

# *Fargo Adult Learning Center*

Each year, the Fargo Public Schools sends 700 to 900 students out of its buildings for the last time with papers in hand; ready to take on the world. Not all of them, however, have just finished the twelfth grade.

Located in the Agassiz building is a program that annually produces a significant number of “graduates.” Many of them have never set foot in North, South, or Davies High Schools. They are products of the Fargo Public Schools’ Adult Learning Center.

The Adult Learning Center (ALC) is staffed by 22 full- and part-time staff, and has four primary programs: English as a Second Language (ESL), General Educational Development (GED), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and Family Literacy.

The majority of **ESL students** are new Americans who come to the Fargo area through Lutheran Social Services, the conduit for the U.S. Government’s Office of Refugee Resettlement. As a requirement of their resettlement, they are tested by the ESL program, and are encouraged to attend classes. Attendance is a requirement to receive federal assistance unless those students find employment.

The Center also receives a few ESL students from other situations, such as spouses of foreign students attending NDSU. ESL is an open-entry, open-exit program for adults. Although state regulations require the Center to keep attendance hours, no one is told they must stay. (However, this is encouraged. According to research by the Center for Applied Linguistics and National Institute for Literacy, it takes 1 to 3 years to learn survival [conversational] English; academic literacy requires 7 to 10 years or longer.)

**GED students** in the Center come from many places. Some are locals who want to finish their high school education, including students from Woodrow Wilson High School. Others are required to be here to receive Vocational Rehabilitation assistance. Some come through North Dakota Job Service, the Robinson Recovery Center, the Cass County Jail, and CENTRE, Inc. These agencies also have an open-entry, open-exit program. The goals of the program are obtaining a GED, post-secondary enrollment, and employment.

In addition to the English language and GED programs, the Center also has two other focus areas: literacy and nursing. Literacy programs include **Driver’s Literacy** (for ESL students), **Computer Literacy** (for GED students), and **Family Literacy**, otherwise known as Even Start. Even Start is an interactive parent-child program designed for low-income families with children from birth through age 7. It provides training in parenting activities, literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency, and age-appropriate child education.

The Center’s **CNA training and testing** program is run in coordination with Bethany Homes, and takes place at Bethany’s facility on South University Drive.

Total enrollment for all ALC programs averages about 950 students per year. The average stay of a student is just short of five months. The Center is grant-funded; those grants require that it places a heavy focus on survival English and workplace literacy. Testing is an integral part – all students who enter are pre- and post-tested; staff follow up with alumni on a quarterly basis for one year following program completion.

Want to learn more about the [Adult Learning Center](#) and its programs? Contact [Jennifer Frueh](#) 446-2806.

