

2016 Legislative Advocacy Program of the Year South Carolina School Boards Association

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



Deadline: October 14, 2016

Purpose

To recognize school boards that have developed and implemented an effective legislative advocacy program.

The Awards Committee may recommend winners from a small district (up to 2,999 students); a medium-sized district (3,000 to 8,999 students); and a large district (9,000 students and up).

Program Eligibility

- Programs must have operated for the most recent legislative sessions of the United States Congress and the South Carolina General Assembly.
- Evidence of program results must be included.
- Both the superintendent and the board chairman must sign the application certifying the eligibility of the program.

The Awards Committee is not limited to the number of recommended recipients.

More Information

The ability of school boards to carry out their mission is affected by decisions made at other levels of government.

SCSBA is looking for those boards that have identified legislative priorities based on SCSBA's resolutions and priorities, and using SCSBA's best advocacy program practices, have positively impacted the legislative process to improve public education in our state.

Judging and Recognition

All entries are judged by various governmental relations representatives from public education organizations, community activists and SCSBA staff.

Legislative Advocacy of the Year award recipients receive special recognition at SCSBA's annual Legislative and Advocacy Conference, news releases to local media and others as requested by the winner. SCSBA may further showcase winning programs in SCSBA publications, on the SCSBA Web site and at Boardmanship Institute workshops.

The board chairman and the board legislative contact receive the award, along with the superintendent.

2016 Timeline

- October 14: Nominations due to SCSBA
- Late October: Awards Committee submits recommendation(s) to SCSBA Board of Directors
- November: **Winners are notified**
- December: Award presentation at SCSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference

Instructions

See Nomination and Award Criteria Form for instructions.

For more information contact:

SCSBA Director of Governmental Relations and Communications Debbie Elmore, 1.800.326.3679 or delmore@scsba.org.

SCSBA Legislative Advocacy Program of the Year Nomination & Award Criteria Form
(Attach form to supporting nomination materials)

Name of School District Board Fort Mill School District Date 10/12/16

District size Small (up to 2,999 students) Medium (3,000 – 8,999) Large (9,000+)
(used for demographic purposes only)

Name of board member/staff completing nomination Kelly McKinney

Address 2233 Deerfield Drive, Fort Mill, SC 29715

Daytime phone 803.548.2527 e-mail mckinneyk@fortmillschools.org

Board chairman's signature  _____
(certifies that the board supports nomination)

Superintendent's signature  _____

Criteria

Tell how your program meets the criteria listed below by addressing the three criteria within a limit of five pages. You may also provide supporting materials, such as background information or newspaper articles. Please describe your program concisely and factually with specific examples.

1. Provide a copy of the board's Policy BJ – School Board Legislative Advocacy Program and BJ-R (administrative rule) supporting advocacy through board activities. (mandatory)
2. Describe the board's legislative advocacy plan for this past legislative session to include:
 - procedures for identifying legislative goals based on SCSBA's legislative priorities and resolutions;
 - the board roles and responsibilities of the Board Legislative Contact (BLC) or board committee to engage key contacts around education legislative issues, advocacy message development and delivery; and,
 - evidence of success.

Email to Debbie Elmore at delmore@scsba.org or mail to
SCSBA Awards, 111 Research Drive, Columbia, SC 29203
by **October 14, 2016**

2016 SCSBA Legislative Advocacy Program of the Year

Fort Mill School District

The Fort Mill School District's commitment to its mission, "Children First... Every Day," is at the heart of each decision made by staff, teachers, and trustees. The mission is as apparent in the district's classrooms as it is in its legislative advocacy program, where in 2016 the board of trustees worked tirelessly to advocate for South Carolina schools to be allowed school start date flexibility, ensuring that all students have equal access to curriculum, exams before semester break, and dual credit course alignment, among other benefits.

Legislative Advocacy Plan

In 2015, the Fort Mill School District Board of Trustees identified the state mandated school start date as a priority for the district's board of trustee's legislative advocate. The Fort Mill Board of Trustees felt that a change in state law was needed to allow start date flexibility. The benefits would include scheduling high school exams prior to Christmas break and balancing instructional days in semesters to ensure fair access to curriculum, among others (see attachment). Additionally, the Fort Mill School District believes that balancing instructional days and providing exams prior to Christmas break are among the things that administration can do to help support the Department of Education's College and Career Ready initiative.

Parent surveys were created to gauge parent feedback on calendar options both with and without school start date flexibility. A calendar committee made up of parents and administrators from each of the schools in the Fort Mill School District was also created to help gather feedback.

After feedback was provided, School Board Chairman Patrick White and the school board's legislative advocate Scott Patterson requested assistance from South Carolina Senator Wes Hayes in making changes to state law to allow school start date flexibility.

Senator Hayes responded with S. 1014, a bill that would change the school start date by one week, from no later than the third Monday of August to no later than the second Monday of August.

Chairman Patrick White and Legislative Advocate Scott Patterson, along with district staff members, attended Senate Education Subcommittee meetings to speak about the bill and its importance to students. Scott Patterson and district staff also attended a full committee meeting where he was able to speak afterward to each member of the committee to advocate on behalf of the bill's passage.

The board provided extensive materials to the Senate subcommittee and the SCSBA to aid in lobbying efforts, including:

- School calendars showing a start-date comparison.
- A brief guide explaining why the Fort Mill School District fully supports S. 1014.
- Parent survey information.

Parents were continually kept apprised of lobbying efforts via School Messenger (see included documents).

Board Roles and Responsibilities

The Fort Mill School Board selects a legislative advocacy chair annually to serve as a liaison between the school board and local, state, and national representatives, though all trustees strive to maintain active relationships with representatives. Representatives and trustees maintain contact through regular phone calls and emails. They also are invited to the school board's quarterly school visits, allowing trustees and representatives time to discuss concerns, ideas, and share district successes.

Trustees and staff also take part in frequent State of the Community events, providing an opportunity to update local and state representatives on the district's successes and challenges.

Evidence of Success

The Fort Mill School District has long been advocates for school start date flexibility. S. 1014 represents a real step forward in this long-standing discussion. The bill was approved by the Senate subcommittee with amendments, providing for an Aug. 15 start date. Though this still does not allow for the flexibility desired, there is hope that the issue is still alive and can continue to move forward with discussion and hope for more start date flexibility in the future.

As a result of the school start date discussions, the SCSBA began tracking calendars from South Carolina school districts, to better understand district calendars and the impact school start dates can have.

Additionally, we believe that discussions about S. 1014 sparked further discussions about consistency in testing, which is a benefit to all South Carolina students.

The Fort Mill School District will continue to work towards a system that allows districts the flexibility to do what is in the best interest of its students, keeping Children First...Every Day.