

Accelerated Learning Program

Through the Beacon Grant, we have been able to develop a version of Baltimore County's ALP here at Mountwest Community and Technical College. In 2012 a small group of faculty from attended an ALP conference at the Community College of Baltimore County in hopes to find a solution to our growing retention problem. There, we found one solution: the Accelerated Learning Program.

Peter Adams designed the ALP specifically to address one type of student. Adams found that students were sometimes succeeding in developmental courses but, for a host of reasons, were never completing a 100-level college course. Peter Adams wanted to focus on keeping those students who were succeeding but somehow disappearing. He designed the ALP to take away an "exit point." By enrolling students in a developmental English course and a 100-level English course in the same semester, ALP allows students to learn basic grammar and essay structure while simultaneously applying those skills to their research papers.

At Mountwest, I have tried to keep our ALP model as close to the Baltimore model as possible. One instructor teaches both courses. The 100-level English course is a standard, research writing course. It will be filled with 20 students: 10 ALP students and 10 non-ALP students. The 10 non-ALP students are unaware of the Accelerated Learning Program. They are enrolled in a normal 100-level English course. The 10 ALP students are also enrolled as a co-requisite into a developmental English course. On the same day, the 100-level course meets before the developmental course. The two courses meet in separate rooms, and the ALP students will receive a separate grade for each course. While the 100-level English course looks no different than if a colleague were teaching it, the developmental English course (in the ALP model) is geared specifically for ALP students to succeed in the 100-level English class. For each formal essay in English 100, the ALP student would have a rough draft and/or outline due in English 095. In addition to these writing assignments, the instructor could spend time on building a stronger grammar foundation while also spending extra one-on-one time with the developmental students. The developmental course looks very much like a supplemental course rather than a prerequisite.

Mountwest Community and Technical College is one of 222 schools across the country practicing the Accelerated Learning Program. Using this model and Peter Adam's idea of eliminating exit points, we have seen many developmental students not only pass but succeed in our English composition course in their first college semester. ALP is not the only solution to retention problems, but it has proven to be one, very effective solution. Nearly every semester since Fall 2012, Mountwest has practiced at least one section of the ALP model. Mountwest's model of the Accelerated Learning Program continues to grow and adapt to our student's needs while providing great results each semester.