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Musing on such foreknowledge, such insight, such preparedness, such “seeing ahead” as He was providing for the coming life, from bugs to slugs, from frogs to snakes, from animals to man, is too much for me to grasp!

Dear Miss Koole
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Deadline for next issue is June 1.

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From a colleague comes the following question: "There seems to be a growing conviction in some quarters that the school year in our country is too short — at least when compared to that of other countries, the students in which are reportedly outdistancing their counterparts in the U.S. in a manner most disturbing to Congressmen, columnists, and school administrators. What do you think, Miss Koole, is that an undue emphasis on academic achievement? Or is it a legitimate

ANSWER:

considered the chief and only good in life because only the best educated persons are considered for work that leads to success and wealth.

Almost every waking hour is spent in studying, and even the greater part of any "vacation" period is also devoted to studies — although the environment may be a camp setting. One of the students, who had previously lived in the U.S. for several years, commented on Japanese education as consisting of more memorization than of development in the thinking process. She believed that Japanese students miss many of the "extras" that make for a well-rounded education.

That extreme and that attitude we should avoid.

Much of the education in our country tends to swing toward the other extreme. Everything seems to be more important than education. Just getting by is far more prevalent than a desire to achieve academic excellence. The legitimate place of memorization is deprecated or negated. Yes, our school days are shorter, our vacation periods longer, less homework is required (and that at a much later age) than in any other country. Of the 365 days in a year, less than half are school days. Many persons, and educators included, realize that it is becoming apparent and urgent that more time be spent in the

classroom. And some school districts (Rochester, New York is one) are planning to do just that. It will involve a much greater expenditure of tax money. Rochester plans to raise the maximum annual salary of its teachers to around \$75,000.

Would I advocate longer school days and a longer school year? I think we should have both in moderation. What I would prefer is a summer school structured quite different from that of the regular school year. There are many worthwhile subjects that could better be taught in a less structured way to smaller groups during a summer period. If one divided the summer into three or four three-week periods and limited the students to one of those periods, some of the following subjects could be taken: art, music, physical education, work on the computer, video viewing, beginning of a spoken foreign language, games in math and reading, geography and history games, science experiments, etc. Many of these things are necessarily curtailed in our crowded school day.

I discussed this with my fourth graders and almost all of them were very enthusiastic about the proposal. Even the students that need much help during the school year said that summers can become "very boring." I believe these same students would benefit

There are many who deplore the waste of empty schools during the summer. And there would be as many who might question the cost of educating small groups in the summer in the variety of subjects suggested. I believe it could be worked out if parents could be convinced that it would be beneficial for their children, and that it is proper stewardship of the time and abilities and responsibilities that God gives us.

From a Grand Rapids Parent:
 "We received a note from school regarding a sale on the *World Book Encyclopedia*. We are vitally interested in encouraging and helping our children in whatever ways we can. Should an encyclopedia be a priority item in our home for our children? At what age will children begin using an encyclopedia and in what ways will children be using an encyclopedia?"

My advice is to take advantage

From the third grade on, teachers will assign simple or more complex topics or reports that require students to use supplementary materials. The encyclopedias provide the most concise and most easy to locate information. Answers to many questions can usually be found in an encyclopedia. Also, the colored pictures make it easy to identify animals, birds, plants, and such.

Both parents and teachers should be alert to provide children with opportunities for learning using the encyclopedia. ■■