
Greater Black Participation Urged in Colleges

If Paul Davis has his way, black students at The Pennsylvania State University will be taking a bigger part in University activities.

Mr. Davis, a graduate of West Philadelphia High School, is president of Penn State's Black Caucus, an umbrella organization which includes all of the school's black-oriented groups.

His administration has been promoting greater black participation in student body events as a way for blacks to be recognized, and simultaneously to enjoy their college experience more.

"We're trying to be more progressively active," Mr. Davis says, "we're going out to find issues that effect us, and ways that we can have impact on our environment. We're trying to get out of the context of just dealing as black students."



Paul Davis—President Penn States Black Caucus

"We want to interact with the entire Penn State community, and not isolate ourselves. I'm sure other Penn State

students want to see Martin Luther King's birthday declared a national holiday, or are interested in African Liberation Day."

He cites an apparent difference in values that black students encounter at predominantly white schools: what whites see as "fun," blacks often find "embarrassing."

"For a lot of events like the Homecoming Parade, they dress up in costumes and do things that we don't identify with, or see as unruly or uncivilized."

But Mr. Davis, son of Phillip and Lucille Davis, of 5118 Hazel Ave., feels that blacks can find ways to participate if they take the initiative.

"Because we come from communities that are totally dissimilar, we'd have to show whites what the black community is all about," he says. "If we took more initiative, we could, for instance, have a black component in Homecoming."

Coming out of high school, Mr. Davis was less a politician than a businessman and sportsman.

"I played soccer and bowled, and was in the school's business training program, DECA, during my last year," he says. "DECA helps you to obtain work experience in business; I got my first exposure to business there, and that's why I went into management."

And it is his business management training that helps him see more effective ways to serve his fellow black students.

"I love my people," he says, "and I feel that, with the time that I've spent here and my training, I can serve the best interests of blacks at Penn State."

"You get a good feeling when you pull off a program for other people. Being here in what they call 'Happy Valley,' our organization shows that we as blacks can maintain our identity regardless of where we are."

They'll Grow Out Of It... Or Will They?

What happens if your child, who always seemed intelligent and normal, can't seem to learn to read? Or can't write clearly? Or seems to have trouble understanding or using language? Or won't concentrate, won't sit still in school, won't cooperate?

"What usually happens," says Dr. Michele Shackelford, clinical Assistant professor of neurology and neuro-

psychologist for the Department of Neurology at Downstate Medical Center (State University of New York, Brooklyn), "is that the parents are told their child 'will grow out of it.' Occasionally, it is only a phase. But often, it's a real problem. It may have been a problem for years, but so subtle that nobody noticed until the child became involved in schoolwork."

Parents of a son or daughter with a learning or behavior problem often don't realize something is wrong. And, since they know full well that their child isn't retarded, the only conclusion that makes sense is that the child is lazy. This is why it is most often the school psychologist or a tuned-in teacher who suggests that perhaps some testing is called for.

Laziness is Not the Problem

Children who come to Downstate for testing in this area get a complete and thorough workup—beginning with an examination by one of the pediatric neurologists. "Our role," explains Dr. Arthur Rose, associate professor of neurology and chief of the Division of Pediatric Neurology, "is to ensure that a physical cause of learning disability is not overlooked. During development, both before and after birth, the brain is highly vulnerable to many kinds of injury." The reasons for these injuries range from toxins, bleeding, and poor blood supply during pregnancy to poor nutrition and physical trauma.

The doctor takes a detailed medical history, including pregnancy, labor, delivery, and the newborn period, in a search for clues to the cause of the learning disability. Next comes a screening development exam and a neurological examination, plus (if called for) an electroencephalogram, sonogram, or CAT Scan.

In cases of learning disability, reports Dr. Rose, the neurological examination will usually turn out to be relatively normal. However, it is now necessary to test the child's intellectual functioning. Since it's impossible to look at cerebral function through a window, this is done by careful and systematic psychological testing. And this is where Dr. Shackelford is called upon to help. She tests children who have trouble with language...or who have some kind of delayed development (other than intelligence)...or who have had a head injury...or are just not doing quite right in school. "often," she points out, "the child looks normal and the neurological exam looks normal, but looking all right doesn't necessarily mean that the higher cortical functions necessary to learn to read, to solve problems, and to remember, are working correctly. We must rely on behavioral tests for that."

To this end, Dr. Shackelford has put together her own battery of psychological and intelligence tests—all readily available and all in general use. But she has chosen them specifically because, used in particular combination, they are best at showing neurological damage. In addition to looking for intelligence and academic achievement levels, she tests for perception, fine

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