



# The ALP Start-Up Manual

## Table of Contents

Introduction
Our History
Building Support
Research/Data
Publicity
Funding/Costs
Faculty Development
Logistics
Scaling Up
Reading and Math
Why Does ALP Work

## **Introduction**

In this manual we have attempted to assemble as much as we can of what we have learned over the four years that we have been piloting the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at the Community College of Baltimore County. We hope that those attempting to start up a version of ALP on their campuses will find it useful.

Of course, no two campuses are exactly alike. Different schools have different students, different faculties, different politics, different organizations, different goals, different dreams, so we don't expect anyone to replicate ALP exactly the way we have at CCBC. Nevertheless, as you work to develop a version of ALP that works in your context, we hope you find some of the ideas here to be helpful.

As you develop ALP in your context, we hope you'll stay in touch and let us know what variations on our model you introduce; we might want to adopt them too.

And we hope you'll send us suggestions about this manual, which is very much a work in progress.

## Our History

As a general strategy, we recommend that you start small and grow slowly. We are a college of about 35,000 students on three main campuses. Our English department comprises close to fifty full-timers and perhaps twice that number of adjuncts. Each fall we offer around ninety sections of our upper-level developmental writing course, ENGL 052; in the spring, we offer about two thirds as many.

ALP has been incubating at CCBC since 1992. In that year, Peter Adams did a longitudinal study of the success rates for students placed in ENG 052 and found that only about 26% of them succeeded within four years, if success is defined as passing ENGL 052 and passing ENGL 101, the credit-level writing course. (This study was reported in detail in "Basic Writing Reconsidered," which appeared in the *Journal of Basic Writing* in 1993.) Shortly after that discovery, CCBC began a tumultuous decade during which three independent colleges were merged into one with a predictable amount of strain and tension. Little progress on developmental education at CCBC occurred until fall of 2006.

At this point the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, the Dean of Developmental Education, and the Department Chair of the English Department decided that it was time to look for ways to improve our developmental writing program. Their initial step was to create two coordinator positions, one for the east side campuses and one for the west. At a meeting in a Pizza Hut in fall 2006, these two coordinators, the department head, and the Dean for Developmental Education had a fairly carb-heavy lunch, but made a very promising decision: we would develop and pilot a model of developmental writing in which developmental students would be mainstreamed into ENGL 101.

During that fall, the coordinators and the English Department chair studied various models of mainstreaming around the country. We also took notice of the learning communities program which was achieving considerable success on our campuses and elsewhere around the country. We developed a proposal for a small pilot program of just five sections, which was presented to the entire English Department at its meeting in January 2007. Surprisingly, without much rancor, the department approved the project, and ALP was launched.

During that spring semester, a small committee worked on the development of several models for ALP and finally settled on the one we are currently using.

Under this model, students whose placement is in the upper-level developmental writing course are given the option of enrolling in ALP. Those who volunteer register for one of the designated sections where they are joined by seven other developmental students and twelve students whose placement is ENGL 101. In addition, the ALP students register for a section of the developmental course that meets in the class period immediately following the 101. There, the same instructor and the same eight students meet for a second hour. This class is conducted as a workshop designed to improve each student's chances of passing 101.

A few weeks later Peter Adams, the coordinator who had taken the lead on the ALP project, met with the Dean for Developmental Education and the Vice President for Instruction to discuss the project. When the VP heard that the class size in the ALP sections was going to be just eight, he abruptly said "No. There is no way the college can afford to run sections with a class size of eight."

Peter had, for many years, taught a mythology course. Sometimes, a week or so before a semester was to begin, he would receive a phone call from his department chair. "Your section of mythology," she would say, "has only eight students. Would you be willing to teach it for just two credits of load instead of three?" Having questioned this policy in the past, Peter was aware that the college had determined that with eight students, the college breaks when the instructor receives only two credits of compensation. Drawing on his knowledge of this policy, which had often irked him in the past, he offered a compromise to the VP. "What if the faculty teaching the ALP sections with just eight students received only two credits of compensation?"

After a few moments reflection, and perhaps calculation, the VP replied. "Okay. We'll pilot a few sections. But this is a *Cadillac* of a program; you'd better produce *Cadillac* results." The coordinator inquired, what would the VP consider to be "Cadillac results." "Oh, improving the success rate by twelve or fifteen percentage points, at the least." And the deal was struck.

The only problem was that now Peter would have to convince his colleagues in the English Department to accept this reduced compensation. At the May 2007 department meeting the VP made an appearance, expressed his support for the proposed pilot, and added one surprise: he'd like to see the first pilots offered in just a few months, in September of 2007. After the VP left, Peter cleared up a few details, argued that because the class size of eight would mean a considerable reduction in the number of papers to grade that the two credit compensation was reasonable, and then held his breath. The department voted to approve the pilot.

Now the problem would be to find five faculty willing to take on ALP at the compromise compensation. Exactly five volunteered, including Peter himself. One of the volunteers, Sandra Grady, had expressed considerable skepticism about the approach but agreed reluctantly to participate. We met a number of times over the summer and agreed to meet once a month during the fall and to do lots of emailing in between meetings. So, in September of 2007, the first five sections of ALP were offered, and forty students signed up.

After grades were turned in the following December, the five faculty met one last time. Peter opened the meeting by asking each instructor to give a one or two sentence summary of how ALP had worked. When it was Sandra's turn to respond, he held his breath. "Peter," she said, "You know I had reservations about the program. However, I have been teaching for more than thirty years, and this was the best teaching experience I have ever had. This is what I went into teaching for in the first place." Almost every faculty member who has taught ALP has had a similarly satisfying experience. In retrospect, I think this kind of extremely rewarding experience is the primary reason faculty want to teach ALP, even if the compensation is only two credit hours.

In spring of 2008, we had our first misstep: one section of ALP did not have enough enrollment, so we ran only four sections. In fall of 2008, we doubled the number of sections we offered to ten each semester. After a vigorous pr campaign in May and June, all the sections had filled by the first of July. We also attracted a new group of faculty who joined the veterans. We offered another ten sections in spring of 2009. At the end of our second year, we began to relax a bit about results as we had achieved a success rate of over 60% (defined as passing both the developmental course and ENGL 101) for four consecutive semesters.

In academic year, 2009-2010, we again doubled the size of the program, offering a total of forty sections enrolling approximately 320 students, with results that were slightly higher than previous years. At this point, we had twenty-nine faculty members who have taught ALP. In this 2009-2010, the Math Department also began piloting several different models of accelerated developmental math courses, and we also offered our first sections of ALP ESOL and of an on-line version of ALP.

In academic year 2010-2011, we offered forty sections of ALP each semester which accommodated 640 students during the year. In academic year 2011-2012, we are offering 80 sections each semester, which will accommodate 1280 students, which will comprise more than a third of the students placed in our upper level basic writing course.

So that's how *we* did it. The rest of this manual is full of suggestions about how *you* might do it.

## Building Support

Start small; build gradually. That may be the most important advice we can give you.

The idea of piloting ALP usually starts with a few people, maybe just one. The idea could originate with a couple of teachers of developmental writing, with a department chair, with a director of developmental education, or with several of these. At this early stage, it's a good idea to have some exploratory conversations, especially with people you think are likely to be supportive. At this stage you have several goals:

- to agree on the broad shape of what you want to do
- to identify the key steps you need to accomplish to get it done
- to develop a tentative timeline for accomplishing these steps
- to identify people whose support will be essential

We discovered early on that there are two kinds of support: permissive and enthusiastic. Permissive supporters may not be enthusiastic about your idea, but they are willing to let you give it a try. Enthusiastic supporters not only give you permission, they energetically support your efforts. Both are important. It would be great if everyone were an enthusiastic supporter, but, especially in the early days, it may be enough if you simply have enough permissive support to move ahead.

We strongly recommend that you propose this project, in the early stages, as a pilot. It is much harder (but not impossible, as we learned from a few of our colleagues) for someone to oppose a pilot. "What harm can there be in trying something out to see if it will work?" we would ask.

In our case, the initial idea started at almost the grass roots of the writing program, with the two developmental writing coordinators and the department head. In order to access the likelihood of this project being approved, we began conversations both up and down the hierarchy of the college's organization. We talked with a number of our colleagues in English, some of whom were enthusiastic supporters and ended up being among our first ALP faculty. And we talked with the Dean of Developmental Education, whom we had identified from her comments at our initial meeting as a likely supporter, but also one who knew a lot about the limitations—both financial and other—on what might be possible.

Having achieved at least permissive support from both these sources, we wrote a proposal for the English Department which outlined our thinking and our goals but which discussed several



different approaches for accomplishing those goals. I would characterize the department's reaction as permission but not enthusiasm; nevertheless, the concept of piloting some version of mainstreaming developmental writers into ENGL 101 was approved.

Having insured our department wouldn't object to such a pilot program, we set up a meeting with the Vice President for Instruction. We brought the data from our 1993 study showing the lack of success of the existing developmental course (see page 4), lots of examples of mainstreaming programs at other schools (particularly Arizona State, which had just published a report on their "Stretch Program" at its tenth year, and a lot of enthusiasm. We were lucky. The VP was fairly new on campus and had already announced that he thought developmental education was one of our primary missions, one he intended to support. I think it also helped that this was an innovation that was coming from the faculty, not something he would need to cajole us into doing. And finally, I think it was much easier for him to approve a small scale pilot, that, if unsuccessful, would disappear in a couple of years.

The big surprise for us was the extent of the VP's enthusiasm as borne out in his suggestion that we offer the first pilot sections in the fall, just three months off. I'm not sure at this point whether that was a good idea or not. I think, with more preparatory time, we could have avoided a few missteps. Most importantly, I think we would have developed a more rigorous program of faculty development. But I do believe that it is important to take advantage of opportunities when they arise, and one had just arisen, so we worked really hard for three months and succeeded in getting five sections to run in September.

Having achieved permission from our colleagues and our administration, we next needed to build support in other parts of the campus, particularly in these three areas:

- advising
- records and registration
- institutional research

Numerous meetings with these three laid the ground work for a relationship that was crucial to the success of the project. I'll discuss these further in the following sections, but it is important to point out here that the advisors are natural allies. On our campus, they have, over the years, felt considerable resistance to the English Department's system of assessment and placement. When we proposed loosening up that system and allowing developmental writers to register directly into ENGL 101, it didn't take much to gain their support for the program.

It was also important in these early years to broaden our support among our colleagues. Each semester, our policy was that any faculty who wanted to try out ALP for the first time had priority for a section over faculty who had already taught it. This way we broadened the number of enthusiastic supporters because those who taught ALP, with only one exception in four years, found the experience extremely rewarding.

A second way we broadened support was with presentations. At department meetings, meetings of program coordinators, developmental education symposia, regional conferences, and other opportunities, we would talk about the results we were having with our students and the satisfaction we were experiencing as teachers.

One caution. While few were willing to oppose a pilot of the program initially and few were willing to oppose something producing such improved success rates, sometime late in our second year and at the beginning of our third, we began to experience some resistance as people realized they were no longer dealing with a tiny pilot that didn't affect them. ALP, as it succeeded and expanded, began to appear a little threatening to some faculty who were not interested in participating. It became important for us to make clear that no one was going to be forced to teach ALP and that no students were going to be forced to take it. We had established its voluntary basis from the beginning, but as the program grew, this became a more significant issue.

We have made it clear that we do not intend for ALP to become the only option for students needing help with their writing skills. We are aware that we have a number of students who can afford to take only one course each semester; ALP requires that they take the two writing courses in the same semester. Some students have a great fear of writing courses; for them, the idea of taking two writing courses in one semester may simply be too intimidating. And we also offer a number of sections of the traditional developmental writing course in a learning community with a credit-level course like Psych 101. We wouldn't want to lose that possibility. So in fall of 2012, when we ramp up the course to something like its final form, we anticipate offering enough sections for about two thirds of our developmental students. Then we'll let them vote "with their feet," We'll offer more or fewer sections according to how many students enroll.

In this section on building support, it's also important to talk about building support among students. In fact, several schools that have attempted to replicate ALP ran into trouble on just this issue. They built support, they planned well, they recruited enthusiastic faculty, but not enough students registered, so the ALP sections were cancelled. In the first two or three semesters, we had to work hard to publicize the course and recruit students, mostly working

through our advisors. Today, we do much less of this because students hear about ALP from other students. We have built up enough support among the students who have taken the course that they are spreading the word much more effectively than we ever could.

## Research/Data

Without doubt, our most important tool in winning support for ALP among faculty, administration, and students has been the data we have produced. Often, collecting data doesn't come easily to English teachers. We deal in words and ideas, concepts not easily reduced to data. Often our only connection with data is when administrators use it to bring pressure us English teachers to "do better"? It's not surprising that English teachers sometimes ask, isn't data our enemy?

Too often it is. Too often data is used in a way that is not informed by pedagogy to evaluate our work in ways that do not reflect the important results we produce. But that possible misuse is the very reason, I would argue, that it is important for us English teachers to become interested in data, to decide what kinds of data really tell us something useful about our programs, to figure out the uses to which we can put that data for the betterment of our programs, and to figure out how to get our schools' bureaucracies to respond to our requests for data.

In fact, ALP began with data. Peter Adams was aware that some people supported his fairly traditional developmental writing program because they viewed it as a pathway to success for underprepared students. He also knew that some supported developmental writing because it allowed them to "maintain standards" in their credit-level courses by serving as a gate to keep those unqualified students out. He wanted to know just what his program was doing; was it serving more as a path to success or a gate denying entrance?

In 1992, Peter conducted a longitudinal study to answer this question, and what he learned opened his eyes. For about a third of the students who registered for his college's developmental writing course, it did ultimately lead to success, or at least success as defined as passing the credit English course. But for almost exactly two thirds of the students, the developmental course served as gate, insuring that they never succeeded in passing the credit course.

This discovery, based on longitudinal data compiled over four years, led Peter to propose mainstreaming of developmental students into the credit-level English course (Adams, "Rethinking Basic Writing," *Journal of Basic Writing*, Fall 1993). Twelve years later, the Community College of Baltimore County was ready to give mainstreaming a try, but in the intervening years, Adams had done a lot more thinking and reading and looking at other

interventions. As a result, he proposed a pilot program called ALP to the English Department in spring of 2007.

Even before the first ALP class had met in fall of 2007, we had met with a representative of our Instructional Research (IR) office to discuss what kinds of support were reasonable for us to expect. IR on most campuses has many more requests for data than they are able to fulfill. Ours is no exception, and yet we knew that doing a pilot was a waste of time if we didn't have data to evaluate the success or that pilot.

We think it is important to follow the following principles when working with your IR office:

- to establish personal contact as early as possible so they know who you are and understand what you are trying to do
- make it clear to IR that the data they produce will actually be put to use; invite them to presentations at which you use their data; ask them to present with you
- ask for data as far in advance as you can
- try to regularize your data requests; it's much easier on IR if you are asking for the same reports semester after semester (this is one we weren't very good at)

It was helpful that our VP for Instruction let the IR office know that he considered data on ALP important. It was also important that we were flexible in our requests; when we had to settle for less data than we wanted or for receiving it later than we had hoped for, we understood.

So what kinds of data are essential?

First it is important to establish a group of students taking your traditional developmental course that your ALP students will be compared with. We used all students who registered in our upper-level developmental writing course in the fall of 2006, the year before we began ALP. This cohort comprised 1023 students. In retrospect, we would have limited the group to those students who were taking the course for the first time in fall 2006 because repeaters introduce more variables.

Second, even though the number of students in ALP will be fairly small in the early years, it is a good idea to begin collecting data, nevertheless. Even the first year's data, none of which was significant because our numbers were so small, was extremely helpful in beginning to demonstrate that the pilot was working and to justify doubling it for the second year.

A second benefit to collecting data even when you are running only a few sections is that you can perfect the system for gathering data and get your IR office used to planning to run your reports at the end of each semester. We discovered several tweaks that were needed in what we asked IR for during that first year.

Finally, what data should you collect? I would recommend the following for all ALP students and all students in your comparison group:

- How many registered for the developmental course (we use data from the third week of the semester) in a particular semester or year. This data is collected for the comparison group, who take the traditional version of developmental writing, and it is also collected for the ALP group. These groups of students comprise the cohorts you are going to study.
- What percentage from each cohort passed the developmental course?
- What percentage from each cohort registered for ENGL 101 (again we use third week data)
- What percentage from each cohort passed ENGL 101
- What percentage took ENGL 102
- What percentage passed ENGL 102

That's the bare minimum. Then if you can, it would be great to look at the following:

- What percentage persisted from the semester they took developmental English to the next semester?
- What percentage persisted from the semester they took developmental English to the next year?
- What percentage has accumulated 15 credits?
- What percentage has accumulated 30 credits?
- What percentage has accumulated 45 credits?
- What percentage has received a certificate?
- What percentage has received an AA degree?
- What percentage has successfully transferred?

What makes this a little complicated is that you don't collect this data just once. You have to collect it each semester, or at least once a year. So you will be following students in each cohort for at least four years.

There is a second approach to data that you can have much more control over: surveys of your students and faculty. We do a survey of students in ALP and in a comparison group of regular developmental writing courses at the beginning and end of each semester. We started out with paper and pencil surveys, had a brief flirtation with SNAP, and have now settled down with Survey Monkey, a survey web site that is free if your survey has ten items or fewer and you have 100 or fewer responses to each survey. For \$19.95 a month, you get an unlimited number of items on each survey, and you can receive up to 1000 responses each month. We use it to evaluate the program, but many of us also use brief surveys of just a few items as classroom assessments throughout the semester. Survey Monkey also tabulates the results for you and produces cute little bar charts.

We have used these types of surveys to learn more about our students and about the effects ALP has on them.

## **Publicity**

The primary need for publicity, especially in the early years, is to attract students. We actually had to cancel one section in our second semester because it was under enrolled. Several schools that tried to implement ALP over the years have been unsuccessful for a semester or two because they couldn't attract enough students.

The problem seems to be how to get the word out. Once students hear about ALP, many of them find it a much more attractive route to follow than traditional developmental courses, but getting word of the program to them is not easy. Here's how we tackled it in the first two years.

- I met at the beginning of the registration season each semester with the advisors on each of our three campuses. This was undoubtedly the most important tactic. Once the advisors understand what ALP is, they are very supportive and enthusiastically encourage students to take it. Now that the program is well established, we don't meet face-to-face each semester, but instead I send out a letter describing the program and listing all the sections for the next semester.
- Posters and flyers in the waiting area at records and registration.
- Appearance at orientation sessions to talk about ALP.
- One of our early ALP students came up with an idea that we haven't used, but someone else might: getting tee shirts made up for ALP students that say on them, "Ask me about ALP," and asking all present and former ALP students to wear them around campus on a particular day near the beginning of registration for the next semester.

## Funding/Costs

You've all seen our PowerPoint demonstrating that ALP actually costs less per successful student than traditional developmental writing. That PowerPoint is also available on ALP web site: <http://tiny.cc/ALPccbcMD>. If you wanted to use it to argue with your administration for the cost effectiveness of ALP, just download it.

Here I want to talk about start-up costs for ALP. Although this will vary widely from campus to campus, I think it might be helpful to know what the start up of ALP at CCBC cost the institution and what we might have done if additional funds had been available.

From the start, the college recognized the need for a director, someone to make the program run, to plan ahead, and to put out fires. I took on the additional role of publicizing the program widely in an attempt to encourage its adoption at other schools, but that should not be a necessary function for most programs.

Let's start by explaining that at CCBC, we are on the semester system, and each full-time faculty member is expected to teach 15 credit hours (five three-credit courses) each semester, unless he or she is on some reassigned time (often called released time) to perform other duties, usually administrative. In 2006-7, the year when we proposed and prepared for the first semester's courses the following fall, I was on three credits of reassigned time to coordinate the developmental program on the east side of town. As we moved toward the decision to implement ALP in the spring, I started using a good deal of my time as east side coordinator simply to organize the start up of ALP.

In our first year of offering courses, 2007-8, I was awarded an additional three hours of reassigned time to direct ALP and retained the three hours for east side developmental coordinator. I continued to use much of the time when I was supposed to be observing new developmental faculty and organizing norming sessions for developmental courses for administrative duties connected with ALP.

In retrospect, I think the director needed at least six hours of reassigned time for nothing but ALP. Stealing time from another job was not a good solution, and some things simply didn't get done. In addition to reassigned time for the director of ALP, in the *first* semester, the college gave each ALP instructor, five of us, one credit of reassigned time because we were teaching a course none of us had ever taught before and we were spending a great deal of time meeting and emailing each other to try to figure out how to do it.

Aside from minor printing costs for some flyers and posters, that was it. Starting up the program was not an expensive operation for the college, but there are two areas that would have benefitted greatly from additional support: research and faculty development.

I have discussed earlier how we had to request that the IR office generate the data we needed on top of all the other requests they were handling. If the college could have afforded it, the hiring of a part-time researcher to work in the IR office on our date would have been of great assistance. In addition, that person, could have helped us design and conduct student surveys more effectively to study the effects of ALP on our students.

I'll discuss how we could have used more funding for faculty development in the next section.

## **Faculty Development**

In the area of faculty development, we haven't done enough. We try to meet three times during each semester, but finding times that work for faculty located on three different campuses isn't easy. We do conduct orientation sessions for new ALP faculty before the semester starts, but we could use much more than that.

It is, however, important to note, that ALP does not have a pedagogy. We do not use a common text or give common assignments. Some of us do more lecturing, while many encourage a more active-learning approach. The ways we conduct our classes are as diverse as the ways the English faculty teach all their courses, at least at CCBC, with common goals but a wide range of approaches.

For one semester, in fall 2008, the ten ALP instructors received one additional reassigned time credit to compensate them for developing a faculty handbook, which does begin to describe our pedagogy in ALP, but it is just a beginning. The handbook, which has just been revised and updated by Bob Miller, is available as a PDF file on the flash drive for the conference, includes a series of sections on such topics as grading, writing assignments, handling behavioral issues, error, and many more.

Now that we have found, over eight semesters, that we have raised the success rate for developmental writing students from under 30% to over 60%, we want to figure out how to raise it more . . . another 15 or 20%. We think the key to doing this is to improve our pedagogy. We are hoping to find funding to support a group of faculty to devote considerable time to this project.



One result will be a much more thorough and helpful faculty handbook, but we are also working on development of an on-line faculty development platform.

## Logistics

Here I will discuss a number of very practical matters, most of which we discovered by trial and error.

1. Getting students to register in the right numbers, especially in the 101 class where we want twelve 101-level students and 8 ALP students proved extremely difficult the first year. Then our registrar came up with a brilliant solution that has eliminated 99% of the problems. The eight ALP seats in the class and the twelve 101-level seats in the class are listed in the course schedule and in the Banner Student Information System as two separate sections with entirely different identification numbers, which we call CRNs. These two different class simply meet at the same time in the same room and have the same instructor, but they have different prerequisites and different class size limits. The 101 class size is twelve, and the ALP, is eight. So Records and Registration knows when the ALP seats are full when the 101 seats are not.
2. We gave a lot of thought to whether we should identify the ALP students in the 101 class or not. We decided that we should not, which then meant we had to schedule the developmental class that follows each 101 in a different room. Otherwise, when the 101 class ended and eight students stayed in their seats as everyone else left, it would be obvious who the ALP students were. As it turns out, the students find this to be much less of an issue than we did. Most of them self-identify after a couple of weeks of classes.
3. We know that many of the reasons that our developmental students don't succeed has nothing to do with thesis statement or comma splices. Many of our students give up because of financial problems or medical problems or marital problems or legal problems or any one of many others. To help keep these "life problems" from decimating our ALP classes, we have assembled a roster of consultants with expertise in a wide range of "life problems" and who are available to meet with our students or even to visit our classes.
4. Which developmental students should take ALP? We've given this a lot of thought and concluded that any student whose placement is our upper-level developmental course should be allowed to take ALP. This includes students whose placement score is at the very bottom of the range for placement into the upper-level developmental writing course as well as those who were initially placed in the lower-level developmental writing course and who passed it.

5. Who should teach ALP? From the beginning we decided that if ALP was going to work, it would have to work regardless of who was teaching it. So there are no restrictions. Full-timers and adjuncts, senior faculty and our newest hires. All have taught ALP, and so far we have had only one faculty member who had an unsuccessful experience. We do not think that only our strongest or most experienced teachers should teach ALP.
6. Classrooms. CCBC, like many other schools, has experienced tremendous enrollment growth in the last two years. This has placed considerable strain on classroom space. Because our ALP sections with just eight students, in most cases, meet in classrooms that can hold twenty-five or thirty, we are under some pressure to find a way to use classroom space more efficiently. In fact, it was primarily this issue that caused one of our partner schools that had planned to start ALP this year to postpone it for several years. We have come up with two solutions to this problem:
  - We have scoured the campuses for underused small rooms—conference rooms or small group study rooms. We are moving a number of eight-student ALP classes into these rooms, which turn out to be better spaces for our small groups.
  - We have a number of classrooms that have two doors, one in the front and one in the back. We are proposing, now that ALP is clearly here to stay at CCBC, that these be permanently divided in half and used for two ALP sections. No, we will not settle for those accordion folding doors.
7. Computers. Most of our ALP classes meet in computer classrooms. However, most computer classrooms are equipped with twenty or more computers. As with large classrooms, having eight students occupy a room with twenty computers is not a good use of technology. Our solution has been to equip the small rooms we are beginning to use with ten laptops. These computers are locked in a cabinet to which the instructor has the combination. In between classes they are placed back in the cabinets where their batteries are re-charged. Some of the instructors have also tried to climb into these cabinets for recharging, but so far that hasn't worked.

## Scaling Up

We said at the beginning of this manual that we recommend starting small, but we also recommended growing, albeit slowly. It is important not to allow your accelerated program to become the province of just one or two instructors and to simply stagnate . . . doing a good job with a few dozen students each year, but that's all. If ALP works on your campus, in anything

close to the percentages it has on ours, then your goal should be grow it into becoming the primary mode of developmental writing instruction.

We have found pressure on growth from two directions. From above, from our very supportive administration, we occasionally hear, "Why are we growing it so slowly?: Sometimes the metaphor of medical research is used. In medicine, when one group is given a treatment and another a placebo, after a couple of years, if the treatment group shows dramatic progress, the experiment may be called off and everyone given the treatment.

We have received the opposite pressure from others, mostly from those who have to find the classroom space and the faculty to teach all these sections. Our department head and campus coordinators, while completely supportive of ALP, sometimes wonder why we have to grow so fast.

I think we've got it about right. The exact rate of growth isn't so important, but growth is. If ALP is only implemented around the margins, then the amount of improvement in success rates will only be marginal.

## **Reading and Math**

At CCBC acceleration got its start in the writing program, but has since spread to many other areas. The Math Department has experimented with five different models. The Reading Department has a different problem. There is no credit-level reading course to mainstream students into. Instead, Reading has made great use of the learning communities approach to accomplish similar goals. Developmental reading courses are paired with credit-level courses like psychology, business, or speech. Student sign up for both courses, whose topics and readings are closely coordinated.

This year we have also begun offering an ALP version of ESOL.

## **Why Does ALP Work**

We have explored this question extensively using student surveys at the beginning and end of each semester and also using weekly faculty reports on student performance and behavior. Based on three years of research we have identified eight features of ALP that seem to be most important in improving student success:

- mainstreamed into ENGL 101
- membership in cohort
- meaningful context
- small class size
- shortening of pipeline
- exposure to strong writers
- attention to behavioral issues
- attention to outside problems

We hope you'll be able to incorporate all eight of these, with some modification into accelerated developmental education on your campus. And we hope you'll discover a couple more and let us know about them.

Improving developmental education is rewarding for those of us teaching; it is essential for our students. Stay in touch.

Peter Adams

padams2@ccbcmd.edu

<http://tiny.cc/ALPccbcMD>