

Seek to detect students' learning disabilities at early age



LEARNING TO read directions carefully and to follow them a Georgetown pupil lays out pattern pieces for a Go-cart racer.

A PARENT VOLUNTEER in Georgetown assists a student in distinguishing vowels. Colorful autumn leaves are used to brighten what could be considered a dull repetitive activity.

Photos by Rick Lambert



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by Pat Wilson

Learning Disabilities Week, held recently in Ontario under the auspices of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD) focused attention on the problems confronting thousands of children in Ontario who find learning extremely difficult.

Few, however, will be aware that Halton County is being watched with great interest by educators throughout Canada and further afield for the work here.

Almost five years ago a

study known as HEIS, short for Halton Early Identification Study, was undertaken by concerned educators in the county to assist classroom teachers in identifying children with learning problems. Now as the project is drawing to a close and an interim report is due for presentation in the new year, it appears that the findings will be regarded as very significant in the field of child development.

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the greatest difficulties con-

fronting the classroom teacher in identifying children with learning disabilities.

Usually multiple problems

affect the child in a Halton Special Learning Disabilities (SLD) class. Heavy concentration or deficit from visual, auditory or perceptual handicaps which affect his ability to learn may be spoken or written language, and if only he is of average or above average intelligence.

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It is this situation that the Halton Early Identification Study hopes to rectify.

Prior to entry into kindergarten and at the end of years 1, 2 and 3, a battery of tests will be administered to identify potential handicaps thought to be potentially high risk for learning disabilities. Through the test results, the analysis of data and after a personal interview in the home, it is hoped the SLD pupil will be identified as soon as possible in his educational career so that treatment may be started early without him having to leave the regular classroom situation.

Use kit

At present a kit known as the Something Special Kit is used by regular classroom teachers and SLD teachers to

Although there are classes in Georgetown, Acton and Milton at the elementary level for children with special learning disabilities, Halton has endeavoured to keep its handicapped students in the normal stream wherever possible. "We've found that because of the sheltered situation, increasing transfer times and difficulty in getting children to co-exist, very well," says Ron Chapman of the Halton Board of Education.

If he is academically fa-

ceted, he can proceed to the regular high school where remedial teachers will continue to assist him as necessary.

At the high school

special education teach-

er may be available for consulta-

tion. Should he wish to pursue a job or career-oriented course, the North Halton student will be bused

to take his place in one of two high schools whose graduates are eagerly grabbed up by industry because of the excellence of their training and their good self esteem.

From its stress on individualized instruction, the Milton SLD program is designed to meet the needs of the individual child with special learning disabilities awaiting the publication of the HEIS report next June.

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The

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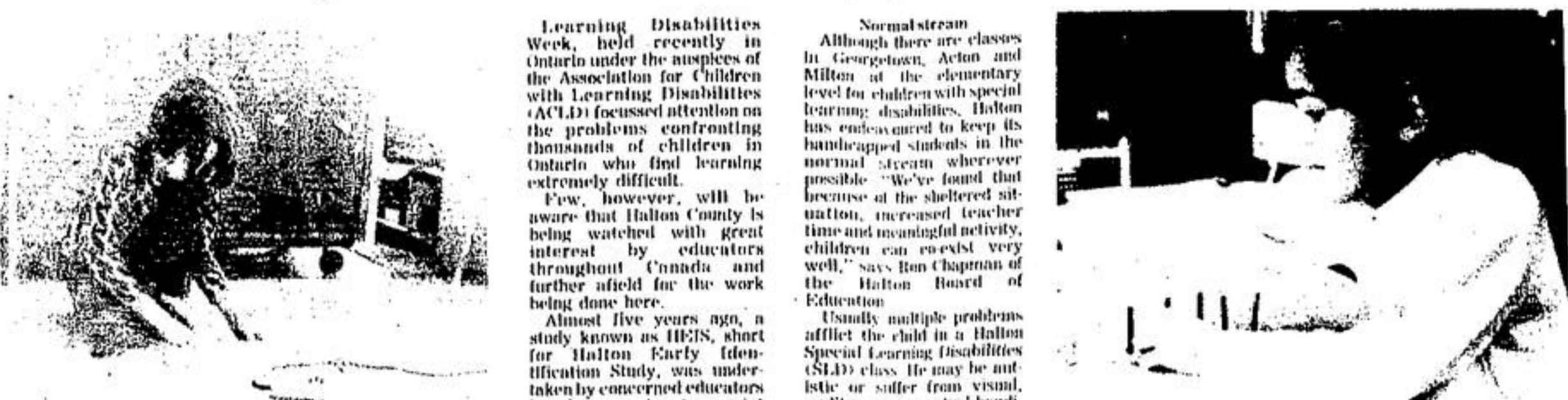
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ANOTHER ACTIVITY to develop observation skills is performed by a young Georgetown pupil. She must arrange the pegs in the peg board in a specified pattern.

Photos by Rick Lambert

Identify the particular learning disability affecting the pupil, then have accepted a number of complementary programs instituted to assist the learning process.

Some of these such as the Stott program devised by Professor Stott of the University of Guelph, are basically reading programs, while others involve learning machines and craft and physical education programs in which hand and eye coordination activities play a large part.

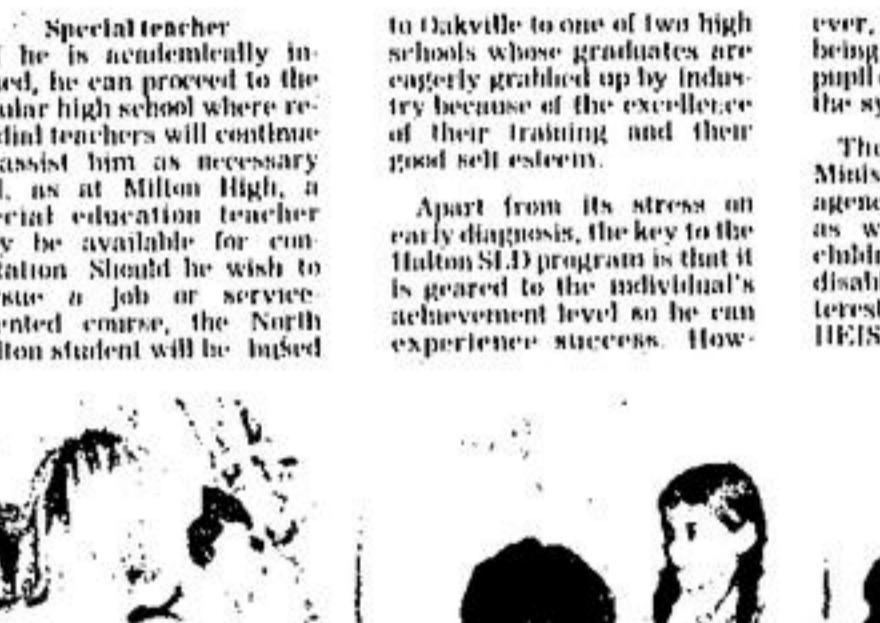
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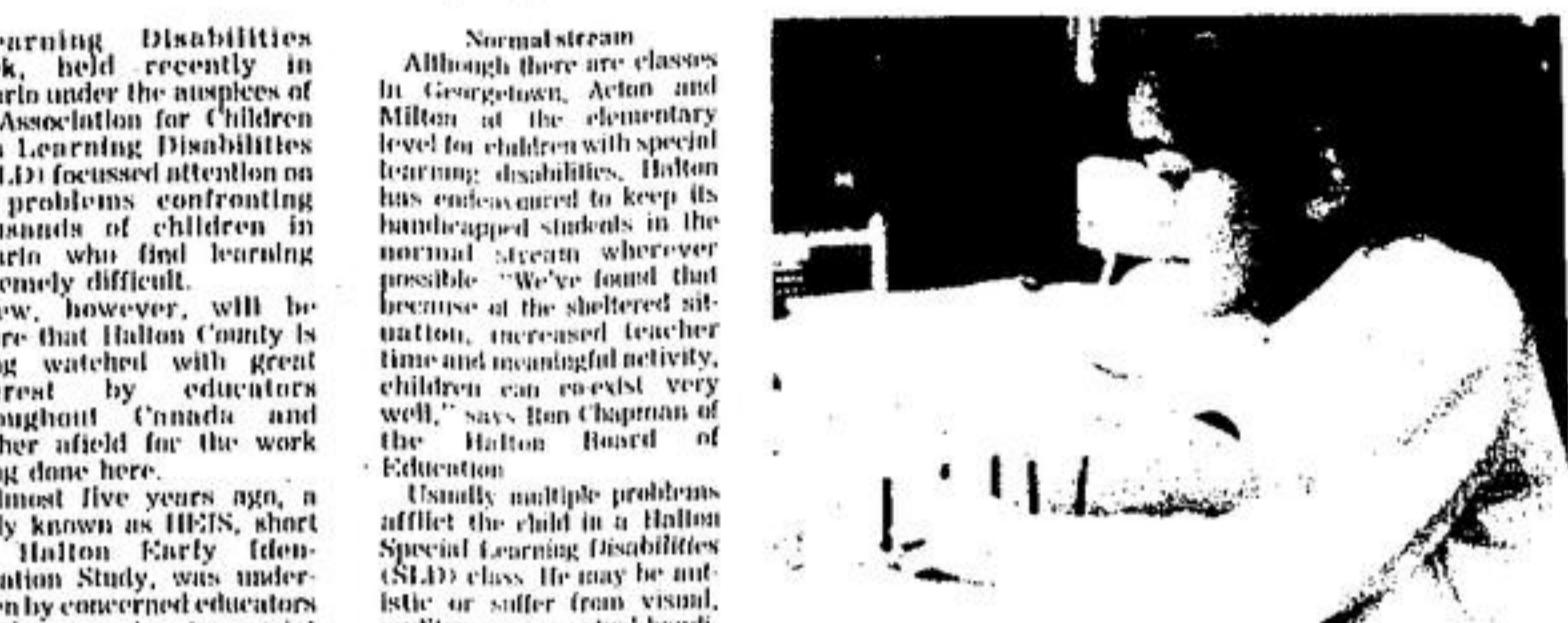
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PHYSICAL EDUCATION is vital to the development of hand and eye coordinating skills. This group of boys at J.M. Denyes School in

Milton practise keeping the ball aloft by using a 'scoop.'

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