

SWWC FAQs: Educational Learning Centers (ELCs) vs. Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs)

1. What is the difference between an Educational Learning Center (ELC) and an Alternative Learning Center (ALC)?

- **ELC (Educational Learning Center):** An ELC is a Federal Setting IV special education program that provides intensive supports for students with significant needs. Placement is determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, and students are currently receiving more than 60% of their instruction in a special education setting.
- **ALC (Alternative Learning Center):** A State-Approved Alternative Program (SAAP) is a learning program for students who are at-risk of academic failure and are experiencing difficulty in the traditional school system. Our main goal is to help students earn the credits necessary to graduate. Enrollment in an ALC focuses on credit recovery, flexible scheduling, and personalized learning.

2. Who is eligible for placement in an ELC?

- Students who meet the following criteria are eligible for ELC placement:
- Must meet Minnesota Special Education Disability Criteria.
- Must have a current IEP, including a Behavior Support Plan (BSP).
- Must have a goal related to behavioral needs.
- Must have an Evaluation Report, including a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA).
- Must demonstrate the need for a Federal Setting IV program and have been serviced in a Federal Setting III for at least 60% of the school day.

3. Who can attend an ALC?

Students who meet any of the following criteria are eligible to attend an ALC:

- Performs substantially below the performance determined achievement test (MCA)
- Behind in completing course work or obtaining credits for graduation
- Speaks English as a second language or has limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Is pregnant or is a parent, is a victim of physical or sexual abuse, has been assessed as chemically dependent and/or has experienced mental health problems
- Has been excluded or expelled according to sections 121A.40 to 121A.56
- Has been referred by a school district for enrollment in an eligible program or a program pursuant to section 124.D69
- Has experienced homelessness sometime within six months before requesting a transfer to an eligible program
- Has withdrawn from school or has been chronically truant

Enrollment is voluntary.

4. How is placement determined for an ELC?

Placement in an ELC is made by the student's IEP team. This team, which includes educators, specialists, and the student's family, meets to assess the student's educational and behavioral needs. If the IEP team determines that the student's needs cannot be met in a less restrictive environment, placement in an ELC may be considered.

5. How is enrollment determined for an ALC?

Referrals to an ALC are typically driven by the district, however it is still the student or parent choice to attend an ALC. There is no IEP or special education requirement for enrollment. We provide general education curriculum in a least restrictive setting.

6. What services are provided at an ELC?

At an ELC, students receive:

- Intensive special education support.
- Tailored instruction based on the student's IEP.
- Behavioral interventions and supports (BSP).
- A highly structured environment with small class sizes and a focus on individualized learning.

7. What services are provided at an ALC?

At an ALC, students have access to:

- Flexible scheduling to accommodate personal or academic needs.
- Credit recovery opportunities.
- Personalized learning plans.
- General education curriculum delivered in an alternative format or setting.

8. Can a student attend both an ALC and receive SpEd services?

Yes, students can attend an ALC and still receive special education services if needed. However, placement in an ELC is specifically for students requiring intensive special education support in a more restrictive setting, while an ALC offers general education programming.

9. How is transportation handled for ELC and ALC students?

ELC: Transportation is arranged by the student's school district as part of their IEP services.

ALC: Transportation arrangements vary and may depend on district policies or parental responsibility.

10. Who should I contact if I have questions about ELCs or ALCs?

For **ELCs**, contact your school district's Special Education Director or Jennifer Kimman.

For **ALCs**, contact Stephanie Strenge.