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Holt school program aids learning-disabled children

By ANNE WAKEMAN

It is a hot, mid-July morning in Holt. The doors to the Midway Elementary School classrooms are open. The children are engaged in various activities within — ranging from math problems in one room to baking cookies in the next.

These children, ages 7-12, are the 23 students enrolled in the special five-week summer school program for Holt children with learning disabilities. The program is sponsored and funded by Michigan State University.

Denise Joseph-Enders, supervisor of the program, defines a learning-disabled child as one with average or above average intelligence who, for unknown reasons, has difficulty in reading, arithmetic, or writing.

Most have proven to be capable of keeping up with their classmates in the majority of regular classwork, but are a bit slower than average in certain areas, she said.

"Summer is a great time to be able to do this," Ms. Joseph-Enders said, standing in front of a brightly colored mural covered with "purple people eaters" in the hall. "We're able to work with the children on a social and emotional level, as well as academic levels."

Ms. Joseph-Enders heads a staff of seven MSU graduate students who are teaching these classes for credit toward their advanced degrees in special education. Many of the graduate students have taught before, or worked with various types of special students, including the retarded.

MSU pays Ms. Joseph-Enders' salary. She is a certified learning resource teacher in Holt during the regular school year, traveling from school to school to aid learning disabled children and guide their teachers in instructional devices.

This specific program is relatively new to Holt, Ms. Joseph-Enders said. It began two years ago, but was not offered last summer.

"Transportation is a big problem," Ms. Joseph-Enders said. "Some kids walk or ride their bikes, but most of them have to rely on their mothers to drive them. Sometimes it's difficult for them to get here every day."

The general attitude among the students' parents seems to be positive, she said. They're glad to see their children getting some additional attention outside the regular classroom. Even the children seem to be content with the situation, and there are several reasons why they should be.

"The best part of the program is the variety of interactions involved," she said. "We're all learning here."



Toby Davis, 8, a student in Holt's summer program for learning-disabled children starts a ball straight down the center of the lane. Tutor is Ed Willison, an instructor in the course, which includes special projects.