

SMU researchers hope to hone reading skills of retarded youths

By **EMILY S. HANCOCK**
Staff Writer

FOUNT WORTH — For long, educators have practiced "remedial" techniques with special students, as one researcher at Southern Methodist University puts it.

"The assumption has been for many generations that these children just could not learn to read,"

said Patricia Mathes, director of SMU's Institute for Reading Research. She with a 100 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Mathes and her colleagues are set to challenge that conclusion.

"They believe that with the right techniques, children with mild to moderate retardation eventually can read and enough to live inde-

pendently. That includes being able fill out job applications, use the Internet and read books and newspapers.

Starting last fall, and over the next few years, SMU researchers will work with 20 children in the Fount Worth Independent School District. Half the students will be taught reading with the university's current methods. The other half

will receive an hour of intensive instruction daily to help them get ready to read and read weekly. But also to know what those words mean.

The approach has worked successfully with students, children and other struggling readers, Dr. Mathes said.

Researchers led the study at Pennsylvania State and Texas Tech

University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Oregon State. The results also applied 80 million spent for special studies.

Of the approach works, researchers say that it could help more than all children assessed in the districts, as the federal for Child Left Behind standards

As **TEACHING**, Page 17

Teaching methods for retarded youths studied

Continued from Page 16

Standard.

"When we talk about the Child Left Behind, we mean to child left behind, and that includes our special population," said Barbara Matthews, dean of SMU's education school.

Researchers demonstrated their approach Wednesday at Wansley Elementary School in Wansley, North Carolina.

Three children out of a class of 20 were chosen, the researchers of SMU's research project, held up a big book and with the letters "the" and a picture of a truck.

"Thee, the you say it with me," the researcher said.

"Thee," the kids re-

sponded.

"Good job!"

Then the teacher asked for a hand paper named the "the" and a story about a monkey who wanted a truck.

One of the students, 7-year-old A.J. Wiggins, was joined by his mother, Loretta Wiggins. She said she's excited about the project and the hope it brought to her children's education.

Teachers basically said me he would know for what a word (child would do). They would read over with the reading. They said he would know talk to his name a long way," Ms. Wiggins said.

A small black and white photograph showing a group of people, likely the researchers and students, in a classroom setting.