

Second In A Monthly Series:

Central School — Where Students Prepare For Life

Story By Elizabeth Stewart

Photos By Tom McIntyre

For most 12 and 13-year-olds, Central School offers their first real concentration on careers and organized health and physical development at a point in their young lives which is a crucial phase of their education.

On any given day of the week, a visit to the campus will find students developing their talents in career exploration, which has moved to a very important role in the total educational program of sixth and seventh graders.

Working in four labs, each seventh grader is given an opportunity for

nine weeks in each lab to learn about construction, personal services, art and music. Boys and girls are cooking, sewing, shampooing hair, manicuring, learning about office machines and office practice, welding, bricklaying, studying art and music and creating beautiful macrame pocketbooks, wall hangings, and pottery.

Each sixth grade student visits each lab six to seven times during the year for basic instruction and demonstrations in the career areas.

And moving from elementary school to Central is a big step for 700 students who comprise all sixth and seventh graders in KM District Schools.

What is Central School doing for kids is a question

the Association of Classroom Teachers asks the Herald to determine in this second in a series of features on KM District Schools.

Principal Larry Allen, in his fourth year as Principal, says that the 38 faculty members stress individualized education.

"We accept the kids as they are and work from that point, identifying as best we can the workability level of each boy and girl," said the principal.

Some students at this age level have definite reading problems and Mr. Allen says quite frankly that the new testing program, approved by the state legislature, will curb these problems by retaining children in the lower grades. Central School will also be forced to remediate before the boy or girl graduates seventh grade.

"When our kids don't function at the academic level we will have to hold them back and not keep in their own age group," said Allen, and he thinks this is a good approach.

Emphasis on decision-making is another area that children learn about when they reach sixth and seventh grade. And there is more emphasis on self-discipline.

It's the child's first experience in band and chorus and in organized physical education on a daily basis. Intra-murals are a big activity at Central School.

Each child at Central School is exposed to positive experiences in all academic areas, declares Allen.

Strong emphasis is also placed this term on First Aid, a program which was popular with students last year and gives practical knowledge and basic life support skills.

Kids also like Interest Period and one of the most popular activities since 1973 has been the Central RAP, student newspaper organized by Social Studies teacher John Pettus and edited by Arjuana Curry. Other staffers are Becky Bolt, Mary Stevens, Heather Crowley, Trent Hullender, Quinton Rikard, Pam Odems, Angel Allen, Angela Adams, Jerri Patterson, Kelly Goodson and Cindy Adams.

"In our newspaper we have a sports page, humor page, ads like every paper, and a front page," says Heather, who recently moved to Kings Mountain from Wilmington when her father, Dr. Crowley joined the staff of Hendricks-Durham - Lee Clinic.

Heather said a feature of next month's edition will be an interview with the new superintendent of schools, William F. Davis.

Her fellow staffers are excited about the awards that Mr. Pettus will present this year to the student for best story, best illustrations and best poetry.

Interest period is one of the most active periods of the day. Within this period of time, the students are allowed to become involved in educational activities that are not routine and that attract the interest of the individual. This part of the Central

program offers the student that needs additional academic help an opportunity to receive some needed individual assistance that he was unable to obtain during the regular class time.

The seventh grade band and the combined chorus utilize this period as a musical interest experience for the students that qualify for the programs.

Approximately 26 students are enrolled in CPR health programs after school and are becoming certified in first aid. A realistic approach is given to the health classes as boys and girls "prepare for life skills" by learning to take care of broken bones and bruises.

Central School has a unique Parent-Teachers group in that the group has no officers and is not organized, as such, rather choosing to meet every nine weeks in a Central Association of Parents to see what their children are doing.

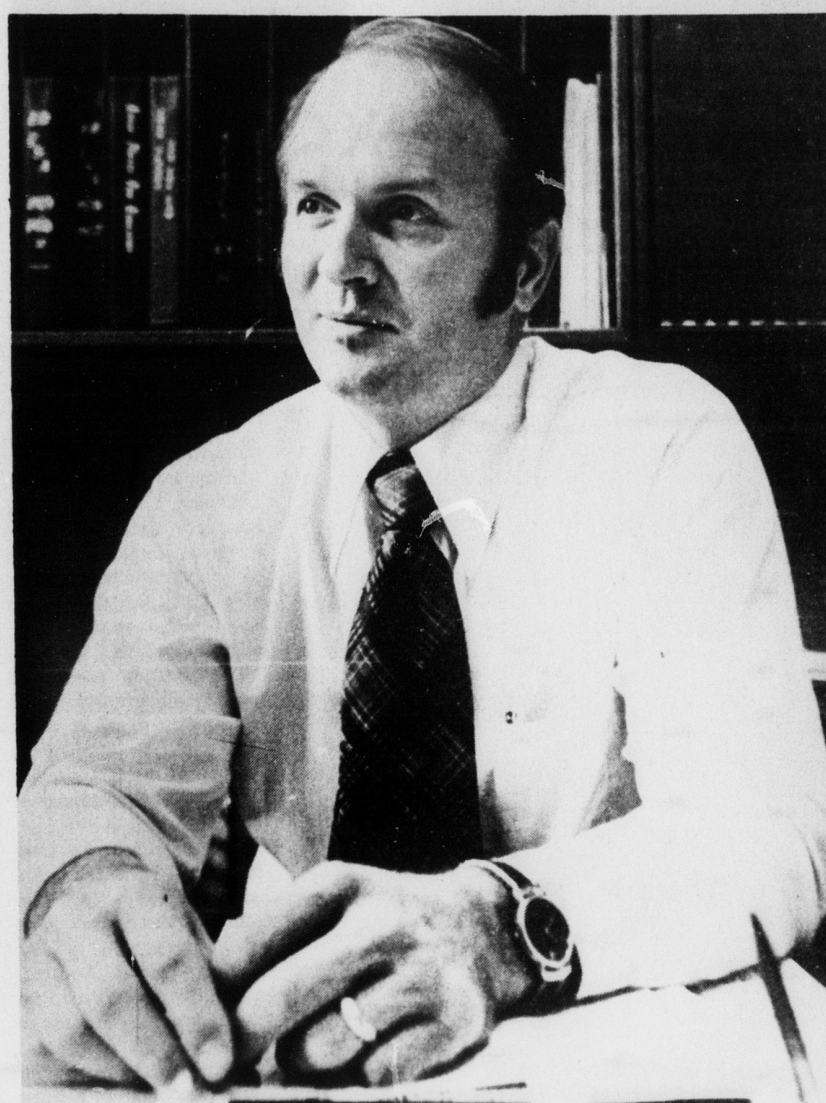
"We polled the parents last year," said Allen, "and found they didn't want planned programs and speakers." The chief fund-raising project of this group is a spring festival and all proceeds are used for needed equipment.

Principal Allen believes, like all his faculty members, that the sixth and seventh grade child can be shaped and molded much more than students in later grade levels.

Peer pressure begins at seventh grade and modified changing class programs literally frighten sixth grade students who are used to small schools and suddenly become part of a 250 member student body composed of previously all fifth grades in the system.

Heather Crowley, who attended a small school in Wilmington, has adjusted quickly to Central, where she is a seventh grader. "Kids are nice," she says, and she loves her work on the school newspaper.

Ronnie Whisnant, sixth grade teacher, in his popular language arts class, has three different tests underway at one time by taping vocabulary and



CENTRAL PRINCIPAL — Larry Allen, in his fourth year as Central School Principal, believes this age student can be molded and shaped much more than higher grade students and feels this period in a child's education is a crucial turning point in his life.

Living Today

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SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS — Tim Phillips, Allan Simpson, Carla Adams, Bob Biddix, Pat Davis, Joel McCoy and Donna Robinson, left to right, are undergoing vocabulary and spelling tests using taped programs while two other groups of students in other areas of the room are being tested, a new approach in classroom teaching by Ronnie Whisnant.



WELDING CLASS — Central students get their first emphasis on specialized education in the four labs offered to them during a school year. Here, seventh graders learn about welding.

speech tests, using a master tape player and earphones. It's a new approach, which he finds most successful, and requires a lot of initiative on the teacher's part.

Fifty-five children participate in the sixth grade reading lab instructed by Carole Wheeler with Janine Miller and Glenda Ivey assisting. Phonics surveys test for weaknesses and skills and all the children have a good attitude about developing their reading skills, says Carole, a third year teacher here and wife of KMSHS Principal Forrest Wheeler.

Carole said that an effort is made to identify specific reading problems and to develop a program that would reteach reading skills that have been lost in the educational process of

these individuals.

"It is our desire," she said, "to identify, with local assessment instruments, the independent reading level, the instructional level and the frustration level of each child taught at Central School and hopefully relate this same information to the Junior High for our present seventh grade and will have this information available to us for the present fifth grade next year.

"This entire effort," explained Allen, will allow teachers to be aware of the students abilities by the opening of school each fall.

In seventh grade Life Sciences, students were looking at protozoan specimens under a microscope, inspecting cow skulls, dissecting frogs,

earthworms, sharks, and fetal pigs and preparing insect and leaf collections. This popular class also plans field trips during the year and plans to tour the UNC-C Science Building in Charlotte soon. Sherrill Toney, in his ninth year at Central, instructs 99 students in science and math.

Ask the teachers what they think Central offers a student and most of them like Ronnie Whisnant, of Ellenboro, will exclaim "enthusiasm."

The Learning Lab serves pupils who have not experienced a great deal of success and have not progressed as fully as possible in their educational experiences. Mrs. Peggy McDowell, 1976 Teacher of the Year, has a classroom of 12 students this year and

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INTRAMURALS BIG ACTIVITY AT CENTRAL — Physical Education classes are organized on a daily

basis for Central pupils who enjoy intramurals and get their first experience "dressing out" for PE.