SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE
RUNNING START 2026
O'FALLON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT #203
FAQs

1. **What is Running Start?**
   Running Start is a dual credit program for qualified high school students to attend SWIC as a full-time student their junior and senior years of high school. Running Start is a two-year program beginning with high school juniors and may not be completed early.

   The Running Start Program meets the requirements for both a high school diploma from O'Fallon Township High School and an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science Degree from Southwestern Illinois College, so both degrees are earned simultaneously.

2. **Who can participate?**
   High school sophomores who are on-track to graduate on-time, have a 3.7 or better GPA, have completed one year of high school algebra and one year of honors high school geometry with a B or higher, take ACCUPLACER and ALEKS assessment and score into college level English and math courses, and have approval from the high school principal or his/her designee.

3. **What is an Associate of Arts Degree and what is an Associate of Science degree?**
   The Associate of Arts (AA Degree) and the Associate of Science (AS Degree) are both two-year degree programs designed to transfer to a four-year institution. The AA degree is usually earned when the student wants to study in such areas as arts, humanities, social or behavioral sciences, or a professional field with those disciplines as a base. The AS degree is usually earned when a student wants to study in such areas as business, science, math or engineering.

4. **Will an associate degree transfer to a four-year institution?**
   An associate degree from SWIC will transfer to any of the public four-year institutions in Illinois. SWIC participates in the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Please visit itransfer.org for more information. Transfer guides are used to provide a suggested path of coursework dependent upon your particular program. Transfer guides may not be available for all schools and programs. Please visit SWIC Transfer Advising for available transfer guides.

   While it is recognized that any four-year institution retains the right to determine which degrees and/or credit hours it will accept, by virtue of its accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, SWIC is not aware of any difficulties in the transferability of the Associate of Arts Degree.

   Transferology is an online tool that helps the student view program requirements, look at course equivalencies, and see how courses you have taken or plan to take transfer to another college or university.

5. **Will students pay tuition, fees or purchase textbooks?**
   Each student will pay $2,275.00 per semester, of the $4,550.00 annual program fee to participate. Each student is responsible for purchasing or renting their own textbooks.

First Day Book Fee
Offered by Barnes & Noble, the First Day™ Program provides students with access to digital course materials by the first day of class. Students are automatically opted in to the First Day program. This model is easy and convenient for student use, provides an affordable option, and supports student success by ensuring every student is prepared for the first day of class.
You may opt-out of purchasing the First Day™ digital course materials, however, you are still responsible for completing all work assigned by your instructor. The Opt-Out tool is available through the Course Materials link in the First Day™ course in your Blackboard. You must Opt-Out before the deadline.

6. **Are Running Start students eligible for a Pell Grant?**
   No. To receive any form of Federal Financial Aid, which includes PEL Grant, scholarships, student loans, or student employment, students must have graduated from high school or have a high school equivalency certificate (GED, HiSET, TASC).

7. **Can I take some classes at the high school and some at SWIC's Belleville Campus?**
   No. Students who participate in the Running Start Program will take all their classes at the Belleville Campus and will not be allowed on the high school property while school is in session. Running Start students may report to OTHS for after-school activities, or earlier if dictated by scheduled times of activities. Students enrolled in Band, Choir, or AFJROTC are permitted on campus during the time of their assigned class.

8. **If I participate in Running Start, will I be eligible for scholarships when I enroll at a four-year college or university?**
   Most four-year institutions consider a student a high school graduate a new college student if they attend the four-year institution after graduation and do not attend any other college/university after graduation. In this case, Running Start students would be eligible for "new student" scholarships at those four-year institutions.

   Running Start students are eligible for other scholarships and financial aid at four-year institutions if they qualify.

   As always, students should confer with the four-year institution they are considering attending.

9. **Can I participate in Running Start and high school athletics and activities at the same time?**
   Because Running Start students are high school students, they may maintain high school athletic eligibility while in the program. However, students will not be dismissed from college classes for athletic events and college attendance policies will apply.

   Running Start students may participate in high school activities such as homecoming, prom, and clubs and organizations that meet outside of the typical high school day.

10. **As a Running Start student, may I participate in college activities and programs?**
    Yes. You will be enrolled in college courses and will receive a SWIC student ID. You may attend college events, join clubs and organizations, participate in the intramural athletic program, and access all college services. Running Start students may not participate in SWIC intercollegiate athletics.

11. **What will students do for lunch?**
    The Belleville Campus cafeteria has hot items for purchase as well as salads and deli items. Students may bring lunch from home or leave the college campus for lunch.

12. **Is transportation provided?**
    It is expected that students will provide their own transportation to the college campus. Free parking stickers are required; there is no charge to park on campus.

    Students will receive a St. Clair County bus and MetroLink pass when they enroll at SWIC.

13. **Will I be able to take online classes in Running Start?**
    Not the first year, but online courses can be taken later with approval.

14. **Will I be eligible for high school graduation honors if I participate in Running Start?**
    Running Start students will follow the same high school graduation recognition guidelines as all other students at OTHS.

15. **Will Running Start students be subject to the college's rules and regulations?**
    Yes. The *Student Rights and Conduct Code* and all college rules and regulations apply to Running Start students.

16. **Who will see the students' grades?**
    Students will sign a release that will enable the college to release their grades to the high school and parents.

17. **Will Running Start students be required to participate in high school testing?**
    Running Start students must participate in all required state mandated testing at the high school and will be excused from SWIC classes on those dates, but the missed assignments must be completed.

18. **Can I change my mind?**
    Students may only start the program with a required orientation course in the Summer prior to the start of the Fall Semester of their junior year.

    Running Start students who wish to return to the high school after the completion of the orientation course may be eligible for a minimal refund after the cost for the orientation course is fulfilled. Once the student begins the semester, there is no refund, and families will be obligated for the cost of the full semester. Students are encouraged to wait until the end of the semester for academic and financial reasons.

19. **What if I get behind in class or think I need help with my class?**
    Always talk with your instructor first. He or she may offer on-line resources or may lead a study group outside of class. The SWIC Success Centers offer tutorial resources and study groups at no charge.

20. **May I schedule a tour of the Belleville Campus before I commit to this program?**
    Certainly. Students wishing to schedule a campus tour can register online at swic.edu/students/services/enrollment-services/visit-a-campus/. Please identify yourself as Running Start in the comment section.

21. **If I drop a class at SWIC, how will it impact my high school transcript and high school GPA?**
    If you drop a class at SWIC, the high school will record the grade as a "W" on the high school transcript.

If you drop a class at SWIC, the "W" is not included in your college GPA, but it will appear on your transcript.

Students are advised to check with their high school counselor when dropping a class to confirm continued eligibility.

Students may be removed from the Running Start program for withdrawing or being dropped from more than one class per semester.

22. Will my grades at SWIC be considered weighted grades by the high school?
OTHS will not award weighted grades for classes taken as part of the Running Start program.

23. Will parents have access to students' progress and grades?
Unlike OTHS's high school's online grading system, there is no central place where parents and students can review the status of the student in each class every day. While some college faculty members may post student's grades as they are earned, giving students an opportunity to track their progress online, not all faculty members do so. However, one of the requirements for participation in the program is the completion of the **Permission and Release of Information Form** which allows for the sharing of student information (attendance, academic progress, grades, enrollment status, etc.) among parents, the school district and the college.

24. How will District #203 determine who will get into the program?
The school district will invite students to learn more about the program if they meet all the program requirements as of January of the sophomore year:
The criteria for student selection includes the following criteria:

- Completion of Honors Geometry with a grade of B or higher by the end of their sophomore year.
- A cumulative weighted GPA of 3.7 or higher.
- Good standing with OTHS and compliance with the OTHS Code of Conduct.
- Being on track to graduate.

To be considered for the program, all students must complete all required materials online or in paper form, attend the informational meeting with SWIC, and remain to meet the criteria stated above after the completion of the spring semester sophomore year.

Students must take the college's ACCUPLACER English and ALEKS PPL math assessment and score into college level classes in both areas.

25. Can students take a practice test prior to taking the ACCUPLACER or the ALEKS PPL?
SWIC now utilizes ALEKS PPL as the math assessment. Students attempting to place into the Running Start Program will have access to an unproctored test prior to their first proctored exam. Upon completion of the first unproctored exam, students will have access to testing modules which will assist them in identifying and practicing areas of the test in which they may have struggled. The sequence of testing for Running Start students is now as follows:

1. Unproctored attempt (not required)
2. Proctored attempt
3. Unproctored attempt (not required)
4. Proctored attempt 2, provided if the student does not place on their first attempt

The Running Start ALEKS cohort will open to students in October; students are not required to take the unproctored exam. Please find additional information below and to view a copy of student instructions for the ALEKS PPL, click HERE.

1. Students who wish to take the unproctored attempt must apply to SWIC in order to generate a student ID, these applications are part of the typical running start process.
2. Students who take the unproctored attempt will have the opportunity to complete learning modules, customized based on their results before taking their proctored exam. Students who work within the learning modules may be able to raise their score.
3. We must emphasize that the student's unproctored attempt should be a **true** measure of their current abilities. Students who cheat or use supplemental materials when testing can be detrimentally affected since the test will not know how to assist them in the learning modules. Schools may also choose to have students take their unproctored attempts in a school environment.

26. How many students are accepted into the Running Start program?
OTHS will accept a maximum of twenty students per graduating class. If more than 20 students apply, they will be ranked according to their weighted GPA (the GPA earned after the first semester of their sophomore year) and the top 20 selected.

27. Who should I speak with at the high school for more information about this opportunity?
Mr. Ethan Graham, Director of Curriculum and Special Projects (grahame@oths.us) or
Mrs. Justine Veath, Running Start School Counselor (justine.veath@oths.us)

28. Where can students find out general information about SWIC?
www.swic.edu
www.swic.edu/running-start