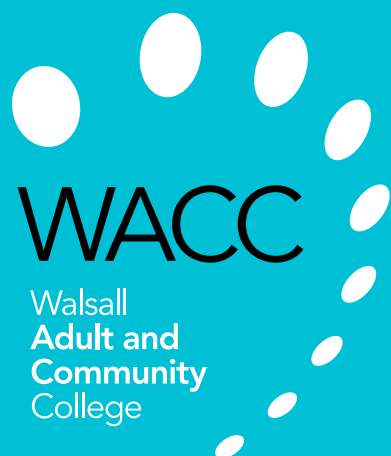




Teaching Excellence = Sustainable Teaching

How Walsall Adult and Community College
used accelerated learning to improve their
English for Speakers of Other Languages provision

March 2013



Foreword

welcome

Welcome to the WACC e-book on accelerated learning as sustainable practice. I do hope you find something of interest with practical use with your own staff and learners in your organisation.

WACC has been involved in education for sustainable development since 2010 and our learning curve has been steep and rich.

We are keen to share our learning freely with the learning sector and to encourage discussions into how sustainability can be integrated within the sector's education and business practice.

This e-book is freely available to you and if you would find it helpful to have additional guidance from WACC staff we are more than happy to support you by arrangement.

LSIS support has allowed us to explore how the accelerated learning, and MESSAGE model, can enable more sustainable learning to take place in adult and vocational learning programmes. This e-book focuses on ESOL, but the principles are transferable to any curriculum sector.

“(I was most surprised that) the learners’ engagement in the class and the whole concept has given me motivation to make my own resources and spend more time on my planning.”



We are very pleased with what we have learned and the outcomes of this project. We are confident the accelerated learning model reflects the principles of sustainability as it enables the following:

- More engagement of learners as a natural resource with learners as active participants in and influencers of learning.
- More teaching teams engaged in solving learning problems by generating and sharing re-usable resources.
- More learning methods that increase the pace and retention of learning, allowing learners to learn and retain more learning in class and at home.
- Staff feeling they have greater control over the teaching and learning environment and more freedom to create and innovate in their lessons.
- More inspiration, joy and confidence about the learning environment amongst both teachers and learners.

If you have any further interest in support for using this model or any other aspect of sustainability in learning and business practice please do get in touch.

Maria Gilling
College Principal WACC



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Introduction

Walsall Adult and Community College (WACC) was built on the concept of sustainability. It's in our DNA and the foundation of everything we do. We don't teach it as a separate subject, but embed it into all of our provision.

We believe that excellent teaching is sustainable teaching and we hope we have gone some way to proving it by gaining Ofsted Outstanding, with our embedding of sustainability cited as being one of the main factors in this achievement.

"An exemplary focus on sustainability has benefited learners, the college and the community through very good use of finance and resources".

Ofsted Report January 2013

Before gaining our Outstanding grade we wanted to move our teaching grade from good to outstanding within our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. This led us to undertake a pilot to use accelerated learning techniques in our ESOL provision and link these techniques explicitly with sustainability.

The project was the second we have developed, having tested similar techniques in our mathematics provision during 2011 with amazing results - every single one of the learners improved by one level and one learner improved by two. In the control group all learners showed improvement, but only one improved by one level.

"I have enjoyed using the Accelerated Learning programme. It's been very engaging, informative and the students... you've only got to look at their faces."



[Play video](#)

In addition, during this project Ofsted inspectors noted the enthusiasm of the tutors and buzz in the classes which were being taught using accelerated learning techniques, and all lessons were rated either grade one or two.

While it is too early to assess the learning outcomes of the ESOL project, we know from interviews with tutors and learners that there is increased enthusiasm for the lessons, that participation has increased, that the learners find the lessons more relevant to their everyday lives and that there is the intention to continue to use these techniques beyond the end of the project.

The information we have included in this e-handbook is intended to help curriculum leaders, tutors and management teams integrate both accelerated learning and sustainability into their curriculums. Our project wasn't perfect, so we have included both the good bits and the things we'd do differently if we had our time again.

We'd love to hear what you think about the e-handbook and project. Please email us with any thoughts at info@wacc.ac.uk

About the project

Teaching Excellence = Sustainable Teaching was the name of a project we undertook in our ESOL provision from September 2012 to March 2013. It was supported by the Learning Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) Stepping Up Into Sustainability fund.

This project focused on developing sustainable teaching and learning approaches and curriculum content specifically around our ESOL provision so that the approaches and learning could be promoted throughout WACC and the sector.



Many institutions have attempted to embed sustainability within the curriculum. This has often taken the form of additional specific modules on the subject matter of sustainability or related content (energy, waste, water for example). However, we believe a truly sustainable curriculum has a focus on teaching excellence, and teaching excellence cannot be separated from sustainable teaching, which ultimately enhances student outcomes, educational attainment and retention.

To demonstrate this philosophy the project took the concept of accelerated learning and demonstrated that through the delivery of excellent teaching and learning we contributed to sustainability using these advanced teaching and learning techniques.

“The more practical things we do with learners, the better it is. They come back to the next lesson and they’re still talking about it, which is, I think, great.”

Accelerated Learning has many inherent sustainability features, which we aimed to explore further and emphasise as part of this project. These include:

- A greater use of technology
- Resource efficiencies in terms of re-usable resources
- Reduced reliance on paper-based materials
- The use of systems-based approaches – in our case the MESSAGE model – and mind mapping techniques which are often cited as sustainability skills
- Real world teaching for ESOL
- Experiential or role play activities
- Group activities and student interaction
- Introduce brain breaks every 45 minutes

For the learner, the benefits of excellent teaching are obvious. But the sustainability link is often overlooked.

Sustainability for the learner means an increased level of competence and confidence, which leads to increased opportunities for work and greater economic prospects. This is even more apparent in our ESOL project as the lessons started to have a greater focus on real world situations.

What we did:

- Training for The Inspiring Learning Coaches – first a one-day introductory course, then six further sessions which qualified them as accelerated learning coaches
- Training for ESOL tutors delivered by the Inspiring Learning Coaches
- Resource preparation sessions were timetabled so tutors were ready to start using accelerated learning
- Benchmarking survey
- Start of using accelerated learning in ESOL lessons
- Follow-up survey

About confidence

“The learners at the end of the lesson seem to be happier... They stay longer in the classroom even after the class has finished gaining more information from the displays and leaflets used in the lessons. Learners’ retention of knowledge has improved, they easily make links themselves now from previous learning, and this makes it quicker when recapping at the beginning of next session.”

We didn’t invent accelerated learning, we simply applied it. There is a wealth of resources about accelerated learning available on the Internet and a multitude of different techniques for delivering it.

The techniques ensure that all learning styles are considered and included in the learning session. Great importance is placed on stimulating the five senses, creating a positive environment, which maximises the chances of knowledge being retained. And it is this that goes to the core of the link between accelerated learning and sustainability – the learner learns faster and deeper, which improves recall. This means that both the learning itself is sustainable, but also that the provision of the courses is sustainable for the institution delivering them.

When looking at sustainability from a social, economic and environmental point of view, the links to accelerated learning are clear:

Social

- The learner gets more from the learning, is more readily able to remember it and therefore can easily apply it
- A greater ownership of the learning, both by the students and the tutors
- Increased staff confidence in their teaching
- A greater awareness of techniques which can be used throughout life and are key sustainability skills (e.g. systems approaches and mind mapping)
- The approaches create a positive buzz throughout the institution amongst staff and students
- There is greater interactivity and variety of lessons, creating more opportunity to integrate sustainability



Economic

- Being better qualified leads to a greater chance of employment and the potential for greater pay
- Courses have high success rates, which attracts more learners and ensures the college’s economic future is secure
- Increased attainment levels and student retention
- Reduction in cost of consumables

Environmental

- Many accelerated learning resources can be reused in multiple ways – bells and hats – both favourites at WACC – are examples. Greater emphasis on responsible resourcing such as sourcing items locally, fair trade products and using other courses within the college to make resources. At WACC the Learning For Living students made cakes for us for the tutor accelerated learning training
- Laminating resources makes them reusable, but also shares the burden of creating and re-creating them among the whole tutor pool instead of it falling on one tutor

Our Inspiring Learning Zone



We already had an Inspiring Learning team before starting this project, as well as a dedicated space for tutors to come for inspiration and support – our Inspiring Learning Zone.

The Inspiring Learning Zone is a hub for training tutors, a place of inspiration and for sharing ideas. It is a safe space for tutors to discuss any concerns relating to their teaching, either with a member of the Inspiring Learning team, or with other tutors.

Our Inspiring Learning team has demonstrated its efficacy as our most recent Ofsted inspection raised our teaching and learning rating from 3 to 1 in just one cycle, something of which we're immensely proud. While this wasn't solely down to the presence of the Inspiring Learning Zone, having both the staff and the dedicated room demonstrates our commitment to sustainably and continuously developing excellent teaching.



commitment

About sustainability

[Play video](#)

“Learners become more active and tap into the lesson automatically. They take charge of their own learning and I act as a facilitator.”



WACC has a long standing commitment to sustainability; it is evident in all that we do. However the approach we take is an ambitious one. It builds on the work of Jimmy Brannigan, WACC's sustainability advisor (www.esdconsulting.co.uk), and is based around the NETpositive model he developed.

The NETpositive concept recognises that a sustainable business and an excellent business are one and the same. If we accept this, then the focus of a sustainability/business strategy is to enhance value to customers, stakeholders and society whilst securing and growing the business financially. Alongside this commitment, the business manages its positive and negative impacts on the environment and society in a balanced manner.

While efficiency and reducing the negative impacts on the environment is a fundamental component of any meaningful approach to sustainability, we also believe that a focus upon truly understanding and enhancing the **positive** impacts of an organisation's activity is a far more innovative endeavour, and is more likely to provide effective responses to the challenges we all face.

Put simply, a NETpositive approach helps develop a strategic approach that pays as much attention to enhancing the positive impacts of an organisation's contribution to society, as it does to reducing the negative impacts of its activity.

“It really supported me to get to know the students better, to know that they're all learning at their own level and that they're all getting something out of it.”

Accelerated Learning in action

Many teachers and tutors have been using elements of accelerated learning for some time, whether they are aware of it or not.

We chose to use a method which uses the acronym MESSAGE to help tutors plan and deliver their lessons.

The following sections and their associated videos explain the MESSAGE model as we applied it. We are by no means the experts though, so at the end of this handbook we've included some links to more reading about accelerated learning and the MESSAGE model for you to explore.



"I went in (to the accelerated learning training) thinking they were teaching Granny to suck eggs... but I was surprised at how much I had to learn and how much I've incorporated it into my practice. And how it supported the other things I have to do in my role as a teacher... accelerated learning is underpinning those."

[Play video](#)



Mindset

The step with possibly the most impact, mindset is about getting learners into the right frame of mind from before they walk through the classroom door.

But it's more than just being friendly and having a nice classroom. It's about exciting learners before they arrive at the lesson and then getting them into a relaxed and receptive state. Some of the mindset process takes place before the learners get anywhere near a classroom, perhaps in the lesson the week before, or maybe even in the course promotional material.

Creating interest before the lesson takes place will intrigue the learner and they will start to focus on the learning event straight away. This means less time spent settling in when the lesson begins and busy thoughts will be more easily put to one side so the learners can concentrate.

The first four minutes of the lesson are crucial to getting maximum impact. Accelerated learning practitioners talk about connecting and clearing. You connect the learners to the topic through visuals, the layout of the room and music. Clearing helps the learner focus on the task in hand, emptying their mind of busy thoughts and minimising distractions – phones need to be switched off at this stage.

Some ways you can do this are:

- Developing engaging course promotional literature to set the tone before the learning has begun
- Sending a reminder email about the course/lesson containing teaser information
- Having a theme which helps learners understand a bit more and form an impression of what they will be learning. We've used airports, travel, spring cleaning and baking to teach basic language skills
- Giving a bit of information about next week's lesson at the end of this week's, so people know what to expect
- Concentrating on getting the first four minutes right in terms of welcome, room setting and music
- Create a high-energy low-threat welcome by being upbeat and friendly when learners enter the room
- Deliver this lesson's objectives at the start so learners can tune in and know what to expect
- Having a poster outside the classroom asking learners to clear their minds and prepare for the new

"I use music to welcome people into the room, but also to bring them back promptly from a break. The Thunderbirds countdown works well for this."

Impact

Play video



Entrance

The new information needs to be presented in a way that utilises as many senses as possible, giving ideas the chance to gain entrance through the gateway of learners' senses. The more senses the better, but at the minimum, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners all need to be catered for.

Your delivery and content should also take account of whether the learners are introvert or extrovert. The teacher should be professional but approachable.

Some ways you can do this are:

- Having a variety of visual aids, both on the tables and around the room
- Having things to taste, smell or touch
- Use a variety of activities that will cover auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners throughout the lesson
- Use of physical exercises

“I’ve found that, it’s worked....to inspire learners... if I’ve got some bright resources and some music, it is more active and dramatic.”





Switch/share ownership

Learning is more powerful when the student takes ownership. They need to feel the topic and materials are personally relevant and meaningful, regardless of their learning preference.

This step relies on understanding the theory of Multiple Intelligences and offering activities to appeal to them all so that the learner is free to process and take ownership of the learning in a way that is relevant for them.

Some ways you can do this are:

- Include a range of activities which together appeal to all eight multiple intelligences
- Encouraging learners to create their own actions which relate to the content
- Including small group activities. For example, we got learners to weigh out the guideline daily amounts of sugar, fat and carbohydrate
- Having themed music in the background helps musical learners associate the information with a particular song
- Encourage learners to explain the information in their own words. We play Pilot and Navigator, where one learner – the navigator – has to explain the information or process to another – the pilot
- Using role play

“I’ve been able to connect with learners individually. I knew the theory that they all learn differently... but now I’ve seen it. I’ve seen how they’ve responded to different activities. It has allowed me to see the strengths and weaknesses in individual students. Yes I could get there normally, but it is quicker with accelerated learning.”



Play video

“Learners are asking for more accelerated learning.”

[Play video](#)



Store

Store is about using association, imagination, emotion, order and the unusual to give learners the best chance of recalling what they've learnt. It's about making sure the key ideas are memorised, but also that all learning preferences are catered for. You need to make the information "sticky".

"It's much more interactive, they're more communicative even pre entry and entry level learners are producing remarkable work. I'm pleased with that."

Some ways you can do this are:

- Repetition using different learning styles and senses
- Pegging – a technique where ideas are actually pegged on to different visuals which are around the room and always in the same place. Encourage students to get up and walk around to literally peg their learning on to the key places. (See here for some more links to explanations of pegging)
- Use of rhyme or rhythm
- Get the learners to create a story
- Using acronyms
- Using subliminal learning aids such as music, displays and other items which are within view of the learners throughout the lesson
- Physical action – creating opportunities for the learners to get up and do something in relation to the learning e.g. creating actions





Act

Build the confidence of the learners by letting them demonstrate they can get it right using games and quizzes. This is a fun and sometimes competitive way to assess the learning in an engaging way.

Some ways you can do this are:

- Using quizzes – either in teams or as individuals. We use bells to increase the fun and competitiveness
- Adapting games played with the information they've been learning
- Playing e-games, for example Blockbusters, Question of Sport, Who Wants To Be A Millionaire



“As an ESOL teacher of pre entry and entry learners you always have to be a bit over the top and play the clown to help the class understand, but having materials and props to back it up have really helped.”



Play video



[Play video](#)

Go again

This step breaks down into three component parts – review, reflect and rehearse.

Review – Research shows that learning is most effective when reviewed. You need to effectively review what the class has learnt, thereby helping embed the learning.

We used a five-stage review process, which has been proved to be very effective. This meant all learning was reviewed after:

- 10 minutes
- 24 hours
- One week
- One month
- Three months

“It (accelerated learning) prepares the learners by providing them opportunity to practise and perform.”

As you can see, the 24 hour review is the only one not always in the direct control of tutors. Explaining the reason for this review will help the learners understand its importance. The other reviews are within your control and are easily carried out during the term.

Some ways you can review are:

- Give learners a 24 hour review card, where they commit to do something linked to the lesson the next day
- Send a text message or email after 24 hours asking a question with a prize for the first correct answer
- Encourage learners to do homework the next day
- Getting learners to recall what they learned in their last lesson
- Using fun question & answer sessions
- Scheduled revision for exams
- Mind-mapping information they’ve learned either one or three months ago

“Accelerated learning has really worked to inspire my pre entry and entry level learners, having props and music adds some fun and drama making the sessions more active and helps the learner to understand the information I am putting across.”

[Play video](#)



Reflect – The learner needs time to reflect on what they have learned. This is a crucial time for the reflective learner. Reflection can be during the lesson or afterwards. Group reflection is useful but individual reflection is most powerful.

Some ways you can reflect are:

- Asking small groups to talk about what their favourite or most surprising piece of learning was
- Encouraging the use of a learning journal or diary
- Introducing breathing exercises, which help people tune in and reflect personally
- Playing soothing music
- Pair learners to talk through what the key points of the lesson were
- Play three stars and a wish – the three things I remember most, and one thing I wish for as a result of this lesson



Rehearse – This is about consolidating and repetition. It could be turning things into a project or setting them as homework, giving the learner the opportunity to rehearse what they've learnt.

Some ways you can rehearse are

- Using role play
- Setting homework
- Creating a project linked to the lesson



"It takes a lot of time to prepare a good accelerated lesson. So maybe having a good set of resources already there would be good."

[Play video](#)



Engage

It's important that learners can see a future application for what they have learned, to help them engage with the topic. This is likely to include some future actions identified by the learners, which they commit to undertake to help reinforce what they've learned.

Some ways you can do this are:

- Identifying situations in which learners can directly apply the knowledge
- Class, one-to-one or small group discussion

"They are more of a team in the classroom and thus they are unknowingly developing team working skills."



"The learners are using the games at home with their families, so the learning is carrying on outside the college."

What the learners thought

[Play video](#)



WACC's learners have been very positive about the changes in teaching techniques. Tutors have commented on the buzz of people coming into the classroom and it's certainly true that learners arrive more positive and ready to learn.

Perhaps it's the sense of anticipation – what is the tutor going to do today? – but overall attendance levels are more consistent than before accelerated learning was applied.

Learners also talk about feeling more like a team, or a family as some put it. They are taking responsibility for helping each other to learn as well for their individual learning. And they're responding well to lots of the techniques such as quizzes and games which help make the learning more fun.

Our ESOL learners also tell us they feel they are learning better than before and are more able to use the vocabulary they learn in their lessons. They're asking for more accelerated learning, what an accolade!



What the tutors thought

The team of ESOL tutors involved in the project were overall very positive about incorporating accelerated learning into their practice. For many, it wasn't such a huge step from what they were previously doing. But the framework provided by the MESSAGE model helped consolidate and stimulate these skills.

Many of the tutors felt the drawback of accelerated learning was in the extensive planning time needed when starting from scratch. At WACC this was partly tackled by allocating some dedicated planning time for which the tutors were given remission from teaching. Another joint planning session is on the cards in order to ensure that producing resources isn't done in isolation and that all the tutors are aware of what the others have produced in case there is any overlap.

What the tutors did agree on, though, was that most of the resources, once produced, could be used again and again in future lessons.

Another thing that came out for the tutors was the impact of using a theme for their lessons. This made the producing of resources much easier and allowed the tutors to be more creative.



[Play video](#)

Here are some more quotes from the tutors:

"There is generally a feeling of fun, classroom doors are left open and you can hear the music playing and learners' laughter."

"We have only been doing it for a few months now but I think as we continue it should become second nature."

"A lesson to be planned with such great detail takes a long time."

"One of the things we can do is definitely share resources amongst each other...of course, once you have created a set of resources you can use it again."

"They (learners) love playing games; interactive games ... they share ideas with each other in the process."

Lessons learned

[Play video](#)



If we had our time again there are a few things we'd change. We're sharing them here so that you can accelerate your journey and learn from our experience.

- Encourage tutors to start to use accelerated learning techniques as soon as they have had the training. We were unable to do this due to the timeline and demands of the project
- Make a list of generic resources you will need and get them ordered straight away. We all know that purchasing things can take a while, so we've provided a list of what we'd order at the start to give you some ideas (see list of key materials)
- Don't put yourself under pressure to be perfect. Start using some of the techniques in your lessons and build up your repertoire
- Done is better than perfect. Don't worry if you can't find a piece of music which fits exactly with your theme, just make sure you play something
- When starting with the technique, do the quick things first and then observe what works for your learners. Of course, this will be different with different groups
- Set some time aside for the tutors to create the resources and share this task amongst all of the tutors so they know what resources exist and can borrow them. This might even need to be regularly timetabled

Things we already knew but which are worth a mention are:

- A management commitment to using accelerated learning is an absolute must. The project must be championed right from the top of the organisation in order that it is taken seriously. Our project was championed by our principal, so we had senior support from the start and this made a massive difference
- Check out any community venues as they may not have the technology needed to effectively deliver an accelerated learning class – speakers, TV, whiteboard
- Key materials worth having at the start of teaching accelerated learning:

Bells – get a selection of sizes as well as a few the same

Table number stands – for displaying info
Paper

Coloured card & laminating equipment

Dry markers – so you can write on laminated resources, making them reusable

Coloured pens

Hat(s) – to help with role play, both tutor and learner

Software – for Question of Sport, Blockbuster and Dominoes (*we got this from Robert Powell*)

Mindmap software

Posters – for inside and outside rooms

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Reference materials and key documentation

Useful links

Following our accelerated learning project in maths, Sheila Minchin, WACC Director of Quality and Performance, in partnership with Sunderland University, published a paper about accelerated learning which you can view here <http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/eg:4608/datastreams/DOC/content>

MESSAGE resources

There are a series of Lex Studios videos about accelerated learning

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kvr-mQxMHZQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4L4s7z0o8I>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5G-f3MxfRw>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_3RgULFbZA

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZF_urNF1LZw

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqGS4xVGiu4>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjFMNRJDln0>

This one explains the MESSAGE model <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNZeObbK3XE>

Lex McKee's book, the Accelerated Trainer <http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/search?index=books&linkCode=qs&keywords=056608077X>

Multiple Intelligences

Test for discovering what your intelligence preferences are http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/ks3/ict/multiple_int/

<http://school.familyeducation.com/multiple-intelligences/learning-styles/childs-special-gifts/66373.html>

A review of the life & work of Howard Gardner, who invented the theory of multiple intelligences <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/gardner.htm>

Pegging

<http://www.memory-improvement-tips.com/remembering-lists.html>

<http://www.newlineideas.com/personal-pegging-memory-system.html>

http://www.ehow.co.uk/info_8659101_chaining-pegging-memory-techniques.html

Music

<http://musicenglish.co.uk>

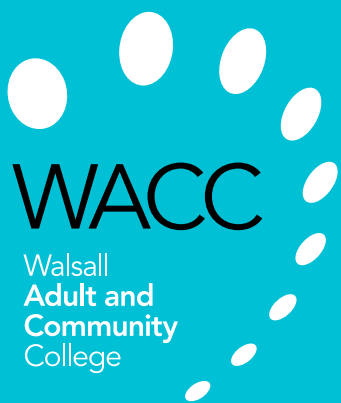
ROOM 4



You are entering a



Positive Learning Environment



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