

2762 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

Mrs. Mary Kimball has two children in school and a four-year-old at home. Once a week she watches a TV program which is teaching her how to sew. The TV teacher also instructs sewing classes at the Opportunity School, and Mrs. Kimball is on the waiting list for one of the advanced sewing classes.

LANGUAGE LEARNED

Juan Ramero arrived in Denver on a Saturday. On Monday his cousin had him registered in an English class. Juan quickly learned enough English to enroll in the Opportunity School's high-school program and he is following an individualized course through English, math, and social studies. His math teacher has assured Juan that he can take a basic electronics course next year in the evenings and continue his job as a polisher in a car-wash establishment.

In 1916, the year that the Denver Opportunity School opened its doors, 2,398 Juans, Marys, Helens, and Bills came to take advantage of its unique personalized educational service.

Last year, more than 32,000 young and older adults took at least one course at this public school.

The youngest students at the Opportunity School are 16. These pupils are enrolled in other Denver public high schools and take only one special course at the Opportunity School. The next youngest pupils are over 21 and quite possibly are school dropouts who want either to finish high school or take a course, such as shoe repair, which will give them an immediate, marketable skill.

The oldest student at this year-round 8 a.m.-to-10 p.m. school is 95. He is enrolled in a daytime oil-painting class and was at work on a flower still life the day I kibitzed over his shoulder.

The City of Denver operates 130 schools with an annual budget of \$78 million. The Opportunity School spends \$2 million of that each year. Enrollees who live and work outside the school district must pay a modest tuition, but for all Denver residents the courses are free.

SPECIAL COURSES SLATED

The Opportunity School will set up any course any time if there is sufficient interest and need. A rubber company, for example, which was opening a subsidiary company in Belgium, asked for and got a crash program in technical French. A group of men from several large advertising firms offered to conduct clinics for small-business operators. The clinics were set up at convenient locations around Denver and proved a tremendous boon to the small-business men who must handle their own advertising.

Another short clinic was held for store detectives.

A certain type of skilled machinist was needed by one large Denver company. The business took \$85,000 worth of machinery over to the school, freed a foreman to teach a course, took the machinery back to the plant, and hired the students from the course who began production work on the same equipment on which they had trained.

The Opportunity School also tries to get ahead of job needs by feeling the business pulse of the community. For example, the school had trained TV repairmen before the first set was sold in Denver. The school also introduced jet-engine repair, and graduated certified repairmen before there was a jet at Stapleton Airport.

In the context of the nation's growth, Denver is still an American melting pot. Hundreds of immigrants first learn English and apply for citizenship in this mile-high city.

The school's citizenship teacher, Miss Esther Heller, is herself an immigrant from Poland who first learned English as a foreign language at the Opportunity School. Then she took the course in citizenship, following this by taking enough basic education courses to get a high-school diploma. She is now a college graduate, and a teacher at the university level as well as at the Opportunity School.

WAITING LIST GROWS

Along with several others, the citizenship class has a waiting list. On March 20, the waiting list for the more popular courses stood at 3,732.

At the same time, there are always some vacancies in classes because each student in each class moves along at his own pace. As soon as a student completes a course, the first one on the waiting list is notified. He may enter the class immediately—there is no waiting period.