

Greer Middle School  
3230 East Gap Creek Road  
Greer, SC 29651

Stephanie Lackey, Principal  
864-355-5810  
[slackey@greenville.k12.sc.us](mailto:slackey@greenville.k12.sc.us)

Anne Kelsey-Zibert, SIC Chairperson  
3230 East Gap Creek Road  
Greer, SC 29651  
864-908-8259  
[akelsey@greenville.k12.sc.us](mailto:akelsey@greenville.k12.sc.us)

Greenville County School District

Application for 2022 Riley Award

## **Part Two - Case Statement**

### **Issue**

In 2020-21, our Greer Middle School population reflected a diverse population. Our racial/ethnic makeup was 21 percent Black, 24 percent Hispanic/Latino, 48 percent White, 5 percent two or more races, and 1 percent each Asian and American Indian. Eighteen percent of our students are special education students. Eleven percent had limited English proficiency. Seventeen percent are Gifted & Talented. This diversity is a great asset to our school. We strive to celebrate diversity and make all students and families feel included. We place a strong emphasis on student belonging through the Capturing Kids' Hearts program, and during the 2020-21 school year we were named a National Showcase School for Capturing Kids' Hearts.

At the start of the 2020-21 school year, our School Improvement Council (SIC) examined the needs of our school and students. Our students had just returned to in-person learning after school building closures during March-June 2020. Many students' families had experienced great hardship and stress due to the pandemic and other non-pandemic factors. Over 73 percent of our students were living in poverty at the start of the 2020-21 school year. We heard from counselors and teachers that many students were struggling with basic needs, and these basic needs sometimes prevented students from being able to learn. Since all school breakfasts and lunches were free to students in 2020-21 and our counseling department already had a robust Weekend Backpack program in place to help with food insecurity, our SIC determined that food was not the area we needed to address. We determined that creating a "Caring Closet" stocked with clothing, undergarments, and hygiene items would make a significant difference for our students.

### **Action Taken**

Once the need was identified, our SIC members worked with our counseling department to create a list of basic items most needed by students. These items included athletic shorts, sweatpants, t-shirts, sweatshirts, socks, underwear, sports bras, belts, deodorant, soap, lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, and washcloths. We determined that we would take a

multi-pronged approach to raise funds and secure items: a school fundraiser, Donors Choose, and an Amazon Wish List. We immediately started a Donors Choose project and all SIC members worked to promote it. The Donors Choose project was fully funded in less than two weeks, and we had items on the way. Next, we initiated a school-wide fundraiser and started an Amazon Wish List that we posted on our school website and social media, allowing any individuals from our school community or the greater community to easily donate our most-needed items. We designated a room in our building to be the Caring Closet and organized the items in a way that made everything inviting and easy to access.

There was one more item that we added to the Caring Closet: books for our middle school students' younger siblings or younger family members. Our SIC members acknowledged that sometimes students do not want to accept clothing or hygiene items due to feelings of pride. Even though the student might be experiencing significant need, he or she might not want to accept any items simply given to them. We decided that offering the student a book that he or she could read to a little sibling or cousin would provide our middle school students with a way to "pay it forward" while also serving to get more books into our students' homes. We used the FirstBook marketplace to obtain high-quality books for our Caring Closet.

## **Results**

The results of our Caring Closet have truly been tremendous for our school beginning in February 2021 when we first received items for our Caring Closet and began providing items to students. Students who otherwise would not be able to stay in the classroom due to issues with clothing, including wet or soiled clothes, have been able to change clothes and return to class quickly. Before the Caring Closet, there were cases when parents would have to leave work and lose pay due to bringing a change of clothes to their student. This is no longer the case. Students who were experiencing hygiene issues due to lack of basic items now have what they need to stay healthier and cleaner. The discrete nature of the Caring Closet allows students to receive what they need in a manner that is dignified and efficient. So far for 2021-22, we have tracked over 36 students who have

received much-needed items from the Caring Closet. Our students not only have what they need, but they also see that their school cares about them in many ways.

Anne Kelsey-Zibert

Anne Kelsey-Zibert

Greer Middle School

SIC Chairperson

December 1, 2021

Greer Middle School  
3032 East Gap Creek Road  
Greer, SC 29651

SC-SIC  
University of South Carolina College of Education  
820 Main Street, Suite 001  
Columbia, SC, 29208

Dear SC-SIC Awards Committee:

It is an honor to write in support of the Greer Middle School SIC's Caring Closet, an initiative started during the 2020-21 school year. I am currently in my third year as Principal of Greer Middle School and my eighth year overall as an administrator at Greer Middle. Our school is a community school with a very diverse population of students. There is strong pride among community members in our school along with great need. Over 70 percent of our students are considered to be a "pupil in poverty." Many of our families have experienced significant employment, housing, financial, and health challenges over the past two years due to the pandemic.

We want our students to do their best every day when they walk in our building. We have implemented the Capturing Kids' Hearts program school wide in order to build relationships with our students and provide them with a sense of belonging and security. But, sometimes, students' needs are at the most basic level. A student might need clean undergarments or warmer clothing. They may need hygiene products like soap, deodorant, or toothpaste. For these needs, the SIC Caring Closet has made a tremendous difference. It is a resource that allows counselors and administrators to quickly and easily access what a student needs to make that student feel more comfortable and confident and be ready to learn.

Our SIC saw a need at our school and worked efficiently during the 2020-21 school year to meet that need. Our SIC is truly deserving of the Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence for the work they have done for our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephanie Lackey". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Mrs. Stephanie Lackey  
Principal

Dr. Kim Brown  
Greer Middle School  
3032 East Gap Creek Road  
Greer, SC 29651

Dear SC-SIC Awards Committee:

The Greer Middle School Caring Closet has been a wonderful resource for my class. Working with students with special needs comes with needs that may differ from other classes. Our students often need undergarments, pants, and sometimes shirts. Having the Caring Closet available allows my students to stay in school without causing a major disruption to their day. It has been a very useful and appreciated addition to the school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr. Kim Brown". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Dr. Kim Brown

Dear SC-SIC Awards Committee:

What a joy it has been to see the growth of the Caring Closet in a little less than a year. What started as an idea during an SIC meeting has very quickly become a community wide initiative of helping our students be the best students they can be. Our students come to school to be equipped as lifelong learners but what we have seen throughout the years is that when social and emotional needs are not met, they are unable to fully thrive in their academics. 70% of students at Greer Middle School receive free or reduced lunch. While resiliency has become a learned skill, these students often lack the education and resources of how to best take care of themselves as growing adolescents. Because of the Caring Closet, our students come to Greer Middle School to learn but now get to leave with resources and necessities they did not have or know they needed to have. The Caring Closet has continued to provide hygiene items for our students ensuring they are learning how to take care of themselves and gain confidence in what it means as they go through a time of many bodily changes. Our specific population of students are growing up faster than those in other parts of the country due to parents working long hours and possibly not being there to take them to school or be there in the morning to help them get ready. When students are waiting at the bus stop for long periods of time in pouring rain, the Caring Closet has provided a change of clothes so that students can focus during class time without the focus being on how wet their clothing has become. Some students have even seen what all is in the closet and have brought friends who they believe could use an item or two. The Caring Closet is teaching students empathy and stretching their own sense of self awareness and teaching them to have a wider perspective.

Greer Middle SIC is deserving of the Riley Award because of the heart and passion behind the project. From the very beginning, our focus has been about the holistic needs of the students. There has been genuine energy amongst the members of the SIC knowing our end goal. We want to love on our students in school and out of school knowing their needs are met. This community and those driving the SIC have hearts that keep students as the priority. Not only was there energy around the initial idea, the energy has gained momentum through Donors Choose and with those in the community that have helped meet needs through our Amazon wish list as well as purchasing things and items on their own.

We are so excited to see the Caring Closet continue to thrive and provide the safe haven for our students and their families.

Sincerely,



Erin Fondren

Greer Middle School Counselor

## School Achievements

National Showcase School for Capturing Kids' Hearts 2020-21

Honors Band earned Superior with Distinction at the state Concert Performance Assessment 2019

7th and 8th Grade String Orchestra earned an Excellent rating for the SCMEA State Concert Performance Assessment 2020-21

Beta Club represented Greer Middle School at the SC state convention with two top-three finishes.

Two faculty members serve as state-wide trainers for Upstate Writing Project

Highest Giving Middle School in GCS for United Way 2020-21

SIC established a Caring Closet during the 2020-2021 school year to support students' basic clothing and hygiene needs.

Our Weekend Backpack Program is in its third year and provides staple foods for our students experiencing food insecurity.

Girls on the Run - Heart and Sole Program

Mindfulness Garden Club

## SIC Members

Anne Kelsey-Zibert, chair  
[akelsey@greenville.k12.sc.us](mailto:akelsey@greenville.k12.sc.us)

Community Members:

Kelli Fowler

Lisa Godfrey

Rebecca Lauriault

Jessica Sharp

Lizett Ramirez

Parents:

Sandy Huff

Atiba Jackson

Brandi Rauterkus

Sara Womack

Teachers:

Nena Barnett

Alicia Nicholson

Allison Rosemond

Ex-Officio

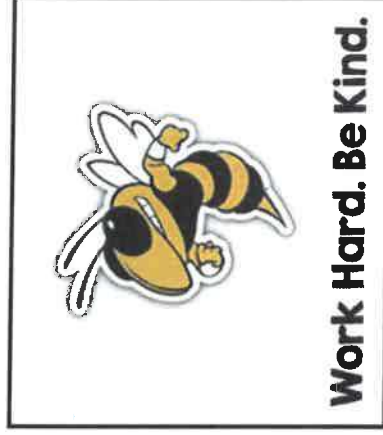
Stephanie Lackey, Principal

## Purpose of the Report

*"This Report is issued by the Greer Middle School's School Improvement Council in accordance with South Carolina law to share information on the school's progress in meeting various goals and objectives, the work of the SIC, and other accomplishments during the school year."*

## School Improvement Council Greer Middle School

## Annual Report to the Parents 2020-21



3032 E. Gap Creek Rd.

Greer, SC 29651

864-355-5800

<https://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/greerms/>

SACS Accredited

The mission of Greer Middle School is to empower students to become independent, productive learners who exemplify good character.



## Our School Population

Current enrollment is 1,077 students.

Demographics:

- Race: Black 21.5, Hispanic/Latino 24.8, White 46.5, Asian 0.9, American Indian/Alaska Native 1.3, Two or more races 5.0
- ESOL: 15.5
- Special Education: 20.0
- Pupils in Poverty: 73.2
- Gifted & Talented: 17.4

## SC School Report Card Spring 2019 SC Ready Scores

	ELA	Math
6th	37.4%	35.8%
7th	38.9%	27.0%
8th	45.4%	38.9%

	Science
6th	34.8%
8th	49.9%

SC Ready and SC Pass scores reflect the percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard.

## Student Achievement

At Greer Middle, we work to support our students' ability to meet the SC State Standards for all subject areas.

We help our students grow into well-rounded individuals who are able to take responsibility for their own learning.

### Performance Goals:

- 44% of students score Meets or higher on SC READY ELA
- 38% of students score Meets or higher on SC READY Math
- 44% of students score Meets or higher on SC PASS Science 6th Grade

### Programs to support students:

- Co-teaching for ELA and Math to support Special Education students
- Co-teaching for ELA to support English Language Learners
- Literacy Support through System 44 and Read 180 Programs
- Carnegie Learning with Mathia for all students in Math
- After-school remediation and tutoring
- Summer Program offered to all students
- Upstate Writing Project based writing instruction
- Gifted and Talented Courses
- High School Credit Courses

## Highlights

Greer Middle Schools is a **Capturing Kids' Hearts school** where we focus on building and maintaining positive relationships between our staff and students.

Engaging **social-emotional learning** through daily mindfulness minutes and weekly lessons through homeroom.

**Student-Led Goal Setting** gives students accountability for their work and provides communication between parents, their child, and teacher at school. It promotes dialogue regarding the work that has been completed at school.

## Parent Involvement

At Greer Middle School, we encourage parental involvement.

### Parent/Guardian Involvement Opportunities:

- 6th, 7th, 8th Grade Orientation
- Virtual Field Trip of the Campus
- PTSA Open House and Meetings
- GMS Virtual and In-Person Book Fair
- Black and Gold & 8th Grade Days
- Celebration of Excellence Awards
- Individual Graduation Plan Conferences
- Capturing Kids' Hearts Virtual Site Visit
- 8th Grade Car Parade,
- Band, Strings and Chorus Concerts
- PTSA and SIC

SC-SIC 2022 Riley Award  
Level Two Application  
Narrative

Our 2020-21 Greer Middle SIC overcame significant COVID-related challenges and disruptions to the school year to create a highly successful Caring Closet initiative. The Caring Closet serves as a positive force in supporting students at our school. Over 70 percent of our students live in poverty. There is a great deal of need, and that need can easily be overlooked in the effort to make sure we are teaching the academic standards. However, if students' basic needs are not met, it is difficult for them to be successful in their classes.

The Caring Closet also helps those who do not directly benefit from it. Teachers and staff are comforted knowing their students will have basic needs met through the Caring Closet. Additionally, members of our community who want to support our school can easily donate to our Caring Closet via our Amazon Wish List. We have had many generous donations from individuals, local businesses, and churches who see our Wish List link shared on social media or posted on our website. These donations create a positive connection between our school and the community.

One of the best aspects of the Caring Closet is the books for young children. We know our middle school students are often reluctant to accept items given to them, even if they are very much in need. One of the ways to make accepting something from the Caring Closet easier for our students is to ask them to "pay it forward" by taking a book home to read to a younger sibling or cousin. Students' faces light up and their demeanor softens when they know they can do something for someone else.

Our school is a National Showcase School for Capturing Kids' Hearts. Our faculty and staff strive to make our school a positive place that prioritizes the whole child. We are proud of the work our SIC accomplished in the 2020-21 school year to support our school and our students through the Caring Closet initiative.