A STUDY OF ADULT EDUCATION
AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION
IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

BY
CALVIN WILLIAM JEWELL

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE
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CHAPTER I

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Our society has long held that education is for youth and that after a person has completed the required number of years of attendance in the public or private schools of the land or has reached the "lawful" age when the state no longer requires that he attend classes, he is then considered to be beyond the reach of assimilating new knowledge or skills from the halls of formal learning. This thinking is rapidly being recognized as outmoded and not a fair evaluation of our society at all. According to Bryson\(^1\), "Adult education includes all the activities with an educational purpose that are carried on by people engaged in the ordinary business of life". This statement would indicate that there is an ability and a need for adults to continue to acquire and use knowledge in the day-to-day events he must face. In his writings Lindeman\(^2\) states that orthodox education may be a preparation for life, but adult education is an agitating instrumentality for changing life.


With the rapid and constant changes we find facing us in the world of today it is vital to our efficient national survival and social well-being to prepare for tomorrow. Prepare our youth and prepare our adult population along with them.

Statement of the Problem

How can a rural community which currently offers no adult education program initiate such a program and do so with the whole community as a possible clientele? Once leadership has become available for an adult program, how do we proceed to sample the wishes and desires of the community in relation to this program? And after the residents of the area have responded with an expression of their desires in relation to the adult education program, what procedures must be followed to offer classes and encourage participation from the community? This is the problem faced in a rural community. The answers to these questions and many more opened the way to establish the adult education program in the area covered by the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if the community of Lovell, Wyoming, had a segment of its population interested in further education. A survey questionnaire was used in the 1967-68 academic year to gather this information, making it as easy as possible for those who had an interest in adult education to make their interest known. This survey also determined the areas of interest and the numbers interested in any given class. The returns of this study were
tabulated by the writer and presented to the local adult education
director of the Lovell Public Schools. The ultimate goal of the writer
was to provide the stimulation and leadership to the residents of the
community in order that any who felt desires for further education and
exposure to continued learning could overtly express these feelings
and so also arouse an intellectual appetite and thirst for new knowledge.

The procedure followed in conducting the survey, the sample
questionnaire employed, the means of ensuring the greatest possible
coverage and return of the interest survey questionnaire, and the
development and beginning of an adult education program in this community
are all part of this study. Personal interviews with directors of
other similar programs and letters to both state and national agencies
were used to gather information about their work in this field, their
procedure, and the attained results and conclusions.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were, first, the review of related
literature was restricted to the library of the Montana State University,
secondly, those limitations which restricted a thorough sampling of
the residents of Lovell, Wyoming, in making the interest survey, and
last, the restrictions imposed by time and specifically, the restricting
of the study to the academic year 1967-68.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The development and findings of this study were shared in a spirit of cooperation with the Adult Education Director of Lovell Public Schools, the school administrators, and the local parent-teacher organization. Other local communities have done similar work in this same area and their recommendations were incorporated into this study. However, the special area of initiating an interest survey does not appear to have a great number of sample questionnaires available for consultation purposes. The nearest and seemingly best example of adult education in the surrounding area is at the Northwest Community College located in Powell, Wyoming. Many and varied classes are offered through this institution in cooperation with the local communities which this school serves. Here classes are made known to the residents and if they are interested in a given area of study they need only register and attend classes. The University of Wyoming also offers classes in the neighboring communities, but many of these which have received sufficient support to actually justify meeting are classes in the field of education. Many teachers in the public schools are greatly benefitted in that they are able to complete the requirements for recertification through these classes, but these offerings do not attack the problem as seen from the point of view of the writer of this study: namely, the offerings of classes which we have just discussed do not draw the
local patrons from the school district nor do these stimulate them to continue in the acquisition of further learning, skills, nor use of leisure time.

Some suggestions and aids were received from the Adult Education and Community Services Department of the University of Wyoming as well as from the National Association of Public School Adult Educators. The publications from these two agencies did extend very usable helps, but again there were no interest survey samples available. Therefore a questionnaire was designed, made as complete and simple as possible while containing the elements desired, and presented to the local residents. As nearly as possible this questionnaire was designed to meet the needs of a rural community.

Since the urban areas change to accept modern innovations and improvements rather readily as opposed to the rural communities with their wariness of something new, this latter group finds itself faced with making a more rapid transition from yesterday toward tomorrow. Since World War II, and especially since 1957, the changes in technological processes, in communications, in social organization, in patterns for living, and in new skills and knowledge have been overwhelming. In our modern world, education can no longer be merely a function of childhood, but a lifelong process. The never ending changes brought about by a rising proportion of older people, shortened work week, more and inexpensive literature, and more leisure time are
forces contributing to and demanding self-betterment of the individual. This self-betterment is a main goal of adult education.

Sworder\(^1\) states that "The purpose of adult education is to develop the potentialities that lie within ourselves to the end that we may solve the problems that we face as adults. The emphasis of adult education must be on learning and problem-solving, and should endeavor to meet the present and continuing needs of individuals".

Our traditional educational philosophy has long been based on the assumption that an individual can acquire in his youth the bulk of knowledge and skill required for him to live adequately the rest of his life. Accordingly, the educational effort of our society has concentrated, until recently, almost exclusively on youth, leaving the learning on the adult level to more informal means; books, mass media, and voluntary study groups. We are learning that almost any subject can be studied with much more interest and intelligence by those who know something of its subject matter than by those who do not.\(^2\) The few programs organized for the education of adults are concerned chiefly with remedying deficiencies in the programs prepared for youths. We are rapidly passing out of the stage of speculation and discussion and into the stage of inquiry and investigation. More and more adult


learning activities are being offered in new programs expressly designed to meet the needs of the mature student, rather than only being redesigned programs from youth-centered schools. The content of these adult designed programs is keyed to adult interests and makes use of adult experiences, making the range of academic subjects as rich and varied as life itself. The greatest disadvantage of the adult programs of today is that the curriculum follows no plan, but is an "a la carte" menu with no provision for continuity or an integration of learning.\(^\text{3}\)

What do we hope to accomplish through adult education? Should it be a continuation in the sense of carrying one's formal education to a higher plateau or in the sense of the interests and demands of adult life? The program should do something to enlighten, to change, and to elevate the individual. We do not teach a subject for its own sake, or lead a group in order to teach a subject, but we teach and help people to effect change in human behavior. Sharer\(^\text{4}\) lists three main concerns of adult education as: (a) identifying with our nation's goals, ideals, policies, and problems; (b) fighting the battle against obsolescence; and (c) charting new directions.

The first step in program implementation should be a systematic assessment of community resources in terms of physical facilities,

teacher resources, the many and varied voluntary local agencies already successful in community efforts, local forms of mass media, technical equipment locales, and personnel for resource committees. A careful assessment of the general socio-economic picture in the area will pay high dividends when it comes to the area placement of certain courses.\(^5\)

Two other major considerations are local control and planning and local participation in financing. It is natural that people are more interested in something they participate in planning and in being responsible for while a "superimposed" program will often collapse because of lack of support. Effective liaison with neighboring community education centers may serve to avoid unnecessary course duplications. This information can all be filed and later made readily available to resource committees and teacher personnel.\(^6\)

The next step is one of attempting to sample community educational needs. At present this seems to be a very neglected field, the usual method being to present to the public a series of offerings and then program accordingly. The survey could be eliminated by offering classes that the school officials "thought" would be in demand, however the questionnaire type of survey or the interview might uncover areas of

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interest which may not be known. There should be a well-balanced program of offerings to meet the different needs and interests of adults. The ultimate test of the program depends upon whether it meets needs and stimulates exploration into other fields. Therefore, early offerings should appeal to a variety of interests and people. Once the offerings are determined, the program can be established and individual interests can be adjusted to the opportunities offered. A failure to constantly assess or sample the community's educational needs is an attempt to avoid the responsibility which is placed upon the adult education agency by the dynamic and constantly changing needs of the adult learner.

Publicity should begin six weeks prior to the registration date with major emphasis during the three weeks immediately before registration. This promotion involves informing the public of the availability of educational opportunity in such a way as to make them aware of its utility to them and to motivate them to participate and to learn. Promotion involves selecting the message and mass media which will reach as many of the potential participants as possible within the limitations imposed by the budget. Equal in importance to the selection of the media is the timing of the message. Announcements of public affairs seminars would either immediately precede or follow news

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broadcasts or news analysis programs since these programs are more apt to attract listeners who are interested in public affairs educational programs. Publicity and promotion are necessary because continued learning is not yet established as a natural way of spending leisure time and because freedom of choice is often limited by ignorance. Evaluation is a vital function defined as the process of determining the extent to which educational objectives have been attained. The evaluation process should: (a) determine what to evaluate, (b) define the behavior desired, (c) determine acceptable evidence, (d) collect this evidence, and (e) summarize and evaluate the evidence.

After a comprehensive and comparative study of many learned authors has given a clear direction to take in proceeding toward the establishing of an adult education program, the next step is to introduce the interest survey questionnaire to the residents of the school district and once their wishes and desires are made known to establish the program and offer classes in the areas of interest.

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10Lyman Bryson, Adult Education, p. 119-122.

CHAPTER 3

SURVEY PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS

Procedures

After the general purpose, history and desired goals of adult education had been studied to give direction to the intended program in the local community, the writer proceeded to introduce the program to the community. The survey sampled the persons residing in the area served by School District Number 3 of Big Horn County, Wyoming; specifically, the approximately 1400 adult residents living in and immediately surrounding Lovell, Wyoming.

A questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed to sample the wishes and desires of these residents in regards to classes on an adult level. Prior to mailing the questionnaire to the homes of the individual residents, a publicity campaign was begun. Three announcements were published in the local newspaper and several reminders were broadcast through the radio station which serves the Big Horn Basin. The local parent-teacher association supported the writer with announcements and timely aid and the school and community organizations offered assistance by telling their members and associates.

The questionnaire itself was attractive, provided clear and comprehensible instructions, was easy to fill out, and provided a space for the individual to place his name and address on the form for further
use by the adult education committee. After several meetings and some correspondence with the public school administrators and the local parent-teacher association president, a list of 39 areas of study was drawn up and placed on the questionnaire. These individuals felt that this list of offerings would provide an opportunity for a majority of the residents to express their interests. Provision was made for adding classes which were not included on the survey. The questionnaire also covered the area of credit (Appendix B). Those persons returning the questionnaire were asked to indicate their preference for college credit classes, high school credit classes, or for no credit.

The questionnaires were mailed out to the adult population immediately following the last week of the publicity campaign. Each envelope mailed out contained a copy of the questionnaire, and a postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope in which to return the questionnaire. In order to obtain as complete a mailing list as possible the writer exhausted the files of the city office, the local school registers, and the telephone directory. Also, as Lovell is a relatively small community, it was possible to contact various persons about new addresses and individuals who had not received a form. Several organizations in the community aided by taking blank copies of the interest survey to their meetings for the benefit of any who had not had occasion to fill out a form. The final step to insure a saturation coverage of the community was taken by having a complete copy of the questionnaire printed in the local newspaper. The possibility of duplication was eliminated by asking each person filling out a form to place his name and address at the bottom
of it. Also, these names were used to contact each interested person personally, either by telephone or letter, when a class in which he had expressed an interest was going to be offered.

As the questionnaires were returned the results were tabulated on a graph which provided a running total of the interest which was manifest in each class. At the end of a three-week period following the mailing of the questionnaires the classes were placed on a priority list (Appendix D), beginning with the classes having the highest number of requests. These priority classes were assessed against physical facilities, teacher resources, equipment needed, and aid from state, county and local sources. The results were then presented to the adult education director for action.

The director and his committee then proceeded to select instructors from a list of qualified individuals who had indicated a desire to teach in these varied fields. The teacher salaries, registration fees, class days and time, and the actual number of class hours were determined by this committee. Registration began with the two highest priority classes. The date and time of registration was announced in the newspaper. Also, a personal contact was made with persons who had indicated an interest in any of these classes to insure that they knew about the registration date and time.

Findings

A follow-up of the questionnaire described above was immediately launched. The total number of questionnaires mailed out was 740. The
actual number of interest questionnaires returned was 159, which gave a return of approximately 20 per cent. A total of 394 classes were asked for (Appendix C). As many individuals expressed an interest in more than one subject area it became necessary to stagger registration and class days.

It is difficult if not completely impossible to assess the reasons behind the lack of greater community participation and the small per cent of the interest survey questionnaires which were returned to the writer. However some very probable causes could have been the following: first, the general attitude of non-concern which is often demonstrated by residents of rural America, second, the attitude built up in this community over a period of years when no adult program was offered, third, the individual wariness of people to return survey questionnaires even when they understand the purpose it will serve and/or are reasonably well acquainted with the agent or agency conducting the survey, and fourth, no desire to return to the classroom to begin anew the formal type of learning that people associate with their childhood. This latter cause may be due to the recall of unhappy or unfruitful experiences. These causes are very real reasons in the minds of some people.

Three classes did arouse sufficient interest to justify conducting. These classes were sewing, typing, and art. The two former classes drew an attendance from persons who wished to improve their skills for home use. The sewing class drew both beginning and advanced pupils. The size of the class allowed the instruction to be of such a nature as to take each person from where she was in ability and provide her with an
opportunity to progress from there. The offering of this sewing I class would not make finished seamstresses of those attending but would provide a springboard for continued study in this area. The class met in the home economics room of the public school. The other two classes that were offered under this adult education program also used the public school facilities. The facilities of the school were readily available and were of such a nature as to make them an ideal location in which to conduct day-time classes for the youth of the community as well as the adult population who wished to take advantage of this program. The cooperative efforts of the school and community in such a program as was offered in this case go a long way in improving the too often strained relations between these two agencies.

The typing class was conducted during the same weeks as the sewing class, but on different nights to allow for those who wished to attend both classes. This class was offered to beginning and intermediate students. The class was successful and provided an opportunity for those who felt a need to learn to type in an atmosphere of supervised instruction and a designated time in which to work.

When the two above-mentioned classes were completed an art class was initiated. With the exception of three persons all of the pupils were beginning artists. The class was begun in the area of drawing, as in the opinion of the instructor drawing was the basic element of any art work and therefore a firm foundation was laid before the pupils were allowed to select a media in which to work. When the allotted
class time was half up, the pupils were allowed to select either water-coloring or oil painting as their area of expression.

Due to the time set aside for the publicity, promotion, designing of the interest survey questionnaire, and the actual conduction of the survey, it was found that some problems were arising which were not anticipated. Some of the local residents were employed in the several areas of agriculture and as the season for preparing the soil for a new crop approached, the numbers available for attending classes declined.

The success of these classes was most encouraging and will lead to more classes being offered in the ensuing academic years in this community. Some errors were made and some plans required changes as the program unfolded but the attained results were most gratifying.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Our traditional concept of education, stemming from our adoption of Western European educational theories and practices and continuing through the evolution of our own peculiar system, has held that formal study is an activity which should be confined to youth. This concept has dominated thinking until mid 20th century. Since then we have accepted more and more the new idea of adult education, that physically and emotionally mature persons can profit from formal education in preparing for life and in improving their individual roles.

With this new change in thinking as a springboard, the writer initiated a study of adult education and its implications for improving the lives of individuals. A questionnaire was used to sample the interest of adult residents of Lovell, Wyoming, and to measure their feelings in regards to adult education classes. This survey followed many hours of preparation and study as well as considerable publicity and promotion. The writer worked in close cooperation with the administration of the local public schools and the parent-teacher organization. The aid of both state and national agencies was solicited and interviews were conducted with directors of other community adult education programs.
The response to the questionnaire survey showed the areas in which the community was most interested. The returns were sufficient to justify three adult evening classes. This launched our adult program and indicated that a rural community could indeed carry out such a program successfully to the benefit of the community members.

Conclusions

The response to the interest survey indicated that many persons were reluctant to return the questionnaire. Only a 20 per cent return was realized in a rural community where a publicity and promotional program was extensive enough to give wide coverage and allow a majority of the residents to become informed about the proposed program. This showing would give strength to the theory that rural communities are reluctant to try something new. Persons who returned the survey indicated an above-average interest in being exposed to new skills and knowledge but did not wholly commit themselves to the program. However, each individual resident of the area was provided an opportunity to express his or her desire concerning the program rather than having a superimposed program forced upon them. This latter type of adult education was used in this community some six years prior to this current study and met with little success.

Another factor affecting the response of the community was the low population ratio of young adults. The classes which were offered were not designed to provide marketable skills for high school drop-outs or non-college bound high school graduates. The continuation of this
adult program will go far to destroy this mood of disinterest which was manifest at the sampling of this community. The successful completion of several classes and the interest generated by those who were participants in these classes will provide a strong and helpful source of encouragement when classes are offered in future years. It will also provide incentive to broaden the curriculum offerings in the adult evening program.

Recommendations

The first recommendation offered is to have a continuation of the adult education program in this rural community. This continuity of study should begin in the fall and should be preceded by a strong publicity campaign to inform the community about the new offerings. A second recommendation is to time the class offerings to coincide with the growing season as Lovell is a farming community and therefore must consider this factor when offering classes on an adult level. The program should offer advanced or second level courses to further serve former class members in the subject area should sufficient individuals manifest an interest. As a fourth recommendation, the writer feels that a wider variety of classes be offered. They should include such academic areas as bookkeeping, office training, English, mathematics, and reading, as well as recreational areas of pursuit including crafts, upholstery, and woodwork. These above classes are mentioned as each received over a dozen calls on the interest survey. Also, many of these classes could easily interest both husband and wife. A final recommendation is to
begin early enough in the year to permit termination of classes by the Christmas holiday. The closing of the public schools for this season has a marked affect on parental attendance.
APPENDIX A

A Check List for Planning¹

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Do we have clear-cut goals to achieve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Can we provide adequate facilities for this program?</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Do we have the necessary:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. study materials?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. equipment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. funds?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Is the list of classes offered on the interest questionnaire attractive to expected participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Do we have available competent instructors to conduct the classes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Do we have sound plans for promotion and publicity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Do we have planned procedures for:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. registration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. class fees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. number of class hours?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Have we provided for a continuity of study?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Is there an assurance that classes will be offered in future years?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Dear Community Member,

This is the questionnaire you have heard and read about concerning Adult Education Classes. This is an interest survey sent to you so that you can indicate the classes that you would be interested in taking. Please place a check mark beside any class or classes you would wish to enroll in. A space is provided for you to write in additional areas of interest that are not covered by this questionnaire. Please place your name and mailing address at the bottom of the form so that we can determine those classes which manifest enough interest to offer.

- Algebra
- American Literature
- Biology
- Bookkeeping
- Business Principles
- Canning for the Home
- Civics and Citizenship
- Drawing
- Driver Education
- English
- European Literature
- Family Nutrition
- First Aid
- Fly Tying
- French
- Great Books
- German
- Health
- History Ancient World
- History of Wyoming
- Income and Related Taxes
- Leather, Plastic and other crafts
- Mathematics
- Mechanical Drawing
- Men's Recreation
- Office Training
- Oil Painting
- Physical Sciences in the Last Decade
- Problems in American Democracy
- Reading Improvement
- Sewing
- Theater Arts (costumes, staging, make-up)
- Typing
- U.S. History
- Upholstery Procedures
- Watercoloring
- Wood Work
- World Affairs
- World Literature

Others:

We hope that each of you will carefully consider these course offerings and support our program by promptly returning this questionnaire in the self-addressed envelope provided.
I would be interested in:

___ College Credit
___ High School Credit
___ No Credit
___ Not Interested

Sincerely,

Calvin Jewell
For Adult Education

Name______________________________

Address__________________________
APPENDIX C

Community Response

Algebra
American History
Biology
Bookkeeping
Business Principles
Canning for the Homes
Civics and Citizenship
Drawing
Driver Education
English
European Literature
Family Nutrition
First Aid
Fly Tying
French
Great Books
German
Health
History of Ancient World
History of Wyoming
Income and Related Taxes
Leather, plastics and other crafts
Mathematics
Mechanical Drawing
Men's Recreation
Office Training
Oil Painting
Physical Sciences in the Last Decade
Problems in American Democracy
Reading Improvement
Sewing
Theater Arts (costumes, staging, make-up)
Typing
U. S. History
Upholstery Procedures
Watercoloring
Wood Work
World Affairs
World Literature
APPENDIX D

Community Response: Priority List

26 Sewing
26 Typing
20 English
20 Upholstery Procedures
17 Bookkeeping
17 Mathematics
17 Oil Painting
17 Reading Improvement
16 Office Training
15 Drawing
14 Leather, Plastics and Other Crafts
13 Watercoloring
13 Wood Work
 8 Business Principles
 8 Fly Tying
 8 Great Books
 8 History of Ancient World
 7 Canning for the Home
 7 Income and Related Taxes
 7 Problems in American Democracy
 7 U.S. History
 7 World Literature
 6 Family Nutrition
 6 First Aid
 6 German
 5 American History
 5 European Literature
 4 Driver Education
 4 French
 4 Mechanical Drawing
 4 Theater Arts (costumes, staging, make-up)
 3 Algebra
 3 Biology
 3 Physical Sciences in the Last Decade
 3 World Affairs
 2 Civics and Citizenship
 2 Health
 2 History of Wyoming
 2 Men's Recreation

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APPENDIX E

Individuals Desiring Credit

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<td>Oil Painting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences in the Last Decade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems in American Democracy</td>
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<td>Sewing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theater Arts (costumes, staging, make-up)</td>
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<td>Typing</td>
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<td>U. S. History</td>
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<td>Watercoloring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood Work</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Literature</td>
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APPENDIX F

Free Response by Community

The following classes were not listed on the interest survey but were written in by the public as free responses.

1 Art in Our Lives
1 American Indians
1 Business Law
1 Ceramics
1 Children’s Literature
1 Computer Science
1 Diction
2 Geology
1 Gun Smithing
2 Home Repairs
3 Psychology
1 Public Speaking
1 Political Science
1 Radio and T.V.
3 Spanish
3 Shorthand
1 Speech
1 Slide Rule Mechanics
2 Speed Reading
1 Short Story
2 Women’s Recreation
1 Welding
1 World Geography

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Sharer, Robert E. "Effective Participation in the Major Concerns of Adult Education," Adult Leadership, XIV (October, 1965), 125-126.
