Adopting and Adapting Reforms: Replicating the Accelerated Learning Program

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Annual Meeting of the National Association for Developmental Education
Innovation in Developmental Education

• National scan of reforms in developmental education suggests that innovation is widespread
  – Bootcamps, acceleration, compressed courses, learning communities, curricular changes

• However, most reform efforts are small in scale, and largely unknown outside their institutions
Challenges in Scaling Up

• Promising innovations often show only “small to modest” results when scaled
  – Variability in implementation
  – Difficult to achieve “depth” of scale (Coburn, 2003)

• “To be at scale, reforms must affect deep and consequential change in classroom practice” (p. 4).
The *Scaling Innovation* Project

- Community College Research Center and partner colleges work to scale promising reforms at new institutions
- Faculty-driven effort, with intentional focus on classroom practice
- Rather than strict fidelity, faculty work to *adapt* the reform to the institutional context
- For more information: wwwscalinginnovation.org
Scaling ALP

• The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) invites instructors to make “deep” instructional changes
  – College composition learning objectives are prioritized
  – Instruction is responsive to students’ learning needs
  – Attention to students’ affective needs

• Through collaborative inquiry, faculty participants are working to scale at depth, while also increasing breadth

• ALP implementation builds momentum for instructional improvement
Purpose of the Session

1. Introduce the Accelerated Learning Program
2. Describe efforts to scale deeply within and across colleges
3. Provide examples of how ALP invites changes to classroom practice
ALP

ENG 101

semester 1

ENG 052

semester 1
What do we do in the ALP 052 class?

The instructor for the ALP 052 section has one goal: to do everything possible to maximize the ALP students’ likelihood of success in the 101 class.

- The class is conducted as a writing workshop supporting the students as they also take ENG 101
- Answering questions left over from the 101 class
- Lots of writing, mostly of short papers that reinforce what has been discussed in the 101 class or prepare for what will be discussed in the 101 class
- Discussing ideas for the next essay in 101
- Reviewing drafts of essays the students are working on for 101
- Working on reducing the frequency and severity of error in the students’ writing
- Discussing how to succeed as a college student
- Discussing problems interfering with the students’ progress in 101
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results for students who took traditional developmental writing in fall 07, spring 08, and fall 08 as of June 2010

results for students who took ALP in fall 07, spring 08, and fall 08 as of June 2010
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did not pass ENG 052 642 31%
don’t pass ENG 101 296 14%

results for students who took ALP in fall 07, spring 08, and fall 08 as of June 2010

didn’t pass ENG 052 19 18%
didn’t pass ENG 101 26 25%
ALP Success Rates, 2007-09

- Traditional fall 2006: 27% pass ENGL 101
- ALP fall 2007: 64% pass ENGL 101
- ALP spring 2008: 59% pass ENGL 101
- ALP fall 2008: 64% pass ENGL 101
- ALP spring 2009: 62% pass ENGL 101
- ALP fall 2009: 66% pass ENGL 101
- ALP spring 2010: 65% pass ENGL 101
- ALP fall 2010: 66% pass ENGL 101

The Accelerated Learning Project
The Accelerated Learning Project is a program under which students whose initial writing placement is ENG099 (Basic Writing) are allowed to take ENG101 (Composition I) and ENG099 at the same time.

Ten students whose placement is ENG099 register for a designated section special section we’re calling ENA101. The ENA101 students meet for 4 of the 7 hours in a “regular” Composition I class; they cover ENG101 material that they must master to pass the course and get credit for Composition I. Key to ALP is that they are also joined by twelve other students who are eligible for ENG101. For an additional 3 hours, they work with the instructor on ENG099 materials, like re-taking the CUNY’s Assessment Test in Writing, a university-wide requirement. The duration of time that they spend together and with the professor creates a relationship among the students and with the instructor that seems to be key to the success of the program. The students are more motivated, they help each other when they have problems, they don’t feel the discouragement and lack of confidence that too often is the case with students who are placed in ENG099, they feel more attached to the college, and they view the instructor more as a coach than a judge.

The program began at the Community College of Baltimore County, and we are replicating their work with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University is recording the process.

LaGuardia offered 4 accelerated writing courses for the first time in Fall I 2011. The results were very good: Our pass rate for the CATW was 82%, well above the pass rate for the University, and 77% of the ENA101 students fulfilled the First-Year Composition (ENG101) requirements, nearly the same rate as ENG101 students (78%).

We look forward to continuing to document our process as instructors for developing ALP at LaGuardia.
Student Assignments

This essay assignment was created to blend the kind of essays First-Year Composition students might write with the requirements of CUNY's Assessment Test in Writing. I have taken the instructions for the CATW prompt and joined them with additional instruction that relates to the textbook we're using in class, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say*.

**Don't Blame the Eater Essay.docx**

This essay uses LaGuardia's Common Reading text *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* as its jumping off point: students are asked to research a topic from the book and add to the knowledge already in the text. You can see examples of student essays--passing, not passing, and borderline--written for this assignment in the "Student Writing" section.

**Henrietta Lacks Research Paper.doc**

For their final essay, students are asked to respond to one of several general themes from *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by agreeing or disagreeing with a statement made by someone from the text.

**Final Essay.Henrietta Lacks.doc**
Reflections

Once a month, the four pilot instructors will reflect on the experience of teaching in this particular environment.

Johnsen
Ting Man
Noel
Edna

Show Comments and Tags
Initial Reflection

My starting expectations for the combined ENA/ENG classes are that what we are undertaking will be an enormous challenge. The ENG class meets with me on Mondays and Thursdays; not all students have the maturity and discipline to carry over such a large interval, and 101 students must learn to write fully developed college-level essays that correctly include information from what I refer to as “outside” sources (other people’s ideas and finding appropriate material through research). The ENA class meanwhile must do not only what the ENG students must do but must also pass the CATW.

All placement tests are imperfect, so I expected to find a mixture in both classes, that is “A” students who could be “G” students and vice versa, which is what the diagnostic essays showed.

“Transparency” is what I planned and started on the first day. I explained that we were doing something new for our college by combining two classes, that all of them are my students as individuals who I see as themselves, not as an “A” or a “G” student. At the same time I need their help because of the records that the college requires must be recorded in different courses. To help me do that I asked that they put an “A” or a “G” after their name on anything that they hand in, which they did the first day on the diagnostics.

When we learned that the wrong SIMS number had been assigned to the “A” classes, I was glad about being up front about the newness for LaGuardia of our experiment.

The “A” class meets for three hours, which is a new experience for me, on Wednesdays. Our first Wednesday went well. A good, constructive exchange of information took place in the classroom.

In Blackboard, I enrolled all students in the G section but for now am keeping the A section only for the A students. I invited G students to join us if they wish when the A section meets (none did the first time).
All in all, my students in the Accelerated group are roughly equivalent to the 099 students I’ve had in the past. I would characterize the six students getting B’s as being more motivated and hardworking than half of the students in the larger ENG group. Overall, the ENG students were a big disappointment. They absolutely weren’t good role models for my ENA students. In the future, it might be a good idea to pair ENA students with ENG students who aren’t brand new to the college and who have a better understanding of what it takes to be successful at the college level. Having also taught an ENC101 course this semester, I have to say that they were an extremely motivated and hardworking group. They were more motivated and hardworking than either my ENA students or my ENG101 students.

I really enjoyed teaching in the three-hour block. It allowed us to do a mix of in-class writing assignments and class discussion. The only complaint I had was that we only had the computer lab for two hours and we then had to leave and go to a traditional smart classroom. (LeRoy kicked us out promptly at 12:30 every week.) This was a bit awkward and definitely broke everyone’s concentration and stride, including mine.

I would highly recommend that other faculty members teach this course. I really enjoyed having such a small number of students to work with. This is an excellent model to teach Basic Writing, and the only thing that I would change is expecting everyone to read and understand every assignment from the very beginning. Some of my expectations early on were apparently too high.
Reflections

Ting Man's Reflections

FIRST REFLECTION: Week 1

I did not have any specific expectations for ENA101 when I requested the course. I just wanted to give the pilot a try. That said, I had heard good things about the pilot: better interaction with students and better outcome. If I had expected anything, that would be these advantages.

Before this pilot, I have had years of experience teaching another hybrid course, ENC101. This course is not easy to teach because it combines regular 101 with CATW (or ACT in the past). And it's not easy because all students are freshmen and there are not many mature role model in class. So sometimes, I may have to deal with disciplinary problems.

This year, I am going to teaching both the pilot and ENC101. One of the questions I have in mind would be What are the differences between ENG/A101 and ENC101? ENC101 was a successful pilot—the past rates are good for both CATW (or ACT) and the regular 101. I have to see if the new pilot will do more magic.

In terms of creating the ENG/A101 syllabus, I followed my previous regular 101 or ENC101 syllabi. I devote the ENA time almost entirely to CATW with some support for ENG101. In terms of affective support, I'll see how the class goes. I think that rapport will develop as we work hard to meet tangible goals such as passing the CATW and meeting the regular 101 requirements.

In the past I have had many teaching-related seminar experiences, having led some and having taken part in some. Not all of those seminars were useful to me. For some, I found it time-consuming and whatever I got out of the seminar was not worth the time I spent. For the pilot, there'll be meetings. I hope I will get something useful out of those.

SECOND REFLECTION: Week 6

So far I've enjoyed teaching ENG/ENA101. The small class size has led to a really pleasant experience. But I did not modify too much of my pedagogy. In the ENA class, I sometimes found myself speaking too much probably I did not put the 10 people into smaller groups. I used circle like a seminar. But in this setting, I think I tend to speak too much and become too dominant. I'll try something new later.
FOURTH REFLECTION: Week 12

I think the ENA model worked quite well. I only lost one student very early in the semester for reasons I didn’t know. All of the nine other students passed both the CATW and the 101 requirements with grades ranging from A to C.

I asked students for their anonymous feedback at the end of the semester. Two or three found the class boring, particularly the 3 hour block. One said that morning class is “most challenging of all. I hated it but it has show me a great deal of improvement.” One said that block “is a little bit longer that what it should be,” making students feel sleepy and bored.” As their professor, I also found the three hour block challenging to teach. This is a bit surprising because I’ve been teaching three hour blocks for ENC101 and I seldom had any problem. I think the reason is most of my three hour class in the past took place in the PC lab so it was easier to give them hands-on assignments to do. This ENA class took place in a classroom: the three hours can really be boring even for me. So next Spring and Fall, I’ve requested the one and two hour blocks for two days. And the two hour block takes place in the PC lab for hands-on work.

I began the semester with a question about the differences between ENC and ENA. I have to say I liked the ENC class more than the ENA probably because of different student chemistry. The ENC was a more lively group and the ENA was very quiet except one student. Actually for the ENC class, I couldn’t give them small-group discussion: they would go crazy. When I led whole-class discussions, I had more than enough students raising their hands, responding to me and to one another. For ENA, in both small and large group settings, all I got was a silent room. So maybe it was student chemistry that contributed to the boredom enveloping the 3 hour block.

For ENC, I taught to the least common denominator. Everything was tailored to the large group, and I paid scant attention to individual differences particularly at the beginning of the semester when I had 28 students. But ENA was different. The individual stood out much faster. I had individual conferences with them during the 3 hour block in the first or second week--something that was impossible in ENC until some students dropped out and later in the semester.

That may explain why even though ENA students came in with lower scores in both reading and writing than their ENC counterparts, they had a lower dropout rate and a higher pass rate in both CATW and the 101 requirements. But this is only true for the two sections I taught. We need to look at the overall grade report for this semester to find out.

In terms of individual attention, I also wanted to add that I’ve compiled a spreadsheet charting ENA students’ placement writing and reading test scores and their subsequent progress during the semester. I think there’s a rather clear correlation between the pre-semester test scores and their subsequent progress. I asked the Department to provide this crucial information to all instructors teaching any course involving CATW. This correlation makes a good topic for further research.

All in all, ENA calls for a different pedagogy from ENC. For LaGuardia, I think there’s room to have both types of bridge courses serving our students. Will see.
After the CATW

I gave my ENA students back the results of the midterm CATW taken 2 1/2 weeks ago. I asked if they wanted to be given the results in private, but they all said no, they wanted the results as fast as possible. Before I gave them the sheet of paper that contains the scores for each section, we talked about what it would mean for our class that only some of the students would need to continue practicing for the CATW. They nodded, looked at the course schedule dutifully and waited for me to just give them the paper!

Overall the results for the class were wonderful and surprising. I wrote last month about my worries that few of my students would pass the exam. I'd just returned a practice exam, and they were not pretty. It was a delightful surprise, then, that 7 of the 9 students passed the CATW this time around. That's around 77%. Not too shabby.

After I passed out all the results to eight students today (one student was absent), they asked about the other classes, and I told them that all the classes had done well, and our class had one of the higher pass rates. They immediately attributed our pass rate to the book we use, *They Say/I Say* by Graff and Birkenstein. That was interesting to me that they really see the value of the textbook. I don't know that I completely agree, but I did choose the text because it seems to break things down very simply for students. In any case, not one of the students seemed to think the results had much to do with me; and I agree.

As we move forward in the semester, I will continue to work with the 2 students on passing the CATW. One of the students writes B+/A- essays when she has enough time to make sure she really understands a topic and to iron out some ESL issues. The other student writes quite well but struggles with reading comprehension, interconnected with attention deficit. I'm not sure how to meet their specific needs, but I will say it seems much less daunting to meet the needs of TWO struggling Basic Writers than a classroom of 24 or more.

In the two weeks since we re-took the midterm CATW, when we didn't have to focus on that particular exam, I was able to re-enforce skills and ideas we'd covered as part of the larger G 101 class. This is the way I did it: the day after the exam, I asked students to freewrite about where they were in the class, what was confusing, what they needed help with, etc. I used what they said to construct the next few days of class time, both with them, and with their G 101 counterparts. We reviewed outlines, works cited pages, and the assigned reading. In one class, I had the 9 students sit around in a circle and tell me the research question they were working on and I gave each one feedback right there. They all left with both a research question and a hypothesis about the answer. And I left with a better understanding of what all the students, both ENA and ENG 101, needed to better understand the assignment I'd given them (specifically that the research they do for this assignment must ADD to what Skloot wrote, and she wrote a whole lot!).

All in all, I really felt like those two weeks were really productive for my students because we could all be very specific and detailed with each other. Students offered one another suggestions about how to shape their topics, and there was a general air of collaborativeness. I wish I had more time with students for that.
COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND ON-LEVEL ALP ENGLISH

- Ideally suited for ALP because of the various skill levels of the students.
- The bonding that naturally happens in the smaller ALP course carries over into the on-level course because...
  - Students build positive interdependency.
  - Students are more likely to work together outside of class.
  - Students are taught the value of teamwork.
Base groups - formed within the first week of class; around three students to a group, as heterogeneous as possible; used for day-to-day activities, such as

- Attendance
- Discussing/reviewing homework
- Quick study group

Base groups tend to work together outside of class, stay in close contact with one another, and even sign up for the same classes next semester!
FORMAL AND INFORMAL GROUPS

- **Formal groups**
  - Use for specific assignments
  - Form by assignment
  - Change from assignment to assignment

- **Informal groups**
  - Not as much pre-planning
  - Spur of the moment activities
  - Vary in size and composition
## Data: Pass Rates

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<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Spring 2010</th>
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<td><strong>English 03</strong></td>
<td>ALP 90%</td>
<td>ALP 74%</td>
<td>ALP 76%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Non-ALP 66%</td>
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<td><strong>English 111</strong></td>
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<td>ALP 76%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-ALP 85%</td>
<td>Non-ALP 77%</td>
<td>Non-ALP 80%</td>
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</tbody>
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SCALING UP

- Fall of 2009:
  - ENG 111/03: 1 section
- Spring of 2010:
  - ENG 111/03: 2 sections
- Fall of 2010:
  - ENG 111/03: 2 sections
- Spring 2011:
  - ENG 111/03: 3 sections
  - ENG 131/03: 2 sections
- Fall 2011:
  - ENG 111/03: 5 sections
  - ENG 131/03: 1 section
- Spring 2012:
  - ENG 111/03: 5 sections
  - ENG 131/04: 3 sections
For more information:

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