

**SOUTHWESTERN STORY AS A SEVENTH GRADE CENTER
50 YEAR CELEBRATION OF THE SCHOOL
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I have been associated with Southwestern directly or indirectly ever since 1969. In the spring of 1969, the Volusia County School Board established Southwestern Seventh Grade Center. This was a move dealing with Volusia County's Court Order to integrate.

To create integration in the junior high schools, the School Board created a seventh grade center in DeLand (Southwestern), Daytona Beach (Mainland), and New Smyrna Beach (Chisholm). All students in all three towns had no choice but to attend these schools. All the students would then advance to the junior highs located in these towns. Southwestern was the one that remained the longest.

There turned out to be many advantages with this set-up. It allowed all students coming from the elementary schools to enter seventh grade together and to learn gradually about changing of classes, it gave all students coming from different feeder schools the ability to get to know one another, and all students were on the same level therefore not being influenced by older students. It also allowed the students to have a true culture wheel giving each student time in Home Economics, Music, Art, and Industrial Arts.

The first Principal of Southwestern Seventh Grade Center was William Beachum coming from DeLand Senior with the Assistant Principal being Earl McCrary, from Southwestern. McCrary later became a School Board member. During the tenure of Southwestern being a Seventh Grade Center Albert Guenther and Robert Milby also served as Principals. The Assistant Principals during this time period included McCrary, Charles Butler, Al Bouie, Norm Gold, Sallie Shelton, and Brenda Cusack. Gloria Collier and I served for about seven years as Deans.

Not only were the students and parents unsure of what was happening, most of the teachers were also not sure about what was happening except for their subject area that they would teach. The staff came together a week prior to the opening of school and all of us learned the campus, one another, and the program that we were stepping into which created a strong staff that first year and years to come.

Many people were unsure of the neighborhood. The houses across the street did not make the situation any better. They were in terrible repair but shortly after the school's opening as a seventh grade center they were re-constructed greatly improving the appearance to New Hampshire Avenue.

There were three teachers for each of the five academic core classes. Reading was a new academic class to most of us on that level of school. Each academic class had three level of teaching – basic, regular, and advanced.

There was no air-conditioning in the school, as far as it goes; none of the schools in the district had air-conditioning at that time. Rooms that backed to each other had a large shared exhaust fan that would draw air into the classrooms. You were instructed to open the windows only six inches and be sure the door was closed otherwise your classroom and the other room's circulation pattern would not work. In the long run, all this did was draw very warm air into the rooms but at least it was moving.

We had many great times while at Southwestern Seventh Grade Center. One of the most memorable times during those years was the day that the space shuttle blew up. Principal Guenther and I were outside the cafeteria during lunch and were watching the shuttle lift off at Cape Canaveral on a very cold day. All of a sudden the con-trail of the shuttle went in many directions. Mr. Guenther told me that he would be going into the office to view the only TV on campus to see what the trouble was and I was to go into the cafeteria and keep all students in their until he returned. It was at that time we learned there was a problem and that the shuttle had blown up.

We did not have all the modern technology that the schools have today. We had no computers; none of the schools had them. We used film strip projectors, movie projectors, and opaque projects – none of which are used at all anymore. We also used mimeograph machines to produce student copies that had blue printing. You either wrote the mimeograph originals by hand or on a typewriter.

We had dances, student talent shows, teacher talent shows, and assemblies. Many of the students did very well and found themselves while attending Southwestern. It was a good time for most of us.

In 1988, the School Board created the Middle School Concept. Once again many of us were not sure what was happening. Southwestern at that time became a middle school with grades six, seven and eight. Southwestern continues as a middle school at this time.