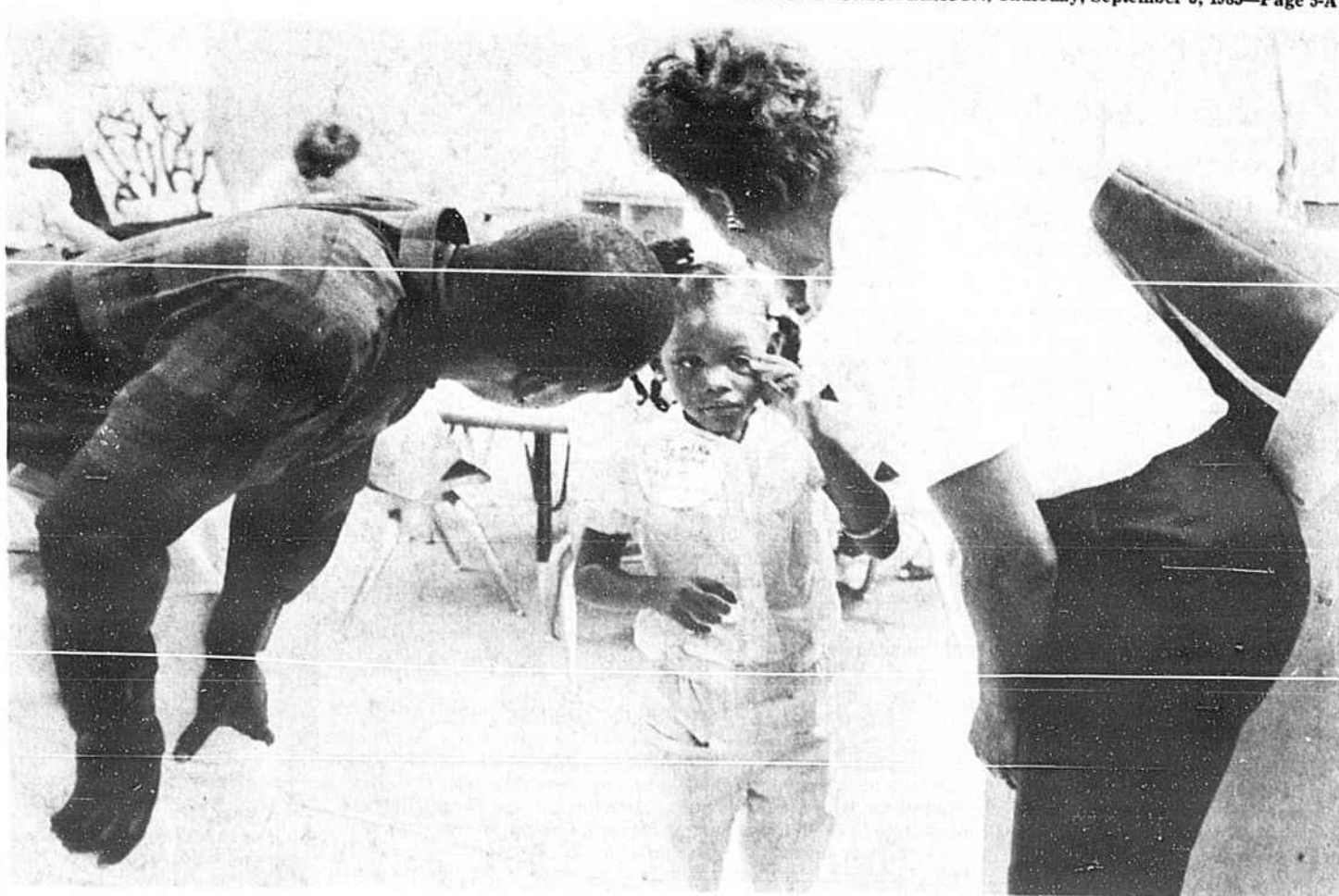




STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

WITH THIS NAME/BUS TAG, Waccamaw Aide Lillie Frink makes sure kindergartener Wendell Walker has no problem getting on the right bus after school.



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

JAMIKA BLAND, separated from her playmates on the first day of kindergarten at Union Primary School, fights back tears as she's consoled by Benji Marlowe and Starie Grissett.

under the sun

Back To Classes!

First Day Rituals Make It Easier

After one last summer fling over the long Labor Day weekend, more than 8,500 Brunswick County students flocked back into classrooms Tuesday, some with tears, others with smiles.

If the day seemed a little longer than usual, it was—by 15 minutes. The schoolday was extended in order to meet a new state requirement.

Across the West Brunswick school district, youngsters settled into classes quickly Tuesday morning as teachers met their pupils, collected lunch and insurance money and set the tone for the year ahead.

At Waccamaw Elementary School, Principal Jean Parker said her faculty was having a "very busy morning, but it's going smoothly." Approximately 425 to 430 students will attend classes at Waccamaw this fall.

Brightly decorated classrooms and warm smiles from teachers Louise

Gause and Angela Smith greeted 42 kindergarteners there Tuesday morning as the school's seven buses rolled up.

Reactions to school varied from youngster to youngster, with most adjusting to their new setting quickly. In Mrs. Smith's room, David couldn't bear the idea of staying behind without his mom, Donna Gore. Next door in Mrs. Gause's room, Hollie was all smiles as she said goodbye to her mom, Donita Taylor.

A few hungry youngsters were disappointed to learn that breakfast isn't served in the county schools until the second day of classes.

At Union Primary School, physical education instructor Tom Simmons directed traffic out front while cars lined the roadway and filled the teachers' parking lot. As parents guided the youngsters to their rooms,

media specialist Etherine Butler helped one first-grader find her homeroom.

"She was wanting to go back to the kindergarten," Ms. Butler said.

"Want to have some fun?" one fellow student asked kindergartener Bradley Caison, who promptly broke into tears. Offered a crayon, he was soon coloring his first assignment, tears forgotten.

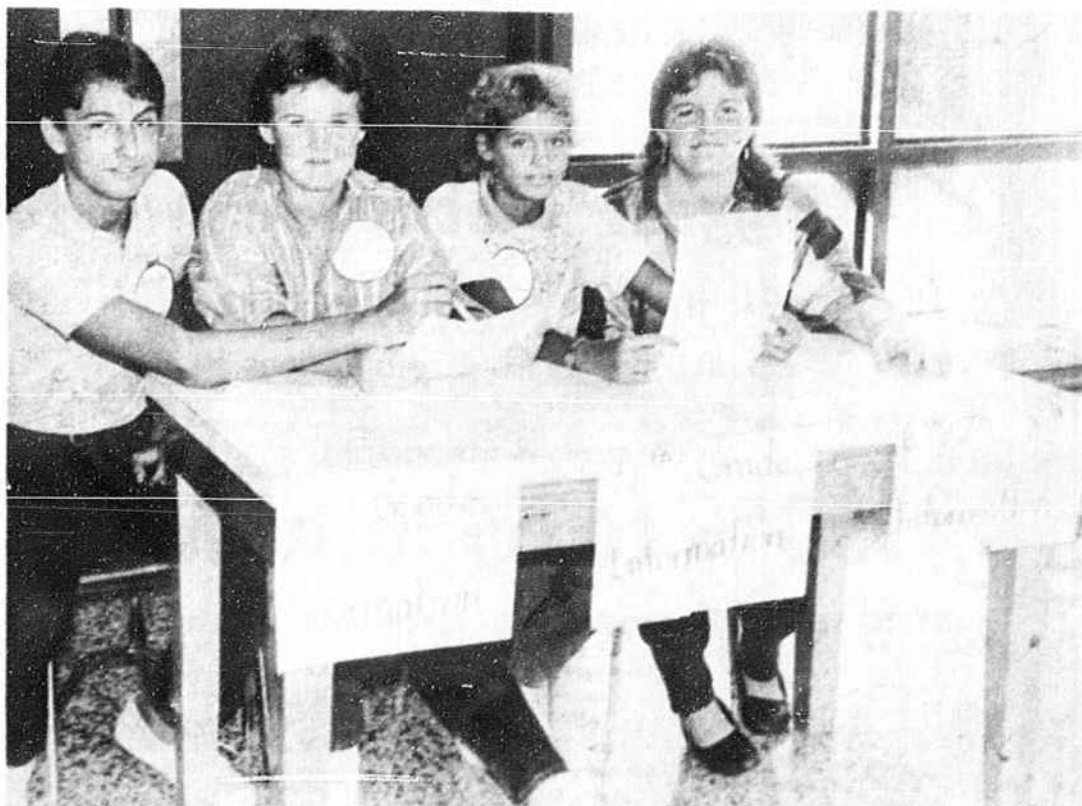
At Shallotte Middle School, Principal Mark Owens and Assistant Principal William Detrie were busy enrolling last minute students. About 10 students and their parents were waiting in the school office, seeking homerooms.

Students entering the school were met by members of the Junior National Honor Society wearing "Ask Me" buttons. The volunteer guides helped new and lost students through the rituals of the first day of school.



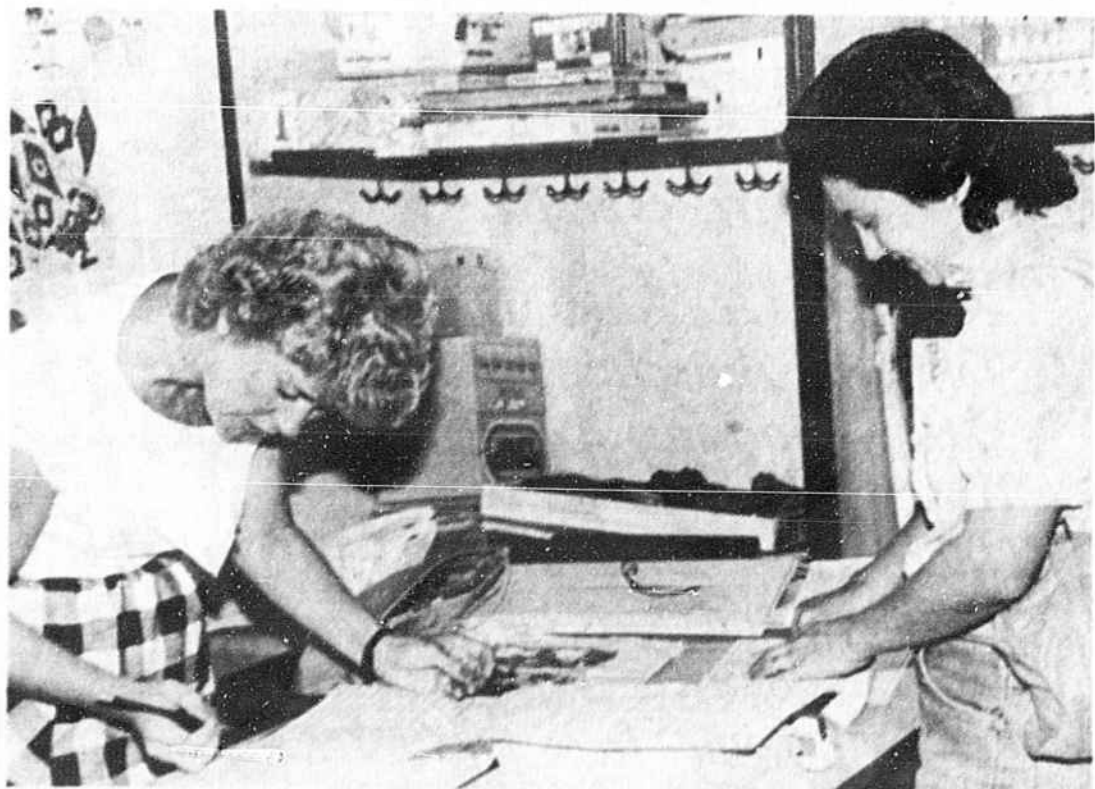
STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

KINDERGARTENER ANNIE WILLIAMS gets down to business, with drawing her first assignment in Angie Smith's Waccamaw Elementary School classroom.



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

TWELVE JUNIOR National Honor Society members like John Malpass, Robin Caison, Elizabeth Thomas and Kristi Lewis above helped new and lost students find their way around Shallotte Middle School Tuesday.



FIRST-DAY RITUALS are slow to change. Waccamaw aide/bus driver Betty Gore collects lunch and insurance money from Sharon White, whose son Johnny started kindergarten Tuesday.