



After ALC

Student Guide for Preparation and the Process of Leaving

As a space dedicated to supporting young people in discerning what they want for their lives then taking intentional action towards those goals, we're always excited for our older students when they start spending more time engaged in the wider city, exploring their professional options, asking questions about college, and generally preparing for whatever is next on their path after their ALC years.

All students transitioning out of the school will meet with staff to discuss their intentions, outline the steps and requirements they'll need to complete along the way, and plan together for how facilitators can most effectively support them in their process. Though it's never too early to begin preparing for the future and everyone's timelines will vary, it's recommended to begin discussing your plans concretely with facilitators 10 - 12 months before your intended departure date.

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All Students

No matter what your plans are for after ALC, you'll need both life skills and certain documents that help communicate to other institutions details about how you have been spending your time. Much of this guide focuses on the documentation that you'll need to produce before moving on to your next adventure. These include transcripts, written reflections, a graduation project, and test scores where applicable.

That said, it's equally important to be assessing and building the skills you'll need for regular life as you become more independent. This is preparation you can start at any time that will support you being ready to transition when the time comes. When you're ready to get intentional about this preparation, you'll want to:

- Start a practice of journaling, reading quality writing, and noticing how you're spending your time. Journaling will help you articulate your goals, your "why," and keep making decisions that help you get where you're trying to go. It'll also make producing transcripts and application essays easier in the future. Reading quality writing will help develop your ear for language, your abilities as a writer, and your critical comprehension. Any genre is fine! Spending your time on exercises like these, and other practices you determine will support your journey, will give you more options in the future. Additionally, noticing how and why you spend your time the way you do – ideally with more curiosity instead of judgment – will help you recognize patterns that you can work with or design against in your independent life. For example, if you notice you focus better in short spurts or with stimulation, you might want to test working with a focus playlist on and at a standing desk, using a pomodoro timer. If you notice turning on your phone to check the time leads to you getting sucked into message notifications, you can experiment with wearing a watch and keeping your phone in your bag instead of a pocket. You have to see your mind and energy patterns to begin figuring out how to work with them!
- Visit the NYPL website to learn about their **resources for learning to drive, standardized test preparation, college and career counseling**, and more. The librarians want to help people learn... that's why they're there, so don't be shy! Beyond exploring a physical library building near you or the school, you'll want to take some time to explore their many, many, online resources, starting at <https://www.nypl.org/remote-learning-resources/college-career-pathways>! The "Learning Express" resources and Teen Zones are particularly rich and helpful. All ALC-NYC students are eligible for an NYPL card, regardless of address, since they study in Manhattan. Talk to a facilitator if you need proof of enrollment.

- Make sure you're comfortable with the health and housekeeping skills you'll need to use daily. There are resources online that you can use, like this workbook: <https://casaconnect.voicesforasachildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Exercises-for-Daily-Life-Skills.pdf>
- Consider taking a few months to work through a "life skills" or "adulting 101" checklist, such as the one at <https://www.casey.org/casey-life-skills/>
- Read through resources colleges and counseling centers offer to orient young people reaching for new levels of independence and responsibility. This slide show is really thorough and has comic illustrations: <https://www.ccri.edu/opportunity/Adulting%20101%20-%20COMPLETE%201%20-%204.2020.pdf>

When you're ready to move into more formal preparation, or at the same time as you're working on the above life skills if you don't have a lot of time for whatever reason, you'll need to start producing and organizing some specific kinds of documents. A **transcript** will put the content you focused on into subjects and levels legible to folks in more conventional institutions. A **written reflection** will let you tell the story of your experience. Depending on where you're headed after ALC, **a portfolio with examples of your work, resume reflecting internship and volunteer experiences, and recommendation letters** from adults who have mentored you may also be helpful to assemble. Be sure to look up and thoroughly read through the requirements for any program you're interested in. Ask a facilitator if you need support doing this and figuring out what kind of documentation you need.

Making A Transcript

The goal of the transcript is to communicate about what you have been learning using the language that state schools and standards use. Reviewing the language used describing graduation requirements in the next section may be helpful if you aren't practiced at thinking in terms of academic subjects. College-level lists of disciplines have even more options, which may also be helpful depending on your interests and goals.

Below are 2 transcript examples that use different scales for assessing your performance or progress as a learner. The first scale, from "approaching expectations" to "exceeding expectations," is similar to the letter or number grading systems widely used in US schools to communicate how well – or not – a student is demonstrating understanding of specific course material. The second scale, from "emerging" to "extending," is more similar to the spectrums used in retrospective exercises for individuals and teams assessing where they're at in their learning journeys. Previous

students have successfully used both scales (and another where classes were worth 0.5 credits for each semester and the students were marked “pass” or “fail” for each). Consider the norms, expectations, and requirements of the place where you’re trying to go next, and pick the format which seems best for that audience.

Example 1:

Transcript for E
D.O.B. - 3/30/--

Agile Learning Center
2018-2019
7th Grade
Teachers:

ATTENDANCE:
Days present: 167
Excused absences: 4
Days late: 0

Areas of Engagement	Description of Area of Engagement and/or Skills that were worked on/mastered	Evaluation of participation in the Area of Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approaching expectations ● Meets expectations ● Consistently meets expectations ● Exceeds expectations
Maths	Mastery of skills via Khan Academy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 7th grade Algebra ● 7th grade Geometry ● 7th grade Word Problems and Arithmetic ● 7th grade Probability 	Meets expectations
Cooking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Following Recipes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Real-world application of math skills ● Improvisation/Problem solvings ● Knife Skills 	Consistently meets expectations
Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding the Function of Basic 8-bit Computer ● Programming in Rust ● Development of New School-Wide Blog Site 	Meets expectations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Programming in Python 	
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● History (U.S. and World) ● Iceland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ History ○ Religion ○ Geography ○ Geology ○ Wildlife ● Climate Change and Climate Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effects of climate change ○ Advocating for climate action ● Comparative Study of calendars - specifically the Jewish lunar calendar 	Exceeds expectations
Physical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rock Climbing ● Sports & other physical activities (i.e. tag at the park) 	Consistently meets expectations
Hebrew as a Second Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modern conversational Hebrew, grammar and vocabulary on Duolingo 	Exceeds expectations
Board Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Range of strategy games played weekly in small group ● Gamesmanship (winning and losing with grace) 	Meets expectations
Computer Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minecraft creations (Jungle tower, 8-bit ALU) ● Minecraft mini-games ● Undertale 'Sans' boss fight 	Consistently meets expectations
English Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blogging (weekly reflective/creative posts) ● Reading (Hunger Games Trilogy, Harry Potter and the Methods of 	Meets expectations

	<p>Rationality, Lord of the Rings trilogy)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public Speaking ● Speech Writing ● Film critique ● Debate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whether or not the Galactic Empire was better than the Galactic Republic 	
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trips to the Natural Museum with focused study on human evolution and astronomy ● Kerbal Space Program - multiple landings on the <i>Mun</i>, basic understanding of orbital mechanics 	Consistently meets expectations
Check-in and Change Up Weekly Community Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active participation in the review of school administration and intentional culture creation 	Exceeds expectations
Curiosity and Engagement		Exceeds expectations
Relationships with peers		Meets expectations
Relationships with teachers		Consistently meets expectations
Collaboration		Consistently meets expectations

Signature

Example 2:



115 East 106th Street 2nd floor
 New York, NY 10029
www.NYCagile.org

Transcript for **STUDENT NAME, DATE OF BIRTH**
 Agile Learning Center NYC 2022-2023 School Year

<i>Proficiency Scale</i>	Emerging	Proficient	Extending
	Has acquired basic domain skills or knowledge	Has achieved thorough understanding and solid proficiency	Has sophisticated understanding and is extending into original work

Fall Semester **MINIMAL DESCRIPTION EXAMPLE**

Subject	Description	Assessment
Math	Geometry	
	Algebra*	
History	US History*	
	World Art History	
English	Myths and Fables*	
Home Economics	Home Economics*	
Art	Fiber Art	
	Pencil and Digital Drawing*	
Science	Physics	
	Biology*	
	Astronomy	

Spring Semester **NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION EXAMPLE**

Subject	Description	Assessment
Mathematics	Studied Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, Functions, data analysis, probability through Khan Academy, and SAT prep textbooks. Learned Game theory and statistics through weekly poker games	
English Language Studies	Attended weekly book club meetings, discussed writing tools and character development of books. Read classic authors such as James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and F.Scott Fitzgerald and read many RF novels, essays, sci-fi books, and NF. Studied and wrote poetry, focusing on themes of gender and childhood. Explored writing fantasy through "writing time" at school, and wrote a short dystopian fantasy story.	
Social Studies	Engaged in discussions surrounding politics, tech surveillance, race, capitalism, Native American history, etc. Watched many documentaries on word history, social justice movements, and US history such as 13th, I Am Not Your Negro, Fire in Blood, World's Most Wanted, The Edge of Democracy, The Russian Revolution, etc. Read The Diary of Anne Frank, Animal Farm, Woke Racism, and some other texts in order to learn about WW2, revolutions, and US history and politics.	
Science	Attended weekly Ecology classes, where she researched animals and environments for various presentations. Spent the last year learning about the science of climate change, and possible	

You can copy and edit a transcript like this using this Google Doc:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sqhZxqNaH2TFuSdFqm-0CC_55HAUQay8mm19cKgz05U/edit?usp=sharing

Written Reflection

While the transcript provides an at-a-glance summary of the academic content you've covered during a specific period in time, it doesn't tell the story of that phase of your educational journey or how you've grown as a person and learner. Telling your story includes sharing your voice, making connections, reflecting on change, and maybe explaining the significance of a meaningful experience to your present and future decision-making.

The simplest format, and the format that staff typically choose when asked to write about students, usually has 5 separate sections. It's outline looks like this:

1. Introduce who the document is about, the context or basis of relationship in which it's being written, and its goal.
2. Describe where and how the student engages in reading and information-gathering. List specific activities where they've demonstrated taking in, processing, and applying information, focusing on their use of text-based resources. Highlight any growth or challenges.
3. Describe where and how the student engages in writing, mark-making, and story-telling. List specific activities where they've practiced or demonstrated effective use of these skills. Highlight any growth or challenges.
4. Describe where and how the student engages with numbers and mathematical thinking. List specific activities where they've demonstrated numeracy, logical problem-solving, or data gathering and use. Highlight any growth or challenges.
5. Describe the student's social-emotional abilities and how they engage in relationships with others. List specific capacities they demonstrate that will support them leading a fulfilling life in the wider world, as well as their progress towards any personal goals they have for their self-development. Highlight any growth or challenges.

For some purposes, like updating your therapist about your schooling or applying to transfer schools, this format works because it focuses briefly on the kind of information that its readers are looking for. That said, it doesn't result in a document that demonstrates your ability as a writer, connects and makes meaning of your experiences, or gets a stranger reading it invested in your potential. If those are your goals, you need a different format.

If you're a confident writer, you might get creative. You can get inspiration by looking at the templates behind articles in magazines or in academic journals. You can make a zine or a comic. You can build a website. You have so many options! But if you're just

trying to get the writing done and would rather think about the content than the form, a standard 5 paragraph essay will do.

Since the opening and closing paragraphs of the essay will be focused on explaining your intentions, outlining your points, and transitioning your reader into then out of your piece, there are really only 3 paragraphs that you have to pick themes for.

You can write about your growth through your earliest, middle, and most recent years of education. You can write about a subject that came easily to you, one you struggled with, and how both contributed to who you have become. You can pick a guiding principle from a practice you have – like painting or playing chess – and describe times it was helpful to you and your learning outside that practice. There are many, many options that would briefly introduce your narrative voice, offer a reflection on some aspect of your lived experience over the past few years, and demonstrate to the reader that you're someone with curiosity and creativity...and your own mind.

Remember outlines are your friend, and don't forget to proofread!

Graduation

Students pursuing graduation and an ALC-NYC private school diploma, will need to ensure they complete all units of study mandated by New York state, any applications and skill-building necessary for their next endeavor, and a community graduation process involving the presentation of a capstone project they design.

For the State

In New York state, a high school course of study must include:

- English - 4 units
- Social Studies, including a year of American history - 4 units
- Mathematics - 2 units
- Science - 2 units
- Health - 1/2 unit
- Physical Education - 1 unit
- Art and/or Music - 1 unit

Additionally, students are required to have learned about:

- The US constitution and its amendments, the Declaration of Independence, the NYS constitution and its amendments
- Patriotism and Citizenship
- NYS History and Civics

- Physical and Health Education, especially regarding alcohol, drugs, and tobacco abuse
- Highway Safety and Traffic Regulation
- Fire Drill Execution, Arson Prevention, Injury Prevention, and Life Safety Skills
- Use of AED and Hands-Only CPR

As reflected in Education Law § 3204(2)(ii), there are specific competencies students should look to develop through their engagement with different classically-defined academic subjects. These are competencies we seek to build through many of our activities and explorations; they are transferable and trans-disciplinary skills. However, it's useful to have them clearly articulated, along with the disciplines they're associated with.

- Overall, students are expected to develop **critical thinking**. While the law does not articulate an expectation that students also develop creative and collaborative thinking skills through their school experience, our community does hold that expectation. We do so with the understanding that engaged civic life and the workplaces of the future will demand all three capacities of our students.
- Beyond practicing reading and writing in an English class, students are expected to develop the **ability to gather information, assess it, and then to use that information** to clearly express a point of view or support an argument.
- Beyond executing problem sets accurately in Math class, students are expected to develop the ability to **solve real world problems using both number sense and fluency** with mathematical functions and operations.
- Beyond memorizing dates and names in History class, students are expected to develop the abilities to **interpret and analyze primary texts, to identify and explore important events in history, and to use information** from reliable sources to support a point of view. Through their explorations of events and connections between them, students should **develop an understanding** of the role of geography and economics in the actions of world civilizations, as well as an understanding of civics and the responsibilities of citizens in world communities
- Beyond memorizing formulas and theorems in Science class, students are expected to develop the abilities to **gather, analyze, and interpret observable data. They should practice using this data to make informed decisions and solve problems** mathematically, using deductive and inductive reasoning to support a hypothesis, and differentiating between correlational and causal relationships.

Students pursuing graduation will meet with staff at the beginning of their process to identify any gaps in their course of study to date. Together, they will map out a plan for the student to cover all required content on the way to graduation.

For the Future

Most young people who declare an intention to graduate do so with a clear goal of getting a job, enrolling in college, taking a trip, or participating in some other program as their intended next adventure. For some, part of their graduation process will include asking for facilitator support in figuring out their next steps...which is an expectation for all graduates at ALC-NYC. Facilitators may help students research jobs that draw on their demonstrated talents and hobbies, recommend interviews with folks experienced in their fields of interest, or plan visits to colleges of different kinds around the city. They'll likely recommend taking advantage of our location in the city by doing things like finding an internship and taking advantage of our membership in the ALC Network by using resources like the "What About College?" webinar at <https://nycagile.org/alc-101-webinar-series/>. If you're thinking about your options but not ready to ask for support yet – and you have more than 6 months before you really need to start figuring things out – any of the exploratory projects mentioned above can be done independently and will give you helpful information.

Once you have set your goals, it will be time to work backwards to figure out what you need to have done by when in order to get where you're trying to go. Different paths will have different requirements: interviews, essays, hiking experience, safety certifications, foreign language immersion, etc. While making sure to fulfill the state's general graduation requirements, it's also important to plan time for building any knowledge and skills you can anticipate needing for your chosen path. What do you think you need to know and have practice doing to feel ready for life after ALC? What do facilitators and other trusted adults in your life suggest would make a difference for you? And, of course, what are the requirements for getting access to the job, course of study, or other adventure you are looking to take on next? You'll need to map out what you've already got covered, what you need to attend to, and a plan with deadlines through the year for finishing the tasks that will help you get ready. Check in with facilitators for collaboration and feedback! We're here to help with this stuff!

For the Community

Informally, students pursuing graduation are encouraged to demonstrate their readiness to be independent young adults in the wider world. Facilitators will be looking for them to take on roles with more responsibility in the school community, for example by acting as mediators, members of working groups, or offering facilitators. They are expected to be able to navigate to different parts of the city – and maybe to and from other cities – confidently. They will be encouraged to pursue internships, volunteer opportunities, classes and maybe jobs beyond the school.

Formally, the young people will need to complete three tasks for the school community to agree to graduate them, in addition to fulfilling the graduation requirements of the state. The first task is to **create the transcript and reflective writing piece** described at the beginning of this document, optionally supplemented by a portfolio of work, for use in communicating about their course of study with the wider world. The second task is to **design and execute a capstone project** that in some manner demonstrates their readiness for the role or environment they plan to take on after leaving the school. Finally, the third task is to **present these artifacts and their plan for their next steps** to a graduation panel, who will decide whether they've demonstrated adequately that they're prepared to graduate. Students will work with staff to assemble their graduation panel, ensuring they include at least one community member, one facilitator, and one adult who has experience in their field of interest or could otherwise serve as a mentor to the young person. Once members of the panel have accepted their role, a facilitator will send them an email that thanks them and explains our expectations. Read through this sample of what will be communicated to them, to help you discern who to pick and then how to prepare:

Dear Graduation Panel Member,

Thank you for agreeing to support one of our young people through their graduation process! We suggest picking panel members who the aspiring graduate admires and would like to emulate in some way as they continue growing, so it's pretty special to be chosen. We hope you feel honored and appreciated through this process.

We're a bit of an unusual school; you can read more about us and our model at agilelearningcenters.org and nycagile.org. If you have questions, of course you can and should ask the student who you're working with but you can also always email alf@nycagile.org to reach school staff.

In the panel meeting itself, you're asking the student about their graduation project and plans for after their time at ALC. They should introduce themselves and their project at the beginning of the meeting. I like to ask about why they picked their project and how they executed it, what their plans are for after graduation, and what skills they needed for their project that they expect will be useful to them as they pursue whatever they have coming up next. You're listening for how well the young person can share their reasoning and reflections, as well as for whether they seem adequately prepared for their after-ALC plans. When the student is finished presenting, someone on the panel will need to ask them to step out of the room so you can discuss your impressions. If you have specific feedback or suggestions to share alongside approval of their readiness at the end of the conversation, you'll call the student back in and share this with them. If you have concerns about their readiness, you will want to discuss with other panel members what specific additional skills or capacities you would need the student to demonstrate in order to feel good about approving them to graduate. In that case, you'll call the student back in and tell them you would like them to schedule another panel meeting in which you'll be looking for them to try again, in a way that addresses your concerns and demonstrates the additional skills or capacities you have reservations about.

Either way, a school staff member will be present and will update other staff and the student's family about the outcome of the panel. At the end of the meeting, they'll thank you for your time and continue to be available at the email address mentioned above if you have further questions or reflections.

And that's it! Thank you again for your willingness to participate in a young person's learning journey in this capacity. They won't forget that you made time for them, and we won't either.

All the best,
Agile Learning Center NYC Staff

So what should your capstone project be? It should be ambitious but do-able, demonstrate knowledge or skills you've acquired in preparation for graduation, and ultimately be something you'll be proud to share. Students have made albums and visual art portfolios. They've coded games and cooked elaborate meals. They've worked, hosted workshops, visited other ALCs, or researched a topic that fascinates them and then crafted a presentation about what they learned through that experience. Your project will be unique to you, and you'll want to check in with a facilitator at least 6 months before you're planning to graduate about how to design and execute it.

Your graduation panel will assemble, online or in person, near your intended graduation date. A school director will have to verify that you've fulfilled the state requirements and are a student in good standing before they officially sign off on you graduating, so your panel's word isn't enough on its own to get you a diploma. That said, you need their approval of your project and presentation as part of the process. You'll want to pick folks whose perspectives you value, and your facilitators will encourage you to schedule the panel meeting at least 2 weeks before your intended graduation date, so you have time for any revisions that they request.

You'll need to communicate with panel members, sending them an explanation of the process you're asking them to get involved in, a request to support you by taking on this role, coordination around a date and time that works for everyone, and troubleshooting around any surprises that may lead to you needing to change plans. This communication is part of the process, since it draws on skills you'll need after ALC. Facilitators can help you craft your communications and plan your presentation when the time comes, though the follow-through is your responsibility, and if you ask panel members to get involved early in your process, they may agree to mentor you in fulfilling your academic goals or executing your project.

Non-Graduation Credentialing Option: TASC/GED

Students looking for a high school credential without completing the graduation process or who need a credential other than a private school diploma may choose to prepare for and take the TASC. The test is free, and is usually given over 2 days. It's about 9 hours total, including sections on:

- Language Arts - Reading
- Language Arts - Writing (which includes an essay)
- Mathematics (which includes a calculator section and a section in which calculators are not allowed)
- Science (calculators are permitted)
- Social Studies

Students must be over mandatory school age, so that means they are at or past the end of the year they turn 16 in NYS and 17 in NYC. Details are found with the application to schedule the exam at

<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/common/acces/files/hse/tascattachmenta.pdf> or at <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/hse/if-you-are-17-or-18-years-age-day-testing> or at (<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/hse/if-you-are-16-years-age-day-testing>).

Approved calculators are provided, but prior practice and some familiarity is recommended. There are many test-prep resources available online and in the city, including:

- Brooklyn Public Library has free test-readiness screenings (must be scheduled) <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/adult-learning/earn-your-hse>
- Prep materials free online, at Brooklyn Public Library (with classes), and at city offices
- Prep programs and counseling available for free at Pathways to Graduation centers (p2g.nyc) for 17yo+parent or 18-21 yos
 - Student must visit center and bring government ID, transcript, and IEP if applicable (and parent if under 18)
- <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/what-hsetasc-test>
- Prep course map at <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/hse/hse-prep-programs-maps>
- <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/hse/ready-set-test-new-high-school-equivalency-exam-here>

For students who aren't planning on attending a CUNY or SUNY school, tests like the GED and HiSET may be options... and they may be better options depending on your preferred test format. For students planning on attending local schools, particularly CUNY and SUNY, the TASC test will be the way to go.

For the Community

The beginning of this document included guides to support you growing up, separate from all the considerations for those graduating or transferring education institutions. Here at the end we have some suggestions of additional things you can make sure to do as you prepare for the wider world:

- Get work experience and build connections **volunteering or working at an internship**, such as those you can find through <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dcas/employment/internship-and-fellowships-summer-internship-program.page>
- Put together a **resume**, even if you don't need it quite yet. Editing something you have to update it will be easier, when the time comes, than creating something from scratch. There are guides online, such as at <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-make-a-resume-with-examples>

- Put together a **CV** (for the same reason you may want to put together a resume)! Guides are online, like at <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-cv>
- Make yourself a **website**! This isn't like a social media profile. Your audience is specifically people who might want to hire you, mentor you, be considering you for a scholarship, or otherwise are professionally interested in how you're developing yourself. You can get started with a simple blog using the guide at <https://wordpress.com/go/website-building/how-to-make-a-website/>
- **Remember who you are and why you're doing what you're doing!** Who and what do you value? What do you want to give your time to and to be remembered for? What have you learned? How will you move forward? If you didn't watch the "What About College?" webinar mentioned above, I'll give you a spoiler: part of the conclusion is that your journey is unique and your life precious, so it's more important to live as engaged and intentional a life as you can each day than it is to achieve any specific small success. Keep learning, keep moving, and keep grounded in who you are.

Whatever path you choose next, best luck with it!