

Students enrolled in barbering or cosmetology normally put in an eight-hour day five days a week until they have studied the required hours and are ready to pass the state examinations. The many students who cannot come for more than one hour a day are also accommodated. This has been the school's policy since its beginning.

That beginning goes back to 1907, when Miss Emily Griffith, a Denver public-school teacher, visited the homes of her children to find out why their homework wasn't done and why their clothes were tattered and torn. She found that their fathers were often out of work, unskilled, and uneducated. She also discovered that mothers were inept at budgeting what little money they had and didn't recognize the potential of good schooling.

To break the cycle of poverty, sickness, and deprivation, Miss Griffith reasoned, a school was needed. Such a school should allow adults to do high-school work, should teach trade skills such as carpentry, sewing, auto mechanics, and welding.

Miss Griffith also determined that such a school need require no previous educational background, should be open and free to residents of Denver, should have teachers willing to double as counselors, should give no grades, and require no homework.

For 50 years the Emily Griffith Opportunity School in downtown Denver has pursued its original policy. The school also has reached outside its own buildings and conducts classes over TV and in more than 100 locations around the city.

COMPUTER USED

Most of the courses taught at the Opportunity School are devised right there. The teachers write their own curriculums, set up their own workbooks, and the school shop prints out the desired number of copies.

The Opportunity School owns its own IBM 1440 computer. The computer teacher heard that a 1440 had been damaged in a recent flood and asked for the machine. He got it for what it cost to transport it to the school, taught computer repair and maintenance to a class while cleaning it, and now is able to use the computer in several special computer-technology classes.

Sewing is the most popular activity at the school. For a few of the women it is a hobby. But for most it is a way of making a living or of augmenting the family income.

The Opportunity School offers training to apprentices in such trades as barbering, boilermaking, carpentry, electrical construction, printing, plumbing, and sign painting. In some instances Opportunity School teachers go to the industrial plants to give instruction. In others, the students come to the school.

Women and girls living at homes and hospitals in the area are also included in the Opportunity School program. Teachers come to them with courses in bookkeeping, business education, business English.

This year, employees of the Colorado State Highway Department can take a course in letter writing. This work is given to those who already have typing skills, but who have not had a recent course in business writing.

Students interested in becoming salesmen, merchandisers, or sales managers take one of the more than 50 courses in distributive education. Art is taught for those who want to work on layout and designs of ads and sales displays. A career training course includes instruction in retail buying, advertising, credit insurance, real estate, traffic, transportation as it affects business sales, small-business management, and other related topics.

EXPERIENCE OBTAINED

Denver's high-school seniors who elect distributive education spend the mornings in class and the afternoons on the job—to the tune of 15 hours a week.

The arts-and-crafts division is always full to overflowing. There are courses in basic drawing, ceramics, enamel on metal, jewelrymaking, lapidary, silversmithing, sculpturing, woodworking, and painting. For many of the pupils in these courses the school is their social center.

A wishing well is kept at the front office for those who say, "I wish you taught XXX." If it's not taught, then the wish is put in the well which is frequently emptied. A sufficient number of Denver citizens all desiring the same program will have their wish granted.

The Opportunity School is just that—an opportunity. For those who are just lonely it is a place of companionship. For those who are illiterates it is a way out of darkness. For those beset by poverty it is the road to a job, dignity, and personal success.