Adult Education Affords Hundreds Another Chance

Woman, 65, Is Among Many Taking Part

By JOE DARBY

"I just want to learn to write so I can write to my son."

These are the words of a 65-year-old woman who is getting another chance in life - the chance to learn to read and write and acquire other basic skills necessary to get along in 1966.

That woman and 1,000 others like her are taking part in the Adult Basic Education Program of the Division of Adult Education, New Orleans Public Schools.

The special program is being financed by the federal Economic Opportunity Act and the State Department of Education. It is being administered by personnel of the Orleans Parish School Board. Some 1,013 persons 13 years of age or over are being taught the basic skills of learning at night classes in 21 schools around the city.

Clyde Jones, who during the day presides as principal of McDonogh No. 41 School at 1133 St. Ann, is one of the teachers working with the program.

"REWARDING JOB"

"Working with adults like his is the most rewarding job in the world," he says.

One of Jones' students is a middle-aged woman who realized her children were passing her up in knowledge. "I tried to help my little boy with his school work and I didn't know what he was talking about," she said.

Actual instruction got underway at most of the schools this week. Two weeks had been devoted to testing the students to determine at what grade level they would be placed.

The testing was in four categories, reading, arithmetic, English and spelling. After the students completed the quizzes, they were issued workbooks on their own level of knowledge.

More information about the program and the schools may be obtained by calling 821-1210, the Adult Education Division of New Orleans Public Schools.

The classes are being coordinated by Bohnstorff and W. C. Wright, supervisor of adult education.

TEACHERS in the Adult Basic Education Program of the Division of Adult Education, New Orleans Public Schools, conduct a class at McDonogh 41 School, 1133 St. Ann. More than 1,000 adults are attending night classes in 21 schools. The teachers in the photo are George Gates (left) and Clyde Jones. The program aims to give adults the equivalent of an eighth-grade education.

AMAZED AT PROGRESS

"Most have been away from school 20 years or more. While they're having their problems, they are amazed at the progress they are making." Jones said most of his students range in age from 30 to 50.

"Theirs minds are rusty," he said of his students, "and we gave them as much time for the testing as they needed."

He continued "many were

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"they spent the whole first night just talking to them and praising them for their decision to return to the classroom. We also explained the benefits of more schooling."

A woman student said it was a hard thing for her to make up her mind to attend the classes. "I didn't want people to laugh at me or think I was dumb."

But once they get involved in the classes the students become enthusiastic.

"Once they have three or four classes and see their progress, they decide to stay," said Jones.

The thrill of some of the students at being back in the classroom is obvious.

Once, when Jones was standing in the hall outside his classroom, explaining his teaching procedure to a reporter, two middle-aged women came hurrying up the hall. They were 10 minutes late.

With a broad smile on their faces, they asked Jones as they hurried in the classroom, "Do we get a whippin' for being late?"

The teacher explained that the women, like many of his students, work late and rush straight from their jobs to their classes.

"DROPOUT SCORES"

One of the students of whom Jones is particularly proud is an 18-year-old girl, a recent school dropout.

Last year the girl was in the seventh grade at 17. In spite of her attained grade level, Jones said, "she was a bright child but out of place."

The girl's aunt registered her for the classes and succeeded in talking her into attending them. Now Jones beamed, she is one of his most enthusiastic students.

The classes are being conducted on two levels. Those with very little or no formal education will go on the first to fourth-grade level. Those with a little more schooling will study fifth to eighth-grade subjects.

Besides reading, writing, English and spelling, the students will learn geography, history, and at seventh-grade levels, science and civics.

GET VARIED INSTRUCTION

Those taking part in the classes are also being taught such everyday tasks as filling out registration forms and applications.

The program, which is being financed by the federal government through the State Department of Education, has been extended through the summer.

William K. Bohnstorff, director of adult education for New Orleans public schools, said that because the classes are being taught on an individual instruction basis, students may still join.

If interest in more classes is sufficient, additional schools will be added to the 21 in which classes are now being taught.