



AUG03

## ELEANOR M. BUTLER

MS, RN

### *The Supervisor*

Eleanor Butler has a big responsibility. Her dual role includes that of public health nurse and school nurse. It's her job to ensure that 13,000 urban schoolchildren have physical records and appropriate immunizations on file. This is on top of handling personnel and administrative tasks, as well as health crisis management within her city's school district.

Eleanor has been working with the New York City Department of Health as district supervising nurse since 1997. Her school district, which is less than one mile from Ground Zero, has 14 elementary schools, three junior high schools and eight nonpublic schools. She also consults with staff in a number of high schools.

"We've had some difficult times since Sept. 11," said Eleanor, adding that many children in her district witnessed the tragedy in New York City. "Following that event, we provided psychological support to many students, families and school staff." Public health nurses typically are the first responders during crises and work in emergency shelters throughout the city.

Eleanor came to the United States in 1980 after working as the chief physiotherapist in Nassau, Bahamas, her native island. While there she was instrumental in developing the visiting therapist home-care pilot program, which still exists today.

Her parents were her inspiration to choose a career in nursing — Eleanor's mother is a nurse, and her father had managed his diabetes since Eleanor was a child. After working as a charge nurse/supervisor in hospitals in Boston and New York, she decided to explore school nursing. "Interaction with children came natural for me. They are usually so truthful and so real," she said.

Eleanor started as a school nurse, caring for children with special needs before working her way up to supervisor. "It's a rewarding profession. We show students how to best help themselves. Teaching is an integral part of what we do," she said. "There's a lot going on in school nursing. You not only take care of the children when they are ill or when they need their medications, you have to understand their psychosocial issues and needs as well."