



READING in Sidney nine years old

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The hardest part is admitting there is a difficulty and summoning the courage to do something about it.

But since 1976 close to 5,000 Greater Victoria adults and students have found the courage and admitted they have a learning difficulty.

These people, who experience varying degrees of literacy, memory and perception problems, have turned to the Victoria R.E.A.D. Society to overcome their particular difficulty.

For the past nine years, Margaret Smith in her Sidney classroom, has guided adult and school-aged students through learning assistance tutoring sessions for everything from teaching adults to read to skill development in high school English and math.

Just as every student is different, every learning difficulty is peculiar to each individual case, she says. Therefore, tutoring sessions are limited to a maximum three students at a time.

"It's not a day school. We work on intensive specific skill development for one to 1½ hours, most students couldn't concentrate intensely for more than that," Smith told the Review.

Remedial classes conjure up images of disabled students to many, and Smith is quick to quash any such misconceptions.

"Many students are just not able to cope with regular school, and combine R.E.A.D. with private tutoring," said Smith who admits that during her 20 years teaching, she is now seeing much more emphasis on alternative education.

R.E.A.D. instructors are certified teachers who have received instruction in special education and remedial teaching.

Smith works alone, full-time, in the Sidney office and receives extra help during busy periods.

The wide-range of learning assistance programmes offered has led R.E.A.D. to develop many of their own materials and game activities used in study sessions. Large print and high interest-low level books are also useful mediums for teaching literacy according to Smith.

R.E.A.D. is a private registered non-profit organization whose major source of funding is tuition fees.

significant today which motivates the society to develop new and expanded programs.

"We give them (students) skills so that they can enjoy reading and develop their potential and go on even further."

However since 1980 a bursary fund has been set up to aid students who cannot pay the tuition. A fund-raising lecture by author Marilyn Ferguson (The Aquarian Conspiracy) was held at the University of Victoria last week with proceeds from ticket, book and video sales going to the Bursary Endowment Fund.

Smith confirmed the fund "gets very tight by year end and we wonder if we'll make it."

However entering their 10th year of service, they have made it every year, and continue to offer learning assistance to all who need it.

Smith believes the incidence of illiteracy among adults is still

"The students are not disabled, we're working with average and above average intelligence. They have particular difficulties in one area."

In some cases, problems are quite minor and are resolved in a short time, while others may take several years to overcome.

While the difficulty may not be major, it can prevent a student from coping with their class work, and "the one-to-one interaction prevents distraction."

Medical and visual problems can also affect students' performance, and Smith points out that if a someone has a problem with visual tracking (following a line of words), they will likely have problems understanding what they read.

