

ACCELERATED LEARNING – A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING

A MODELING PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Teachers who want to be facilitators of learning often know the research supporting a more effective pedagogy than traditional teacher-centered approaches. They have the knowledge and the passion they need to support deep learning and transformation in their students. And, they want to design and facilitate relevant, significant learning experiences that help students prepare for the world and contribute to solving some of its so-called wicked problems. The missing piece is often the “how to”. “How do I design my semester so that I am able to cover all the materials, prepare students for the exams and ensure collaboration, the development of agency skills, often called the 21st century skills or soft skills?” “What does transformative learning look like in Math, Chemistry, History, Computer Science and Language Arts?” “What are the instructional strategies, proven techniques and learner centered activities that will accomplish everything that needs to be achieved in college and K-12 classrooms – including the passing of exams?”

Accelerated Learning, as practiced today, is a systemic approach to designing learning programs, one that considers everything in participants’ lives that can either hinder or support their learning. It looks at what encourages intrinsic motivation and participants’ ability to master the concepts, skills and processes they need to succeed. To do that and to create the optimal design approach, Accelerated Learning draws from interdisciplinary research – the neurosciences and what they are suggesting in terms of what we know about the brain and learning, adult education theories and practices including transformative learning, change theories and theories and practices of human development from fields as diverse as philosophy, psychology, organizational development and change management. To design a learning environment that supports deep learning and has real impact in students’ lives, Accelerated Learning encourages teachers to take the time to analyze students’ lives and the ways in which the organization, whether it is the university, a company, or a cultural group in which students live contributes to or gets in the way of the success of learning and development. Teachers look at the set of beliefs, values and norms students come into the classroom with and how they affect their motivation and self-concept. They think carefully about how their subject relates to the world and students’ lives. The International Association for Accelerated Learning Practitioners worked with expert practitioners and researchers around the world to create a practical roadmap that teachers and instructional designers can use to develop lesson plans and learning programs that accelerate the development of expertise and facilitate deep personal transformation.

The design and development of an effective learning program begins with a discovery process, an analysis of the goals and desired impact of a learning program and the limiting and enabling factors in the system as a whole. The process might include interviews with students, practitioners in the field and, or some deep thinking on the part of the teacher/designer in order to determine the desired outcomes, the skills needed, the real world application, the motivational factors, and the limiting factors. Once teachers have the information they need, they can use the Accelerated Learning cycle to support them in designing effective lesson plans, entire semesters and learning programs online or face-to-face.

- **The Learner Preparation Phase** includes activities at home and at the beginning of each class that help learners think deeply about themselves, the topic and one another. The activities help participants center and be present and focused. They build a sense of community and encourage focused conversation about the praxis.

- **Connection Phase** activities surface participants' experiences with the topic, their thoughts, knowledge and feelings about it. They also create some type of experienced significance of the learning to them.
- **The Discovery Phase** replaces the ineffective lecture and transcends the idea of telling as teaching followed by practice activities until mastery. New ideas, knowledge and aspects of the content are "taught" through short input, then engaging activities or sharing in pairs or groups. Perhaps students participate in discovery activities that require them to observe, read, experiment, then analyze, discuss and prepare some type of teach-back to others.
- **The Activation Phase** provides students with the opportunity to practice applying the skills they are learning in realistic, stimulating and relevant scenarios and contexts. Feedback, refinement of skills and further practice build mastery during the semester and students often end with a capstone activity that allows them to demonstrate their mastery in a complex and realistic situation.
- **Integration Phase** activities before participants leave each day and at the end of the semester encourage students to reflect on what they have learned, how they contributed to the results they got and what they will take with them into their next learning experience to make it more valuable and beneficial to them and others. Such activities often take the form of a "ticket out the door", a reflective prompt, pair sharing at times, then students responding to thought-provoking questions in writing on an index card. As they leave, they drop the card into a basket so that the teacher can reflect on what they have written in support of the design of the next lessons.

In using the five phases to design lesson plans, Accelerated Learning practitioners build in reflection, sharing in pairs and small groups, teach through arts and music, by using active and cooperative learning techniques as well as focused discussion approaches. Using the Accelerated Learning Cycle as a roadmap, teachers have a tool for designing transformative experiences while they develop students' expertise in their discipline.

SELECT REFERENCES

Feinstein, Sheryl (editor). (2006). *The Praeger Handbook of Learning and the Brain*. Volume Two, Suggestopedia (Accelerated Learning), pages 464-472. Westport, Connecticut. Greenwood Publishing Group.

www.acceleratedlearning.info. Website on Accelerated Learning with resources and further information.

www.iaalp.org. Professional organization for Accelerated Learning practice and practitioners.

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