

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 23 full- and part-time staff and has four primary programs: English as a Second Language (EL), General Educational Development (GED), Intro to Certified Nursing Assistant, and Family Literacy.

The majority of EL students are new Americans who come to the Fargo area through Global Refuge. As a requirement of their resettlement, they are tested by the EL program and are encouraged to attend classes. Attendance is a requirement to receive federal assistance until those students find employment.

The Center also receives a few EL students from other situations, such as spouses of foreign students attending NDSU. EL 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 Dakota High School. Others are required to be here to receive Vocational Rehabilitation assistance. Some come through North Dakota Job Service, 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 offers literacy programs such as Driver’s Literacy (for EL students), Computer Skills, 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 also offers Citizen classes, Intro to C.N.A. (for EL students), and Intro to Education for those interested in becoming a paraeducator.

Total enrollment for all ALC programs averages about 1200 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 Director Jennifer Frueh 446-2806

