

# Middle Schools Off To Good Start In Durham— There Are Problems

By Pamela Banks

In Ms. Susan Norman's 7th grade class at Shepard Middle School, four students peck away at typewriters, while another student works with a calculator, and yet another group of four students busied themselves with a game called "Life," that stimulates buying and selling real estate. The student groups are called stations.

This is part of the business sector occupational education, an integral part of the middle school concept, where six graders concentrate on career awareness, while 7th and 8th graders explore various careers through a "hands-on" approach.

Middle schools are new to Durham City Schools which operated the traditional junior high schools last year. Junior high grades are 7th, 8th and 9th, though the 9th grade is really the first grade of high school. In the middle school concept, the grades are 6th, 7th and 8th, which takes the last year of elementary school and groups it with two traditional junior high grades. Durham's middle schools are Brogden, Holton, Shepard and Rogers-Herr.

Three weeks into the new school year, the middle school program is off to a good start in the basic academic areas, but some elective and extracurricular segments of the concept are not yet in

place. The middle school concept was adopted by the School Board earlier this year.

And though things have run fairly smoothly considering the fact that the local school system didn't have much of a chance to practice the concept before launching it, there have been problems.

At Brogden, toward the end of the second school week, one eighth grade math class was just receiving its textbooks. At Shepard last week, some 8th grade students were just getting permanent class assignments. H.E. Tatum, Jr., Shepard principal, said assignments were adjusted to better suit the students abilities.

At Shepard, a space shortage does not allow students with special math and reading problems to be taken out of regular classes for instruction by resource teachers. According to Mrs. Blondola Lucas, Shepard's assistant principal, these students will have to be helped where they are.

But despite the problems, everyone — students, teachers and principals — have pitched in to make this new approach work.

Tatum said they are not "pushing it" or trying to do too many things at one time. He said the administration and teachers are working on the intramural program and hope to start it in two weeks following a survey of student interest.

Tatum said that the approach at Shepard is to take "one step at a time" in setting up the other portions of the 30-minute activity period such as the mini-guidance sessions and electives.

Brogden Middle School principal, Dr. William B. Rice, Jr., said the intramural survey has been completed and they are in the process of setting up the schedule.

The initial "getting acquainted" stages of the mini-guidance sessions are underway at Brogden, Rice said. The purpose of these sessions is to help students, through teacher leadership, deal with some of the adjustment problems adolescents face such as relationships with parents, the opposite sex and friends in general.

The schools hope to extend curriculum offerings through an electives program. However, Rice said a survey of student interests is necessary to determine offerings.

The program could offer foreign languages, crafts or computer technology depending on whether a staff teacher is available for instructing the courses and students are interested. The program could also have volunteer instructors from the community to teach.

Overall, principals at both schools are pleased with the program and report few problems in implementing it. Tatum believes the extensive planning by the school administration and preparation of teachers is the reason for the smooth transition.

Several of the teachers at Brogden and Shepard expressed satisfaction with the planning system where two or three teachers in the basic skills who are assigned to the same students design lesson plans together.

Mrs. Emily Scott, a language arts teacher for the seventh grade at Shepard finds team planning an asset to her teaching. She said this is the first time she has worked with science and math teachers, but finds no difficulty.

"I can see how it (middle school concept) can work with people who can cooperate," said Mrs. Scott. "I know I'm in a good situation."

Likewise, Mrs. Judy Alford, a sixth grade language arts teacher at Brogden believes the system has a positive effect on student learning attitudes. She said the only complaint she has heard from her students is that they have to wait too long for their lunch period.

However, Mrs. S.R. Alston, English and social studies eighth grade teacher, prefers to take a wait and see attitude toward middle schools since there have been no pilot programs in the system or test scores comparing the progress of students

under the old junior high system and the new concept.

Generally, comments from students were good, especially the sixth graders.

"I like it because we are not with one teacher all day," said Lesley Bullock, a 6th grader at Brogden who attended Club Boulevard school last year.

Likewise, Angela Alston a sixth grader at Brogden likes "having different classes and lockers" for her books and other belongings.

One eighth grade fellow at Shepard felt he had less time between classes to go to his locker and that his classes were shorter than last year.

Cathy Hazelton, an eighth grader at Shepard, said she liked the set up better at Lowe's Grove Junior High where she attended last year. She believes her math class at Shepard is not as advanced as at Lowe's Grove.

Another eighth grader, Tiyann Coley likes the middle school concept better because she believes the "classes are shorter and the teachers have more time to spend with the students."

Most of the basic skills — science, mathematics, social studies and language arts — are taught in the mornings at both schools for all grades. Assistant principal Mrs. Blondola Lucas, at Shepard said this was done because educators have found students are more attentive in the mornings.

For their basic skills courses students rotate between two to three teachers who are organized in teams containing math-science and social studies-language arts specialists.

Students take more than one subject, under each specialist, eliminating the need to change classes as frequently as under the junior high format.

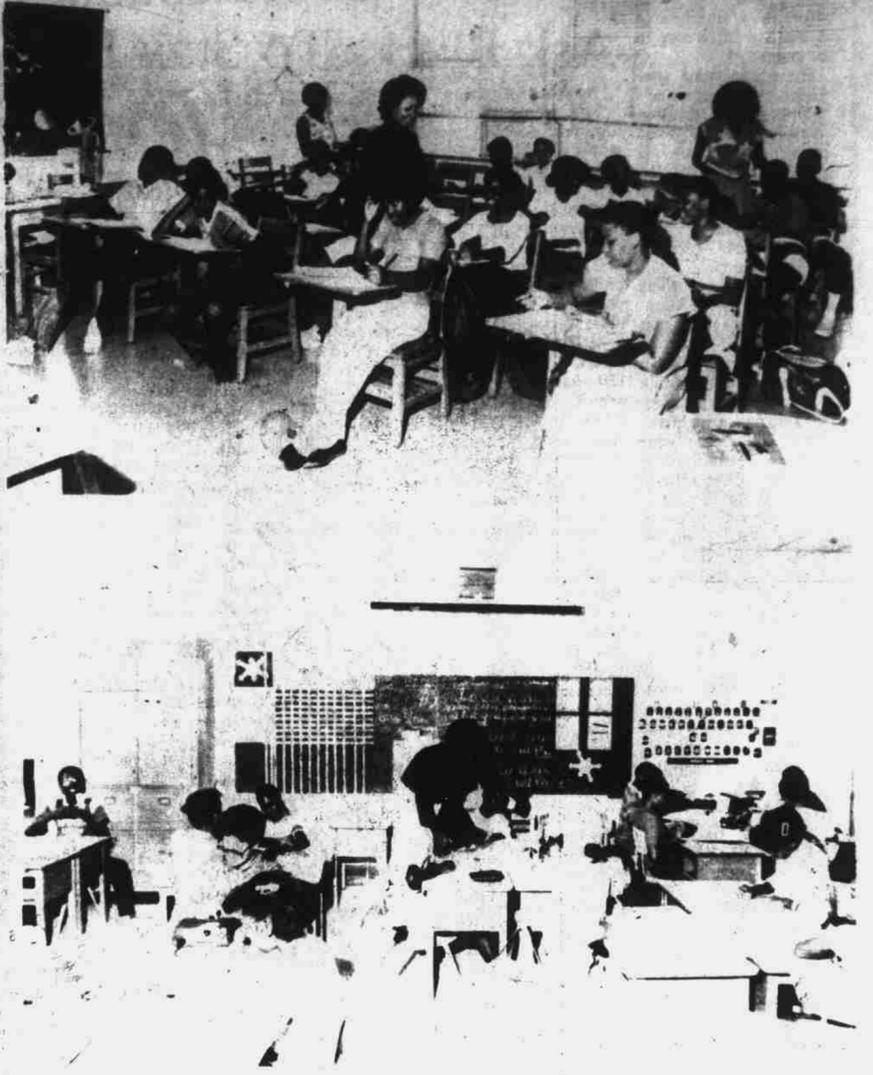
In each school classes are located as close as possible to allow most students to walk next door in changing classes. School officials believe this approach cuts down on confusion and noise.

However, classes in reading, music, art and electives, occupational and physical education are spread out.

To help students to make class changes more smoothly, Mrs. Jean McCall, assistant principal at Brogden, said teachers walk with the students to their various classes.

At both schools, all basic teachers instruct small reading classes on all grade levels for 50 minute periods. This is usually done when half the students from a given team are in music and art. These classes usually have about 15 or fewer students.

The emphasis is teaching reading skills and materials are geared to the abilities of the



MIDDLE SCHOOL is getting off to a good start in Durham as these two pictures indicate. In the photograph at top, an academic class with its three teachers take on one of the basic subjects. In the photo at bottom, an occupational exploration class gets a look at the world of work.

Photos by Silas Mayfield

## Wedding Anniversary Party

On Saturday evening, September 4, the children of Mr. and Mrs. Roy B. Robinson surprised their parents with a Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary Party, at the West Durham Community Center on Hillsborough Road.

The Community Center was decorated in gold, pink and green colors with floral arrangements of gladioli. The couple was presented with corsages of gold carnations at the beginning of the festivities. Music was provided by the Sensational Angels of Durham.

Mr. and Mrs. Robinson were married on September 3, 1932. She is the former Miss Flossie Mae Parrish of Roxboro; he is a native of Durham.

The children of the couple are: Roy H. Robinson, Leon Robinson, Phillip Robinson, all of Durham; Mrs. Francis Wood and Isaac Robinson of Newport News, Va.; Robert Robinson of Hampton, Va.; Mrs. Malinda McCullum of Oklahoma City, Okla. There are 19 grandchildren and one great grandson.

Guests for the occasion included other relatives and friends.

## Women's Day at Bell-Yeager

The 8th Women Day Service of Bell-Yeager Freewill Baptist Church, 128 E. Cornwallis Rd., will be observed Sunday, September 19 at 4 p.m. Mrs. Celestia Sanders, of Union Baptist Church, will speak.

## Floral Club Anniversary

The Floral Club of Bell-Yeager Freewill Baptist Church, 128 E. Cornwallis Rd., will observe its 8th Anniversary, Sunday, September 26 at 6 p.m. Rev. C. R. Mitchell, pastor, Northside Baptist Church, will preach.

## Fall Concert at Covenant

The ushers of Covenant United Presbyterian Church, will present the Blue Wing Baptist Church Young Adult Choir in Concert, Sunday, September 26 at 4 p.m.

## 6th Young Adult Anniversary

The Young Adult Choir of Shiloh Baptist Church, Morrisville, observed its sixth anniversary, Saturday and Sunday. Special guests were the Bazzel Creek Baptist Church and T. C. Tart Young Adult Choir of Lumberton.

His influence was so great that as a teenager he led a group of young men and women who were only slightly younger than he. They trusted him and their parents trusted him. Some of them remain his friends and followers, while a few no longer "believe" in him.

"In the 60's Ben was everything that I wanted to be," said Larry Mangum, a 30-year-old Durham resident and graduate student at North Carolina State University. "I was in a group of young people that he led in marches and demonstrations. Those were the days of when Ben wore blue jeans and skull caps."

Mangum said that he is not bothered by Ben Ruffin's change in clothing, but that he believes that Ruffin no longer holds to some of the values he once preached. "There was a time when Ben would have done anything for black people," Mangum said. "I don't think that is the case now. Now he would use us if necessary."

According to Mangum, he and Ruffin were once very close allies. Now, when he sees Ruffin at community meetings, they speak, but it is more like seeing a distant relative who you really want to avoid, Mangum said. It's only "hello and goodbye."

Geoff Simmons, a Raleigh lawyer and former assistant to Ruffin, said he works in the best interests of black people. "He will tell the governor and anyone else just what is on his mind. He is in a very powerful situation and the interests of the black community come first."

Simmons, who worked with Hunt before Ruffin joined his staff, said that his former boss could not "be bought" and that he spent most of his Sundays speaking from the pulpits of black churches throughout the state. "Unlike some special assistants, Ruffin does not just bring greetings from his employer, the governor," Simmons said. "Ruffin talks about the plight of blacks in the state of North Carolina and what blacks must do in order to progress."

Undaunted, Ruffin brushed aside the attacks as politically motivated and continued his march straight ahead. "Ben is strong enough to withstand the attacks Ruffin was at his headquarters helping to add Bell, a Durham County up the numbers and per-grieving when the final tallies came in. It would have been easy for him to stay at home that he does and damned if he night, but he did not. His concern deciding to fight for blacks is first and instead," Simmons said. "Not many people is," he added.

know that Ruffin has a master's degree in social work from the University of North Carolina, Simmons continued. "It is amazing how he handles himself so well with all levels of people."

"Ben is the closest thing to the governor we have," said one veteran black politician who asked not to be identified, "he is effective and he gets things done. If Hunt goes to Washington as a Senator or as a Vice President one day, Ben will be right there with him. Imagine, we will have someone right from Fayetteville Street in the White House."

Married and the father of two children, Ruffin has been the target of many political attacks over the years. Most recently, a Burlington-based publication, with ties to the Congressional Club — the fundraising organization for Jesse Helms — attempted to discredit Ruffin.

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**Mount Gilead Baptist Church**  
404 DOWD STREET  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27701

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1982

8:00 A.M. Morning Worship  
9:30 A.M. Sunday Church School  
11:00 A.M. Morning Worship

TRANSPORTATION IS PROVIDED TO ALL SERVICES UPON REQUEST.

Call 688-6052 or 682-8464 or 682-7160

**Emmanuel Pentecostal Temple**  
1000 North Street  
North Durham School Bldg.  
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Fenced-in Parking Off Onslow St. in rear of Auditorium

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1982

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Sunday—10:00 AM & 6:30 PM  
Wednesday—7:30 PM  
Friday—8:00 PM

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1982

Sunday School 9:45  
Worship Service 11:00  
Wednesday Night Service 7:30

Pastor Willie Walters

**Mt. Calvary United Church of Christ**  
1715 ATHENS STREET  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27707  
TELEPHONE: 688-5066

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Rev. J. Cecil Cheek, B.Th., M.Div. Minister  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1982

9:30 A.M. Sunday Church School  
11:00 A.M. Morning Worship

WEDNESDAY

7:00 P.M. Prayer Service

Breakfast will be served at the church between 8-9 a.m. each 4th Sunday of the month.  
Bus Service for Church Sunday School and Morning Worship Services. Everyone is welcome to come and join us in all services.