



Project IDEAL Update



Project IDEAL Support Center
 Institute for Social Research
 University of Michigan

Project IDEAL—Improving Distance Education for Adult Learners—A collaborative of the states of Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, & Washington

New Benchmarks for Seat Time

A number of member states have sufficient experience with distance education to provide a clear picture of what is possible with distance strategies. Ohio and Pennsylvania have been offering *GEDC* at a distance for two years.

The table summarizes recruitment and seat time data from these states over a 10-month period. On average, quarter-time teachers recruited and enrolled just under 25 adult learners. Learners studied for an average of three months and typically earned about 30 seat-time hours. In Ohio, one-quarter of the distance learners earned 40 or more hours and took a TABE posttest. Of the Ohio learners who were posttested, 56 percent showed a pre-post gain of one or more Educational Functioning Level (EFL). The percentage was virtually identical for learners in Pennsylvania (54%).

North Carolina used *Crossroads Café* with its ESL distance learners. In NC, learners checked out videos and workbooks from a library one at a time. Each time they came in for new materials

Project IDEAL is a consortium of states working to develop effective distance education programs for adult learners. The Project IDEAL Support Center at the University of Michigan helps consortium states by developing training materials and web-based tools. The Center provides technical support in the areas of teacher training, research design, data collection, data analysis and reporting. Through collaborative research and practice, we are working to provide quality distance education for adult learners across the country.

Recruitment, Retention, Seat Time & EFL Change for *GEDC* Learners

	Ohio		Pennsylvania	
	N	%	N	%
Recruited	304	100%	524	100%
Enrolled (Earned 12-hours)	275	90	481	92
Mean Seat Time †	32.5 hrs		29.9 hrs	
Pre- and posttested	59	25	125	19
Gain of 1 EFL or more	33	12 *	67	14 *

*NOTE: The average number of students per teacher was 24 in Ohio and 23 in Pennsylvania. † Seat time includes credit given for intake and orientation activities. *This translates to 56% of those pre- and posttested in Ohio and 54% in Pennsylvania.*

they took a quiz on the material and had a conversation with an English speaker. On average, over a five-month period, learners passed mastery tests for six units of *Crossroads Café*. Some completed as many as ten units of the curriculum. Forty-four percent of those enrolled in the program were posttested using CASAS. Half of those students showed an EFL gain of one or more on the reading test.

Given these results, all three states consider it reasonable to offer distance programs on a regular basis. They recognize they need to perfect their learner-support strategies. And they are still concerned with the challenge of getting learners to return for posttesting. But, with experienced distance teachers and learners prepared to study on their own, distance is viewed as a viable supplement to classroom offerings. (Additional data can be found in Working Paper #2: *Measuring Seat Time & Educational Gain*.) In this coming year we hope to gather comparable seat time and achievement data for learners studying the same curricula in classroom programs.

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Online Data Collection System

Seat time logs are an important part of measuring a state’s progress in distance teaching. They help guide everything from program design to policy development. Support Center staff have developed new online versions of the former Excel logs. The new online system will make the recording process much easier for teachers and will also enable DLCs to monitor teacher and program progress. Finally, the new system has built-in validation checks that will result in cleaner data by reducing clerical errors and identifying discrepancies in pre-post assessment reporting.

Benefits for Teachers

- No more downloading or uploading files
- Access to data from any location with an Internet connection
- Seat time logs for eight curricula: *Crossroads Café*, *English for All*, *GEDC*, *MHC-GED Online*, *Madison Heights/LifeLines*, *PLATO*, *SkillsTutor*, and *WES*. All logs are available with the click of a button
- Automatic calculation of enrollment status, EFL levels, scaled score changes, and instructional hours
- User-friendly data entry screens—pull-down menus and click and enter fields; roster sorting functions
- Summary screen of all information and data related to a student
- Fields to record supplemental activities teachers assign to students
- More data and information tracking options
- Online help, on-screen instructions, and pop-up directions

Benefits for Administrators & DLCs

- Easier to get monthly and annual reports
- Variety of reporting options
- Ability to review teacher rosters and data collection activities
- Data collection options for programs using more than one curriculum
- Separate totals for seat time associated with pre-instruction, instruction, and use of supplemental materials

We hope this new system will make data collection and reporting in your state easier.

Study Groups Launched

IDEAL is excited about the launch of its new online professional development course Distance Learning 102: Study Groups. DL102 is designed for experienced distance teachers who want to improve their teaching skills. Participants create case studies of difficult teaching situations they have faced. For 4–6 weeks, participants discuss each other’s case studies in an online discussion forum, honing their analysis skills and building their repertoire of effective teaching strategies. An experienced facilitator helps the group stay on target.

Last winter the Study Group concept was piloted in two states. Materials and training were made available at the August workshop for states interested in offering their own Study Groups. At least five states are planning to offer Study Groups this winter, many of them including teachers from more than one state.

To learn more about this course, go to <http://projectideal.org/DL101and102.htm>
If you are interested in offering DL102 in your state, please contact the Support Center.

Many thanks to our online system pilot testers: Jeff Bostic (PA), Sara Brennen (PA), Donna Cornellier (MA), Rosemary Matt (NY), and Donna Walter (MI). Thanks also to Jeff Noel, our technical support manager, and to Marisa Smith of Datasmith Consulting, for developing the online data collection system.

Roster New Student Teacher Info Help Logout											
Roster			Sample roster page from the Online Data Collection System								
<small>To view and/or edit a student's record, click on the student's name. To access a seat time log, click on the name of the curriculum next to the student's name. This list can be sorted by column in ascending or descending order by clicking on the arrows next to the header name.</small>											
Instructor:		Anne Teacher		Center:		Michigan Literacy Works		State:	Michigan	Students:	18
Group	Name	Seat Time Log	Seat Time	Last Update	Status	Weeks	Delete				
1.	Booker, Deshawn	GEDC WES	22.75	10/22/2004	Active						
2.	Coker, Marcie	GEDC WES SkillsTutor PLATO MHC-GED CRC	155.15	10/26/2004	Inactive	5					
3.	Corinthos, Sonny	SkillsTutor PLATO MHC-GED	15.74	10/8/2004	Inactive	8					



Arizona

For our Year 1, Arizona Adult Education has selected seven pilot sites to implement the AZ Distance Education for Adult Learners Project. This project will deliver instruction in GED preparation using an online curriculum. The pilot sites will focus on recruitment, assessment and retention of adult learners. The goal is for each site to have two instructors, each providing a distance class with 10–25 students, for a total of 140–350 learners throughout the state. DL101 will begin in January, and distance instruction will run for twelve weeks beginning in mid-March. Research questions include:

- Would learners be likely to attend school if not for the distance learning opportunity?
- What are the characteristics of the learners who thrive in a distance learning environment?
- How much teacher support is needed for distance learners to succeed?

Arkansas

Year 2 of Project IDEAL was very successful for Arkansas. We had four returning sites and added one new site. We used *GEDC*, *PLATO*, and *SkillsTutor*. Instructors and administrators from each site came together for training in November. The number of students recruited and retained and seat time hours were tripled from our first year of the pilot. All students were pre-tested, and approximately 25% were posttested. Forty-six percent of posttested students had one EFL gain and 43% had two EFL gains.

Arkansas will continue in Year 3 of the Project with four returning sites. Our goals are to double the number of students retained and posttest at least 50% of those retained. We will again use *GEDC*, *PLATO*, and *SkillsTutor* and possibly add *MHC-GED Online*.

Arkansas Success
The number of students recruited and retained, as well as the seat time hours, were tripled from our first year of the pilot.

Idaho

For several years Idaho has had a small distance effort aimed at pilot-testing the use of *SkillsTutor* at a distance. At the annual meeting of adult educators in October, center directors voted to take the project statewide. They hope that every site will identify two teachers to become distance educators. Along with the site director, these teachers will form a site-based team. Together, they will take the online course DL101 in late fall and develop a detailed plan for their distance program. They will begin recruiting students in January. Idaho is inviting Even Start Family Literacy sites to join the project as well.

Illinois

The online GED prep program *GED Illinois* is now fully implemented, and all 65 GED programs in the state have been trained to use it. This fiscal year a second layer of lessons was added to the program for learners needing a little more help mastering difficult concepts. Last year many sites received

leadership grants to develop best practices in the use of *GED Illinois*. These will be completed at the end of October and the results shared with programs throughout the state. The results of another study on effective use of *GED Illinois* with distance learners will be available in February. Illinois plans to add DL102 to the menu of trainings available to *GED Illinois* programs.

Kentucky

Kentucky has an online portal for adult learners (www.kyvae.org). Through the portal learners can study *PLATO* at a distance. This year Kentucky will conduct a study to identify differences in recruitment and learner support strategies used in various counties with the hope of identifying best practices in these areas. The results will be used to develop training efforts for literacy centers throughout the state.

Maine

After completing DL101 and attending *GEDC* training in Spring 2004, five teachers in four Maine Adult Ed programs facilitated a distance learning mini-pilot this summer. The mini-pilot utilized a hybrid model, combining face-to-face meetings and online instruction. These same teachers are offering a full *GEDC* online course from October through December 2004. They will participate in a Study Group with teachers from two other states next spring.

Maine hopes to learn (1) if distance learning is a viable option for its adult learners, (2) what are best practices for delivering distance education to adult learners, and (3) how much teacher and administrative time is involved in implementing and running a high-quality DL program.

Maine is developing an RFP this year to seek 6-8 new programs to develop distance education programs next year.

Maryland

Maryland, a new member of Project IDEAL, launched its first online GED preparation classes, which run from 9/04 through 6/05 using *GEDC*. Four adult education programs are participating in this pilot, each offering one class, with a total anticipated enrollment of 100 learners. Two of the four classes will be team-taught. The instructional staff spent late spring and summer becoming familiar with *GEDC* in a classroom setting. Our research questions for this pilot are:

- Is distance learning an effective option for recruiting and serving learners who are in need of services but who have barriers to attending onsite classes?
- Are online classes as effective as classroom instruction in terms of learning gains and outcomes?
- What additional professional development do distance teachers need?

Two of MD's recruitment resources—a brochure and streaming video—are available online at

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/careertech/adult_ed/

Massachusetts

Massachusetts is funding six distance programs with multiple sites. The new programs will be starting services at various times based on their current distance experience and knowledge, with all programs offering services by January 2005. We expect to continue to fund these programs in this experiment for an additional two years beyond this year. The majority of the programs will use *GEDC*; the others will use *MHC-GED Online*, *WES* or a custom web-based curriculum.

Some programs have decided to implement distance with one instructor using other support personnel; others have elected to run the program with two distance teachers. Each program will serve approximately 30–40 students. All programs will participate in DL101. Two areas we will be looking at closely are: (1) student progress related to seat time allocation and retention, and (2) student progress at a distance as compared with progress in a traditional classroom setting.

Michigan

The Michigan Office of Adult Education's DL Pilot Program is in the planning stages. The scheduled date for implementation is July 2005. In August 2004, the first DL Planning Committee meeting was held to discuss the program vision as well as to gain feedback from committee members on implementation issues.

The program will use *WES* to assist single parents into employment and to familiarize them with distance learning as a means to further their education and obtain a GED. A hybrid model will be used that blends distance education and face-to-face contact. Each of the four pilot sites serves a different part of the state. There will be approximately 30 students per site, with two part-time instructors at each location. The distance program will be used to reach a population not currently being served in traditional classroom programs. The pilot will provide insights into best practices for facilitating participant success.

Missouri

The Missouri Distance Learning Project has expanded this year. We have doubled both our *GED Online* and *GEDC/WES* staff, taking the count from 30 last year to a total of 60 DL teachers in the state.

We have created a mentoring program for our new *GED Online* Teachers. We have also created curriculum review teams, made up of experienced teachers, to make suggestions for improving our current *GED Online* curriculum.

We have also added a Teacher Workroom Area within *GED Online* (Blackboard platform). This workroom has information for DL teachers, resources such as web links and online teaching tools, and a discussion area broken down into specific groups such as *GEDC*, *GED Online*, Mentoring, etc.

New York

New York's Adult Education and Workforce Development Unit, along with the Regional Adult Education Network and representatives from the field, will update and improve NY's

approved DL programs. Four distance learning content areas will be studied to evaluate how technology affects distance learning and our current Distance Learning policy. Programs are developing research plans that explain the goals and objectives of their efforts. Teachers will participate in conference calls and online discussions to develop a rich portrait of how the programs are working. In addition, teachers will maintain seat time logs. Data from the studies will help state administrators evaluate existing policy.

North Carolina

North Carolina experienced considerable success during its first year of experiments using *Crossroads Café* with its ESL distance learners. Eight programs participated (total of 16 sites), enrolling 175 learners. Demand for NC's distance services was so great that instructors had to open additional classes to meet student needs. NC is planning to offer DL102 for programs that participated last year. DL101 will be offered to 20 new programs this year. We are working out the RFP process to do the training late this year.

Ohio

Ohio's seven ABLE-funded pilot sites, which include 14 teachers and 7 administrators, have completed their second year of implementation and are eager and enthusiastic about the possibilities of distance education. Research will continue to focus on "what works" and "what

doesn't work" as it relates to distance instruction in the ABLE classroom.

Data from last year indicate that the pilot sites collectively recruited 304 adult learners, 275 of which were enrolled. This is wonderful news, especially when compared with the data from fiscal year 2002–03, which showed the pilot sites recruited 215 adult learners and enrolled 182 of them. During the first two years of implementation, the pilot sites utilized *GEDC*. In the third year, pilot sites will continue to teach *GEDC* and are adding *Pre-GEDC* and *SkillsTutor*. More information about Ohio's efforts is available at: <http://literacy.kent.edu/ideal>.

Pennsylvania

In 2003–04, 19 Pennsylvania distance learning pilot sites recruited 980 learners into their *GEDC* and *WES* distance programs and collected data on these learners with regard to learner demographics, goals, hours, and pre- and post-assessments. Ninety-one percent of learners reached enrollment status, and learners averaged 29.9 seat time hours. Regarding goals met: 16% of learners reporting a high school diploma or GED achieved this goal, 38% achieved secondary education or training, 23% obtained a job, and 28% retained a job. Consistent themes programs report included: (1) having more success as they gained experience with delivering distance instruction, (2) continuing challenges with obtaining posttests, and (3) needing to supplement the curricula with other

Demand for NC's distance services was so great that instructors had to open additional classes to meet student needs.

instructional materials.

This year, Pennsylvania has moved beyond the pilot stage so that any program in the state can offer distance to its students, either through its own instructors or through an experienced DL instructor affiliated with the Distance Learning Project, provided they participate in mandated professional development. Our goals for this fiscal year include: (1) expanding statewide capacity so that any PA student ready to study at a distance can be served, (2) documenting and disseminating best practices, and (3) providing programs the support they need to implement those practices.

This year, PA has moved beyond the pilot stage so that any program in the state can offer distance to its students...

Rhode Island

Based on last year's enrollment, the Project IDEAL team in Rhode Island expects participation in the Rhode Island Distance Learning (RIDL) Program to increase steadily again during FY05. Four adult learning centers around the state serve as "registration and assessment" locations for clients. Curricula offered include *SkillsTutor* and *GEDC*. Research this year will compare three groups: 1) pure distance learners; 2) learners using Distance Learning services and also attending class; and

3) learners attending class and not using DL services. Data collection will focus on assessing the amount of time clients access either *SkillsTutor* or *GEDC* and any subsequent improvement made in their skills.

Washington

Washington State expanded its Distance Learning Initiative to add four projects to the original five from the first year. Both previously funded and new programs submitted applications to participate in the second year of the project. Staff also investigated using an existing GED curriculum and are pleased to be piloting *GED Illinois* in Washington. All four of the new projects will use *GED Illinois*, and three of the original pilots have chosen to use it along with offering their instructor-designed courses from the first year.

One of the new pilot projects is also teaching curriculum designed by instructors from the first year of the pilot. This expands our online course offerings from five the first year to thirteen for FY05. Project staff have redefined data collection and will collect data using both Project IDEAL logs and the Washington ABE data collection system, WABERS. Staff also plan to collaborate with Illinois to offer DL102 for instructors from both states and to continue to offer "New Teacher Orientation" as an online staff development opportunity for teachers new to the basic skills system.

Workshop 2004

The 2004 annual workshop was again a great success. The first half of the workshop focused on Year 2 research findings and on issues of policy, practice, funding, staff development, curriculum selection, and supporting sites. The second half included in-depth training for states planning to offer DL101 and/or DL102.

Throughout the week, participants had the opportunity to learn about the project's national research efforts and findings, to share ideas about research and practice, and to receive state-specific support through one-on-one consulting with Support Center staff. In providing feedback on the workshop, one participant from NY wrote: "The workshop provided an educational component which recapped things accomplished in the past and brought us forward to focus on our next year's research plan."

Returning states shared their experiences with implementing and then refining their distance programs. Newer states had the opportunity to learn from their colleagues' experiences. Several participants took advantage of this opportunity to form



Staff from all 16 member states attended the 2004 Workshop.

partnerships with staff from other states. As one state staff member from WA noted: "It was most valuable to establish connections with DLCs and trainers from other states, to learn from those who have been in this longer than we have."

In summing up her experience, one attendee from MI concluded: "For me, the highlight of the workshop was not a single session or event, but rather, the opportunity to interact with and learn from so many creative people who are truly excited about what they are doing."

New Working Papers

The following new working papers can be downloaded from the Project IDEAL website.

Exploring Policy Issues & Options in Distance Education for Adult Learners (WP #4). State directors from five member states along with the DAEL Director, Cheryl Keenan, were interviewed regarding the development and expansion of distance programs and the challenges associated with developing state and federal policies for program operations.

A Pilot Test of Study Groups: Professional Development for Experienced Distance Teachers (WP #5). This paper presents findings from the pilot test of the professional development course Distance Learning 102: Study Groups.

Beyond the Classroom: Six States Develop Distance Programs for Adult Learners (WP #6). This paper presents case studies on six states' efforts to develop and expand their distance programs and the lessons they learned along the way.

Works in Progress

Intake and motivation measures

The Support Center is developing two measures to be administered at intake that we hope will provide insights into which adult learners are most likely to succeed in studying at a distance. One measure examines "enabling characteristics," such as organization and independent study skills, that are important for learners studying at a distance. This measure draws from several existing measures and will be available by the end of November. The second measure explores motivational constructs, such as self-regulation, that may be related to successful distance learning. We are working with motivation experts at the University of Michigan and the University of Houston to develop this measure and anticipate having a pilot version available in January. We are looking for states interested in using either or both measures with their learners. This will involve assessing learners at intake and/or exit with the measures and providing that data, as well as data on student retention and achievement, for analysis by the Support Center.

Revisions of student, teacher, & administrator surveys

Several ideas came out of the August Workshop presentation on the 2003–04 teacher and administrator survey results. This fall and winter, Support Center staff will collaborate with DLC and Trainers who volunteered to help revise and expand the end-of-year online surveys. Revised surveys will be available for use next spring.



Project IDEAL

Published Semi-Annually by

Project IDEAL Support Center
5118 Institute for Social Research
University of Michigan
P.O. Box 1248
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248
Phone: 734-615-3628
Fax: 734-615-6638
projectideal@umich.edu
<http://projectideal.org>

Updates & Revisions to Existing Products

The third edition of the *Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners* incorporates more lessons learned from member states, including additional ideas about recruitment, orientation and teaching. Expanded information on teaching with different curricula is also included. In addition, the Handbook explores characteristics of successful distance teachers and presents suggestions for supporting teachers. The companion professional development course, DL101, has been adjusted to correspond to changes in the Handbook.

Measuring Seat Time & Educational Gain (WP# 2). This paper updates the earlier paper with the latest seat time and achievement data from five states.

<http://projectideal.org>

