

WWC Review of the Report “New Evidence of Success for Community College Remedial English Students: Tracking the Outcomes of Students in the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)”^{1,2,3}

The findings from this review do not reflect the full body of research evidence on the *Accelerated Learning Program*.

What is this study about?

The study examined the impact of the *Accelerated Learning Program* at the Community College of Baltimore County, a program in which upper-level developmental writing students are “mainstreamed” into English 101 while being simultaneously enrolled in the required three-credit developmental writing course.

Students who enrolled in the *Accelerated Learning Program* course combination comprised the intervention group. Two comparison groups were used in this study. The first was a group of 5,545 students who enrolled in the traditional section of the developmental writing course. The second group was a propensity-score matched sample of 592 students identified from the larger comparison group. Students in both comparison groups enrolled in the developmental writing course alone and were eligible to enroll in English 101 in a later semester, upon passing the developmental course.

Study authors examined impacts on completion of the developmental course, completion of college-level English courses, the number of college courses completed after enrolling in the developmental writing course, and the number of college credits completed after enrolling in the developmental writing course. English grades in college-level English courses were also reported.⁴

What did the study find?

None of the analyses presented in this study meet WWC standards, and therefore, the study findings are not presented in this WWC report.

Features of the *Accelerated Learning Program*

Students in the *Accelerated Learning Program* take a required developmental writing course simultaneously with a college-level writing course. The *Accelerated Learning Program* was designed to meet the developmental requirement and help students maximize their likelihood of success in English 101. Students typically enroll in the developmental course prior to taking the college-level English 101; the *Accelerated Learning Program* model is intended to provide a more cost-effective route for underprepared students to transition into college-level coursework because students enroll in the developmental course at the same time they enroll in the college-level course.

WWC Rating

The research described in this report does not meet WWC group design standards

Because students were not randomly assigned to the intervention and comparison groups, and pretests on the outcomes were not available, the study needed to demonstrate equivalence on baseline measures of socioeconomic status and prior achievement to meet WWC group design standards with reservations. Data on these measures were available but included some imputed cases. Currently, the WWC does not allow for the use of imputed data in quasi-experimental design studies. As a result, this study could not meet group design standards, and therefore, the findings from this study are not presented in this WWC report.

Endnotes

¹ Cho, S.-W., Kopko, E., Jenkins, D., & Jaggars, S. S. (2012). *New evidence of success for community college remedial English students: Tracking the outcomes of students in the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)* (CCRS Working Paper 53). New York: Community College Research Center.

² Single study reviews examine evidence published in a study (supplemented, if necessary, by information obtained directly from the authors) to assess whether the study design meets WWC design standards. The review reports the WWC's assessment of whether the study meets WWC design standards and summarizes the study findings following WWC conventions for reporting evidence on effectiveness. This study was reviewed using the Developmental Education review protocol, version 3.0.

³ The study was originally reviewed for a grant competition, and this single study review is an update of the original review. The study rating has been changed from *meets WWC group design standards with reservations* to *does not meet WWC group design standards*. Data on baseline covariates were provided by the authors but included some imputed cases. Currently, the WWC does not allow for the use of imputed data in quasi-experimental design studies. The study rating has been changed to reflect this policy.

⁴ There were four outcomes included in the study that are not described in this WWC report, as follows: (1) Attempt rates for English 101 and 102, (2) conditional pass rates (pass rates conditional on attempting the courses) for English 101 and 102, (3) number of college courses attempted after enrollment in English 052, and (4) number of college credits attempted after enrollment in English 052. The protocol does not include credits attempted as an eligible outcome domain because it is difficult to determine whether more attempted credits or fewer attempted credits is the positive outcome.

Recommended Citation

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Glossary of Terms

Attrition	Attrition occurs when an outcome variable is not available for all participants initially assigned to the intervention and comparison groups. The WWC considers the total attrition rate and the difference in attrition rates across groups within a study.
Clustering adjustment	If intervention assignment is made at a cluster level and the analysis is conducted at the individual level, the WWC will adjust the statistical significance to account for this mismatch, if necessary.
Confounding factor	A confounding factor is a component of a study that is completely aligned with one of the study conditions, making it impossible to separate how much of the observed effect was due to the intervention and how much was due to the factor.
Design	The design of a study is the method by which intervention and comparison groups were assigned.
Domain	A domain is a group of closely related outcomes.
Effect size	The effect size is a measure of the magnitude of an effect. The WWC uses a standardized measure to facilitate comparisons across studies and outcomes.
Eligibility	A study is eligible for review if it falls within the scope of the review protocol and uses either an experimental or matched comparison group design.
Equivalence	A demonstration that the analysis sample groups are similar on observed characteristics defined in the review area protocol.
Improvement index	Along a percentile distribution of individuals, the improvement index represents the gain or loss of the average individual due to the intervention. As the average individual starts at the 50th percentile, the measure ranges from -50 to +50.
Multiple comparison adjustment	When a study includes multiple outcomes or comparison groups, the WWC will adjust the statistical significance to account for the multiple comparisons, if necessary.
Quasi-experimental design (QED)	A quasi-experimental design (QED) is a research design in which study participants are assigned to intervention and comparison groups through a process that is not random.
Randomized controlled trial (RCT)	A randomized controlled trial (RCT) is an experiment in which eligible study participants are randomly assigned to intervention and comparison groups.
Single-case design (SCD)	A research approach in which an outcome variable is measured repeatedly within and across different conditions that are defined by the presence or absence of an intervention.
Standard deviation	The standard deviation of a measure shows how much variation exists across observations in the sample. A low standard deviation indicates that the observations in the sample tend to be very close to the mean; a high standard deviation indicates that the observations in the sample are spread out over a large range of values.
Statistical significance	Statistical significance is the probability that the difference between groups is a result of chance rather than a real difference between the groups. The WWC labels a finding statistically significant if the likelihood that the difference is due to chance is less than 5% ($p < .05$).
Substantively important	A substantively important finding is one that has an effect size of 0.25 or greater, regardless of statistical significance.

Please see the [WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook \(version 3.0\)](#) for additional details.