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**Volume 2**  
**Issue 2**  
**Fall 2005**

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## Superintendents Lyda and Singletary Give Their Views on Benefits of District Accreditation

The Transylvania and Onslow County School systems are the first districts in N.C. to host Quality Assurance Review visits. Both systems were reviewed on April 24-27, 2005. Several weeks after the visits, the superintendents were asked why they decided to pursue accreditation for their districts and how they felt about their decisions following successful reviews. Here are their responses:

### Dr. Sonna Lyda, Superintendent, Transylvania County Schools

*1. Why did you decide district accreditation is the right approach to school improvement for your system?*

Over the course of several years, Transylvania County Schools developed and deployed a process for school improvement that focuses on the alignment of improvement efforts across the system and on data-driven decision making. When I was first introduced to the idea of district accreditation, I was impressed by its compatibility with the continuous improvement model in place within our school system. As I examined the three key components of district accreditation, I came to realize that our efforts were very much aligned with the SACS/CASI process. After some discussion with key leaders in the district, we decided to move forward with our request for a quality assurance review under the district accreditation model.

*2. Now that your district has been through a successful quality assurance review, are you convinced that the process is an effective vehicle for achieving the goals of your district?*

I am absolutely convinced that the district accreditation process is an effective vehicle for achieving the goals of this school district. I have worked with SACS for many years, and I firmly believe that this accreditation process has the potential to positively impact student learning like no other. I have believed for quite some time that those individual schools seeking SACS/CASI accreditation have needed a strong central focus on continuous improvement. While individual schools can certainly impact teaching and learning, the impact of those efforts is magnified significantly when improvement is a district-wide focus. The district accreditation process and the quality assurance review ensure that such a focus exists, and help to strengthen and reinforce purposeful, effective connections throughout the entire school system.

### Dr. Ronald Singletary, Superintendent, Onslow County Schools

*1. Why did you decide district accreditation is the right approach to school improvement for your system?*

District level accreditation provided Onslow County Schools with the opportunity to ensure that our vision, mission, and goals were truly aligned with the schools and the community expectations. After talking with district staff and SACS CASI leadership it became evident that our processes were reflective of the SACS/CASI researched standards and the district accreditation process would serve as a great validation to our Strategic Planning. Our district was excited to be involved in this new process.

*2. Now that your district has been through a successful quality assurance review, are you convinced that the process is an effective vehicle for achieving the goals of your district?*

What a great experience! Our district has been able to review and refine our processes to ensure that we are meeting all levels of continuous improvement to affect student achievement. This model reflects the need to continue monitoring and changing in areas of need based on data and stakeholders input. The opportunity to blend the SACS CASI process from the school level to include the entire organization was a truly valuable added outcome.

The two superintendents and their districts will be recognized on December 12 at the 2005 Annual SACS CASI Conference in Houston, Texas.

## Interpreting Membership Status

As you review the membership status assigned to your school by the North Carolina Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (NC CASI) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), please keep the following factors in mind:

- The membership status of a school is determined by its standing with regard to SACS CASI standards and policies at the time it files its Annual Application for Accreditation. Plans or actions to be taken in the future do not excuse a school for noncompliance with a standard or policy at the time the report is filed.
- A school is responsible for providing NC CASI complete and clear evidence of how it has addressed any outstanding standard deficiencies. In the absence of a clear explanation of how the school has addressed a previous year deficiency, the deficiency will continue to negatively affect the membership status of the school.
- Shortly after a school files its Annual Application for Accreditation, the director of NC CASI informs the administrative head of any standard deficiencies and asks that he/she inform the office of NC CASI either by email or letter of any inadvertent reporting errors made in the initial report. The director of NC CASI then makes any needed corrections to the application before it is considered by NC CASI. The final membership status for all schools will be posted online within two weeks following the NC CASI spring meeting. Schools may check their membership status at [www.sacscasi.org/northcarolina](http://www.sacscasi.org/northcarolina) anytime throughout the year. After NC CASI acts on the application, no corrections to reporting errors are considered until the next report year.
- The membership status of a school is determined primarily by the total number of standards a school does not meet and by the nature and severity of the deficiencies. A set of the Guidelines for Determining Accreditation Status are available from [www.sacscasi.org/northcarolina](http://www.sacscasi.org/northcarolina).

## Solicitation of Nominations for 2006 John M. Davis Distinguished Educational Achievement Award

NC CASI invites representatives of its member schools to submit nominations for the 2006 John M. Davis Distinguished Educational Achievement Award. Any individual who has made a significant contribution to K-12 education in N.C. is eligible for consideration. NC CASI will use the following criteria to select the recipient from those nominated:

- Contributions to Southern Association of Colleges and Schools at the regional and state levels
- Cumulative record of service to K-12 education
- Impact on the profession of education
- Reputation as a promoter and facilitator of educational improvement

Letters of nominations speaking to the nominee's standing with regard to each of the above criteria should be submitted by no later than September 1, 2006, to NC CASI – SACS, 152 Outreach Center, WCU, Cullowhee, NC 28723.

The 2005 recipient of the Davis Award will be announced and recognized at the SACS CASI Annual Conference in December.

### Dues Schedules for 2005-2006

#### Public Schools

Pre-K Elementary Schools	\$350
Middle or High School	\$550
PK-12 School*	\$600
Special Purpose School	\$500
Vocational-Technical School	\$550

#### Non-Public Schools

PreK-Elementary School	\$500
Middle or High School	\$600
Special Purpose School	\$550
PK-12 School	\$750

\*Dues for PreK-12 Public Schools will increase to \$700 for 2006 and \$800 for 2007



### They Answer Your Calls and Respond to Your Emails: Becky and Debi

The editor asked Becky Hoyle, administrative assistant, and Debi Thomas, secretary, in the office of NC CASI, to tell the newsletter readers something about themselves. Here are their comments:

#### Becky Hoyle

I received an associate degree from Southwestern Community College (SCC) in 1980 and worked in the office of the Registrar at SCC from 1978-1982. I began working as a program assistant in the Office of the Dean, College of Education & Allied Professions at Western Carolina University in 1986. In 1996, I moved to the position of administrative assistant for NC SACS CASI. I have two daughters (Kim and Kala) and two granddaughters (Lia-3 years and Lynsee-6 months).

#### Debi Thomas

I was blessed to have been born and raised in the beautiful Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. I can't imagine myself living anywhere else. I graduated from Swain County High School in 1974, the home of the Maroon Devils. Soon afterward I married a wonderful man, Darwin Thomas. This September we will have been married 30 years. I have two great children, Mandy and Justin.

I attended Southwestern Community College and earned an associate degree in business. I worked in a medical practice in Sylva, N.C., for 12 years, until the practice closed. I have been privileged to work with Dr. Gurney Chambers and Becky Hoyle for the past year and look forward to working with them in the years to come. Working with SACS CASI and having the opportunity to talk with and get to know so many of you has been a great experience, one that I appreciate very much.

## Break-out Sessions

NC CASI Annual September Conference  
Sheraton Greensboro Hotel at Four Seasons, Greensboro, NC  
Greensboro, September 19, 2005

**Participants will have an opportunity to attend any three of the following sessions:**



***“Getting Stakeholders to Value Accreditation and to Reap the Benefits”***-An overview of “the Next Generation Process” and an exploration of the benefits to stakeholders

***“Preparing a Guided Self Study (demonstration, not documentation)”***-A walk through the steps for preparing a Guided Self-Study

***“How to Develop & Use A Profile”*** -A discussion of the components and development of a comprehensive school profile

***“Creating One School Improvement Plan”***-A discussion of developing a school improvement plan and preparing for a review

***“Making the Connection between the Classroom and School-wide Accreditation”***- An examination of the four major elements embedded in an effective continuous process of improvement (vision, profile, plan, and results)

***“SACS For Dummies: Your First Team”***-An examination of the basics of chairing or serving on a QART for those who have never served on or chaired a team

***“Materials and Resources: Initial /Continuing Accreditation”***-A walk through the available resources that support the pursuit of initial or continued accreditation for both schools and districts

***“Concerns/Issues Specific to Non-Public Standards/Self-Study”***-A discussion for non-public school personnel who are considering accreditation for their schools or are just beginning the accreditation process

***“Using Data to Make Instructional Decisions”***-A discussion of how high schools can use their profile data to maximum advantage

***“Writing a Meaningful Action Plan”***-An exploration of the components of an effective school improvement plan and how the words on paper translate into a meaningful daily action plan

***“Using an Internal Facilitator to Promote Continuous Improvement”***-A discussion of how schools train “one of their own” to guide and facilitate the continuous school improvement process

***“Strategies That Motivate Staff to Support Continuous Improvement”***-Tips on how to motivate the school staff and get them committed to raising student achievement and maintaining an effective operation

***“Implementing an Effective System for Monitoring and Assessing Quality Assurance”***-A discussion of one system’s use of Baldrige principles to improve student learning

***“What is District Accreditation and How Can It Help My System?”***-An overview of what District Accreditation entails, including essential conditions and benefits

***“SACS CASI Liaison Meeting”***-An information session for those individuals who are responsible for coordinating SACS CASI activities in their school system

***“Getting Stakeholders Involved With The District Accreditation Process”***-Tips on how to get all stakeholder groups continuously involved in school improvement through SACS CASI accreditation

***“Preparing for a Quality Assurance Review Visit”***-A small school system’s discussion of the benefits of district accreditation and its experiences in preparing for the review

***“This Is What We Learned about District Accreditation”***-A discussion of the values of district accreditation by leaders of a small district of nine schools that hosted a successful QAR Visit in April 2005

***“Continuing the District Accreditation Journey: Maintaining Momentum”***-An exploration of how to sustain interest, address recommendations, etc. following a successful District Accreditation review

## LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER

### Annual September Conference of NC CASI *Pursuing Continuous Improvement through SACS CASI Accreditation*

Sheraton Greensboro Hotel Four Seasons, Joseph S. Koury Convention Center  
September 19-20, 2005

Pre-registration is required. Registration fee and completed form must be received in the NC CASI office by September 8, 2005. Participants in day one of the conference will have an opportunity to hear a presentation on school improvement through SACS CASI accreditation by Dr. Mark Elgart, chief executive officer of SACS CASI, and attend three of 20 different break-out interest sessions (please see page three of newsletter). Participants who remain for day two of the conference will hear a presentation by Dr. Nikki Armato, director of professional development for SACS CASI, and receive certification as a non-chair member of Quality Assurance Review teams.

Representatives of several school systems that have hosted or will host district accreditation visits in the near future are scheduled to conduct break-out sessions at the NC CASI Annual Conference in September. The systems include Asheboro City, Beaufort, Buncombe, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Franklin, Granville, Hoke, Johnston, Onslow, Transylvania, and Wilson.

## Registration Form Enclosed



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