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"America can't afford to lose 1 per cent, much less 10 per cent or more, of its mentally advanced youngsters."

That 10 per cent or more of the nation's top small fry mentalities go unidentified is a major worry of Jack W. Birch, University of Pittsburgh teaching at UMD this summer, and other leaders in his field.

Professor of education and director of Pittsburgh's special education department, Professor Birch has conducted two graduate courses on teaching the gifted child during the first UMD summer term.

In conjunction with the program, a demonstration class of third, fourth and fifth grade pupils from Duluth public schools and the UMD laboratory school has been conducted by Miss Merle Bryant, UMD instructor of education.

William C. Simmons, director of special services, Duluth board of education, and Harry C. Johnson, UMD professor and head of elementary education, have been local coordinators for the program.

"The best estimates are that we are losing 10 per cent or more of our high IQ youngsters by failing to identify them early enough. Once they are submerged with the rest, they are usually lost forever," Professor Birch declares.

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During the five-week courses, which have attracted several score students from many states, Professor Birch has emphasized the characteristics by which the bright youngster may be discovered. Among them:

An advanced vocabulary

Early efforts to read and write

Interest in activities of older children

Early talking and walking

Early social and emotional adjustment

A lot of "why" questions

Early creativity--new ways of putting old things together

Early classroom and home behavior, routine interest and intelligence tests and general observation provide clues. A psychologist is called in to confirm identification of the bright child through more specific tests and study.

Professor Birch urges more parental help in identifying the gifted and mentally advanced.

"Parents shouldn't be modest about this. About 1 child in 10 brought to the attention of the principal or teacher proves to be mentally advanced, a significant percentage that makes the whole effort worthwhile."

"Parents of the other 90 per cent are usually grateful for the psychological evaluation that gives them a better picture of the special interests, abilities and needs of the child. All children benefit from the program."

He adds: "we have long ago exploded the myth that the genius is a big-domed weakling who early burns himself out. The bright child is usually above average in looks and emotions as well as intelligence."

Many workers in this field advocate careful psychological examination of all children at about three years of age. Until that comes about, however, the parent and teacher are the key persons in identifying the advanced youngster.

Once s tted, the bright youngster can be directed into many effective channels. Three key procedures Professor Birch suggests:

• Accelerate the gifted child in school--about two years by the 12th grade.

• Encourage early reading--as young as three years.

• Develop "conversational competence" in another language in kindergarten or the first grade, the ages when the child is particularly adept in language learning.

"Language competence," Dr. Birch noted, "will be particularly important in Duluth as the city becomes a great international port. Bear in mind, that next to remembering his name the best way to please a person is to speak his language."

America's cultural and physical survival hinges upon the identification and development of potential leaders and top thinkers. Their ability to communicate as well as to think creatively is vital to their contribution, the Pittsburgh educator emphasizes.

Do programs for the gifted and mentally advanced produce an intellectual elite which withdraws itself from the rest? Dr. Birch doesn't think so.

"On the contrary, research indicates that programs for the mentally advanced produce more democratic and socially sensitive adults than the average.

The keen competition among the advanced group grinds off rough corners that might otherwise create real problems in the less competitive atmosphere of a regular classroom."

Professor Birch terms the Duluth program " a superb example of cooperation between a local school system in a major city and a University campus."

Honored a number of times in his own community and profession for outstanding contributions to special education, Birch continues:

"I don't know of another major city other than Cleveland that has devoted the careful thought and systematic approach to its beginning program for mentally advanced children that Duluth has.

"The joint planning and financial sponsorship is a wonderful example of cooperation between a community and a University campus."

From the Duluth project will emerge courses of study and special projects for the mentally advanced designed by committees of teachers enrolled in the program.

Eventually, the effects of the Duluth program will reach into many classrooms of the country as the critical search for the mentally advanced is extended.

"There are a lot of things we still don't know in this field," Professor Birch concludes, "But certain things we know for sure.

"First, civilization has suffered a tragic loss from failure over the centuries to identify the superior mind. Worse, society has frequently persecuted it or allowed it to turn to evil ends. Nobody can say that Al Capone, for instance, was stupid.

"Secondly, any couple can have a gifted child. Until more effective screening is put into use, parents and teachers must help in identifying him.

"Thirdly, once the child's high potential is discovered, it takes a sound educational approach to bring it out. The Duluth program represents that kind of approach."