

Willowbrook Faces Shortages Despite Progress

Second of two articles.

By ROLLANDA COWLES

Despite the tremendous strides Willowbrook State School has been making in the education of the mentally retarded, the institution still is faced with a shortage of classrooms and teaching personnel. The academic school department enrollment shows some 484 children under 13 and another 614 who are over 13 years of age.

All educable children of school age are being served, according to Mrs. Hannah Glasser, director of the school.

There are, however, 683 trainable children of school age with somewhat less are given learning potential — not being serviced because of insufficient facilities. Of these, 631 would benefit and 52 would not, she said.

The curriculum for these is based on self-help, stressing socialization, motor development and language development in order to bring them up to

their full potential. Last fall two new wings, one for the trainable and one for the trainable, were added to the original school building. Classrooms are still at a premium and there are several teacher vacancies, Mrs. Glasser said.

The school takes a realistic approach in the education of these children.

"We try to teach the educable children the fundamentals which will be essential to them as contributing citizens," Mrs. Glasser said. "The curriculum is occupationally geared, as a means to an end, she added.

In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, the students are given instruction in social habits and elementary science.

Some of the boys and girls who have left Willowbrook now are employed in such areas as housework, gardening, sewing, factories, bakeries and candy factories.

Others are performing as porters, cleaners, doormen and are nursing home aides, compared

capable are exposed to situations and surroundings simulating actual work conditions.

The education department is also involved in a federal project instituted last fall in conjunction with the recreation and occupational training departments.

This encompasses some 50 children who previously did not meet criteria for any program because of their hyperactivity. They are housed in new pre-fabricated units near the school, but will be transferred to the two-pronged academic program as soon as they show improvement, according to Mrs. Glasser.

An intensive therapy center for 25 retardates under 5 years of age is slated for completion by late fall. Additional facilities in this unit will include classrooms, speech, physical therapy and recreational rooms.

It is more beneficial to start working with them at an earlier age. Retarded children respond when you retrain and hold at least expecting it, and when they do, it's most gratifying," license.

At present, the school is not affiliated with any college, although Mrs. Glasser envisions teacher training as a possibility.

The woman behind this extensive program is twice a grandmother. Her husband, Dr. Frank Glasser, now retired, was once assistant director at Willowbrook.

One of their sons, Dr. David Glasser, is a resident in Kings County Hospital. Another, Dr. Lewis Glasser, is finishing medical training at Emory University Medical School in Atlanta, Ga. His twin, Bertrand, is recreation therapist at Creedmore State Hospital.

A native of Newburgh, N.Y., Mrs. Glasser won her teaching certificate after graduating from New Faiz (N.Y.) Normal School in 1931.

She holds the bachelor of science degree in education from Hunter College, where she worked at Hunter, Wagner and City Colleges and holds a New York State principal's license.



Mrs. Hannah Glasser

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