Adult Education
Rolls Total
525 In Parish

Began by a 1950 act of the state legislature, the Adult Academic Education Program in Louisiana and in Lafayette Parish has been growing as fast as available funds will allow. From an original annual appropriation of $2,500, the program has been expanded to $250,000. In keeping with the state's belt tightening measures, this amount represents a $100,000 cut over the previous year.

Classes ranging from 15 to 25 members are established from state funds distributed to the various parishes. The appropriations are used to pay teacher salaries.

Thousands Enrolled
According to Alexis Larriviere, assistant superintendent for special studies, Louisiana Department of Education, who was interviewed recently in Lafayette, over 125,000 persons from 19 through 90 years of age have enrolled in the special courses since the adult education program was started 12 years ago.

Over 15,000 adults have been awarded high school equivalence diplomas, whereby they are recognized as bona fide high school graduates by colleges and industries. Larriviere stated, The 1961-62 graduates numbered 1,450, of whom 1,389 were white.

Representing in general those who were forced to leave school at an early age to support their families, most of the students are in the 30-year-old group. Many others in the adult program are younger people who dropped out of school for other reasons and are now feeling the effects of a lack of education.

Minimum Age Set
To prevent teenagers from dropping out of regular school to seek admission in the adult education classes, state law sets the minimum age for the special classes at 19.

When an eligible person applies for adult classes, he is given a California General Achievement Test. After the applicant's level of achievement is determined, he is assigned to a class for 90 hours of study. Sessions are generally held twice a week, usually at night, with periods lasting from two to three hours.

Adult students advance through a series of texts at their own speed. At cost price, they pay for their workbooks, test forms and other supplies.

Upon completion of the 90 hours, they are given the General Education Development Test from the State Department of Education. If they do not make the grade, high school equivalency diploma. If they do not make the grade, they may continue studies until they acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to pass a later examination.

Parish Program Leader
Head of the adult education program in Lafayette Parish since its founding is Gladu Dupuis, former principal at the Milton School, where he had served on the faculty for 16 years.

Enrollments for the 1961-62 adult classes in the parish were 525, of whom 261 were white and 264 Negroes. The average upgrading for the year was 1.3. Last year saw 14 white students graduated.

Dupuis pointed out that the state's adult education program is very efficient and inexpensive to the taxpayers since the average cost per grade elevated is only $18.07.

The Department of Education shows the need for increased efforts in adult education through the following figures:

From the 1960 census, it is seen there are 1,659,315 persons in Louisiana 25 years or older, and about 40,000 are in Lafayette Parish.

Educational Levels
In the state 21 per cent of the above number are classified as illiterate or functionally illiterate; that is, having four years of schooling or less. In Lafayette Parish the percentage is 27.

About 52 per cent of adult Louisianans have an eighth grade education or less. In the parish the figure is about 50 per cent.

In the state 67.6 per cent of the adult group mentioned above do not have a high school diploma. In Lafayette Parish the figure is slightly better at 62.6 per cent.

Finally, those of the number bearing college degrees on a state level represent 6.8 per cent. In Lafayette Parish the figure is significantly higher, 10.9 per cent due in large part of the presence of the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

For More, Better Jobs

According to Larriviere, industries are not only employing individuals who have completed the adult education courses but are also encouraging their employees to attend the classes to improve and upgrade their industrial standards. He said job promotions and salary increases are often results of obtaining the high school equivalency certificate.

From a recent survey conducted by the Department of Education in the scattered parishes of Calcasieu, Lafourche and Rapides, Larriviere said the average annual income of persons before enrollment in adult education was $3,210 and, after completion of the course, the average jumped to $3,918. This increase of $78 a year was registered, said Larriviere, despite the fact that 72 per cent of those reporting were females, many of them housewives with no income.

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The continuous and growing need for more adult education classes is seen in the fact that more industrial plants are requiring at least a high school education for employment and promotion, and that increasing numbers of adults are realizing the importance of obtaining an education.

Larriviere pointed out that better educated citizens can stand on their own feet financially and thus can both profit from and contribute to society. He concludes that every dollar spent by the state appropriates to adult education is more than repaid by the added business it generates and by the numbers who can raise themselves from welfare roles and make themselves self-supporting citizens of Louisiana.