

Accelerative Learning in Action: ESL in the Construction Industry

It was in the spring of 2003 when a top manager for one of the largest concrete construction companies in the United States, Baker Concrete Construction, Inc. mentioned to Karen Gentry-Sizemore that they were in need of an ESL (English as a Second Language) program. They were looking for a way to improve English proficiency in a select group of employees who were on track to be promoted into supervisory positions. The manager went on to explain that Baker had previously sent employees to ESL programs offered through the local community college, but that the students lost interest and eventually stopped attending the class.

Having been expertly trained as an Accelerative Learning teacher by ICAL (International Center for Accelerative Learning), Karen quickly replied “I can help you with that!” Karen explained that Accelerative Learning was the answer that they were looking for. Although skeptical, the manager agreed to fund the development and implementation of a customized Accelerative Learning ESL program.

With the help two other ICAL-trained teachers, Danny Perez, and Jay Gorham, Karen developed a six-week ESL program which went on to prove A.L. method would work in a seemingly “tough” industry. Karen heard skeptics say “they won’t finish the class” and “construction workers won’t like the activities, role-play, and games”. Karen proved the skeptics wrong.

The first class to complete the course in 2003 finished with almost a one hundred percent student attendance record, and documented significant improvements in English proficiency levels. One project supervisor who sent one of his best employees to the class, stated “after he finished the class and came back to work for me, it was like getting **two** guys back”. This was attributed to the increase in job performance, confidence, and improved ability to communicate on the job.

The ESL course was customized to include job-specific vocabulary, safety procedures, corporate values and mission statement, quality, and teamwork.

Today, Baker continues offering the ESL program to its key employees. Karen and Danny continue their work at Baker Concrete, teaching ESL classes at Baker’s regional locations in Denver, Phoenix, Houston, Orlando, and Miami.

