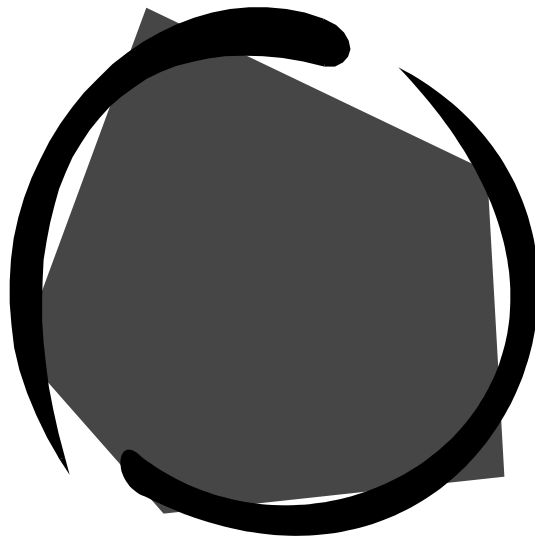


**The Accelerated Learning Cycle:
Are You Ready to Learn? Am I Ready to Lead?"**

Karen Kinard, Tallahassee Community College

Mary Parker, Austin Community College

USCOTS 2007 Breakout Session



What is Accelerated Learning?

Accelerated Learning is a method that begins with the premise that each person is capable of much, much more than they think is possible. AL assumes that our own limiting beliefs about ourselves, our abilities and learning itself often get in the way of our learning potential. In an AL classroom, the facilitator creates multiple opportunities for individual and group experiences that enable participants to move beyond those limiting beliefs and tap into their inner wisdom, their hidden potential. The facilitator, the learning environment and the design of the learning process are key determining factors in the success of learning and the development of the capacity to learn.



The Facilitator

AL teachers or trainers act at all times as facilitators of learning. They create and support positive group dynamics and give attention to individuals and their needs. IAL places great importance on the personal development of the AL facilitator to become the kind of person who can create a learning space in which each person thrives. AL facilitators are comfortable with ambiguity, and can “read” the group and make good decisions about what is important at any given time in the learning process. They are people who are open to learning potential, and who open up possibilities. They challenge, coach, inspire and guide.

AL facilitators change roles easily to support learning. They can be actors/actresses on stage, great story-tellers and entertainers, and then, as easily take a step back and hand over the stage to the learners, support them in discovering their own answers, guide them in developing new questions and help them mastering the learning through experimentation and carefully orchestrated practice sessions.

To guide the learning process successfully, AL facilitators are trained to see, hear, and feel more of what is happening in the group. They develop sensory acuity or heightened observation skills and can use language and positive suggestion to support learning and development. In fact, the AL facilitator is so important that the training to become an IAL certified facilitator places equal importance on personal mastery and growth and to the development of the skills to use the tools of AL effectively.



The Learning Environment

The facilitator creates and maintains a safe and stimulating learning environment. In an AL learning program, the space looks and feels different than in more traditional classrooms. Lighting, seating arrangements, wall space, and the materials used are all chosen or designed to create an environment that is aesthetically pleasing, interaction rich, and appealing to all learning styles. Participants see the important content on the walls. Music supports learning and retention. Movement and interaction with one another and the content is encouraged. The physical and emotional environment provide safety and invite learners to experiment and grow.



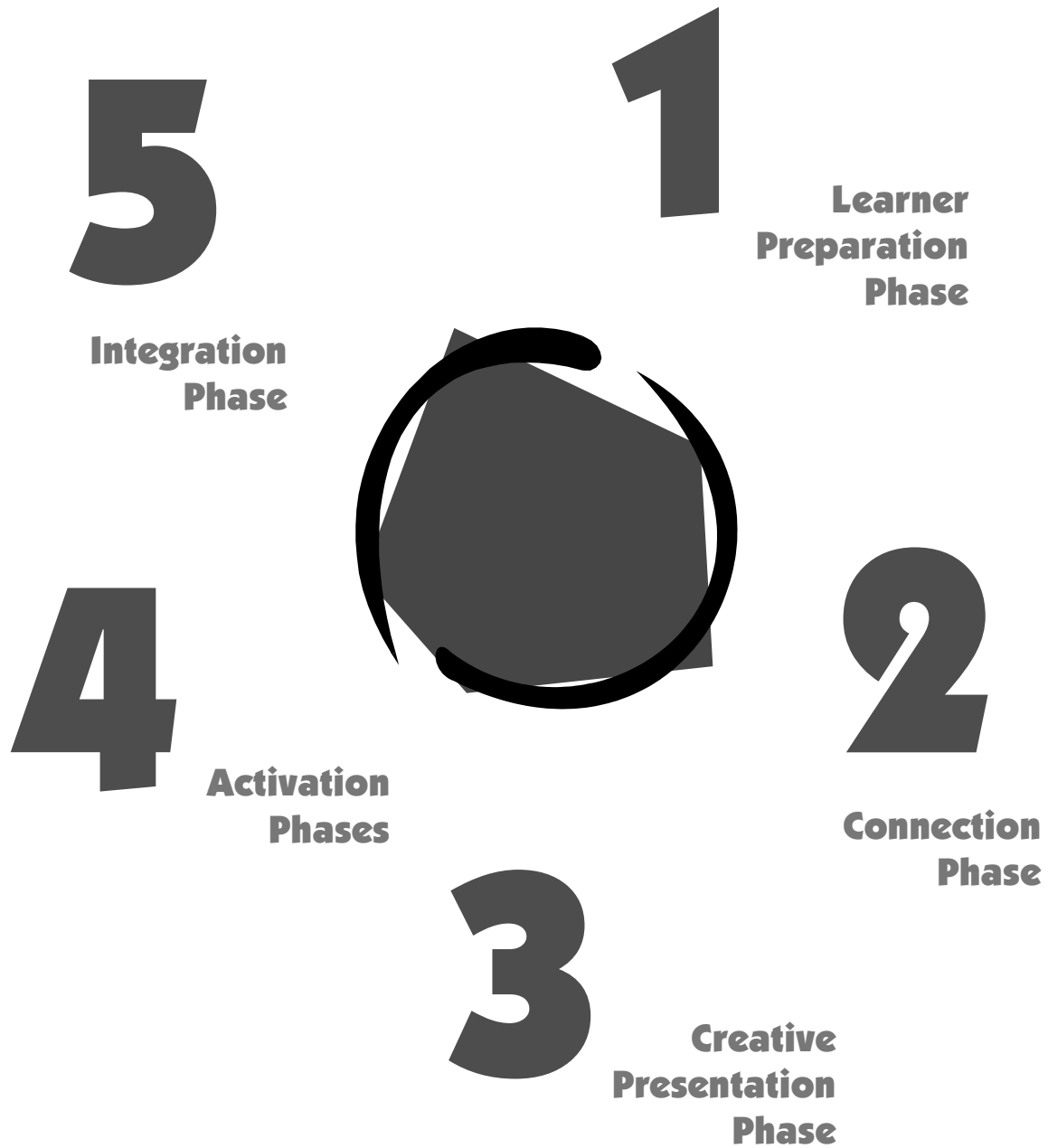
The Learning Design

Accelerated Learning design appeals to all learning and processing styles. The AL cycle offers a template to design and facilitate that provides a framework for success. It enables facilitators to adjust their design to accommodate what is happening in the learning environment. The Accelerated Learning design is an open system that provides enough of the right kind of structure to give guidance and ensure success time and time again. You will find many different AL cycles using various names for the key elements. All of them include the preparation of the learner for the learning, activities that motivate and engage learners emotionally and mentally, the teaching of new content or processes in a way that involves learners through simulations, experiments, concert readings or other creative presentation forms. In the practice phases, you will find game-like activities that support participants in mastering the material from more facilitator supported to more learner-directed. To bring closure to the learning, you will find activities to allow learners to integrate the learning into their lives, to reflect on the learning and its relevance to them, and to celebrate success.

In the preparation stages, the AL design involves finding out what the limiting beliefs or suggestions of learners might be, and then carefully creating activities and an environment that de-suggests or helps learner move beyond their limiting mental models and expand their perspectives. During the learning process, the aware facilitator revises the design as needed, and creates possibilities to support the creation of new and empowering beliefs and mindsets.



The Accelerated Learning Cycle



Learner Preparation Phase

Pework/Meaningful Assignments

Purpose:

To engage learners minds and hearts before they come to the learning. To make learning “real”.

How?

A review of the internal website and key organization-wide themes in preparation for a “world café” discussion and a group presentation to key stakeholders (played by the facilitators) builds group cohesion, starts the graduates thinking prior to the program and encourages personal accountability. They now begin with a powerful message - it isn't about just what you know, but about how you demonstrate customer and stakeholder focus. The pre-work becomes a model for the learning itself.

Welcoming / Centering

Purpose:

- To create a safe, positive learning environment (welcoming).
- To prepare the learners to “be present” or centered and able to focus on the learning. Most people’s minds are elsewhere when they come to any learning program. Activities at the beginning of each day help learners connect to the learning.

How?

The room design and set-up, the overview of the program, and the framing of each learning segment creates the right environment for deep learning. (Practice field and buffet metaphor), a demonstration of the intentionality of everything in the program and the appreciation of diversity.

An activity at the beginning to build community, one each morning to reconnect with one another, the prior day’s learning and focus the group on the upcoming learning: (Pair share, concentric circles of conversation, etc).

Connection Phase

Purpose:

Although everything should be motivating, this particular phase in the cycle is part of a conscious design that allows people to *connect* with the learning material at many levels: intellectual, emotional, and at times physical. It makes the most “boring” of subjects come to life. The Connection Phase is also the part of the design that taps into the inner knowing or wisdom of the learner, begins to overcome limiting beliefs and creates an “emotional hook” as some people call it.

How?

Some concrete examples:

- Gallery Tour (allow people to walk around and invite each person to note what is important to him/her)
- Guided Imageries (A Leader who Inspired Me, my vision for the future)
- Simulations (to show how quickly we get into a win/lose mindset, to demonstrate team work and learn from it)
- Choose a Card (Find a picture card that demonstrates change, creativity, etc)
Free associate to “Creativity is...”

Creative Presentation Phase

Purpose:

To present new material or allow learners to discover and develop the new information (content/process) in creative, interactive, memorable ways.

How?

There are various ways of “presenting” content: Interactive lecture with props, simulation of reality (presentation to stakeholders), world café, DVD to demonstrate best practices of creativity and innovation), model on floor, model on flipcharts, cartoons that illustrate systems thinking principles, etc).

Activation Phases

Purpose:

In the first Activation Phase, learners begin to use the new material in controlled and structured activities (games, interactive activities, etc are often used).

How?

Short activities in pairs or teams, small group or whole group activities that are fun, meaningful and the best use of learner’s time make up Activation One.

Purpose:

As learner competency increases, the facilitator hands off the baton to the learners and they practice using the material in new, creative and individualized ways, demonstrating more and more mastery.

How?

Role play, skill practice using individual real situations, larger simulations, various practice sessions requiring a higher skill level, application to real situations, synthesis of materials in different ways are typical of Activation Two (Developing concrete actions to support creativity and innovation in the organization, enterprise first attitudes and behaviours, etc, practice in the teams of teamwork and reflection and integration of new learning).

Purpose:

The final Activation Phase is a transfer to situations that simulate the reality of the learner and promote deeper levels of learning and understanding. They move the learner from knowing to doing and a high level of mastery.

How?

Learners use the material in individual and meaningful ways, play with it, own it and develop a high level of mastery of the concepts and processes.

Integration Phase

Purpose:

To bring a module, a day, or the program itself to a close. To prepare learners to transfer the learning to their lives. To bring closure and a sense of accomplishment and empowerment to a group and individuals at the end of a program.

How?

Creation of Leadership Message, After Action Review of Senior Leader Engagement session, closing each day that includes reflection on the day and feedback to one another and facilitators in a variety of ways on the learning with suggestions for enhancements.



The 10 Elements of AL

Fundamentally, the concept of Accelerated Learning incorporates hands on experiences with positive reinforcement of the natural learning abilities of every individual. It's a system derived from detailed studies of the human mind and how it acquires knowledge, with consideration for Dr. Lozanov's conclusions that learning is enhanced when tension, stress, and preconceptions are removed. Accelerated Learning enables learners to move beyond limiting beliefs about themselves and what is possible, and tap into the potential they carry inside.

Lozanov believed that powerful learning must engage both the analytical brain and the emotional brain, along with both states of mind, the conscious and the unconscious. Based on these principles, IAL focuses on the following ten elements as key to successful Accelerated Learning facilitation and program design.

Knowledge about the Human Brain

Scientific knowledge and understanding of the brain supports the design of effective teaching and learning experiences. As we learn more about how the brain functions, and how that knowledge translates to classroom practices, the Accelerated Learning model adapts to integrate what we know about learning and what we do in the learning environment to support learning.

Emotional State

Without emotion, there is no learning. Our emotions powerfully influence the learning process and either hinder or enhance retention. When emotions are positive, we are open to new possibilities, our total mental capacity is available for learning, We are ready to move into new experiences. Accelerated Learning creates and maintains an environment in which each person is involved in the learning, engaged in what is happening and always feels empowered and resourceful.

The Learning Environment

AL takes into consideration every aspect of the learning environment that can positively or negatively affect the experience, such as lighting, temperature, acoustics, seat arrangement, color, décor, as well as the emotional and mental qualities of the environment. AL creates and maintains a fun, engaging, and rewarding environment that invites learners to experiment, discover and learn.

The Role of Music and the Arts

Because music creates emotional engagement and memorability, it is a valuable, and often overlooked, educational tool. It can influence the entire pace, mood and energy level of the learning experience. Art in its various forms facilitates self-understanding, emotional involvement and the application of knowledge to real life situations. Research shows that the arts – everything from storytelling to drama, to the visual arts enhances learning and speaks to us at both the conscious and subconscious level. AL uses all of the Arts to promote the development of the entire person and make learning inspiring and transformational.

Personal Motivation

The desire to continue learning is based on self-confidence, intrinsic motivation, and personal expectations. Accelerated Learning supports the intrinsic motivation of the learner as opposed to extrinsic awards like grade and prizes. In the AL classroom, learning is shared, cooperation stressed, and the learning community and group cohesion supports each individual in becoming the best they can be. By enabling learners to tap into their innermost desires, goals and vision, they naturally become engaged learners.

Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles

The theory of multiple intelligences and the many theories of individual learning and processing styles are an integral part of Accelerated Learning program design. IAL subscribes to Howard Gardner's perspective. . . "to respect the many differences among people, the multiple variations in the ways that they learn, the several modes by which they can be assessed, and the almost infinite number of ways in which they can leave a mark on the world."

Imagination/Metaphors

Imaginative games and activities enrich verbal and written information with physical movement, color, depth, and positive emotions. Visualization skills enhance spelling, memory, creativity, and other abilities, and metaphors bring stronger meaning to any subject. AL uses ritual, metaphor, similies and analogies in various forms to support learning and make it more memorable.

Suggestion/De-Suggestion

Learners come into learning with many pre-conceptions about themselves, the world, the subject matter and learning. Personal suggestions, often called beliefs or mental models, sometimes enhance our ability to learn and often limit what is possible. In Accelerated Learning, the facilitator pays attention to each individual and supports him or her in moving beyond limitations. The AL facilitator designs the program, uses both verbal and non-verbal communication carefully and intentionally to be a supporter of learning and not an added barrier. What is not spoken may often be conveyed by body language, attitude, choice of words and thinly veiled expectations. Though subtle, positive suggestions, aided by a rich variety of learning tasks, music, movement and exercise, can create a positive mental state and raise energy levels and attentiveness.

Team Learning and Cooperation

Cooperative learning activities allow participants of all abilities to benefit as mentors and learners, develop interpersonal and time-management skills, and more fully develop their creative talents. The sharing of learning reinforces individual learning and group results.

Improvement and Results

Learning expectations should be clearly defined and shared with participants and constituents so that:

- learners are able to comprehend the relevance of the subject matter to their lives and
- facilitators of learning can measure progress and generate objective data that can be used to continuously improve and add value to planning, assessment, and process improvement.



International Alliance for Learning

The International Alliance for Learning is a non-profit professional membership organization for Accelerated Learning practitioners and others who wish to improve the quality of learning for all. The association provides resources, certification, and training and development opportunities for teachers, trainers, and facilitators.

IAL's vision of a world where lifelong learning, joy and esteem are honored as universal human capabilities naturally leads the organization to constantly search for better ways to facilitate the learning process. IAL offers members and colleagues a network of educators and corporate trainers with innovative practices. We support individuals and organizations in creating learning programs that make a difference in the lives of the learners at home and at work.

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