School Improvement Council
Handbook

The Basics

Sixth Edition, 2011

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Table of Contents

History of South Carolina School Improvement Councils

South Carolina initiated School Improvement Councils (SICs) through legislation as a means of assuring the influential voice of parents and community members in the education of their children. Over a period of more than 30 years, the South Carolina General Assembly has enacted laws that established SICs and subsequently expanded and extended their roles and responsibilities for planning, monitoring and evaluating improvement at the local school level. Four key pieces of legislation in particular have affected the composition of SICs and the growing importance and influence of Councils in South Carolina's education improvement and accountability efforts.

1977 – Education Finance Act (EFA). The EFA was passed to create a new structure and formula for state financed education in South Carolina. This Act directed local school boards to establish what were then called "School Advisory Councils" composed of parents, educators, community members, and high school students to advise school principals and provide a direct public voice in education.

1984 – Education Improvement Act (EIA). The EIA amended the EFA to outline a series of specific programs and actions to be achieved by the SC Department of Education and local school districts and schools. A new penny sales tax was enacted to help fund these new programs and actions. The EFA changed the name of local Councils to "School Improvement Councils." It empowered SICs to take an active role in the development of a three-year School Improvement Plan in each local school; to monitor and report on the progress of Plan goals; and to advise on the expenditure of incentive award funds received by the school.

1993 – Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act (Act 135). Act 135 further amended the EFA by altering the state's school funding formula to account for the affects of poverty on children. The three-year School Improvement Plan process was extended to five years, and SIC responsibilities in the planning process were expanded to include writing annual updates of the Plan. Act 135 also charged local Councils with the responsibility of writing an annual *Report to the Parents* outlining the progress made by SICs and schools in meeting stated goals and objectives.

1998 – Education Accountability Act (EAA). The EAA established a system of curriculum standards (measured by state assessment tests) reported by an annual *School Report Card* rating local schools and districts. This Act continued SIC roles in the improvement process, expanding them to include collaborating with the school principals in writing a descriptive narrative featured in the state-issued *School Report Card*. The EAA also mandated the inclusion of SICs in the annual revision of the School Improvement Plan of those schools rated as "Unsatisfactory" (now called "At Risk") on the state *School Report Card*. (Updates to the EAA made in 2008 had no impact on the statutory roles of SICs.)

More detailed information on these pieces of legislation and their impact on South Carolina's School Improvement Councils can be found online at *sic.sc.gov*.

SIC 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 appropriate training to help them. The SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) provides information, materials and services to SIC members and others through its website (*sic.sc.gov*) and toll-free hotline (1-800-868-2232), and state-wide, regional and local training sessions.

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) or a SACS Plan from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools that contains strategies or goals to improve student achievement over a five-year period. This Plan is reviewed and revised every year. The local school district may establish the planning process to be used by its schools, create the timetable for Plans to be completed and provide resources to schools to aid the planning process and the writing of the Plan. Act 135 requires SICs to be "active participants" in this process. The process can take place in a variety of forms:

• The SIC acts as the core of the planning team and others are added to ensure a broad representation of the school community. The SIC is involved in all stages of the development of the Plan.

• 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 in 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 or committees to plan the specific steps to be accomplished for each year of the five years.

• 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 or committees to develop specific actions to implement the Plan.

• As the SIC is to take an active role in the development of the Plan, it is important that each member of the Council is supplied with a copy of the Plan annually. To assist the Council in the development of goals to implement and evaluate the Plan, it is also recommended that the school's principal provide the SIC a synopsis of the Plan in a bulleted one to two-page outline form.

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

A core function of the SIC is to develop goals to assist the school in implementing and evaluating its School Improvement (or SACS) Plan. The SIC gathers information about the actions taking place and the progress realized in achieving goals. A major portion of monthly SIC meetings should be spent reporting such information.

The Plan can be monitored solely by SIC members if the Council is large enough (at least 15 members) and/or through the use of committees. As the Plan contains multiple goals, the number of SIC committees and members on each committee will vary according to the content of the Plan and work on the goals.

• Members of SIC committees may be recruited from among parents, teachers, students, and community members interested in and committed to working on a particular goal of the Plan, but not serving on the SIC itself.

• The SIC as a whole reviews information from school administration and faculty committees, forming subcommittees as needed to gather the information about the implementation of goals.

• The school's 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 Plan goals will affect how the membership is divided up to

perform this function of the Council. 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 sharing the workload. When every SIC member has an assigned job and responsibility, the result is an effective SIC.

At the end of the school year, information about how well each strategy or goal of the Plan was implemented must be compiled, analyzed and evaluated by the school's administration with the assistance of the SIC. The information is written into an Annual Update and submitted to the local school district. Each district sets its own deadline for this Update.

ADVISE on the spending of any state incentive award funds received by the school. (EIA, Act 135, EAA)

Incentive awards are given to schools based on the rating each school receives on the annual *School Report Card*, along with other performance and improvement objectives. Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards may also include a cash award (if funds have been allocated by the General Assembly for this purpose). As the SIC represents the many groups interested in the school's success, it is well positioned to provide informed input about how incentive funds could be spent to implement the School Improvement Plan more effectively. The signature of the SIC Chair on the budget submission form is required by law and verifies the participation of the SIC to the SC Department of Education.

WRITE the annual *Report to the Parents* about the progress of the school and SIC in achieving the goals and objectives of the School Improvement Plan. (Act 135)

The SIC is charged with the responsibility of preparing an annual *Report to the Parents* about the progress being made to achieve improvements. This *Report* is to be publicly distributed by **April 30th** of each year, must focus on the **current** school year and should include the following:

• A brief summary statement about each goal.
• Progress made during the current school year.
• Actions planned for the upcoming school year.
• Information about programs, activities, awards, and recognitions for students and teachers.
• Pertinent test scores **not** already reported in the annual *School Report Card*.

The SIC may appoint a committee for writing the whole *Report* or form small teams to write sections of the *Report*. The final product should be designed to attract attention and draw the reader's interest to the information contained within it. The SC School Improvement Council provides space on its *SC-SIC Member Network* site for the local Councils to upload their *Reports* for public viewing. Visit the SC-SIC website (*sic.sc.gov*) to view some sample reports, helpful tips and instructions on how to upload *Reports*. Local SICs may consider the following suggestions for the *Report*:

• Include the school's mission statement.
• Write a brief letter or introduction about the *Report*.
• List SIC member names and contact information.
• Use letter-sized paper and fold it to make a brochure.
• Print the *Report* on colored paper.
• Use the school mascot as a graphic theme throughout the publication.
• Use various size fonts and graphics for emphasis.
• Distribute copies of the *Report* to other members of the community by placing them in public locations and/or posting the *Report* to the school's website.
• Confirm that the school administration has uploaded the *Report* to the SC-SIC Member Network.

WRITE the annual *School Report Card* Narrative. (EAA)

Since 1998, the annual state *School Report Card* has required the SIC and the principal to provide a brief narrative with information about the school, its challenges and the strategies developed to address those challenges. The text of this narrative is submitted by the school to the SC Department of Education as part of the summer data collection for the *Report Card*. In 2008, under revisions of the Education Accountability Act (EAA), the *School Report Card* was shortened to an executive summary format of two pages, with a full online version to be posted to the state Department of Education website. Both versions of the *Report Card* include the narrative, which is to bear the name of the name and title of both the school's principal and the SIC Chair.

PARTICIPATE in the revision of the School Improvement Plan if a school is rated as "At Risk" on the *School Report Card*. (EAA)

The local district will provide direction and procedures for the revision of a School 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.

SIC Membership Requirements

The membership composition for School Improvement Councils was first set out in the Education Finance Act (EFA) of 1977. Ex-officio members were required by Act 135 in 1993. Information about membership and elections procedures should be outlined in the local SIC's bylaws. Participation on the SIC is an important contribution to education initiatives at the local level. As a publicly elected or appointed position, SIC membership should be considered a high-status position in a school and district.

Elected Members

In accordance with state statute (EFA, EIA), the elected members of the SIC make up two-thirds of the total membership of an SIC (excluding ex-officio members).

Parents
• A minimum of two parents are required by law to be elected by the parents of current students in the school.
• A parent may not serve as an elected representative of parents if his/her child no longer attends the school.
• Most SICs have more than the minimum number of elected parents in order to increase the base of representation.
• In deciding the number of parents serving on the SIC, the enrollment of the school, the number of grades in the school, or the various communities being served by the school may be considered.

Teachers
• A minimum of two teachers are required by law to be elected by the teachers in the school.
• Most SICs have more than the minimum number of elected teachers to reflect the representation of the grades, subject area or age groups of the school's students.

Students
• Students in a school with grades 9-12 are required by law to elect a minimum of two students to the SIC.
• Schools with grades other than 9-12 may elect students to the SIC if they desire.
• Most high schools have more than the minimum number of elected students to reflect the number of grades in the school.

Appointed Members

• In accordance with state law (EFA, EIA), appointed members represent one-third of the SIC (excluding ex-officio members).

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 70 to 75 percent of any given community.
• These appointments may include business and industry representatives, civic and social organization leaders, non-custodial grandparents, retirees, and social service agency or local government representatives.
• By law, these appointments **should not** include individuals eligible to be elected to the SIC (parents, teachers or students).
• In appointing community members, attention should be given to creating a balanced representation by gender, race, age, and location in the community so that the demographics of the SIC reflect that of the school.
• If an SIC wants to increase its number of community representatives, then the number of elected members must also increase in order to keep the required ratio in balance.

Ex-Officio Members
• These members of the SIC are included by virtue of the position they hold in the school or an organization associated with the school.
• By law, the school's principal is automatically considered an ex-officio member of the SIC.
• Act 135 does not set limits on the number of members in this category, but does make suggestions about what positions a school might include: business partner, Teacher of the Year, president of the parent-teacher organization, chair of the Title I Parent Advisory Council, or a previously serving SIC Chair.
• The reason the ex-officio category is included on the SIC is to bring all interested parties into the discussion and planning for improvement at the school.
• The local SIC's bylaws should indicate the voting status for the principal and other ex-officio members.

School administrators and SIC leaders should pay particular note to the legislatively-mandated ratio of elected to appointed members. SICs should always have **twice as many elected (parents, teachers, students) members as appointed (community) members.** These membership ratios ensure that all of a community's constituent groups have a direct voice in their local schools and that school principals receive a broad range of community advice and support in charting their schools' improvement and success. Ex-officio members are not included in the elected/appointed membership ratio set forth in law.

Terms of Service

Elected Members
• Elected members are required by law (EFA, EIA) to serve a minimum two-year term.
• 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 one-half of the membership in each category of elected membership to maintain a staggered election process.
• Staggered elected terms provide a continuity of membership and knowledge of the SIC's actions from year to year.

Appointed Members
• 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.
• The local SIC's bylaws should indicate the term lengths for appointed members.

Conducting SIC Elections

Elections for each of the categories of SIC membership are conducted 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 each has found achieves the most participation.

When?

• Elections for SIC members are required by law to take place no later than **October 15th** of each year.
• Fall elections take place early in the school year to provide time for the SIC to organize and begin its work before too much of the school year has passed.
• Schools are encouraged 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, an effective process for including the parents of rising students from feeder schools needs to be in place to give those parents the opportunity to participate.
• Spring elections also provide principals with the summer months to make community appointments to the SIC, ensuring a demographic balance for the SIC reflecting that of their schools.

How?

For parents, be sure to be inclusive and find ways to offer all parents the opportunity to run for the SIC. Pay special attention to recruiting parents from feeder schools and parents of four and five year olds entering school for the first time.

• Nominations are solicited through the school newsletter or other communication, at student registration activities prior to the start of school, at end-of-year events, and/or on the school's website.
• 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 an established method of school-home communication.

Practices that help parents participate in the election process include:

• Each candidate for election writes a brief statement of two or three lines about why he/she wishes to serve, with these statements published in the school's newsletter and/or on the school's website.
• Publish the picture of each candidate in the newsletter and/or on the school's website, on the ballot sheet, or on a flyer announcing the election date, time and place.
• Introduce the candidates at the chosen event and provide ballots for parents present, with voting conducted by the outgoing members of the SIC.
• To ensure that as many parents vote as possible, a ballot box should be made available to parents in the days before and/or after the event in the school's office or some other place convenient for parents.
• When balloting is completed and the votes counted, the principal should contact the newly-elected members to notify and immediately congratulate them on being selected for SIC membership.

Parents need to know who has been elected as their representative on the SIC. Ways for communicating information about newly-elected SIC members include:

• Listing the new members' names in the school newsletter, website and marquee.

• Place their pictures on a school lobby bulletin board.
• Announce the new members in the local newspaper.

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

• Teachers should be nominated in advance and the faculty 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 on the SIC supervise the counting of the ballots and announce the faculty's selection.

For students, elections are held when other class and student body officers are chosen. Nominations by grade level or at large are made according to the local SIC's bylaws.

Practices that help students participate in the election process include:

• Nominated students should write a brief statement indicating why they wish to serve on the SIC, with these statements and the candidates' pictures published in the school newspaper, website, on an information flyer, and/or on the ballot.
• Introduce candidates at an assembly or other event so those students voting get to know the students who are standing for election (especially if the school is large and each 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, with outgoing students and teachers on the SIC counting the ballots.
• Announce the new student SIC members at school, in the school newsletter, on the marquee, on the school website, and in the local newspaper.

Elections for New or Reorganized SICs

• 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" (drawing straws or slips of paper numbered "1" and "2") to determine which member(s) will serve only one year in the first year in order to get the staggered system started.
• For example, if an SIC has four parents elected in its first year, two parents will serve a one-year term and two parents will serve two-year terms. In subsequent years, all elected members will serve two-year terms.
• This procedure is also appropriate when the SIC is found to be inactive or nonfunctioning and the need to reorganize is recognized by a new principal or district staff.

SC-SIC Member Network Database

State law (Act 135) requires membership information on each local SIC to be reported to SC-SIC office no later than **November 15th** of each school year. The *SC-SIC Member Network*, an online membership database and information reporting system, provides a variety of membership services to the general public and the education community. It may be accessed via the SC-SIC web site at *sic.sc.gov*.

SIC District Contacts and school administrators can obtain user accounts and log onto the system to enter or obtain membership data for their own SICs. Member contact information and compliance reports for School Improvement Councils are available to school and district account holders. Security regulations require that district and school user accounts be reactivated each year.

A read-only function enables the general public to view SIC membership, compliance reports and *Reports to the Parents* for individual public schools anywhere in South Carolina. No password is necessary to access read-only information. Membership information is not downloadable but PDF files of schools' *Reports to the Parents* will be available for free public download.

Reports to the Parents are uploaded to the *SC-SIC Member Network* by the same school staff member(s) responsible for reporting the SIC membership to the state office via the *Member Network*. Only school and district personnel are authorized to obtain accounts for the *Member Network*; SIC members who are not school or district employees may not hold *Member Network* accounts. Using the *Member Network*'s read-only function, SIC chairs should confirm that the SIC membership has been reported by **November 15th** and that the *Report to the Parents* has been uploaded by **June 1st**.

Membership data is vital to SC-SIC in order to distribute newsletters and other important information and correspondence. The names and contact information 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. This data, along with individual SIC membership compliance, will also be made available to school district administrators, local school boards and other elected officials as appropriate.

SIC Officers

Leadership is an important ingredient for all successful organizations and the School Improvement Council is no exception. At a minimum, SIC officers include a Chair and a Recorder/Secretary. Many effective SICs also have elected a Vice Chair, and some have Co-Chairs. However, SICs should not have the elected office of Treasurer as they are public bodies without non-profit status, and therefore should not hold or maintain funds of any kind.

Both the elected and appointed members elect SIC officers. Some of the ex-officio members are officers in other organizations associated with the school (such as the PTA, PTO or PTSO) and should not be considered eligible as an officer of the SIC. The local SIC's bylaws will state how the election of officers occurs and who is eligible to vote for the SIC officers. The election of officers should be concluded prior to the **November 15th** membership reporting deadline so that this information may be entered into the *SC-SIC Member Network* database.

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

Overall Duties of the SIC Chair

• 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, district staff, and local school board.
• Sign documents assuring SIC participation, such as the school's annual *Report to the Parents*, the narrative accompanying the annual state *School Report Card*, and the budget submitted to the SC Department of Education for any incentive award expenditures.
• Appoint SIC members and others to serve on committees as needed.
• Monitor the *SC-SIC Member Network* to confirm that updated SIC membership information is posted by the school administration by **November 15th** of each school year and that the SIC's annual *Report to the Parents* is uploaded to the Member Network by **June 1st** of each year.

Monthly Activities of the Chair

• Prepare the agenda with the principal well in advance of the monthly meeting to allow time for the Recorder/ Secretary to send it to all members prior to the meeting and to have it posted publicly at the school and on the school's website.
• Conduct monthly meetings of the SIC, directing the action of the meeting through the agenda, and appointing committees as needed.
• Communicate regularly with the SIC subcommittee, project and task force leaders to support their activities and prepare them for reporting progress at the meetings.

Overall Duties of the SIC Vice Chair

• 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.
• Additional duties will vary according to local SIC bylaws.

Monthly Activities of the Vice Chair

• Coordinate with the SIC Chair to identify the actions needed.
• Additional activities will vary according to local SIC bylaws.

Overall Duties of the SIC Secretary/Recorder

• Maintain a set of records at the school for the SIC including current bylaws, current and past copies of SIC meeting agendas and minutes, current and past copies of the school's *Report to the Parents*, latest copy of the state *School Report Card*, and a copy of the current year's portion of the school's Five-Year Plan.
• Work with school staff to ensure that copies of the bylaws, current year's minutes, agendas, and other pertinent information is readily available to the public, or by posting it to an SIC section of the school's website.
• Assure the agenda is distributed to all SIC members at least five business days prior to the next meeting, and that a copy of the agenda is available for public view at least 24 hours prior to the meeting by posting it at the school or on the school's website.
• Record attendance at each meeting.
• Make a record of the actions taken at each meeting (using the agenda as a guide for reporting actions taken and giving summaries of discussion points where appropriate).
• Coordinate with the committees and school staff about having copies of materials prepared for each meeting.
• Summarize information about meeting actions for publication in the school's newsletter, website or local news media.

Monthly Activities of the Secretary/Recorder

• File the approved minutes or record of action in an SIC folder at the school and arrange to have them posted to the school's website.
• Distribute copies of the minutes/record of action of the previous meeting along with the agenda of the upcoming meeting to all SIC 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/newspaper the summary of the last SIC meeting and the agenda of the next meeting, and submit similar information to local news media.
• Keep the SIC District Contact informed of local SIC actions.

SIC 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.
• Chairs of SIC committees are not required to be elected or appointed SIC members.

SIC Voting

Voting procedures and criteria may vary among SICs. The local SIC's bylaws should indicate under what circumstances voting will be conducted, when consensus is used, what percentage constitutes a majority vote, and the voting status of ex-officio members.

Characteristics of Effective SICs

Research has found that effective School Improvement Councils share the following characteristics: strong principal leadership; SIC members receive training; written SIC bylaws or guidelines are in place; the local school district supports SICs; and SIC members feel 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 contributions. The principal promotes the status of the SIC in the school by:

• Charging the SIC with its role and responsibilities and stating the expectations for participation.
• Initiating a positive relationship with the elected SIC Chair to coordinate the development of the agenda.
• Providing materials, information and resources when requested.
• Establishing a routine procedure for distributing SIC communications including: disseminating meeting minutes and agenda; posting minutes in teacher work area and on email; placing meeting action summaries and agenda in the school newsletter and on the school website.
• Ensuring a positive working relationship exists between the school staff and the SIC's officers and members.
• Attending monthly SIC meetings and participating as appropriate.

Training

Every local school board is required by state law to establish an SIC at each school in its district and to provide for training of the membership of these SICs. Opportunities for training supported by the district might include:

• An annual district-sponsored orientation for new SIC members.
• Regional or state-level trainings about a topic related to school improvement strategies.
• Attendance at training sessions and conferences sponsored by SC-SIC.
• Networking with other SICs within the district or in other parts of the state.

Hollingsworth, S.T. (1986). A study of the functionality and effectiveness of School Improvement Councils in selected school in South Carolina.

• Access to resources provided by SC-SIC including training materials, newsletters, toll-free hotline (1-800-868-2232), and website (*sic.sc.gov*).

Written Bylaws or Guidelines

Effective SICs 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 an SIC file at the school, posted to the school's website, and each SIC member and the SIC District Contact should have a copy of the SIC's bylaws. Points to include in the bylaws should be:

• Purpose, responsibilities and duties of the SIC.
• Membership composition.
• Election and appointment procedures.
• Voting requirements.
• Officers and their duties.
• Council structure, including committees, tasks, events, and activities.
• Amendment procedures.

Sample bylaws addressing these points and covering all statutory obligations regarding SICs are available for local use and adaptation through the SC-SIC website, *sic.sc.gov*.

District Support

Support for SICs from the local school 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:

• An SIC District Contact appointed by the local district 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.
• Mileage reimbursement for SIC-related travel.
• District staff is available to attend SIC meetings and provide resources.
• Public recognition of SIC members serving each school.

Sense of Accomplishment

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. In this way, they 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. All members' ideas and positions are encouraged and respected, and communication is open and regular.
• The meeting schedule is most convenient to parents and community members, child care is provided and meeting materials are readily available.
• Response is timely to requests for information from SIC members about policies and budgets.

It is also important for SICs to effectively manage their time to maximize the efforts of their members and to undertake their various responsibilities in a consistent and productive manner. The SC School Improvement Council recommends that Councils meet no fewer than eight times each school year. To assist SICs in establishing and planning their yearly activities, SC-SIC has developed an annual School Improvement Council Calendar, available on Page 15 of this *Handbook* and online at *sic.sc.gov*.

In 1992, SC-SIC published the report *A Descriptive Study of Eight School Improvement Councils in South Carolina*, which formed the research base for a "School Improvement Council Self-Assessment Profile." Designed specifically as a teaching tool, this Profile can be used at the beginning of the school year to orient new SIC members and evaluate SIC efforts in the previous year, or to be used at both the start and end of each school year to examine SIC progress. Best used as a group exercise to stimulate dialogue and ideas for improving the functioning of SICs, the full Profile is available online at *sic.sc.gov*.

The Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award

The *Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award* is presented annually by SC-SIC to a local Council demonstrating exemplary leadership and actions resulting in improved public education in their community. The award is named for former U.S. Secretary of Education and South Carolina Governor Dick Riley and his late wife, Tunky, who were presented the inaugural award in 2002 "in honor and recognition of two people who sparked the flame of education improvement in South Carolina."

All SICs in South Carolina that have been convened for at least one year are eligible to apply for the *Riley Award*. Initial applications for the award are submitted in the fall of each year, with the naming of the award recipient in the spring. Throughout the process, applicants have the opportunity to be selected as an Honor Roll SIC, an award finalist with Honorable Mention, or the annual *Riley Award* winner.

Participating in the award process is an opportunity for SICs to celebrate their achievements, share strategies with others, ensure their compliance with state law, and provide much deserved recognition for hard-working volunteers. More information on the *Riley Award*, the application process and timeline, judging criteria, and application examples from previous award winners is available online at *sic.sc.gov*.

About the SC School Improvement Council

The South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) provides training and services to more than 15,000 parents, teachers, community members, students, and administrators serving on local School Improvement Councils in each of South Carolina's 1,100-plus K-12 public schools. Located at the University of South Carolina's College of Education, SC-SIC holds as its vision "to promote and support civic engagement for quality public education in South Carolina." To this end, SC-SIC sponsors local, regional and state training events on a variety of topics pertinent to SIC members and their leadership roles in local schools. SC-SIC produces and provides many printed, electronic and online materials to inform and assist SICs in their work, and maintains a toll-free hotline and website for SIC members – and members of the general public – to receive information, assistance, request materials and services, and schedule training activities.

Annual School Improvement Council Calendar

__August / September__
• With the principal, plan SIC election procedures (unless Spring elections are held)
• Arrange training for new members and distribute SIC Handbook
• Elect SIC officers and make committee assignments based on the school's Five-Year School Improvement Plan and the SIC's annual goals
• Begin collecting SIC membership and contact information for school staff to enter into state database (SC-SIC Member Network) by November 15th deadline

__October__
• SIC elections completed by October 15th
• Committees identify areas of Five-Year Plan to be monitored and organize for work on goals
• SIC begins review of school data such as surveys, test scores, demographics, and budget
• Schedule and attend SIC training (if not already completed)
• Apply for annual SC-SIC Riley School Improvement Award

__November / December__
• Current year's SIC membership and contact information submitted by school staff to SC-SIC Member Network by November 15th statutory reporting deadline
• Review data from annual School Report Card (as soon as it is available) and how it relates to Five-Year Plan
• Committees continue to monitor implementation of Plan strategies and SIC annual goals

__January / February__
• Share analysis of School Report Card data with parents and faculty
• Committees continue to monitor and report implementation progress of Plan strategies
• Identify SIC members to draft the SIC's annual Report to the Parents for current school year

__March / April__
• Review draft of the Report to the Parents; revise and finalize for publication
• Distribute Report to the Parents by April 30th to parents, community members and local SIC District Contact
• Attend annual state SIC conference and/or plan spring SIC training event
• Identify SIC members to work with the principal in drafting the narrative for the upcoming state School Report Card

__May / June__
• Summarize progress made on Five-Year Plan strategies and SIC annual goals
• Submit electronic copy of SIC's Report to the Parents to SC-SIC via SC-SIC Member Network by June 1st
• Finalize School Report Card narrative with the principal for submission mid-June
• Conduct SIC elections or begin planning elections process for Fall of the upcoming school year

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