

Stepping Up in Sustainability 2012-13

Walsall Adult And Community College Case Study



Title of project	Accelerating Learning Teaching Excellence = Sustainable Teaching	
Lead partner organisation name and address	Walsall Adult & Community College Beeches Road Walsall WS3 1AG	
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1. Aims of the project	<p>Walsall Adult & Community College (WACC) firmly believes that sustainability should be integrated into everything we do, not taught as an additional topic.</p> <p>Our aim was to demonstrate that excellent teaching and sustainable teaching are one and the same thing through embedding accelerated learning techniques into our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision.</p> <p>This was a pilot project to enable us to prove the benefits of using accelerated learning and demonstrate its sustainable attributes.</p>	
2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you	<p>WACC wanted to move our teaching grade from good to outstanding within our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>These two factors led us to undertake a pilot in our ESOL provision to use accelerated learning techniques and link these techniques explicitly with sustainability.</p>	
3. Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve	<p>We wanted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve our ESOL teaching grade from good to outstanding • better engage learners in their lessons, leading to better attendance and attainment • demonstrate that excellent teaching and sustainable teaching are one and the same thing • embed accelerated learning into our ESOL teaching for the long-term 	

4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach

Overview

We delivered this project between September 2012 and March 2013. It was the second such project we had undertaken, having previously run a smaller one with our maths provision. There were a number of key stages:

- Training for the Inspiring Learning Coaches – first a one-day introductory course, then a further six sessions which qualified them as accelerated learning coaches
- Training for ESOL tutors delivered by the Inspiring Learning Coaches
- Resource preparation sessions were included so tutors were ready to start using accelerated learning
- Benchmarking survey with students to understand what they already think about sustainability and how they perceive it is relevant to their lives
- Benchmarked teaching and learning methods to enable reflection on changes made after Accelerated Learning was introduced.
- Accelerated Learning coaches provided on-going support and tutors feedback progress in their curriculum meetings.
- Start using accelerated learning techniques in ESOL lessons
- Follow-up survey and analysis of impact.

In detail – training

WACC already have an Inspiring Learning Team whose role is to support tutors in order to improve our teaching and learning grade. We identified that the Buzan method of accelerated learning suited our institution and sourced an introductory course for them to attend.

Having satisfied ourselves that the method would work for us, two Inspiring Learning coaches went on a more comprehensive course and qualified as accelerated learning coaches.

We chose to invest in training our own staff rather than bringing in consultants as this is another element of sustainability in the project.

Having the skills and knowledge within the college means we can continue to roll out accelerated learning techniques to other subject areas now we know how well it works.

We delivered the training to the tutors over a number of sessions and asked them not to use the new techniques they had learned in between. This was to enable benchmarking to take place at the end of term one and the techniques to be used in term two. In hindsight we would break the training down into perhaps three or four sessions and encourage the tutors to use the new techniques in between in order that they start to become more familiar and comfortable with them.

In detail – preparation of resources

The nature of accelerated learning means it places much more emphasis on the tutors planning and producing lots of resources ahead of their lessons. We recognised that to get things started the ESOL tutors would benefit from a group session to start to plan their lessons and create some of the resources.

We have also made space for these resources to be shared so that tutors can access those prepared by their colleagues and use them in their own lessons.

In detail - benchmarking

We chose to undertake a survey with ESOL students before starting to use the accelerated learning techniques in order to be able to measure its impact. However, it was difficult to get good quality results from the survey especially from Entry Level learners as we think the concepts were difficult to understand without the language skills – about their attitude to recycling for example.

However, this is likely to be an issue unique to ESOL provision and would be unlikely to occur to the same extent in other subjects.

In detail – using accelerated learning techniques in lessons

Tutors still need a lot of support once they start to use accelerated learning and the use of the techniques needs closely monitoring as it's easy to slip back into old ways.

We found the tutors not only needed the support of the Inspiring Learning Coaches, but also needed a forum to come together and discuss how it was going for them and to share ideas.

Naturally each tutor used the accelerated learning elements they felt most comfortable with, so elements of the technique were being

used, not the entire model. This is something that will improve with on-going support and as different parts become embedded into their practice.

Other things to consider

The project was instigated by the college's principal, so we didn't need to secure additional **management support**. However, this is an absolutely key factor in the success of the project so if you don't already have that support, securing it should be your first step.

We already had an **Inspiring Learning Zone** – essentially a space dedicated to improving teaching and learning where tutors can come to seek support and share ideas. We slightly adapted its purpose and used the space for training as well as coaching sessions with our Inspiring Learning Coaches.

This space has been essential in providing a safe place to discuss ideas and concerns, as well as somewhere away from the normal teaching environment for tutors to reflect and plan.

There are many **resources** used in accelerated learning which are generic. We'd recommend ordering these as soon as possible in order to ensure they are available when you need them. In particular bells and hats are the things we've found the most useful and have lots of different applications.

5. Results that you obtained

19 tutors at 6 sites are now applying accelerated learning techniques in their ESOL teaching, which impacts on 550 students.

Attendance and engagement has increased by approximately 4% and tutor feedback states the students are completing work to a higher standard than would previously have been expected of them.

Accelerated learning encourages tutors to use real-world situations as a theme for their lessons, so the learners not only improve their English, but also gain confidence and experience in situations they will face in their daily lives.

WACC is now looking to extend accelerated learning across all of its provision, using our Inspired Learning Coaches to train all of our tutors in the techniques.

Reflections from the tutors

"It's much more interactive. They're more communicative. They're able to produce the work that I'm expecting at that standard. Even at

lower levels they're producing remarkable work and I'm very pleased with that."

"It (accelerated learning) prepares the learners by providing them opportunity to practice and perform."

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

"They are seen as a team in the classroom and thus they unknowingly build team working skills."

"The learners at the end of lesson seem to be happier than before... They stay longer in the classroom even after the lesson has got over to gain more information from the displays and real leaflets used in the lessons. They remember better what they have learnt in previous lessons and can talk about it relating it to the activities and tasks they carried out."

"(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."

6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?

Having dedicated and specially-trained Inspiring Learning Coaches has allowed us to support the tutors in using these new techniques every step of the way. The investment in their training has paid dividends by allowing us to have the relevant resource on tap.

Our Inspiring Learning Zone has also played its part in creating a safe space for tutors to discuss all aspects of their teaching and learning, to share ideas and to get inspiration.

However, the fact that the project was conceived by WACC's principal, and therefore had unwavering high-level support, was the single biggest factor in its success. Our commitment to having sustainability embedded across the college meant this project was seen as an integral part of the college progressing, not just a piece of hobbying.

<p>7. What would you say were the most important things you learned from this project, which you will take forward as an individual or as an organisation in your sustainability journey?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from the top is critical as it brings with it both the resources needed and the attitude from others that the project is important • Accelerated learning needs much more planning and preparing than traditional teaching techniques and tutors will need supporting with time at the start • Finding ways to share the burden of planning and preparing resources in the long term will pay dividends for students because of the variety of lessons they will therefore experience • Once trained, tutors still need a support network to help them to continue to embed new techniques in their practice. Regular monitoring and support is necessary to ensure people continue to use the new things they have learned 						
<p>8. Any resources or tools produced by the project</p>	<p>An e-handbook has been produced which goes into detail about the accelerated learning technique we used and our experience of it. In it we point to lots of additional resources as well as including a list of basic accelerated learning resources. It includes videos with tutors and students and images of lessons and can be downloaded from www.wacc.ac.uk</p>						
<p>9. Total costs of the project</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="555 1093 837 1153">LSIS funding</th> <th data-bbox="837 1093 1279 1153">Match funding</th> <th data-bbox="1279 1093 1495 1153">Total funding</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="555 1153 837 1200">£10,000</td> <td data-bbox="837 1153 1279 1200">£15,000</td> <td data-bbox="1279 1153 1495 1200">£25,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	LSIS funding	Match funding	Total funding	£10,000	£15,000	£25,000
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	<p align="center">Funded by LSIS through the Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund</p>	
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