaries of discussion points where appropriate. (One person may record the actions at all meetings or it may be a shared responsibility by members taking turns during the year.)
- Coordinate with the committees and the school staff about having copies of materials prepared for each meeting.
- Summarize information about the meeting actions and upcoming agenda for publication in the school newsletter or newspaper and for the community media.

Monthly Activities
- File the minutes or record of action in the SIC folder(s) at the school.
- Distribute copies of the minutes/record of action with the agenda to all members in advance of the meeting.
- Contact the SIC Chair or committee leaders to determine if materials need to be copied for the next meeting.
- Submit to the school newsletter or newspaper the summary of the last SIC meeting and the agenda of the next meeting; submit similar information to local newspaper(s).
- Keep the SIC district contact informed of SIC actions.

- Notes -

"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."
–Peter Drucker

"One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest."
–***Maya Angelou***

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP DUTIES

- Direct the actions of a standing committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of a strategy or an ad hoc committee with a specific task and limited time of existence.
- Communicate progress to the SIC Chair and prepare to report to the SIC.
- Report the progress of the committee's work when scheduled on the agenda.
- Recruit committee members from among others not already serving on the SIC.

Characteristics Of Effective SICs

A study by Hollingsworth and Kijai* found that effective School Improvement Councils shared the following characteristics:

- Strong principal leadership
- The members received training
- Written bylaws or guidelines were in place
- The school district supported the SICs
- SIC members felt a sense of accomplishment

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

It is widely agreed that the principal sets the tone, expectations, and direction for a school. Principal leadership is also a key to the effectiveness of the SIC. If the principal lends his or her support to council activities, the SIC is empowered to make its greatest contribution. The principal promotes the status of the organization in the school by:

- Charging the SIC with its role and responsibilities and state the expectations for participation.
- Initiating a positive relationship with the elected SIC Chair to coordinate the development of the agenda.
- Providing materials and information resources when requested.
- Establishing a routine procedure for distributing SIC communications including: mail minutes and agenda, post minutes in teacher work area and on email, place meeting action summary and agenda in school newsletter and on the school Web site.
- Ensuring a working relationship exists between the school staff and SIC officers and members.
- Attending monthly meetings and participating as appropriate.

TRAINING

Every district school board is to establish a School Improvement Council at each school and provide training for the SIC membership. Opportunities for training supported by the district might include:

- Annual orientation for new members sponsored by the district.
- Regional or state level training about a topic related to improvement strategies.
- Attendance at trainings/conferences sponsored by SC-SIC.

"If a man does his best what else is there?"
–**George S. Patton**

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* Hollingsworth, Sara and Kijai, Jimmy, "A Study of the Functionality and Effectiveness of School Improvement Councils in Selected Schools in South Carolina" in *Focus on School Improvement: School Improvement Councils Working for Effective Schools*.

- Network with other SICs within the district or in another part of the state.
- Access resources provided by SC-SIC including training videos, newsletters, council updates via SC ETV and toll-free SIC hotline (800-868-2232), and Web site (www.ed.sc.edu/sic).

WRITTEN BYLAWS OR GUIDELINES

Effective School Improvement Councils also have bylaws to provide the structure which allows the organization to operate effectively to achieve its goals. Copies of the bylaws should be kept in the SIC file at the school and each SIC member and the SIC District Contact should have a copy the SIC bylaws.

Points to include:
- Purpose of the council
- Responsibilities and duties of the council
- Membership composition
- Election procedures
- Voting requirements
- Officers and their duties
- Council structure; committees, tasks, events, and activities
- Amendment procedures

Samples of SIC bylaws are available on the SC School Improvement Council Web site (www.ed.sc.edu/sic).

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."
–W.B. Yeats

DISTRICT SUPPORT

Support from the district comes in many ways depending on the need of the individual council. The district is the source of information, funding, and other resources to support the efforts of the SIC. Examples of district support are:
- SIC District Contact appointed by the superintendent coordinates training and acts as a resource to the district's SICs.
- Payment of registration fees for SIC members to attend conferences and training events.
- A district bus or van is supplied to transport SIC members to attend training events, school visits, and/or conferences; also mileage reimbursement for travel.
- District staff is available to attend SIC meetings and provide resources.
- Public recognition of SIC members serving each school.

SENSE OF IMPACT

Members of organizations need to feel they are valued, that their work and family priorities are honored, and that the goals of the organization match their own values to become committed and active participants in the organization. SIC members need to be involved in the work of the SIC in specific ways to have a sense of accomplishment.

- Every member of the SIC has a job responsibility, such as a committee assignment.
- Meetings follow the agenda, start on time and end on time, everyone's ideas and positions are encouraged and respected, and communication is open and regular.
- The meeting schedule is convenient, child care is provided, and materials are available.
- Response to requests for information about policies and budgets for SIC members is timely.

"There are two kinds of people, those who finish what they start and so on."
–Robert Byrne

SIC
self-assessment
PROFILE

- D i r e c t i o n s -

The Profile has been designed as a teaching tool, used either at the beginning of the year to induct and orient new members, or to evaluate the past year. It is best used in a group, stimulating dialogue and ideas for improving the SIC.

To complete the *Profile*, follow these steps:

1. Give a *Profile* to each council member. Complete responses to statements as a group or mail prior to meeting so that members arrive with their responses completed.

2. Select a recorder to make a single record of the group's consensus to all of the statements. When completed this copy becomes a record to measure progress toward council effectiveness.

3. Decide as a group whether the answer is *yes* or *no* for each statement. All council members should agree on the answer. If you need additional information to answer, leave the statement blank for now. If discussion suggests actions for your SIC to consider, make sure these actions are recorded.

4. When you have finished responding to each statement, check any statements left blank for lack of information. Assign specific individuals to collect information by an agreed upon date.

5. Review responses for the three factors. If you do not have many *yes* responses for a particular factor, review the *no* statements in that section. Determine whether these statements suggest actions your SIC might take to strengthen its effectiveness. Wherever possible, related statements have been grouped together. For example, statements 40-45 refer to the relationship between your SIC and your school's teachers. If you do not have many *yes* responses for these statements, you may want to plan actions to increase teachers' involvement with your council. Record all suggested actions.

6. Decide on actions to increase your SIC's effectiveness and a timetable for implementing them.

Profile Statements

Organizational Capacity

Check One

1. SIC members include parents, teachers, students (grades 9-12), **and** community representatives (such as business partners, retired persons, etc.).

   ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2. The SIC includes ex-officio members with leadership positions in the school or school organizations such as parent-teacher groups, booster clubs, and federal program advisory groups.

   ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

3. The principal is an ex-officio member of the SIC.

   ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

4. The principal appoints additional SIC members from the community to ensure that the council is representative of the school and community.

   ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

5. There is at least one SIC teacher representative for every two SIC parent representatives.

   ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

6. The SIC has more than the minimum number of members required by law.　　　　Yes　　No

7. SIC nomination procedures ensure that **all** parents, teachers, and students (grades 9-12) have an opportunity to be nominated for election to the SIC.　　　　Yes　　No

8. SIC election procedures ensure that **all** parents, teachers, and students (grades 9-12) have an opportunity to vote for SIC representatives each year.　　　　Yes　　No

9. Election of SIC members occurs no later than October fifteenth of each year.　　　　Yes　　No

10. The elected members of the SIC comprise at least two-thirds of the total elected and appointed members (excluding ex-officio members).　　　　Yes　　No

11. Elected SIC members serve at least a two-year term.　　　　Yes　　No

12. An updated SIC membership list is sent to SC-SIC within 30 days following council elections every year.　　　　Yes　　No

13. SIC terms are staggered so that only half of the council members are new each year.　　　　Yes　　No

14. SIC has an established meeting schedule that is publicized in the school and community.　　　　Yes　　No

15. The SIC has at least eight meetings per year.　　　　Yes　　No

16. At least 80% of SIC members are present at each scheduled council meeting.　　　　Yes　　No

17. The SIC replaces members who fail to attend three or more meetings and do not have an excused absence.　　　　Yes　　No

18. The SIC elects a chairperson each year.　　　　Yes　　No

19. The SIC elects a vice chairperson each year.　　　　Yes　　No

20. The SIC elects a secretary/recorder each year.　　　　Yes　　No

21. The SIC has written guidelines or bylaws about how the council operates.　　　　Yes　　No

22. A written agenda is prepared and distributed to all members prior to each SIC meeting.　　　　Yes　　No

23. Minutes or actions of each SIC meeting are recorded.　　　　Yes　　No

Council Functioning

24. The SIC agenda is prepared by the SIC chairperson in consultation with the school principal.
    Yes **No**

25. The SIC chairperson (not the principal) presides over all SIC meetings.
    Yes **No**

26. The SIC guidelines or bylaws are reviewed every year and amended as necessary.
    Yes **No**

27. All SIC members receive copies of council minutes.
    Yes **No**

28. Articles about SIC activities are published regularly in the school newsletter or other publications sent home to parents.
    Yes **No**

29. Expenses for SIC operations (printing, postage, etc.) are paid by the school.
    Yes **No**

30. The SIC establishes task forces or committees to address specific issues or needs.
    Yes **No**

31. Parents, teachers, or school administrators who are not members of the council serve on SIC-sponsored committees.
    Yes **No**

32. The SIC annually evaluates its activities, discusses accomplishments, and sets priorities for the year.
    Yes **No**

33. The SIC has spent meeting time discussing the expenditure of state school incentive award funds **within the past two years** (*leave blank if your school has not won an award, or if state funds are not allocated*).
    Yes **No**

34. The SIC develops the Report to the Parents by April 30 each year to provide information on the school's progress in meeting the school and district's goals and objectives.
    Yes **No**

35. The SIC works with the principal to write the narrative for the annual School Report Card.
    Yes **No**

36. SIC members design and administer surveys or conduct discussions with parents, teachers, students and community members (when appropriate) to gather information on school improvement needs.
    Yes **No**

37. Results of school surveys or other forms of gathering information are shared with parents and teachers by the principal or SIC members.
    Yes **No**

38. The SIC analyzes school level information on attendance, test scores, accreditation, and dropout rates (if applicable) prior to the writing or updating of the school's improvement plan.

Yes | No

39. SIC members, as a group or in committees, participate in the preparation of the school's improvement plan.

Yes | No

40. The SIC assists with monitoring and evaluating strategies described in the school's improvement plan.

Yes | No

41. Every member of the SIC and school faculty receives a copy of the school's improvement plan.

Yes | No

42. SIC members present the school's improvement plan to the district school board or attend the board meeting when the plans are presented.

Yes | No

43. Teachers who are not members of the SIC are able to name two current SIC members (excluding the principal).

Yes | No

44. Teachers who are not members of the SIC can describe at least one activity or accomplishment of the council.

Yes | No

45. Minutes of SIC meetings are distributed to all teachers (including email) or posted in a central location (such as a teachers' lounge or workroom).

Yes | No

46. Minutes of the SIC meetings are sent to the SIC District Contact and/or other appropriate district staff.

Yes | No

47. The SIC chairperson or other SIC members have talked with district staff about specific school improvement needs at least once within the past year.

Yes | No

48. SIC members have attended at least one district board meeting within the past year.

Yes | No

School and District Level Support

49. Each SIC member has received an orientation to SIC roles, responsibilities, and functions from training provided by the principal, SIC chair, district, or SC-SIC.

Yes | No

50. Each SIC member has received materials on SIC roles, responsibilities, and functions from the principal, SIC chairperson, district, or SC-SIC.

Yes | No

51. The principal attends at least 90% of the SIC meetings each year.

Yes | No

52. The principal consults regularly with the SIC chair and other SIC members by telephone or in person (apart from SIC meetings). | Yes | No

53. The principal provides a meeting room for the SIC. | Yes | No

54. The principal provides secretarial support for the SIC. | Yes | No

55. The principal solicits input from the SIC during the school budget development process. | Yes | No

56. The principal shares the completed school budget with the SIC. | Yes | No

57. The principal provides school data such as attendance, test scores, survey responses, accreditation, and drop-out rates (if applicable) to council members. | Yes | No

58. The principal has participated in SIC training sessions provided by the district, state, or SC-SIC during the past 2 years. | Yes | No

59. The principal **and** SIC chairperson can name their district contact person. | Yes | No

60. The district contact person has corresponded or talked with the principal **and** SIC chairperson at least once during the past year. | Yes | No

61. At least one district staff person or board member has attended a SIC meeting within the past year. | Yes | No

62. The district recognizes the contribution of SIC members through letters of appreciation, certificates, or other appropriate means. | Yes | No

63. The district provides at least one training session for the SICs each year. | Yes | No

64. The district pays some or all expenses of SIC members to attend regional or state SIC training. | Yes | No

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About SC-SIC

South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) is an independent, non-regulatory agency whose mission is to assist local school improvement councils to work effectively in promoting and sustaining continuous school improvement. SC-SIC fulfills its mission by advocating for local School Improvement Councils (SICs) and providing training, technical assistance, and a variety of materials to SICs and related school personnel.

SC-SIC is the publisher of *A Descriptive Study of Eight School Improvement Councils in South Carolina* (1992) which formed the research base for the *Profile*. For additional information about SC-SIC services or the *Profile*, contact SC-SIC, College of Education, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, or call 1-800-868-2232 or 803-777-7658.

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