|  |
| --- |
| **Replicating the Accelerated Learning Program:**  **Updated Findings** |
|  |

Dawn Coleman January 2015

**Prepared in Collaboration with:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Community College of Baltimore County | Achieving the Dream  C:\Documents and Settings\cdr7536e\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\LBP5739G\ATD-VSig-3272Kjpg.jpg |

Funding for this study was provided by The Kresge Foundation. The findings and opinions in this report are those of the authors and do not represent the opinions of the funder.

We would like to thank the many colleges that were willing to participate in the various stages of this study. This includes all of the colleges that provided information about their accelerated learning programs as part of the inventory and the four colleges that shared their student data with us (Atlantic Cape Community College, Jackson College, Lansing Community College, and North Arkansas College). We further thank the faculty, students, and administrators at North Arkansas College who participated in the case study, allowing us a closer look at ALP in action at their college. We would also like to thank Susan Gabriel, Co-Director of the Accelerated Learning Program at CCBC, for her support during the editing process.

***Please address all questions to:***

Dawn Coleman

Director, Center for Applied Research

Central Piedmont Community College

PO Box 35009

Charlotte, NC 28235

704-330-6702

www.cpcc-cfar.com

Email: Dawn.Coleman@cpcc.edu

**REPLICATING THE ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM:**

**UPDATED FINDINGS**

**STUDY OVERVIEW AND YEAR ONE 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, and the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) chose ALP as an example of a high-impact educational practice.

In 2013, with funding from the Kresge Foundation, the Center for Applied Research conducted a study designed to begin exploring ALP replication 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 year-long study was conducted in three phases: an inventory of accelerated learning programs around the country, a look at student outcome data from a sample of seven colleges, and a qualitative case study of ALP implementation at two colleges. The findings included the following:

* ALP is being implemented at colleges that are very different from CCBC in terms of geographic location, demographics, and developmental education structures.
* Colleges that implement ALP have shown improved student outcomes, including higher success rates in ENG 101.
* Most colleges start small, and scale-up has been minimal.

**YEAR TWO OVERVIEW AND FINDINGS**

Following a one-year extension of the Kresge Foundation ALP Grant, a continuation of the original study was conducted to build upon its preliminary findings. In the previous study, the three phases occurred largely in a sequence. In this updated study, the three phases took place concurrently.

* Phase 1—The national inventory was revised, and information was solicited from a larger pool of colleges.
* Phase 2—Four colleges were included: Jackson College, Lansing Community College, North Arkansas College, and Atlantic Cape Community College.
* Phase 3, a case study of ALP at North Arkansas College was conducted to explore the unique situation of a college that chose to commit completely to ALP with a full scale-up.

The full report of the continuation study is available on the ALP website (<http://alp-deved.org>).

**THE EXPANSION OF ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMS**

Responses to the national ALP inventory survey confirmed the findings from the first study that ALPs are being implemented in a variety of environments, are relatively new programs, lead to pedagogical changes, could benefit from more training, and face similar challenges. Whereas the first inventory included only 63 programs, this updated study includes information from 137 colleges. Based on the survey responses, ALPs have now expanded to at least 35 different states.

**Findings:**

* Colleges continue to struggle with logistical challenges.
* Scaling-up requires more structured training.
* ALP must continually create and maintain buy-in.
* ALP leads to rethinking of developmental education.
* Non-cognitive issues are addressed formally and informally.

**A LOOK AT STUDENT SUCCESS AT FOUR COLLEGES**

To explore student outcomes at colleges that have implemented ALP, student data were obtained from four colleges that also participated in the original study. Two of the colleges, Jackson and Lansing, closely replicated the CCBC ALP model and were part of a state-wide expansion of ALP that offered training from CCBC and opportunities to gather with other ALP colleges in the state. North Arkansas also replicated the CCBC ALP model but did so at full-scale without a pilot. Atlantic Cape represents a modification of the CCBC ALP model with its use of the Triangle model, which links developmental students from two first-year credit classes into a single ALP class, producing a class size that is larger than recommended by CCBC.

**Details**

For this phase of the study, three student cohorts were created to explore the success of ALP students:

* The Baseline Cohort consists of students who enrolled in a traditional developmental writing class in the year prior to the implementation of ALP.
* The Comparison Cohort consists of students who enrolled in a traditional developmental writing class during terms in which ALP was also offered.
* The ALP Cohort consists of students who enrolled in the co-requisite accelerated model.

**Findings:**

* Findings from this study support the findings of the previous study which indicated that colleges can replicate the CCBC ALP model, including adapting it to the Triangle model, and produce positive student outcomes.
* At three of the four colleges, the pass rates in the developmental course were higher for ALP students than for students in the baseline or comparison cohorts. At the fourth school there was only a slight difference between the two groups.
* At all four colleges, the success rate for ALP students in the first-year credit writing course was much higher than the success rates for students who began in the traditional developmental course.
* At all four colleges, ALP students performed better than their traditional developmental counterparts in the second-level credit composition course.

**A CASE STUDY OF IMPLEMENTING ALP AT FULL-SCALE**

The case study of ALP at North Arkansas (Northark) consisted of classroom observations, two student focus groups, a faculty focus group, and interviews with two administrators who could speak to the initial choice to implement ALP. Northark adopted ALP in Fall 2011 as part of a state-wide initiative to improve developmental education. Rather than piloting ALP with hand-picked faculty and students, Northark implemented the program at full-scale. Eliminating the self-selection issue removes certain confounding variables such as student motivation in taking an accelerated course and the characteristics of faculty who choose to participate in a new developmental education program. Also, studying a college that implemented at full-scale allows for the exploration of the unique challenges encountered as a result of not piloting the program.

**Findings:**

* Implementing at full-scale introduces new challenges.
* Creating buy-in is still important with full-scale implementation.
* Small class sizes facilitate one-on-one attention and student engagement.
* Implementing ALP raises questions about the importance of grammar instruction.
* ALP can look very different depending on the instructor.

**FINAL THOUGHTS: THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN IMPLEMENTING ALP**

At its roots, ALP is a structural change, and this structural change alone can have a profound impact on student success. However it is not just a structural change. It is also a paradigm shift. The goal of a traditional developmental course is to prepare students to take the college-level course while the goal of ALP is to help students pass that college-level course, so they can progress more quickly into other college-level work. The philosophy is different and leads to a change in pedagogy and a rethinking of how developmental writers can be supported in their efforts to complete college-level work.

The extent to which a college intends to scale up ALP should be considered early in the implementation phase. It has been recommended by some that colleges should start small but plan for scale-up from the beginning. However, if the end goal is full-scale implementation of ALP, it might make sense to bypass the piloting stage.

* Colleges that pilot ALP may spend much of their energy on activities that become unnecessary when the program scales up.
* There is less concern that the ALP classes won’t fill and more focus on facilities management and finding enough classroom space, especially if technology is used extensively in the ALP class.
* The message to advisors shifts from one of promoting the program as an option to one of reassuring students that they can handle two writing courses.
* More formalized training becomes important to train all faculty rather than a select few.

With every college that is studied in greater detail, we gain a deeper understanding of the myriad of ways that colleges can adopt and adapt ALP to make it their own. This will help ensure that ALP is not just another developmental education fad, but instead is successfully institutionalized at colleges all around the country.



The Center for Applied Research (CFAR) is a research and evaluation team housed at Central Piedmont Community College. CFAR is the first research center in the nation to be affiliated with a community college and as such is uniquely situated to offer insight into community college issues. The CFAR motto – “Solving real world problems through quality research” – reflects our drive to contribute positively to the success of organizations by assisting them with their research, data collection and evaluation needs. Since opening in 2004, CFAR researchers have worked with local governments, educational institutions, businesses, and non-profit, community-based, and faith based organizations to help them achieve their programmatic goals.