Accelerated Learning by John King

There are many people who argue that accelerated learning will not give the student the time to learn knowledge and skill thoroughly. But within the limits of fatigue, I believe the more quickly one learns something the better they will learn.

In fact, there is no rule of learning that says that the longer it takes you to learn something the better you will learn it and the longer you will retain it. On the other hand there is a rule of learning that says that the better you can make associations and correlations the more you will understand the relationships and the better you will have the big picture with all the pieces falling into place.

We all know that recall is based on context and associations. If you meet an acquaintance in an unusual context, you may recognize that you know them, but will not know who they are or how you know them. But if on the other hand you meet them in the context of how you relate with them, their name and what they mean to you will come to mind immediately.

It is our job as instructors to help students with those associations and correlations that will help them gain what the FAA calls "insight". At King Schools we design our courses around that concept. When people understand where what they are learning fits in to what they have learned before, it makes learning clear, simple and easy. Accelerated learning – whether in a ground school course or in flight lessons – helps the student get that big picture. Because when a student learns over a shorter period of time, the experiences are more recent and vivid. Instructors generally agree that when a student spreads their training out over a year or two, the information and skills are not as well learned as if the training takes place over a few months.

I am a fan of accelerated learning especially in scenario-based instruction in which you learn in the context of how you will use what you learn. When you know how and when to use what you learn, it makes learning a lot more fun.

When a student pilot performs ritualized exercises out of context, they are of much less value when it comes time to apply the skills. For many years pilots have learned to perform stall demonstrations and many other maneuvers as a drill exercise, but when it comes time to use the very skills they have learned in the exercises, the skills are often of no use to them because they do not have them associated with the context in which they need them.

So in my mind there are great advantages to accelerated learning, but no matter how well you learn something, for long-term retention you need to put it into practice. It is just one more reason to keep flying.