

Jan Schneider is pictured working with two students at St. Michael Lutheran School, Wayne, Mich.

The resource room: a helping place

The bright, cheerful resource room at St. Michael Lutheran School in Wayne, Mich., is decorated with pictures cut out of construction paper, posters listing rules about verbs and nouns, and quite a few drawings the children have given to Jan Schneider, their teacher.

Jan Schneider, who works in the mornings at St. John in Taylor (about 10 miles away), gets to St. Michael about 12:30 p.m. each school day. Between the two schools, she helps about 20 children.

How does a child get referred to a resource room? Usually, the child's regular education teacher refers the child. "Sometimes the referral is prompted by the child's behavior, but not often," Jan says. "Usually the child is having a real problem with reading or math."

The resource room at St. Michael helps students from as young as first grade through eighth grade. Each child who uses the resource room must go through an evaluation process at the Ephphatha Center in Detroit.

After the evaluation, the consultant who did the testing, the parents, the

teacher, the principal and Jan meet. This group works together to determine the child's strengths and weaknesses, and to determine a course of action.

At St. Michael, the children's time in the resource room varies from a half hour to an hour a day, but at times may be as long as two hours, depending on the need of each student. They spend the rest of their school day in their regular classroom.

Usually, there are three or four children in the resource room at any given time. During this time, Jan works with each child—concentrating on whatever subject in which the child needs help.

"We give them help outside the classroom on a one-to-one basis. They apply the things they learn in the resource room, so they can get more out of their regular class, too," Jan says.

Jan stresses the importance of working with the regular education teachers. If a child has trouble reading, for example, the regular teacher may come to Jan and ask her to read a test to the student. That way, the child is being tested on the

subject matter, not on his or her ability to read.

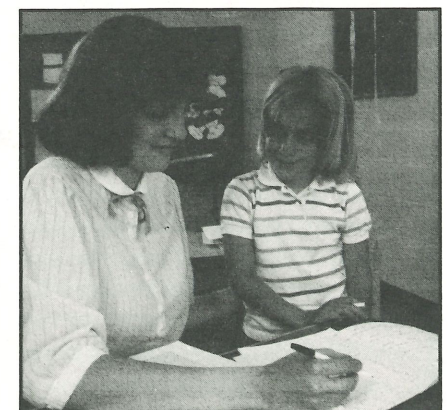
Jan also helps teachers plan different strategies in their classrooms to help students—all students, not just those who are learning disabled.

Jan, who taught third grade in regular education for 11 years, has a Master's Degree in Developmental Disabilities. "You have to be trained and have to have a wide variety of knowledge, because you're helping kids from first through eighth grade. It's hard."

How do the kids feel about the resource room? "They really enjoy coming here," Jan says. "I have only found positiveness in them. It's almost like a haven for them."

In fact, Jan says, "The greatest thing I think I can give to these kids is the determination to go in there and fight for what they can do."

Just what is it that makes the resource room special? "To me, I believe that the kids learn to feel good about themselves here. Face it, many of these kids have only known failure. I see my kids coming to a place where they can succeed and hopefully take some of that back to their classroom. The kids say, 'I can do it in the resource room, so I'm going to try in my regular classroom.' They see that they can do it, even if it's tough."



Our students are very special to us!

Yes, there is a place for them

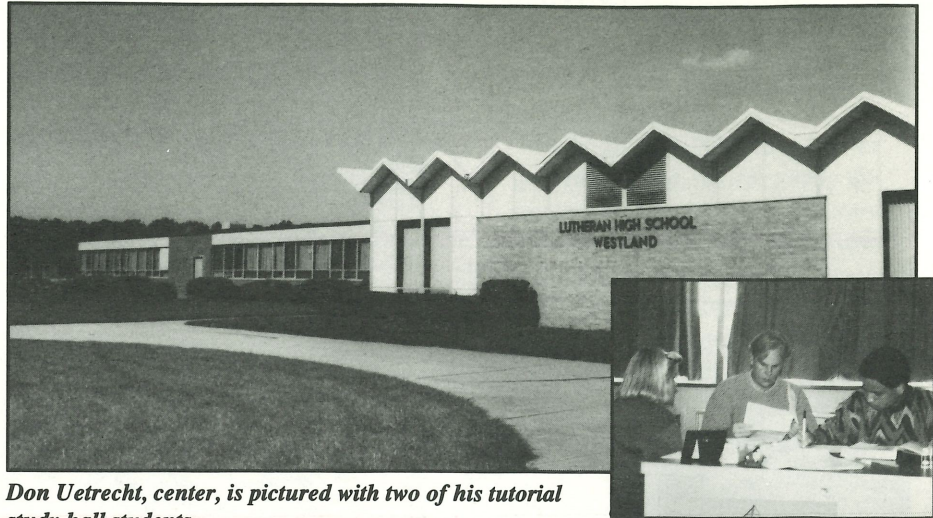
"Mr. U., can you help me over here?"

Don Uetrecht hears that quite often during his day at Lutheran High School Westland, Mich. He helps about 26 students during the regularly scheduled tutorial study halls at this large, attractive school.

The school is similar to hundreds of other high schools across the United States. It has 339 students, some of whom may participate on the basketball team, football team, cheerleading, band, drama, track, cross country, wrestling or baseball.

However, this school is different: It is one of five Lutheran high schools in Michigan that has a tutorial study hall, or resource room, provided by Lutheran Special Education Ministries.

Don Uetrecht has worked at Lutheran High School Westland for four years. He



Don Uetrecht, center, is pictured with two of his tutorial study hall students.

graduated from Concordia College, Seward, Neb., and has nearly completed his master's degree at Wayne State.

At Lutheran High School Westland, Don has no more than six students scheduled for each study hour. Don helps each student individually as they work on essay papers, book reports, molecular structure charts for science, and so on.

Most of the students who attend the tutorial study hall graduated from one of the Detroit area Lutheran grade schools and have used resource rooms during elementary school.

However, that doesn't mean that every child who attends a resource room during grade school automatically enters tutorial study hall in high school. That depends on the need.

When all students enter a Lutheran high school in Detroit, they take the STS high school placement test. Don says the test is the "red flag." Estimates are that from 5 to 7 percent of the high school population are learning disabled.

If a student does poorly on the test, then his or her grade school records are examined to see if the student received any kind of special help there. Each year, about five students who did not use resource rooms in the past are determined to be learning disabled and need to attend a resource room during high school.



Each of these students must also be evaluated by the Ephphatha Center in Detroit.

Every year, each student's situation is reviewed. A team made up of the parents, teachers and counselor set annual goals

Editor's Note: In other articles in this issue of "The Advocate," resource room teachers Jan Schneider and Don Uetrecht refer to the testing that occurs before a child is admitted to their classroom. In the Detroit area, this testing or evaluation is done at the Ephphatha Center on the Detroit campus. Testing is also done in Illinois for the resource rooms located in that state.

How do you know if a child is learning disabled? You certainly can't tell from looking! LD kids don't wear funny clothes or have a certain type of haircut. The only way you may suspect a learning disability is by the lack of achievement by a student who appears to have normal intelligence.

Before a child can be certified (a legal term) as learning disabled, an evaluation procedure must be initiated. According to the Ephphatha Center's Director, Jim Pagels, the evaluation usually occurs when a teacher or parent has concerns about a child.

Every year, Ephphatha Center staff evaluate about 300 such children. Not all these children are diagnosed as learning disabled. Sometimes the child has an attention problem that interferes with his concentration, a lag in a skill area or an emotional difficulty. Sometimes the evaluation reveals a difference in the expectations of the parents or teachers and the child's ability.

When the concerns about a child are not resolved through the usual parent-teacher consultation or subsequent problem-solving procedures with the resource room teacher, the general education teacher and parent make a referral to the Ephphatha Center, requesting an evaluation.

The actual evaluation takes about three hours. The child is evaluated by a school psychologist and an educational evaluator (who tests the child on school subjects). In-depth questionnaires and interviews are also conducted with the parents.

After the evaluation, an Individualized Educational Planning Committee, made up of the Ephphatha Center evaluator, parents, and teachers, reviews the concerns, presents the data, works together to determine appropriate educational strategies, and plans the implementation of the recommendations. This plan, called the Individualized Education Program (IEP), is completed for each child evaluated.

"Through this evaluation process," Jim Pagels says, "our goal is to help each child's teacher know how to help that particular child as much as possible."

for each student. Then Don and the student work to accomplish those goals on a one-to-one basis. "We take a lot of little steps instead of one big step," Don says.

High school resource room teachers have a variety of ways to help individual students besides actually sitting down and working one-on-one. "Most of our textbooks are on tape, so our students who have low reading levels and are not visually oriented can listen to the lesson material on tape." Don also tries to get his students to take a lot of notes, and helps them by quizzing them and reviewing notes.

The relationships these students have with other adults—like parents and other teachers—in addition to their peer relationships are also important. Don believes it's important to work with the parents, so he calls each student's parents every two weeks to let them know how their child is doing.

The other high school teachers also play a very important role in the tutorial study hall. "The teachers here have a really good understanding of what LD is all about," Don said. "There's a really good working atmosphere here with the faculty." The teachers work with Don to prepare him for what's coming up in their classrooms, provide him with old copies of tests, brief him on current subjects, and so on.



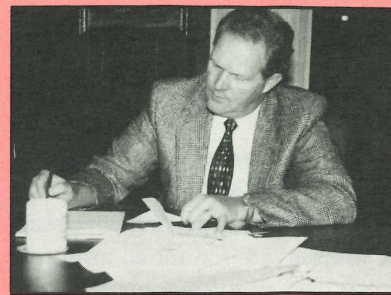
The other high school students don't look down on the students who attend the tutorial study hall. They "know that is a place where one can get help" and that "they are just normal kids who might have severe problems in reading or in math."

"If we didn't have resource rooms, we would not meet the needs of our special children in the Lutheran school system. They would not be here; they would have to go somewhere else. Without the resource rooms in our Lutheran school system, we would lose 100 kids in the Detroit area because they wouldn't receive the help they need," Don says.

"We try to be Christ-centered in what we teach them," he added. "And if a student has a learning problem, yes, there is a place for them."

A Report from Executive Director Roger DeMeyere:

What is so special about special education?



Almost everyone knows some family that is having trouble with one of their children. Maybe that child is causing trouble in school; maybe he or she is having a really hard time learning things in school; maybe the child just can't sit still and concentrate on anything.

Put yourself in that family's place for a moment. Imagine the turmoil they must go through every day. Besides the daily stress of problems with jobs, conflicting personalities at work, traffic, cars, health, marital stress and so on, they've got the additional stress of the child's behavior at school—working with the child to try to do better, often struggling to even complete homework.

Then add to that the stress of imagining there's something wrong with your child—something that's hard for anyone to admit—or that your child is really not very intelligent. Even more stressful is when the child himself believes that he's not quite as smart as everyone else in his classroom. He begins to doubt his own worth—and that can cause a lot of emotional damage to the child.

Can you imagine what their life must be like?

Often, children who are labeled "stupid" or "slow" in a classroom aren't stupid or slow at all! In fact, they could be of normal intelligence—but may have a learning disability. This disability as well as others, can be determined through extensive background examination and in-depth testing at our Ephphatha Center.

Federal and state laws mandate that all public schools have special education programs and services to help learning disabled children. However, this does not help the children learn about God's love and that He cares for them. Although there is no such mandate to provide Christian education for these children, Lutheran Special Education Ministries believes there is a sacred mandate.

In fact, that thought is reflected in our statement of ministry: "With the knowledge of God's love and the desire that God's love be revealed through our ministry, Lutheran Special Education Ministries serves to enable children with special learning needs to receive a Christian education."

We believe that we are challenged to help that hurting family—and especially that hurting child—to realize there is a place to go, people to help them and teachers who care for them. We try to help parents feel better about the situation—and help the children feel better about themselves.

A lot of children who have special problems are in pain. We can intervene in that by identifying what the problems are and also by making the kids and their families feel like they're not alone—that this is a problem many families experience. Just that awareness can be very comforting.

Our goals at Lutheran Special Education Ministries:

- to help children learn about Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior
- to offer each child as much individualized help as possible in order to benefit from the educational process
- to help teachers understand and instruct children who have special learning needs
- to reinforce skills necessary for students to become independent, functional members of society
- to educate children in the least restrictive environment possible
- to work cooperatively with Lutheran school personnel, various church related organizations, parents and community agencies on behalf of children with special learning needs
- to foster student feelings of self-worth and dignity.

Meet a new
staff member:

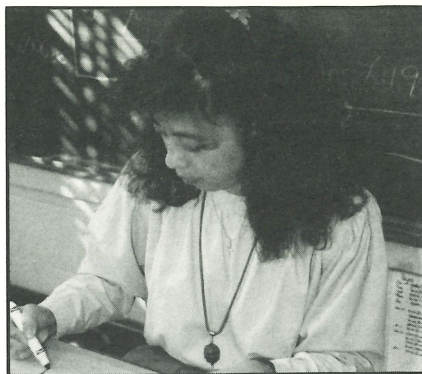
Irene Lee

About five years ago, Irene Lee was living and working in Taiwan. After earning a degree in banking and insurance, she worked first for an insurance company and then for a trading company. Working for the trading company "was really a blessing, because my boss was a Christian," Irene said. In Taiwan only 5 percent of the people are Christian.

However, she wasn't really satisfied with her job. She wanted to work in some area of social work—in fact, she had done volunteer work with blind, deaf, and physically handicapped students for five years. She had no formal training, but enjoyed the work.

Irene was introduced to Overseas Volunteer Youth Minister Todd Roeske by her sister. He invited her to come to an English Bible study, and after one year, "God really changed my life," Irene says, "and I became a Christian."

Through these missionaries, Irene found out about Concordia College in Seward, Neb. She came to the United States in August 1987 to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher for special educa-



Irene Lee

tion students and graduated from Concordia last August.

At North Detroit Lutheran School (our special education day school), Irene teaches 10 learning disabled 9- to 11-year-old students. She works with each student, pointing out that she "tries to use each student's strengths to work on his or her weaknesses."

"My heart is really with the kids," Irene says, "I'm always thinking about what I can do that will be better for the children. I know only God can give me the strength to help these children."

Irene adds that she likes to teach in a Lutheran school, "because I like to think that through the lessons, I can teach them about God, and that's the most important thing they need in their life."

We need your help!

Lutheran Special Education Ministries is a nonprofit organization affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Since our ministry receives no government aid, we are totally dependent on the generosity and commitment of those who believe in our ministry and want to help.

We are grateful that so many individuals and groups recognize the value of this unique Christian educational support system for special children.

___ I would like to include Lutheran Special Education Ministries in my will. Please contact me. My phone number: _____.

___ I would like to make a donation to Lutheran Special Education Ministries. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

___ I know someone who might be interested in supporting your work. Please have your representative contact:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Lutheran Special
Education Ministries
6861 E. Nevada
Detroit, MI 48234
(313) 368-1220

Statement of Ministry

With the knowledge of God's love and desire that God's love be revealed through our ministry, Lutheran Special Education Ministries serves to enable children with special learning needs to receive a Christian education.

The Advocate
for Students with Special Learning Needs

Second
class
postage
paid at
Detroit, MI

The ADVOCATE for Students with Special Learning Needs
—USPS 150-480
Published quarterly by Lutheran Special Education Ministries
(formerly Lutheran School for the Deaf), 6861 E. Nevada,
Detroit, MI 48234, (313) 368-1220.
Editor: Gregg Braun, Director of Development
Managing Editor: Roger DeMeyere, Executive Director
Send all communication regarding the editing, and
ALL ADDRESS CHANGES to the address above.