

## PILOT TESTING THE WIAL CERTIFIED ACTION LEARNING COACH (CALC) E-COURSE AND BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAM IN THE PHILIPPINES

WIAL Philippines was invited to pilot test the e-Course and Blended Learning Program. It was very timely - the materials were ready just in time for our scheduled 4-day Intensive. We were stoked to test the new format, and contribute to this huge milestone for WIAL. We were even more excited because this was to be our first certification program in close to 2 years, given the global pandemic. And so we wanted to re-launch with a bang!

This article presents the personal insights about the experience from the point of view of Cristina Alafritz (MALC mentor) and Audrey Arayata (CALC Candidate).

### **JULY 14, 2021: PROGRAM IS CONFIRMED!**

CRISTINA: Full house! Two weeks prior to the scheduled Intensive, we confirmed 6 participants, with 2 very seasoned CALCs offering their valuable time and experience to help train our newest cohort. After a quick exchange with WIAL's Executive Director and the Education Committee Head, we agreed to convert this Intensive into a Blended Learning Program using the brand new e-Course. Thanks to the very clear Instructor Guide, I was able to structure the learning journey as shown below. In theory, this learning journey best supports one of the principles that CALCs live by: Learning = Programmed Knowledge \* Questions \* Reflection. Note that the hours were customized according to actual experience.



AUDREY: I received the email confirming my participation, and I remember the excitement I felt. The email contained important information about the e-course, the practice sessions and upcoming WIAL Philippines learning sessions that we can join. The WIAL portal was easy to access and navigate. I was pleasantly surprised that the required reading didn't take much time to complete. I expected bodies of text and academic language, but I was oh so very wrong. The information was easy to digest because each chapter was subdivided into smaller sections of 5 minutes each. On top of that, there were breaks within each section in the form of visuals, short videos, and

quizzes. The e-course came with an assignment document, which we needed to complete as we progressed through the chapters. The best part was that there was no need to submit these online, I just needed to have them ready for discussion during the practice sessions. This took a lot of pressure off me as a working professional because I had the freedom to complete all readings before starting on any of the assignments without worrying about hard deadlines.

### **JULY 21, 2020: ONE WEEK TO GO!**

CRISTINA: I clearly underestimated the preparation work for this program! I must have gone through the e-Course at least twice over to make sure I was grounded on the content, and updated my practice session design and materials to echo and build on this content. By going through the e-Course myself, I expanded my own knowledge and appreciation of AL, its benefits and applications. I also realized that with this e-Course, WIAL can now offer a more consistent learning experience for all CALC candidates around the world and level up our coaching standards overall.

AUDREY: I completed all the assignments, and became even more excited for the practice sessions! I looked forward to how the micro learning fit into the sessions. I was excited to meet the other CALC candidates and instructors, as I imagined their diverse backgrounds would really contribute to the learning. As much as I was excited, I was also quite nervous. I didn't have much coaching experience. I did my best to manage my nerves and instead focused on the possibility of learning so much more in the sessions to come.

### **JULY 28-29 and AUGUST 2-3, 2021: PRACTICE SESSIONS**

TINA: All ingredients necessary to have an excellent certification program were in place - well prepared materials, a team of seasoned MALCs and CALCs as instructors, and a cohort composed of high caliber individuals experts in their respective fields. I just needed to trust the process, trust the team of instructors and the cohort, and trust myself. The schedule was packed with a total of 12 practice sessions, since each CALC Candidate was required to play the role of member 6x, coach 2x, observer 2x. After each practice session was a debrief, highlighting learning opportunities that arose. We also made time for deep dives into critical topics and discussions of assignments. My high level design is shown below.

| DAY 1 - July 28            | DAY 2 - July 29                | DAY 3 - Aug 2            | DAY 4 - Aug 3                        |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Opening                    | AL Session 2                   | AL Session 6             | AL Session 10                        |
| AL Demo                    | AL Session 3                   | AL Session 7             | AL Session 11                        |
| Review AL Concepts         | Deep Dive: Coach Interventions | Knowledge Check!         | AL Session 12                        |
| Practice Sessions Overview | AL Session 4                   | AL Session 8             | Intro, <u>Implem</u> & Sustaining AL |
| AL Session 1               | AL Session 5                   | AL Session 9             | Certification Requirements           |
| Deep Dive: Problems in AL  | Mid Point Check Out            | Types of AL: MPAL / SPAL | Final Check Out                      |

This is the 7th certification program I conducted across the years, and I clearly saw the impact of the e-Course as a prerequisite - we spent more time in the practice sessions and the debriefs therefore accelerating the competence and confidence of the CALC candidates; there was higher engagement during discussions with most of the theories and concepts explained by them; and, we were able to plan and design AL programs for their potential clients.

AUDREY: Day one finally arrived and I was welcomed into the Zoom room with so much warmth and positive energy by the instructors and the other CALC candidates. We began by getting to know each other, followed by an overview of our four days together. Then there was a demo AL Session, and I was able to create a model in my mind that I could pattern my own sessions after. Then the practice sessions started! The feedback and debrief that followed each session were most helpful to me as an AL Coach, as a person, and as a professional. From my own coaching experience, I gained a higher awareness of my virtual presence and how some of my behaviors affected my participants. By being an observer, I considered how I could handle similar situations in the future. By being a problem presenter, I was able to clarify my values and my priorities. With all these roles I played, I learned about the importance of observing with my senses and the value of setting aside time for reflection.

### **THE LEARNING JOURNEY CONTINUES ...**

TINA: After the practice sessions, what I first felt was relief - that we pulled off this pilot test extremely well! Then pride - about what the cohort had accomplished individually and together, and how they were more than ready to create a positive impact as AL Coaches. And finally, eagerness - to iterate the current program so that many more in the world can experience a much improved Blended Learning Program.



AUDREY: After the practice sessions, I was welcomed into the WIAL Philippines community via the Viber group. This lessened my worry of not being able to practice AL immediately because the community regularly hosts AL Movements where we can volunteer to coach. I grabbed the opportunity for a recent event, and I'm happy to say that I conducted my session successfully. I am also considering ways to build my own client base, and I'm seeing 2 clear opportunities: (1) to invite my own network to these AL Movements; and (2) to offer free demo sessions. I admit that my coaching experience is still at its infancy, but I have the perseverance of an Olympic weightlifter to get better at it. That 7.2-foot metal bar won't lift itself - it will take my own dedication and the support of the community to bring home that gold.



By Cristina Alafriz, MALC and Audrey Arayata, CALC Candidate / August 2021