

# Madonna's Reading Clinic: No Pressure, All-Positive

The small boy was lively and friendly and had the ability to do fair-to-middling work in school.

The only problem was that he was the youngest in a big family of gifted children.

He was doing fine in his middle reading group. His parents, accustomed to top readers, were sure he could do better if he tried. He tried. He couldn't do better. Finally he simply closed himself off as far as school was concerned and finished first grade with the poor readers.

And at that point he went to the Psycho-Educational Center at Madonna College for six weeks of special help.

Sister Mary Martina, director of the center, reported the happy ending.

"In our evaluation," she said, "we told his parents to stop expecting so much and accept and appreciate him as he was. He did well that summer and hasn't had serious problems since."

**THE SMALL BOY** was like some of the 80 youngsters now getting help in a program that has been going on at Madonna since 1952. So many parents are interested in the center, Sister Martina said, that there would be twice that many students if staff and facilities were available.

Over the years, though, the number of

youngsters participating has been between 1,200 and 1,300. Their parents pay \$75 that includes preliminary testing, instruction and materials.

Some have to buck emotional problems—their own or their parents'. More are hampered by perception difficulties that make it terribly hard to learn to read and thus may slow the child in every other subject.

"These are children who are performing reasonably well and progressing in school," Sister Martina said. "But somewhere along the way, maybe because of slow maturing or illness or school transfer, some learning tool was missed. We help the child find that tool."

Participants in the program range from first grade through high school and come from all over this area. There are about 50 per cent from public schools and 50 per cent from parochial. Some are referred by their schools—some brought by parents acting on their own.

In the lower grades the emphasis is on what Sister Martina called "word attack skills."

"They learn the sound and visual form of letters and learn to blend them," she explained. "They also learn to see—some for the first time—that words are made up of separate parts."

**OLDER STUDENTS** learn to improve



**SPECIAL SCHOOL DAYS**—Dawn Whitaker of Livonia took a hearing test and received evaluations before she enrolled in Madonna College's Psycho-

Educational center this summer. She's among 80 youngsters getting help for particular problems at the center.

comprehension and drill on meanings of words and choosing the exact word. They also get help in using a dictionary and reference books.

To improve reading speed, they use a machine known as the Craig reader, which lights up the printed word on a scroll screen. The lines roll along at a speed the student sets. Then he tries to advance it.

Sister Grace Marie, working with some of the high school students, pointed up one basic tenet of the program.

"It's an all-positive approach," she said. "No pressure. We give no marks, and they don't even trade papers to correct them. Each student's progress is known only to him and to me."

Sister Martina, who besides conducting the program is a professor in the Madonna school of education, interviews and tells each youngster and talks to his parents before he is enrolled. The parents also answer a detailed questionnaire about the child.

The tests give a complete picture of the child's ability to learn. "And we then try to tailor the program to fit his needs," Sister Martina said.



**REDFORD BOOK**—Sister Mary Martina heads a detailed study of each child there.



**READING TOOLS**—Sister Mary Sandra has plenty of visual aids to help her charges gain printed word proficiency.



**PROGRESS**—Timmy Miller reads right along from his primer.

**PICKING UP SPEED**—The Craig projects words on a moving screen and helps older students learn to read faster.

**STORY:** Margaret Miller  
**PICTURES:** Harry Mauthe



**Livonia Mall  
Semi-Annual  
Antique Walk In Mall**

(no admission charge)

July 9 - 12

Wed. 9:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Thurs. 9:30 - 9 p.m.

Fri. 9:30 - 9 p.m.

Sat. 9:30 - 9 p.m.

*Michigan's finest dealers.  
Everything from Flea Market  
Bargains to priceless antiques.*

Shop in air-conditioned comfort

*Meet You  
At The Mall*

