

Currently our programs for disadvantaged youth involve:

Automobile mechanics, clerk and general office training at various levels, machine operator training (male and female), power sewing machine operators (male and female), welders, certified laboratory assistants (male and female), clothing alteration women, cooks and countertermen, industrial electricians, janitors or custodial workers, mechanical draftsmen, small engine repair, waitresses, gas engine repair maintenance, nurses aides, special programs for older workers (for example, teaching them to take the examination for postal employees), machine molders, sales clerks, and a host of students who are slotted into our various regular programs, of which we have approximately 1,500 different classes, courses—that is, not programs—but 132 programs.

In addition to this, all of those who lack basic education are given an opportunity to at least acquire functional literacy; that is, reading and comprehension at the sixth grade level, and the use of simple arithmetic in actual operational practice, in these programs.

This, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, is a brief statement of background against which I hope to address myself to any questions you may ask.

Chairman PERKINS. I know you are operating one of the outstanding vocational and technical training centers in America.

Do you find that as a general rule, before disadvantaged youth succeed in a vocational school, that they must be functionally literate, so to speak, or at least acquire functional literacy determined here through the sixth grade?

Dr. PARKINSON. The answer to your question is, "Absolutely yes." An individual has to be brought up to functional literacy or he can't be taught a skill. In fact, he can't become a real person in society unless he has this degree of competence.

Chairman PERKINS. What is the educational level for admittance to your institution, not considering the disadvantaged?

Dr. PARKINSON. We have a complex of six schools, Mr. Chairman, and in our adult school we can take people who are not functionally illiterate, but who are absolutely illiterate, and we move them from there up.

On the other end of the scale, we operate an accredited junior college level institute.

Chairman PERKINS. I want you to explain that to the committee. I know you operate various schools.

Dr. PARKINSON. We can take a person, and do take many of them, who can't sign their own name, cannot read or write, and we take them through a program we call "eighth grade completion," and some of them start at the first, second, or third grade level of competence or reading ability.

Chairman PERKINS. A disadvantaged youngster of that type, how long does it take you to get him that high before you commence to give him other training?

Dr. PARKINSON. That is a difficult question to answer because we are an open admission school, and the variety of competence and the level at which they enter varies so widely.

You can indicate that in certain of our education classes, where we have a group that actually operates at the second and third grade