

"The Northeastern Standard"

A Ninety-Day Report for the Period July 1-September 30, 2008

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Northeastern Conference
Department of Education
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To Principals, Teachers, Board Chairs, School Pastors, Department Directors and Administrators

Dear Education Family

Welcome to the "*Northeastern Standard*", a quarterly newsletter, shared with teachers, principals and workers and which will be available on the conference web-site. The "*Standard*" needs your ideas, your vibrancy and your support. We welcome you to an exciting quadrennial, 2008-2012. We invite you to become a part of our team. Share your questions, and comments on issues. We intend to reach out and harness the rich reservoir of talent in the Northeastern Conference constituency. Contact us at the above address, call (718) 291-8006, ext 250 or contact me directly at (978) 660-7293, cell.



Central Office Team—Meet the People

Our central office team consists of five resident persons and three other associates who teach in the schools.

Dr. Sylvan Lashley, superintendent, comes to us with a wealth of experience in K -16 Adventist schools. Originally from the Caribbean, he formerly served as a high school principal of a 700-pupil high school, a college/university vice-president of student services, a vice-president of academic administration, a three-time college president and a chair of K-12 accrediting teams in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America. He is certified to teach history and social studies in Michigan public schools and denominationally certified in administration. He has graduate degrees in education leadership, history, business and law and is listed as an online adjunct professor at several universities. His spouse, Rosita, is the director of admissions at Atlantic Union College in Massachusetts. At the present, he pastors a church. He will be responsible for the general coordination of the department, and specifically responsible for spiritual oversight, financial responsibility and accountability, resource development, strategy, the academy, and enrollment-marketing.

Gwen Wesley, the associate superintendent, in addition to instructional supervisory responsibilities, is specifically responsible to the superintendent for academic and evaluation standards, teaching and learning, employee performance in the elementary schools and customer satisfaction. She is tasked with integrating the Seventh-day Adventist and state standards in all schools through seminars and workshops. Mrs. Wesley, originally from California, has been a banker, a two-time elementary school principal in the Seventh-day Adventist educational system, and a supervisor with the New York City Board of Education where she is certified as a teacher. She brings a wealth of experience and has a graduate degree in administration-supervision. Her husband is a pastor in the Northeastern conference.

Laurent Servius, general field supervisor, has served as a principal at three schools in the conference. Originally from Martinique, besides supporting the superintendents in all their tasks, he is additionally responsible to the superintendent for teacher certification, pupil and staff personnel, the evaluation of customer satisfaction, external test reporting, Opening and Closing Reports, school registers, student academic records, staff documentation and compliance, special events, and technological issues. He has a graduate degree in Administration from Andrews University and in Languages from Montpellier University in France.

Pastor Raymond Alcock is the school chaplain. He is mainly responsible for organizing and establishing spiritual formation in consultation with the Bible teachers, area pastors and principals to put in place a spiritual master plan. He will also organize Weeks of Prayer, Rally (baptismal) days, and the all-school Bible challenge bowls.

Brigette Manie serves as departmental secretary. She holds degrees in Office Technology and Communication from Monroe Community College and from Empire State College respectively. Her main role is to coordinate the flow of office activity, assist the superintendency team with reports, dissemination and information storage of information, track departmental expenditures, communicate with all constituent groups, and quality control of outgoing materials and other areas as assigned. She succeeds Dawn Levy who now assists the Family Life Department. We thank Dawn for the super efforts and sacrifices that she made in the Education Office, and we can still call on her.

Associates in Administration--There are three other associates in Administration. **Marlene Alvarez,** the principal of the Northeastern Academy, and formerly the principal of the Hebron School, serves as the field supervisor for secondary grades which focus on the junior academies and any grade 11 centers. All 11th to 12th grade ventures on other campuses come under the

supervision of the Northeastern Academy in a specially affiliated relationship. Ms. Alvarez brings a strength of added supervision from her continued academic work in classroom management. **Lilith Coke**, a teacher at the R.T. Hudson school in the Bronx, and who is completing a Ph.D. in Special Education, serves as an advisor on special education issues to the superintendency team and to the Atlantic Union Conference. **Glenn Cassimy**, principal of the Westchester Area School, serves as an advisor on curriculum issues and is a central key person in the planning of our summer seminars.

Working Styles and Governance

Our work style is consultative, communicative and advisory rather than executive. We report to the conference president and to the Executive Committee of the Conference which has delegated its authority to the K-12 Board. The schools in Northeastern Conference belong to groups of churches and are governed by local school boards, with the exception of the Academy which is a conference school and has its own board. The educational team provides solutions and recommendations to school boards and works in conjunction with their recommendations. We do retain the final right of hiring recommendations for conference educational employees (for legal reasons) to the K-12 Board, but we work closely with the local school boards on these issues.

We are goal driven, transparent and direct in what we do, tying resources specifically to our goals. The K-12 Board establishes policy parameters within which we operate and we are guided in those operations by the Atlantic Union Code of Education to which every employee should have access. Our local boards provide governance by establishing directions and parameters, in working on recruitment and financial issues, and school principals provide administrative leadership for instruction. Together, the local boards and the conference effect a working partnership where the conference advises on technical legal, personnel and curricular issues. Truly, we are connected at the hand and the foot, the hip and the neck.

Department Directions

As a team we have proposed a number of directional emphases to the schools and to our K-12 Board emanating out of our own onsite visits to schools, and the vision and mission statements stated below. We work in the rich tradition of Seventh-day Adventist Educational philosophy where we maintain "that the work of education and redemption is one" and the inclusion of Biblical instruction in our daily curriculum. We are reminded that Jesus preached, taught and healed. We fervently believe that "all of our children should be taught of the Lord".

We have subjected all that we do to a "treatment model" explained below and began the implementation of the model when we visited all seventeen schools within the first two weeks of the school year to identify issues and problems, observe teaching and make recommendations. Out of that process,

we are building a consensus of recommendations, and specific actions tied to resources of dollars and personnel and a time-line to indicate how we shall move forward.

We plan to include all stakeholders of teachers, students, administrators, parents, pastors, church educational secretaries and home and school association leaders in the implementation of this Manifesto:

Diagnosis-----Alternatives—Prescriptions—Implementation—Follow-UP
Problem Identification----Consensus-----Recommendations-----Action & Budget-----Evaluation

Vision Statement—the Department of Education is becoming a fully functioning unit with its own quarters to continuously enhance and support schools in the areas of personnel, student life and spiritual formation, enrollment/marketing, technology, exceptional students, curriculum and instruction, finance, resource development, school plant, and administrative systems

Mission Statement—the mission of the Department of Education is to provide structure and accountability which allows students, teachers and administrators to secure opportunities for academic, spiritual and emotional advancement within the Seventh-day Adventist tradition

Goals for the 2008-2009 school year

1. **Spiritual—Spiritual Formation in the lives of students as evidenced by student conduct and baptisms**
 - a. A quantitative baptismal goal for each school
 - b. A Qualitative goal of student lifestyle improvement, personal integrity, faith in Christ, community of trust and respect
 - c. A spiritual master plan outlining more specifically the goals, the personnel, the timeline and resources for spiritual formation

2. **Academics—Rigorous Standards in learning and instruction as evidenced by student performance**
 - a. Satisfactory and improved scores on internal and state tests
 - b. Improved pedagogical skills and teaching to denominational and state standards
 - c. Diverse learning opportunities and improvement of the classroom learning environment

3. **Financial & Administrative Systems—Accountability and fiscal responsibility as evidenced by improved collections and timely remittances, and administrative and systems**

supportive of teaching and learning as evidenced by effectiveness and efficiency

- a. An upgraded school remittance funds policy
- b. Upgraded collections policies
- c. **A** policy on Fiscal Exigency
- d. Health policies for unsubsidized employees
- e. **S**trategic Budgeting and Planning for budgets and cash flow
- f. Satisfactory enrollments in each school through a conference-wide enrollment marketing plan
- g. The development of an education endowment fund and fund-raising
- h. Continuation of the Technological Development plan
- i. Personnel Improvement Plan
- j. Improvement of Governance and Leadership at Board levels

4. Excellence in Service to Customers—as evidenced by satisfaction surveys of the major goal areas

- a. **S**trengthen relationships with parents and the wider community
- b. Provide quality service to all publics
- c. Provide structure and accountability to administrators, students, teachers and parents

Mantra—“SAFE” Schools

We promote “SAFE” schools in the Northeastern Conference. Every school in 2008-2009 must demonstrate to its publics specifically how it is a “safe” school. It is that “safety” that we will market and promote to parents and stakeholders as a more excellent Christian Seventh-day Adventist product, and to which we have allocated personnel, and budgetary resources.

Spiritual—Spiritually Sound (the chaplain and the superintendent)

Academics—High academic standards (the associate superintendent)

Fiscal and Administrative Systems Responsibility (superintendent, field supervisor)

Excellence in Service—a customer Service focus (associate superintendent, office secretary)

Staffing Report

The schools are staffed by an increasing high performance cadre of teachers and principals. The Department requires, expects and inspects for excellence in teaching and learning. Where an employee is found not to measure up the

rigors and standards of teaching and administrative excellence, then opportunities, guidance and instructions are given for improvement. Where there is no satisfactory improvement, then the employee is relieved of his/her duties.

Accordingly, several principals and teachers are pursuing advanced and terminal degrees and keeping current with their denominational certification, a departmental requirement. Of the eighteen schools, more than 50% are staffed by individuals who are pursuing terminal degrees or specialist degrees that would past muster under the federal No Child Left Behind Act for qualified teachers. To begin this new school year, twenty-two new persons were elected or appointed to duty (excluding transfers made between schools), representing 20% of the employee work-force. Approximately 10% of the workforce including principals are pursuing and completing doctoral degrees in education.

New Employees

| Names | Educational Background | School |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Rosalind Aaron, teacher | Ph.D. in Curriculum and Supervision, Principal of the Antigua SDA School | Berea Academy—replacement |
| James Bennett | Vice-Principal, coming from Pine Forge Academy as Dean of Boys | Northeastern Academy—responsible for discipline |
| Antonie Brady | Music teacher | Northeastern Academy |
| Kimberly Cail | Transferring from the South Atlantic Conference, Bachelors degree from AUC | Berea in Boston |
| Katherine Castellon | Spanish teacher with B.A. from Maryland | Bethesda Jr. Academy |
| Jacqueline Chase | M.A. in Information Technology | Hebron |
| Celestine Creighton | M.A. in Ed. Psych, and former vice-principal at Bahamas Academy in Nassau, Bahamas | Bethel |
| Katia Dauphin | | Bethesda |
| Mary Ann Edgar Robinson | B.A., Transferring from Allegheny West Conference in Virginia | Hartford Area School |
| Raquelvy De Jesus Garcia Justiano | B.A. degree; transferring from Greater New York | Brockton Area school |
| Trenton Hamidan | Masters degree, transferring from Greater New York | Hanson Place |
| Mekisha Hugh-Hampton, | Degree in History | Northeastern |

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------|
| | | Academy |
| Esther Kerr | Principal, completing doctorate in education | Jamaica School |
| Marva Marret | M.Sc in Biology; M.A. in Ed. Leadership | Hartford Area School |
| Celes McGeachy | B.A. in English, AUC | Northeastern Acad |
| Hance Philippe | Bible Teacher & Global Studies, M.Div from Andrews University | Northeastern Academy |
| Merdell Richards | M.A. in Education | Hebron |
| Cassandra Valbrun | M.A. in Education, tr from South Atlantic Conference | Hebron School |
| Gwendolyn Wesley, Admin | M.Sc. in Administration; associate superintendent transferring from New York City Board of Education | Asst. Superintendent |
| Sylvan Lashley | Ed.D., & J.D., from pastoral district in Brockton, MA | Superintendent |
| | | |
| Yunior Herrera | B.A. degree, Spanish—replaced deceased teacher | Northeast Acad |
| Brigette Manie | Office Secretary | Central Office |

Enrollment Round-UP

Enrollment Increases/Decreases--Of the 17 schools reporting, six experienced enrollment increases and eleven had decreases, three of which were significant. The largest decreases were at the Academy, Bethesda, Westchester and the Hartford Area school and the largest increase at the Excelsior and Hanson Place schools. Where decreases were significant, steps are being taken to make the appropriate adjustments. In several cases, schools decided not to re-enroll students with large past due balances and so experienced a decrease. Enrollment remains our greatest area of challenge as we face the future.

Enrollment Management Marketing Team--For this purpose, the Office of Education has commissioned an enrollment-marketing team to develop a conference-wide recruitment and enrollment-marketing plan which will be launched between February 15-20, 2009 at our Albany Training Session and especially in an extended period (February 19-20) when we will convene all Home and School Leaders and Educational Secretaries of the churches. In addition, special care is being given to improved and heightened academic

standards in teaching content and delivery, to improve libraries and to plan for intensive professional development.

North American Division Enrollment Marketing Seminar—the North American Division is conducting an enrollment management seminar for principals, teachers and administrators this February 18-20, 2009, in Portland, Oregon, at the annual meeting of the Association for Seventh-day Adventist School Administrators.

Academic Round-UP

Improved Student Performance--It is the intent and vision of the Department of Education to improve scores on all internal and external examinations. To this purpose, we are incorporating and integrating both the Seventh-day Adventist standards and the state standards to allow students to improve in their performance of state examinations. A sub-committee consisting of school principals and the associate superintendent are tasked with this integration.

Teacher Improvement-- We have commissioned several workshops along this purpose with the first beginning on October 19 where principals and selected master-teachers will be trained in certain skill methodologies in areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. That emphasis continues in February 19-20, 2009 in Albany, New York at a special retreat for all educational personnel and again from August 2-5, 2009 in Rhode Island for all teachers and pastors. We have also selected new books for this current school year, and established a base professional library for school principals and school teachers at the Central Office. More than 75% of our central office time will be spent in schools, assisting with the supervision and implementation of these standards

Admissions Process—our principals have voted to strengthen and tighten our admissions process by conducting interviews with all incoming new students and using placement examinations where necessary.

Education Summit Concept, February 19-20, 2009—The K-12 Board voted to approve in principle an "Education Summit" to follow on the heels of the Albany Training Institute from February 15-18. The purpose of this summit is to launch a conference wide school recruitment plan for home and school association leaders and education secretaries, and to continue the academic standards implementation. The provost of Andrews University, Dr. Heather Knight, will be the keynote speaker and several other professional persons will be present. The details of costs will be shortly communicated.

Academic Program Adjustments—there are several program adjustments that the K-12 Board recorded. There will be no 11th and 12th grades at the Rochester Junior Academy, the Hartford Area School or the Bethesda School for 2008-2009 because of inadequate enrollment to financially support an 11th Grade. Students at these institutions desirous of an 11th grade education may pursue the same through Griggs University, the Seventh-day Adventist Distance Education University for K-16 education. Students selecting the Griggs model will receive school administrative services support at their schools. Both the Hartford Area School and the Rochester School are following the Griggs plan for the 11th grade. The only school at which there will be a traditional 11th grade will be the Excelsior school in Brooklyn.

Pastors and Teachers Convention for the Atlantic Union Conference—each teacher should plan to be present at the Atlantic Union Conference Pastors/Teachers Bible Conference being held in Rhode Island, from August 2-5, 2009. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Financial and Administrative Systems Round-UP

Remittance and Collections Policy--The K-12 Board voted new remittance and collections policy that allows schools to deposit remittances directly and electronically into the conference school account and places under financial exigency if remittances are 90-days in arrears. Each school will be monthly billed.

Financial exigency Policy—this policy establishes certain warning signals and criteria by which a school will be judged to be in financial exigency and allows the superintendent to bring recommendations to the K-12 Board for personnel adjustments or any other measure to bring a school into balance even in the midst of a school year.

Subsidized Teachers—How it Works-- For each subsidized teacher, schools remit \$3327.00 monthly to the conference. If a teacher is paid \$45,000 per year, then the school remits \$33,270.00 of the amount and the conference the remainder of \$11, 730.00 when all portions are paid up. For the 2008-2009 school year, the conference absorbed the 4% salary increase. In return, the conference sends a check for the full salary directly to the teacher. Remittance points to the conference are on the 25th and the 10th of a month. The total remitted amount from schools is \$354,000.00 monthly for ten months.

School Principals' Support--The conference pays the principals fully and separately, and stands all benefit costs for subsidized employees. Salaries are paid out for a 10-month contract in 12 months of 24 installments except for principals. Whereas schools owed the conferences \$3.2 million from January to

July 2008, the schools have made an improvement in their September remittances. This has been another area of concern to the conference leadership

Balanced Budgets--Each school is required to submit a balanced realistic budget to the conference. Where budgets are not realistic, superintendency personnel, as they have been assigned to schools, will sit with local boards to assist. Further assistance and support is now provided by the conference treasury where one of the Associate treasurers, Mr. Edson Bovell, has been assigned to work with the schools in areas of budgeting and audit control.

Technology Plan—A \$1.6 million plan for technology improvement was launched under the leadership of the former superintendent Dr. Pollyanna Barnes, as a part of the Strategic Educational Plan for the conference. The Plan involved the provision of technological software services to schools and the installation of T-1 computer lines to schools from a special government grant for services and for hardware with conference and school participation. The Plan will be continued in a financially feasible manner.

The 2009 Budget Year--The Department of Education Budget consists of Salaries and Salary expenses, Special Travel and a General Education Expense account. The new 2009 budget will specifically now be tied to the established goals and line items for those goals to reflect SAFE schools and the programmatic costs associated with implementing the "SAFE" Schools program.

Health Policy and Personnel Matters

Health Insurance--In the visits to schools, the superintendency team has noted a large number of auxiliary non-certificated personnel as well as unsubsidized certificated personnel that school boards have hired, who are paid at different rates from the subsidized teachers and who have no health insurance. Since these events represent a potential liability issue for the conference and the schools, the K-12 Board has taken the position that all employees present at a school should be brought into some type of subsidized health policy. The Superintendent team will be in discussion with local school boards to see how to best implement these directions and a more specific policy will be voted at the K-12 Board after consultation with school boards.

Background Checks--The Office of the Superintendent will conduct background checks on all employees/persons working on the school compound including volunteers and/or anyone else that works with the children. The Conference has retained a firm that will assist with such compliance efforts.

Personnel Audit—The Superintendent’s office is also tasked with completing a full personnel audit of schools to record compliance with legal status issues. As a result, the Office of Education has recommended and the K-12 Board has voted a moratorium on new hirings through visa filings until it investigates and clears any present anomalies in the system.

Hiring Standards—Unsubsidized Employees--The Department will also be reviewing the hiring standards for all unsubsidized employees as practiced by local boards, and recommending equal standards to minimize liability in pay differentials for equal qualifications and work.

Central Substitute Registry--The Department of Education will also operate a central substitute registry where all substitute teachers who are called to teach in schools will first be registered through the Central Office for legal compliance, background checks and teaching ability.

School Employees--The K-12 Board has taken a position that no person should be employed in a school where the Department of Education is not knowledgeable about the presence of such a person BEFORE the person appears in the school room. This is to avoid liability issues, and help protect the schools by allowing for pre-background checks and compliance issues.

Practices and Procedures Manual--The Department is collating a practice and procedures manual for teachers (in the context of the Atlantic Union Code of Education) that deals with a number of issues as they specifically relate to Northeastern Conference. These issues involve the resettlement and relocation of teachers, rental advances, salary and payroll matters, health insurance benefits, and tax filing matters.

Teacher Grievances—the formation of a personnel committee of the School Board and/or the Executive Committee of the K-12 Board is being studied for the purpose of establishing a hearing committee for teacher grievances which are not resolved at the level of the school or the Superintendent and/or which the superintendent decides to recommend to this committee.

Governance, Leadership and Visibility

Local School Boards--The Department of Education will improve governance and leadership in the system by conducting periodic Board seminars and workshops for local boards and will assist Boards with any recommendations for implementation. We observe that there is an overlap between governance and administrative functions in some schools between Board chairs and principals. A retreat for Board chairs has already been planned.

K-12 Board Sub-Committees—the Department advises on the improved efficiency and effectiveness of the K-12 Board by its proposal to have sub-committees of the K-12 Board which will consist of Board members and may consist of staff persons and constituent advisors. The Board sub-committees being proposed are Academics, Spiritual and Student Life, Personnel, Enrollment/Marketing and Finance. Sub-committees will work between Board meetings on matters and bring recommendations back to the Board through the Office of the Superintendent and the Executive Committee of the Board. The K-12 Board will act on this concept at its next meeting.

In-House Committees--The Department has established an in-house committee on Technology and another on Enrollment Management to keep track of developments in these areas and to monitor the progress of the Department in these areas. We also serve on several union committees in the areas of curriculum, certification and general administration

Visibility and networking—our staff speak in churches, sit on panels, deliver seminars, meet with public officials in the major cities where we have Seventh-day Adventist schools. Our staff members are well known and recognized for their craft throughout the New York and New England area. We seek to build networks now into the churches where there are professionals in all areas and will be building a database of such persons in the very near future, church by church for purpose of consultation, networking and collaboration.

The Department of Education—what we really do? The staff of the Education Department visits schools primarily to support the principals in their quest for instructional improvement and the accreditation and re-accreditation of schools. We recommend policy, relate to the Atlantic Union Conference in filing reports, developing curriculum, handling certification and relate to other regional conferences. We relate to the education departments of Oakwood University and Atlantic Union College, identify resources for project implementation, communicate with pastors and Board Chairs in school areas, and relate to other departments of the conference. We work with the K-12 Board and local boards in keeping the schools spiritually sound, academically strong, financially responsible, and legally safe through inspection and compliance. Each individual in the central office has specific work duties in addition to visitation schedules. We sit on the conference president's administrative council, on the Executive Committee of the Conference and we assiduously call schools on the 25th and the 10th of a month regarding their remittances. We also sit on all the seventeen local school boards where they deal with personnel matters and review Minutes of meetings from these Boards. Here is an idea of some of our activity in one month

1. October 3, Berea School Board
2. October 9, Excelsior School Physical Plant Evaluation—Atlantic Union

3. October 10 (pm), Lebanon SDA church
4. October 14, Hartford Area School Visit Evaluation—Atlantic Union
5. October 14, Connecticut Pastors' Schools Consultation
6. October 16, New York City pastors consultation
7. October 18, Linden SDA church
8. October 19, Specialist Teachers Meeting & Principals, Bethesda School
9. October 20-22, Union Education Council
10. October 23, Massachusetts Pastors' Consultation
11. October 26, Local Board Chairs Workshop
12. October 27-30, Workers Meeting, Victory Lake & Workshop on Immigration Compliance Issues (school principals)
13. November 16-18, Non-Public Schools meeting (principals), Albany
14. November 17-19, Education Meetings at the Atlantic Union Conference
15. November 23, Executive Conference Committee
16. December 7-10, Oakwood University and Regional Superintendents Meetings