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Best "Brains"

(Continued)



Gifted children get needed companionship.

CONTRARY to popular belief, the superior student is not puny and unattractive—the traditional "sad sack." According to Dr. Woolcock, the gifted are usually physically strong, socially able, and attractive. What is generally overlooked is the fact that they require more time than the slow learner, more sympathy and understanding.

As for parents of the gifted child—there often is a driving responsibility to do something. Dr. Lenore Vaughan-Eames, director of the graduate program at New Jersey State Teachers College and a member of the new Council's advisory board, points out that parents can surround the child with books and more books, with pictures and material relating to specific interests. They can take the child on short walks and long trips, but they must be doing more than just looking. Interpretation can make these experiences vivid and exciting to young minds.

"The child should always have an answer to a question, although it may take time," she says, "and the adult and child may have to do some research together. Sometimes all that is needed is for the parent to know where to turn for help—in the community, the school, or elsewhere."

Nor can one overlook the importance of a relaxed atmosphere at home, where there is a mutual respect and appreciation for the needs and interests of each member of the family.

As principal of Hunter College High School, Dr. Woolcock never has encountered a case of delinquency. This is not likely to be a problem, since students know they can seek out a counselor when difficulties arise. With parents and teachers working closely together to supply a child's special needs, the student comes to

know himself as an important part of a family and social group.

Thus, recognition of brains and ability is moving into its proper niche at last. The great American pastime of sneering at the "brain" has come to an embarrassing end. While we were scoffing at our "eggheads," Russia was marshaling hers for the first successful venture into outer space and new world prestige.

Dr. Paul Witty, professor of education at Northwestern University, writing in the National Parent-Teacher, points out: "When qualified youth fail to go to college, our country suffers a loss of needed teachers, social workers, scientists, engineers, physicians, and other skilled professionals as well as civic, religious, and political leaders."

Evidence of the neglect of gifted children is seen, he declares, in the fact that in a country that makes a college degree a prerequisite for many professional and scientific careers, 60 percent of our very bright youngsters don't go to college.

And Dr. Woolcock maintains, "We must do everything humanly possible to surpass the Russians. If we don't, we shall surely fail as a free people."

