



# ALC Student Learning Guide

*A Family Guide to Your Child’s Communication, Independence and Learning Journey*

Your child is learning in the Active Learning Classroom (ALC) — a small, structured setting designed to help them build the communication, independence, and everyday skills they need to thrive. This guide shows you what to expect at each stage of your child’s learning journey and how you can support their growth at home.

This parent resource is designed to help families understand how students in Sherman ISD’s Active Learning Classroom grow over time in communication, independence, behavior regulation, and readiness for less restrictive settings.

## ALC Student Progression Table

| Area of Growth                                            | Getting Started                                                                                                                      | Building Skills                                                                                                                | Making Progress                                                                                                 | Almost There                                                                                                | Ready to Move On                                                                      | How Families Can Support This at Home                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Domain 1: Communicating with Others                       |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                             |                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Using Words, Pictures & Devices(Expressive Communication) | Your child may use crying, reaching, or simple gestures to communicate. They may need physical hand-over-hand help to make a choice. | Your child is starting to use pictures, symbols, or a communication device to make requests. They may point to what they want. | Your child uses their AAC device, pictures, or words consistently to ask for things they need most of the time. | Your child communicates in multiple ways across different settings — at home, school, and in the community. | Your child communicates their basic needs in most situations with minimal adult help. | Practice "wait time" — pause and give your child 5–10 seconds to communicate before helping. Keep their communication device accessible at home and use it together. |

Family partnership is a key part of ALC success. When home and school use the same routines, communication supports, and expectations, students make stronger and more lasting progress.



**Sherman ISD Bearcat Program | Active Learning Classroom (ALC)**

| Area of Growth                                                | Getting Started                                                                                     | Building Skills                                                                                                      | Making Progress                                                                                                     | Almost There                                                                                                                     | Ready to Move On                                                                                         | How Families Can Support This at Home                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Understanding What Others Say(Receptive Communication)</b> | Your child may not yet respond to their name or simple 1-step directions without physical guidance. | Your child follows 1-step directions with a visual cue or gesture (e.g., "Sit down" + pointing to chair).            | Your child follows 2-step directions with picture supports in familiar routines.                                    | Your child understands and follows directions in new settings with visual supports.                                              | Your child understands directions from multiple adults in multiple settings with minimal visual support. | Use visual schedules at home (pictures of morning routine steps). Give one direction at a time and show it with a gesture or picture. |
| <b>Domain 2: Learning Everyday Skills</b>                     |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Pre-Reading &amp; Early Learning(Functional Academics)</b> | Your child is learning to match identical objects and sort by color or shape.                       | Your child recognizes their own name, matches pictures to objects, and is learning basic concepts like "big/little." | Your child identifies environmental print (EXIT sign, their name, common words) and counts small groups of objects. | Your child reads functional sight words, can count with 1:1 correspondence, and uses a picture-supported schedule independently. | Your child accesses a simplified curriculum with picture supports in multiple settings.                  | Point out words in the environment ("That says STOP!"). Practice counting everyday objects at home like snacks or toys.               |
| <b>Daily Living Concepts &amp; Practical Math</b>             | Your child is learning to sort and identify everyday objects used in routines (spoon, cup, shoe).   | Your child understands same/different for objects and is learning coin identification.                               | Your child uses a visual schedule or checklist to complete simple daily tasks.                                      | Your child handles simple money transactions with supports and reads basic time concepts (morning/afternoon).                    | Your child uses functional math skills across daily routines with minimal prompting.                     | Have your child help with simple tasks like setting the table, sorting laundry, or handing you items by name.                         |
| <b>Domain 3: Taking Care of Themselves</b>                    |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Personal Care &amp; Hygiene Routines</b>                   | Your child needs full adult assistance for personal care tasks such as                              | Your child tolerates and begins to participate in personal care                                                      | Your child completes parts of personal care routines with picture-step                                              | Your child completes most personal care routines independently                                                                   | Your child manages personal care independently across home,                                              | Use a picture checklist for morning and bedtime routines. Let your child do as many steps as possible on their own before helping.    |

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| Area of Growth                                         | Getting Started                                                                                                   | Building Skills                                                                            | Making Progress                                                                                           | Almost There                                                                                       | Ready to Move On                                                                                   | How Families Can Support This at Home                                                                                                                         |
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|                                                        | handwashing, dressing, and eating.                                                                                | routines with physical or verbal prompting.                                                | supports and occasional prompting.                                                                        | using a visual checklist.                                                                          | school, and community settings.                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Community &amp; Everyday Independence</b>           | Your child needs close adult support in all community and school settings (cafeteria, hallways, community trips). | Your child can follow 1–2 step routines in familiar community settings with adult support. | Your child navigates familiar community settings (school store, cafeteria, library) with visual supports. | Your child participates in community routines with minimal prompting and increasing independence.  | Your child uses independence skills in new community settings with visual supports only.           | Practice community outings — grocery store, library, restaurant — and let your child use visual supports to navigate the steps.                               |
| <b>Domain 4: Making Friends &amp; Playing Together</b> |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                            |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Playing &amp; Interacting with Peers</b>            | Your child plays near others but does not yet interact directly. They may prefer adult interaction or solo play.  | Your child tolerates being near peers and begins to notice or watch what others are doing. | Your child participates in parallel play and simple turn-taking activities with peer support.             | Your child takes turns, shares materials, and engages in simple cooperative activities with peers. | Your child sustains peer interaction during structured activities in their natural school setting. | Arrange short, structured playdates or shared activities. Practice turn-taking games like simple board games or tossing a ball.                               |
| <b>Social Routines &amp; Community Expectations</b>    | Your child is learning basic social routines like greetings, waiting, and staying with the group.                 | Your child responds to greetings and follows basic social expectations with prompting.     | Your child initiates simple greetings, waits for a turn, and follows group routines in familiar settings. | Your child follows social norms in school and community settings with visual supports.             | Your child independently follows social routines across school, home, and community.               | Practice greetings and simple social scripts at home. Use social stories or pictures to prepare your child for community outings.                             |
| <b>Domain 5: Staying Calm &amp; Focused</b>            |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                            |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Managing Feelings &amp; Sensory Needs</b>           | Your child may have frequent emotional or sensory reactions that disrupt                                          | Your child begins to respond to sensory breaks and calming strategies when                 | Your child uses some self-regulation strategies (visual break card, fidget                                | Your child independently uses regulation strategies in familiar settings                           | Your child self-regulates in multiple settings, including with                                     | Learn your child's sensory signals and have a calm-down kit at home (fidgets, headphones, a quiet spot). Ask the teacher what strategies work best at school. |

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| Area of Growth                                                            | Getting Started                                                                            | Building Skills                                                                             | Making Progress                                                                             | Almost There                                                                                       | Ready to Move On                                                                                                                                         | How Families Can Support This at Home                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                           | learning. Close 1:1 adult support is needed.                                               | offered by an adult.                                                                        | tool) with adult prompting.                                                                 | and returns to tasks with minimal support.                                                         | non-familiar adults and peers.                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Staying Engaged &amp; Using Skills in New Places (ALC Exit Domain)</b> | <b>Your child needs 1:1 support to stay on task in structured 1:1 learning situations.</b> | <b>Your child sustains engagement for short tasks (3–5 min) in structured 1:1 settings.</b> | <b>Your child participates in small group activities (2–3 students) with adult support.</b> | <b>Your child participates in larger group activities and uses learned skills in new settings.</b> | <b>Your child demonstrates skills learned at school in new settings and with new people for at least 20 school days — this is the ALC exit standard.</b> | <b>Share what's working at school at home. The more your child practices skills in different places, the faster they grow. Consistency between home and school is the most powerful tool.</b> |

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# Your Child's Journey Toward Greater Independence

*The 5 Stages from ALC Entry to a Less Restrictive Setting*

| Stage                                          | What This Looks Like                                                                                                                        | What the Team Is Doing                                                                                                                          | How Families Are Involved                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Starting Out in ALC</b>                  | Intensive 1:1 supports across all activities. Focus on building communication and daily routine foundations in a highly structured setting. | Staff conducting baseline assessments, establishing routines, and identifying key communication tools and supports for your child.              | Families learn about the ALC approach, daily routines, and communication systems. Regular communication begins with the teacher.      |
| <b>2. Building Core Skills</b>                 | Consistent progress in communication, self-care, and social skills. Your child begins participating in small group activities.              | Data is collected on all IEP goals. Monthly progress reports are shared with families. Team reviews data at regular intervals.                  | Families receive monthly progress updates and are invited to share observations from home. Home strategies are aligned with school.   |
| <b>3. Collecting Exit Data</b>                 | Your child demonstrates skills in group settings with minimal or visual support only. This phase lasts at least 20 school days.             | Team collects 20 consecutive days of data showing group participation with minimal/visual support. ARD team is notified of progress.            | Families are invited to observe their child in the classroom. Family observations and input are recorded as part of the data process. |
| <b>4. ARD Meeting &amp; Planning</b>           | Your child has met the exit standard. The team reviews data together and discusses placement options in a less restrictive setting.         | CPP (Comprehensive Program Plan) is submitted. The team reviews all data and discusses Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) options.             | Family voice is at the center of the placement decision. Families share their priorities, concerns, and vision for their child.       |
| <b>5. Moving to a Less Restrictive Setting</b> | Your child transitions gradually to the new setting with continued supports. Progress is monitored closely during the transition period.    | A gradual transition plan is developed. The team provides 30/60/90-day follow-up monitoring. The ALC teacher remains available as a consultant. | Families stay closely connected to the new team. ALC staff remain available to answer questions and support the transition.           |

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*You are the most important member of your child's team. Every skill your child practices at home — communicating, following routines, playing with others, staying calm — helps them grow faster. We are so grateful to partner with you on this journey.*

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