



THE CENTER FOR  
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**Replicating the  
Accelerated  
Learning Program:  
Preliminary but Promising Findings**

**Prepared in Collaboration with:**

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF BALTIMORE COUNTY



ACHIEVING THE DREAM



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# REPLICATING THE ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM: PRELIMINARY BUT PROMISING FINDINGS

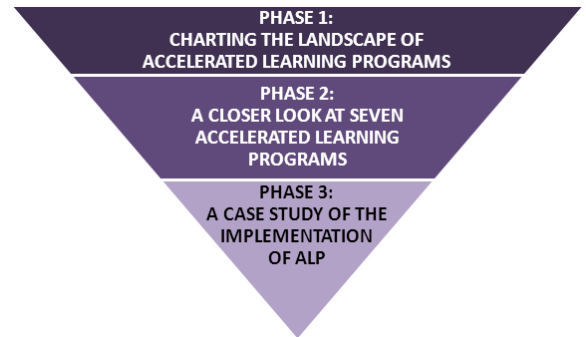
## STUDY OVERVIEW AND FINDINGS

In 2007, the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) launched a new innovation in developmental writing. The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) was a co-requisite model, designed to accelerate the progress of developmental education students by co-enrolling them in the highest level of developmental writing along with the first credit-level writing course. Studies by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) showed that ALP has a positive impact on student outcomes in both the developmental course and the college-level course. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) chose ALP as an example of a high-impact educational practice, and an upcoming Practitioner Brief, “Adopting and Adapting Compression Strategies,” from Achieving the Dream and MDC characterizes ALP as a program that “has become highly influential in higher education.” In addition, Complete College America has recommended making co-requisite models, such as ALP, the default for students who place into developmental education. In an environment in which policy makers and college administrators are looking for ways to reform developmental education and to improve student outcomes, ALP offers one model that has produced impressive results at CCBC.

Other colleges have begun replicating the CCBC ALP model. This study, intended as the first of many, examines the implementation of ALP at institutions other than CCBC, with the following goals:

- Assess the extent to which ALP can be replicated by other institutions and still achieve the level of success achieved at CCBC,
- Assess student success rates for schools that have made modifications to the CCBC model, and
- Determine which characteristics of ALP are critical for its success and which characteristics allow for more flexibility.

This study has three phases: (1) a broad survey of the implementation of ALPs around the country, (2) an examination of student-level data from a sample of seven colleges to compare the outcomes of ALP students to traditional developmental students, and (3) a qualitative case study of the implementation of ALP at two colleges. This study was designed to be exploratory, and consequently it raises more questions than it answers, but we hope that this study will be the first of many and one that provides preliminary information that will be helpful to other colleges considering implementing ALP.



### Phase 1: Charting the Landscape of Accelerated Learning Programs

In order to assess the landscape of ALPs across the country, we reached out to colleges known to have implemented some version of CCBC’s ALP, asked them to complete a survey, and requested that they also forward the survey to other colleges with an accelerated learning program.

Almost all of the colleges included in this study are using the ALP model as it was developed by CCBC. However, six colleges have replicated the model with significant modifications. Two of the colleges offer some combination of individualized tutoring, a workshop hour, and a student success course to developmental students taking the college-level writing course. One obstacle to implementing ALP is the small class size of the ALP course; CCBC recommends having no more than 12 students in this cohort which can be prohibitive for some colleges. Because of this issue, four colleges are using the Triangle Model in which students from two college-level classes populate a single ALP developmental class.

The colleges in the inventory are located across the country in 26 states. Fifteen states have more than one program in the inventory.

### **Findings**

- ALPs have been implemented in varied environments.
- ALPs are young and diverse; most colleges start small, and scale-up has been minimal.
- The implementation of ALPs leads to changes in teaching and course content.
- ALPs are spending more time on non-cognitive issues.
- “Instructors receive some training, but certainly not enough.”
- Colleges encounter similar challenges when implementing an ALP.
- Many colleges already have data showing positive student results.
- Colleges report positive feedback from students in ALPs.

### **Phase 2: A Closer Look at Seven Accelerated Learning Programs**

Based on the information from the ALP inventory, seven colleges were chosen for further study. This sample includes institutions that are replicating the CCBC ALP Model as well as schools who have modified that model. The colleges agreed to share limited student record data, including student demographics and course outcomes in the highest level of developmental writing along with the first two levels of college English.

### **Colleges in the Study**

- Three colleges represent replications of the CCBC ALP Model.
- One college has modified the model: class sizes are larger.
- One college has modified the model: different faculty teach the developmental course and the college-level course.
- One college has replicated the CCBC ALP Model at full scale with no pilot.
- One college is using the Triangle Model: developmental students in two college-level courses feed into a single ALP section.

### **Findings**

- ALP implementation at the seven colleges ranges from Fall 2010 to Fall 2012 which coincides with the findings from the ALP inventory that show most ALPs are still in their infancy;
- The number of ALP students in the seven colleges ranges from 18-156.
- Despite the limited data, the short-term results of the seven colleges covered are promising and merit further examination.
- Data from all seven of the colleges show higher student success rates in both the first and second college-level courses, compared to students taking the traditional developmental course sequence in the same terms.

- These results suggest that it is possible to modify the CCBC ALP Model and still be successful, though this study is limited in its scope.
- Further study may yield evidence that, while ALPs may be successful in a myriad of forms, certain components of the CCBC ALP Model, such as small class size and having the same instructor teach both classes, may work synergistically to create even more positive outcomes.

### **Phase 3: A Case Study of Two College Implementing ALP**

This phase of the study consisted of a qualitative look of the implementation of the CCBC ALP Model at Jackson College and Lansing Community College, colleges that have worked closely with CCBC as part of the expansion of ALP in Michigan. These two colleges volunteered to allow us to observe classes and conduct focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

### **Findings**

- Advisors may play a critical role in the recruitment of students and in scaling up.
- ALP students may benefit from pedagogy that includes supported learning and attention to non-cognitive issues.
- Teaching in ALP is a blend of structure and flexibility.
- ALPs can build communities through students bonding with each other and with the instructor.
- ALPs may benefit from a commitment to innovation and change.

### **Some Final Thoughts**

- The findings in this study are preliminary and exploratory, raising questions that merit further study to determine the extent to which the success of ALP at CCBC can be replicated and modified while still achieving high levels of student success.
- The colleges in this study represent a cross section of colleges implementing ALP; all of them have experienced success with the particular model of ALP that they have implemented, even when they strayed from the recommendations of the CCBC ALP Model.
- While further study is certainly necessary before policy recommendations can be made, these preliminary findings are encouraging.



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