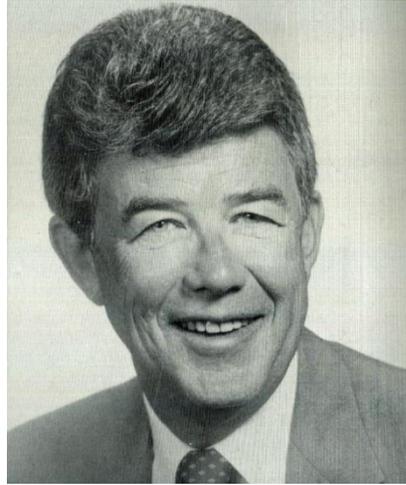


# West Aurora Schools

## Gary D. Jewel

(Superintendent 1979-1993)



Gary D. Jewel



Gary D. Jewel Middle School  
1501 Waterford Road, North Aurora  
Opened 1998



Jewel (third from left) with Governor Thompson (fifth from left) and other dignitaries at opening of IMSA (Illinois Math & Science Academy) in late 1980s

## **Profile of Gary D. Jewel**

**Gary Jewel was born on September 25, 1939 in Wyanet, Illinois. He was raised in Mendota, Illinois and was a 1957 graduate of Mendota Township High School. During his senior year, he served as class president.**

**Mr. Jewel received his bachelor of science and master of science degrees from Illinois State University. He was one of nineteen students recognized as “Outstanding Seniors in Academic and Service” at the university. He also took post graduate courses at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign.**

**Jewel began his career in 1961 as a 9th grade Civics and English teacher at Benjamin Franklin Junior High in Aurora. In 1963, he was elected president of the Aurora Education Association West.**

**He was appointed principal of Washington Junior High in 1965, assistant superintendent of School District 129 in 1970 and superintendent of the district in 1979.**

**Shortly after he took office as superintendent, the worldwide oil crisis, and the dramatic increase in inflation and interest rates had a devastating effect upon the district.**

High unemployment and the closing or sale of many of Aurora's large industries resulted in a weakened local economy.

The number of students enrolled in the West Aurora Schools dropped by 3,000 from a peak of 11,000.

Jewel's leadership was tested early in his tenure. He and his staff put together a white paper on how to cope with the growing fiscal pressures without compromising the educational quality of the schools. Hearings throughout the community were held to inform the citizens of possible options.

Should the district transform the new North Campus into an upper grade school (grades five through eight) and close several of the older buildings - Hill, Lincoln, Greenman and Todd? Or, should other uses for the North Campus be identified? The consensus was to keep the grade schools intact and begin efforts to close the North Campus.

The decision also was made to deactivate Todd School as an elementary school. After being out of service for a few years, it reopened as a center for the education of students experiencing behavior disorders. As of 2016, it serves as an early childhood center.

The North Campus was used to educate the freshmen of the district. And, Waubensee Community College rented some of the classrooms. But, the space was greatly underutilized. The complex was closed in 1981.

Jewel then spearheaded a collaborative effort to link business and educational interests. The Corridor Partnership for Educational Excellence, which he chaired, was formed to engage schools in solving, not creating problems for the community. One of the major thrusts of the organization was to support the creation of a statewide school for the gifted.

With the support of Governor Thompson, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) was formed. In 1985, the North Campus was sold to the State of Illinois for the new academy. Jewel served as a founding member of the board of trustees of IMSA.

School District 129 was instrumental in providing teachers for IMSA's art, music, physical education and driver's education classes. Jewel and his staff worked day and night to ensure IMSA's early success.

Superintendent Jewel's legacy is far-reaching. His vision to work with local businesses helped to strengthen the relationships between the schools and the community.

He worked with the board of education to make fiscally responsible decisions in regard to the North Campus.

Also, in spite of the many complex issues facing the district, a tax referendum was passed in 1988 to increase needed financial resources for the operations of the district.

Under Jewel's leadership, there were no layoffs of tenured teachers nor was there any organized discontent among staff. He resolved to keep the problems he and the board of education faced away from the classroom.

He respected and supported the district's teachers. In return, the staff gave 100% to the students entrusted to its care. The district survived a tumultuous time because Superintendent Jewel developed a team that weathered the storm with determination and dignity.

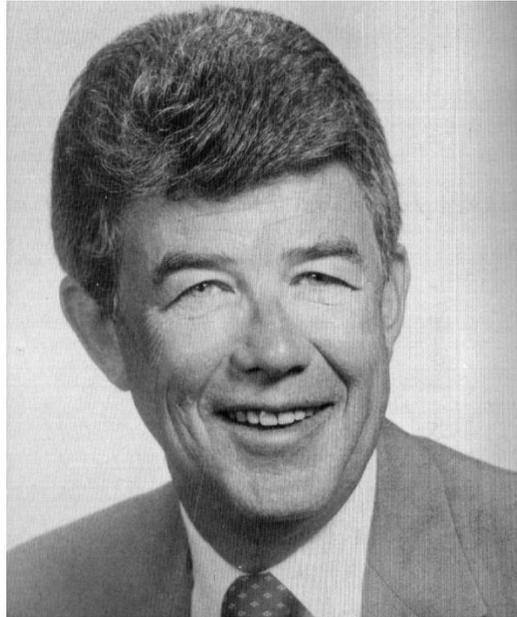
During his tenure as superintendent, Jewel served on the board of directors of the Institute for Educational Research and the Kane/DuPage Education Service Center. He also was a charter member and treasurer of the state-wide association of the Large Unit District Association (LUDA).

Upon his retirement from the district in 1993, Mr. Jewel was named Kane County Educator of the Year.

He then was appointed chairman of a financial oversight panel for the Mount Morris School District. Later, he became founding dean of the College of Education at Aurora University where he received an honorary doctorate.

His community activities included serving as past president of the board of directors of the Aurora YMCA, member of the Aurora Planning Commission, member of the board of trustees of the Copley Hospital Foundation, member of the Aurora Kiwanis and Aurora Rotary Clubs, and trustee of the Ball Foundation which was established to promote education, innovation and the study of human aptitudes.

Sources for this profile: West Aurora Schools and the Aurora Beacon-News. An August 20, 1998 article in the Aurora Beacon-News reported that Jewel Middle School was opened in the fall of 1998. This profile, completed in 2016, is courtesy of the A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools and the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley.



**Gary D. Jewel**

In 2016, the A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools and the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley collaborated in the development of biographical profiles of those for whom District 129 schools are named. Financial support for the project was provided by the following Special Friends of West Aurora School District 129: Sherry Eagle, Gary and Mary Jewel, Neal and Mary Clark Ormond, Char and Frank Voris, and Brent and Jean Wadsworth. The research, writing and editing of these profiles were courtesy of the Community Foundation and its President Emeritus Sharon Stredde, Research Associate Judith Iverson and Past Chairman of the Board Neal Ormond III.



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