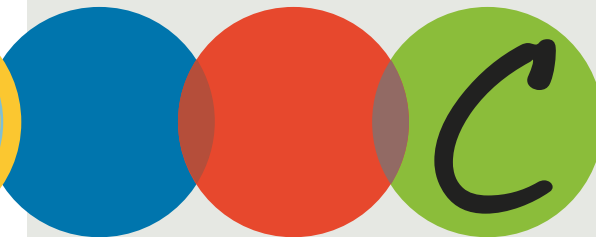
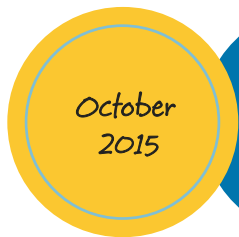
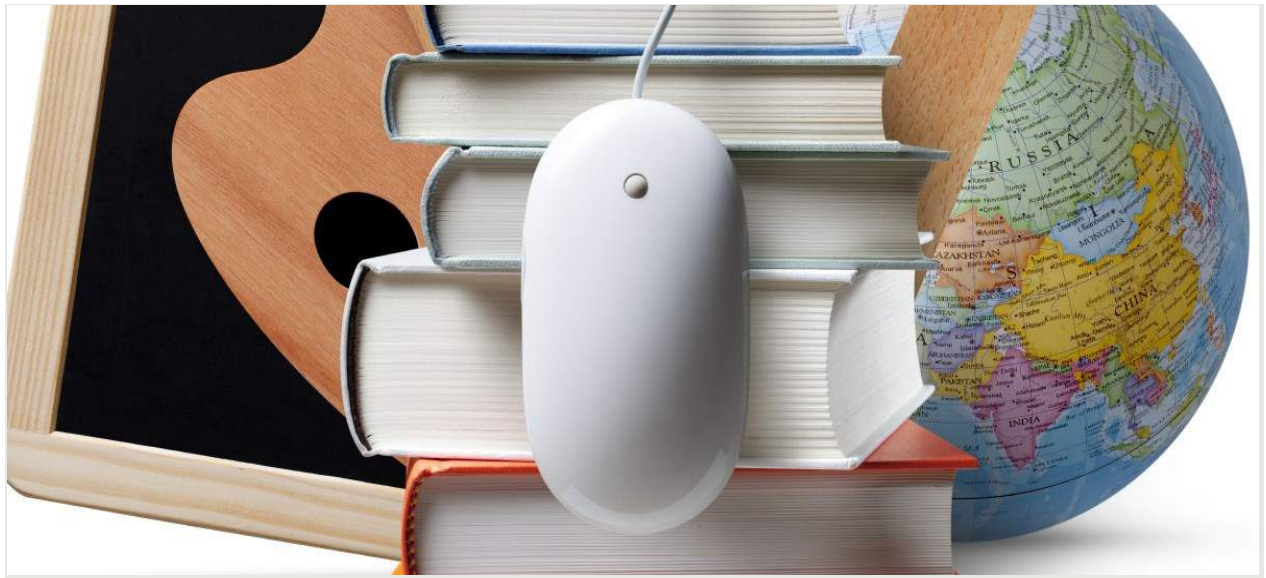


A monthly  
newsletter  
filled with practical,  
research-based  
articles for K-12  
educators across the  
North American  
Division



# the **crae** Connection

## A Note from the Editor

Several weeks ago, my family was enjoying a quiet afternoon at home. My husband was mowing the backyard and our two small girls were outside, alternately playing with the dogs, digging in the dirt and “helping” clean out our pool. I was just about to call them inside for dinner when our four-year old burst through the back door, dripping wet. I gaped at the small person in front of me, puddles already forming around her feet. But before I could even open my mouth to ask, she announced, “I have good and bad news. The bad news is – I may have gotten a little wet.” “But the good news is,” she continued triumphantly. “*I didn’t die!*”

It’s all about perspective, isn’t it? A child’s perspective on an accidental foray into the shallow end of the pool is different from a parent’s perspective on said situation. A teacher’s take on a student’s progress in school may not be the same as a parent’s perception, and two administrators may have the same job description but use completely unique approaches to their responsibilities.

In this month’s issue of *Connection*, we want to share with you some thoughts about *perspective* – sharing yours and gaining another’s. In *The Chalkboard* and *The Locker Room*, we discuss upcoming parent-teacher conferences and how to use that time most effectively to communicate your thoughts while also listening to a parent’s concerns. Over at *The Desk*, we explore the idea of shadowing another administrator to gain a different perspective for your job.

Blessings to you as we enter into this fall season! The bad news is – you still have six and a half weeks until Thanksgiving break. The good news is – you have over one hundred days left in the school year to share Jesus with your students!

*Perspective.*



### THE CHALKBOARD

“My Student, Your Child”

Collaborating with parents

for the student’s best outcome.

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### THE LOCKER ROOM

“Student-led Conferences”

Involve students in parent-

teacher conferences!

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“Shadowing for Perspective”

Consider the benefits that shadowing a principal might offer.

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# The Chalkboard: notes for the elementary educator

## My Student, Your Child

As a classroom teacher, you spend 6-8 hours, five days a week with your students. During that time, you talk to them, you listen to them, and you read to them. You button up sweaters, tie shoelaces, blow noses, and wipe away tears. You hear about fights at home, funerals for pets, and prayer requests for family members. You attend birthday parties and piano recitals, soccer games and spelling bees.

### *You know your students.*

As parents, they have watched their baby grow into the walking, running, laughing, chattering individual he/she is today. They know that oatmeal-with-thinly-sliced-bananas is their son's favorite breakfast and that seamless socks are the only thing their daughter can be convinced to wear on her feet. They can tell you that their child is anxious about speaking up in class or that his grandma is in the hospital or that she can't see the board clearly from her seat.

### *They know their child.*

Far too often, parent-teacher conferences take on the guise of a custody battle, with each side trying to one-up the other. Parents come in with their own agenda, which causes the teacher to become defensive, which leads to misunderstood statements and an altogether unproductive conference.

And to what end? We are on the same team! You know your students and they know their child. *Both* perspectives are valuable and necessary as they each bring a different facet and understanding of the child into the conversation. A friend recently told me about a meeting she had with her son's teacher to discuss his disruptive behavior in class. After talking over some of the instances, they were able to identify a pattern: he was most often unruly and inattentive during and after chapel, which was every Wednesday morning. This proved significant as my friend realized that her son was going to bed extra late every Tuesday night due to his siblings' volleyball matches that season. The 15 minute conversation ended up resulting in a change in schedule, a happier, more productive student, and a strengthened teacher-parent relationship.



Here are some ideas to explore as you begin planning for your parent-teacher conferences:

**Prepare the parent.** It's hard to fit everything into a 20 minute conference, so some teachers have found it helpful to send a pre-conference letter to all parents. The letter can briefly state some of the things you'd like to cover in the conference, as well as ask parents to note a few things – if any – that they specifically want to discuss. This sets up both parties with a clearer understanding of what to expect in the meeting and lessens the risk of anyone being blindsided by a big, previously unnoted, issue.

**Speak their language.** Be aware of any educational jargon that may befuddle parents. You may be able to rattle off Common Core terms or policies from the school handbook, but remember that parents may not be as well versed in those areas. On related note, if a parent is not fluent in English and may have difficulty understanding you and/or sharing his/her own thoughts, do try to enlist the aid of a translator. Not only will the conversation be much more productive, but that gesture alone demonstrates a respect for the parent that will be much appreciated.

**Show evidence.** Because parents aren't in the classroom with you day in and day out, it's important that you *show* them tangible products of their child's time and effort in your room. Be prepared with some examples of their best work as well as assignments where they seemed to struggle.

As you prepare for your conferences this fall, we would encourage you to continue being intentional about collaborating with your parents by sharing your perspectives and remembering that you *both* care deeply about your student.



## The Locker Room: notes for the academy educator

### Student-led Conferences: A Striking Alternative

As a high school teacher, you probably have first-hand experience with the lack of parental involvement at the academy level. While your colleagues on elementary campuses can often have a plethora of hot lunch helpers and field trip drivers, academy classrooms are generally not teeming with parent volunteers. But for good reason, right? We *want* our children to become more independent and more self-sufficient as they grow up. Parents help lay a good foundation for their students by carefully going through homework and helping to check for missing assignments – but by the time those students are in high school, the expectation is that they can manage those tasks – and more – on their own.

Does that mean, however, that parent-teacher conferences are not useful or relevant at the high school level? Absolutely not. You want parents engaged and involved with their academy student, and it is *still* – and perhaps even more so – important that teenagers know that their parents care – about their education, about their daily lives, about *them*.

So how do we update the standard parent-teacher conference model to reflect the different needs of academy students? Some schools offer conferences only through appointments; the teacher has a list of available times and parents can reserve one if they'd like. Other schools hold conferences in the gym or cafeteria; all teachers have their own table and are required to be present on

that designated evening. Parents can wander through the room and wait in line for whichever teacher they'd like to meet with to have a 5-10 minute conversation with them.

While both models are efficient, they don't seem to provide the structure or environment that engenders genuine, helpful, substantive conversation about the progress of each student.

One method that many high schools have explored is the student-led conference (SLC), in which students are responsible for presenting a prepared portfolio to their parents, discussing their work, answering questions and leading the conversation. The teacher is there to help facilitate, but the student takes complete ownership of his/her work as well as the conference. Advocates of SLCs maintain that this structure not only holds students closely accountable to their successes and failures, but it also allows students to develop real-life skills such as talking with adults, advocating for themselves, and articulating their own self-reflections. Parents have seemed to respond positively with attendance at conferences skyrocketing up from 45% to 90% for one school in Oregon after switching from traditional conferences to SLCs.

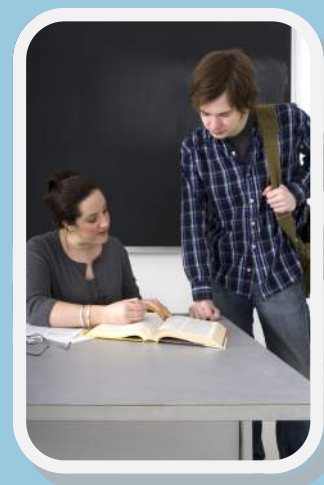
If you're considering SLCs for your school or just your classroom, here are some ideas to explore:

**Prepare your student.** Just because this is a *student*-led conference doesn't mean you can be completely hands off. What should go into the student portfolio? What

would be most representative of his/her work? How should the student start and end the conference? Guiding them through this process of preparation will make for a much more productive conference.

**Allow for ample time.** SLCs take more time than traditional conferences, but it's *because* of the candid, dynamic conversations taking place. Squeezing SLCs into a 10 minute slot simply won't suffice.

**Evaluate the experience.** Whether it's through a rubric or survey or other method, make sure you allow both parents and students to comment on their experience with the SLC. Their feedback is vital for you to determine if it is an effective structure and/or make any changes for the future. **Allow for ample time.** SLCs take more time than traditional conferences, but it's *because* of the candid, dynamic conversations taking place. Squeezing SLCs into a 10 minute slot simply won't suffice. changes for the future.



## 100 Reasons WINNERS!!!

For over three months, we did the digital equivalent of knocking on doors to solicit the Adventist community's reasons for believing in and valuing Adventist education. We were delighted by the responses that came pouring in through our survey, Facebook page and email. As we read through each submission, it was evident to our staff that Adventist education is indeed priceless. Please know that your ministry in your classroom and on your campus is prayed for and appreciated.

The Center for Research on Adventist Education sponsored four prizes for submissions, and we are pleased to announce the winners of the 100 Reasons!

### The \$100 Amazon gift card recipient:

*Rebecca Lindor* – a paralegal who works and lives in Monterey, CA. One of her reasons for Adventist education was: “Adventist education cares. Teachers are well-educated, caring women and men who focus not only on the academics, but also on the individual student's emotional and spiritual education. Faculty and staff at every SDA school I've been privileged to visit or work at have the same goal. . . to educate not only for the future, but for eternity.”

### \$25 Amazon gift card recipients:

*Josue Silvestre*: “Adventist education truly provides faith-based principles for students to succeed in this world and the world to come in heaven.”

*Larry Geraty, Professor Emeritus, La Sierra University*: “Adventist education has always pushed me to learn, to value evidence, and to recognize excellence.”

*Ryan Gullett, graduate student, La Sierra University*: I would send a student to an Adventist school because they outperform schools across all demographics. Adventist education truly educates kids for success with a holistic approach that can't be matched.

Thank you so very much for all of your submissions. We look forward to sharing them with our community on Facebook as well as in a future marketing piece.



# The Desk

## notes for the administrator

### Shadowing for Perspective

When I was hired for my first administrator position at the ripe old age of 25, I tried to stem the rising tide of panic by immediately calling a trusted mentor and asking for his sage advice. While he had many helpful things to share, he also made a comment that gave me long pause. “You should know, Aimee, “ he said slowly. “It's lonely at the top.”

And it is, isn't it? For those of you who are veterans, who have sat behind that desk for years, who have played the role of janitor, bookkeeper, after-school care supervisor, gardener and librarian – you know all too well that it can indeed get lonely “at the top.”

And unfortunately, resolving to push through your endless to-do list by shutting yourself in the office only perpetuates that situation, causing you to become further isolated from your professional community.

We often encourage our teachers to reach out to each other, to collaborate and seek out channels for professional development. We know that it's vital to their growth as educators to constantly be learning from others. And yet how often do administrators allow themselves that same opportunity? We push our staff to take a day to attend a professional growth conference in an area that they are passionate about, but who pushes *you* – the principal – to do the same?

While there may be different administrative seminars that you may wish to explore, one idea we'd like to suggest is to shadow another administrator in your area. Sound like something you might've done your junior year in Career Ed? Before you blow

it off, consider the benefits that shadowing a principal might offer:

**Inspiration.** Maybe you're stumped by how to split up your part-time staff's duties. Perhaps you are struggling with a way to effectively communicate to parents. By peering into the inner workings of another campus – even for just a day, you can gain a myriad of different ideas and things to try at your own school.

**Empathy.** Who else would better understand your current issues than a fellow administrator? As you shadow the principal, we know it won't be long before you are swiftly trading stories from your respective experiences. “Have you ever had a parent who. . .?” “I have a teacher who is fantastic with. . .” “Did you get dinged by that auditor last year. . .”

**Perspective.** Whether it serves to remind you of why you went into administration in the first place or if it makes you more appreciative of your own staff and school family, the perspective that you can gain simply by being on a different campus for a day and taking the time to talk to another administrator is invaluable.

We encourage you to give it a try! Look through your conference directory, find a school within driving distance and call up the administrator to see if he or she would be willing to let you shadow him/her for a day. It's an experience that takes time, effort and planning, but we think that in the end, you will find it a worthwhile investment. It can indeed get lonely at the top, but if you glance up for a moment, you may find that you are in good company.