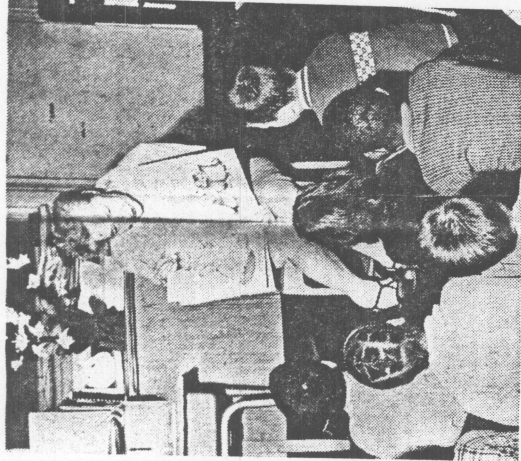




Deaf children get special comprehension lessons.
PHOTOS BY JOHN SCHNEIDER



Prereadiness classes are for the younger children.



Blind students sing, paint, color and even make cutouts at the state school.

Willowbrook--Where Every Response Is Gratifying

By JULIE SUMMERS

The walls are lined with cutouts for the season — shamrocks for St. Patrick's Day or snowflakes or flowers — cut and colored by the students in that class.

A phonograph plays a singing tune and the children raise their voices and, as children will try to drown each other out.

Students are seated at tables

a city within a state (New York).

The education department at Willowbrook is run efficiently and effectively by Mrs. Hannah Glasser, education director, and her staff of 35 teaching personnel and two education supervisors, Nicholas J. Mannano and Joshua Calio.

Over 75 classes are held each day for 929 5 to 21-year-old mentally retarded students. The classes are small, approximately 15 to 20 students each.

ely 15 in each, and are held in the morning and the afternoon for two and a half hours. Students are grouped according to their mental age, chronological age and social maturity.

ALTHOUGH all the students

are mentally retarded — many are also physically handicapped — to Mrs. Glasser and her staff — "they're just children" who need love, affection, understanding and care.

With that philosophy in mind, the Willowbrook education department works to bring each child to his full potential.

Screening the children to determine who is educable, which are trainable and which will not benefit from any teaching, is done before any patient is placed in a class.

Those students screened as educable are placed in classes according to present capabilities. They are then educated to their potential. They are taught academic subjects and are given socialization and vocational guidance.

When the educables reach the age of 16, they are placed in vocational training with half a



MRS. HANNAH GLASSER

day spent in academic pursuits and the other half learning vocationally. At 17, they graduate and enter the young adult program, which gives them on-the-job training and a curriculum geared even more vocationally.

BEFORE entering the young

adult program, the students are given a complete tour of the state school training areas to determine in what capacity they would like to work.

Trainable patients follow a curriculum based on self-help with socialization and oral expression stressed. They then develop the self-sufficiency which keeps them from becoming total-care patients.

There are 369 students under 13 enrolled in the education department and 560 13 or older. Approximately 859 more of the 6,000 patients at the state school are not being serviced by the education department because of space and personnel shortages. Of these, approximately 445 of trainables would benefit and 414 would not. According to Mrs. Glasser, all educable children are being serviced.

Problems are no more or less prevalent at Willowbrook's school than at a public school, says Mrs. Glasser, stressing again that "children are children" under any circumstances.

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