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Heading: **Stamp Out Illiteracy: Build Up Skills**

Stamp Out Illiteracy; Build Up Skills

The 1990 census said 16 percent of central Illinoisans could not read; the community's goal should be to close that gap - and not stop there.

Technical skills will be a functional necessity in the years to come. Those who have them will find jobs, and communities which can offer a skilled work force will have no trouble attracting high-quality employers.

A host of new vocational programs at Illinois Central College, a one-stop shop for people needing testing and training, and the RiverTech Center opening soon downtown are strides forward. But we must do more.

Apprenticeships date to the 17th century; state universities to the 19th. Community colleges trace their origin to 1901 at Joliet. The wave of the future could be new institutions that combine the best of all three - respectively, private-sector sponsorship, prestige and accessibility - while turning out top-flight plumbers, bakers, mechanics, computer repair technicians, tool-and-die makers, electricians and hygienists and retraining them over a lifetime as technology outdates their skills.

Much has been said here about back-to-basics capital spending. But the most basic investment for the future will be in human capital.

Helen's response published on January 22, 2000:

Better Diet Can Help Kids Learn

In the Sunday edition, Jan. 2, you had an editorial, "Stamp out illiteracy; build up skills." I couldn't agree more.

One way to accomplish this that wasn't addressed could be helping students with their diets. I'm referring to another article you published a couple of weeks ago reporting that changing students' diets was a very effective way to control attention deficit disorder.

The best way I am aware of to know what foods are best and worst for each child is to have a hair trace mineral analysis. The imbalances of the minerals show how the body is functioning on the cell level.

Changing a student's diet can be a very difficult thing to do. Family, educators, churches all need to be supportive.

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