



IDEAL Consortium

A Project of the EdTech Center @ World Education

Report on the 2016 IDEAL Institute

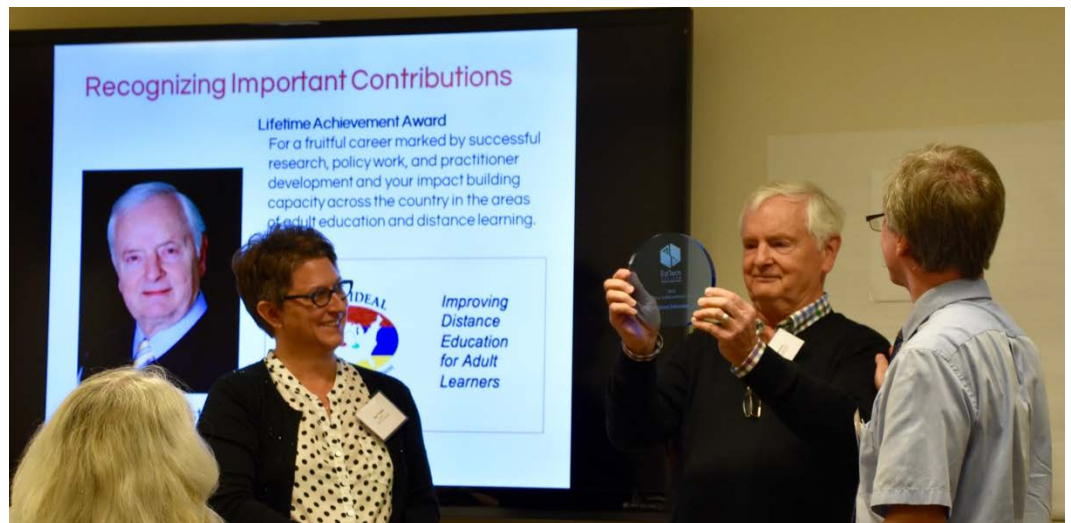
Together Again!

August 2016 marked the reconvening of the IDEAL Consortium membership. Participants from ten member states gathered for two days of learning marked by collaborative discussion and presentations from national experts on critical issues impacting distance and blended learning for adult education students. Education leaders from the following states attended as members of the Consortium: Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia.

Introduction of New Resources

The Institute marked the launch of new professional development resources available to member states.

The materials include a completely updated IDEAL Handbook of Distance and Blended Learning; an accompanying online course IDEAL 101: Foundations of Distance and Blended Learning; IDEAL 102 study groups supporting in depth exploration of instructional or administrative issues, and three new self-paced courses on 1) blended learning, 2) use of OERs, and 3) using mobile devices for learning.



Jen Vanek, Director of the IDEAL Consortium & Steve Quann, Director of the EdTech Center present a life-time achievement award to Dr. Jere Johnston for groundbreaking work in adult education and supporting the development of distance education for ABE learners in the U.S.

State of the States

Current Distance and Blended Learning Initiatives

Participants discussed current initiatives and challenges that define programming in their states. Each state implements programs given unique circumstances; however, there was much common ground.

Need for Self-Assessment. Rhode Island, California and Texas have focused on using learner self-assessment to identify learning needs and goals. Data collected helps state leadership develop policy and provide targeted professional development opportunities that are aligned with the needs of learners. For an example, see the teacher and student surveys and results from California Adult Education.

<https://adulthood.otan.us/info.cfm?fuseaction=tp>

Use of Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment. Participants described the integration of Northstar into their programming. Assessment modules (Computer Basics, Internet, Social Media, Email, Information Literacy, and Office Suite applications) help teachers identify digital literacy skill gaps in order to help learners build skills needed for success in distance learning. Minnesota, Rhode Island, California, and Arizona all use the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment. For more information, visit the Northstar website (www.digitalliteracyassessment.org).

Competency-Based Models of Education. Adult Education leaders in Rhode Island and Massachusetts have led an effort to explore the efficacy of a competency-based model of education in ABE and its suitability for distance and blended learning. This approach focuses on personalized self-paced learning, demonstration of mastery, and learner involvement in goal setting. Contact EdTech partner David Rosen (djrosen123@gmail.com) with questions.

Expanded Role of Distance Education. WIOA articulates a requirement for effective use of technology and focus on career pathways. Reference to this exists in the “13 Considerations” for provision of high-quality adult education, presented in OCTAE’s overview of the Act (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/wioa-overview.pdf>). This has led to heightened interest in implementing quality distance and development of blended learning opportunities for learners in member states.

Challenges

Tracking Data. Many states struggle with gathering data needed to fully understand the impact of their distance and blended learning. Participants from states who excel in this area, Texas and Arizona, signaled their readiness to mentor others.

Opportunities for PD. Several states’ participants described difficulty reaching practitioners who would benefit from PD. California, Texas, and Minnesota employ an approach to PD offering a range of options that vary in duration and intensity, for example a mix of short modular self-directed learning and ongoing community of practice groups, to better meet the wide range of practitioner needs and constraints.

Teacher Involvement in Instruction. Participants shared concern that some teachers view distance learning as “handing out a URL and log in information”. The new IDEAL Handbook offers a chapter on the varied means by which teachers can increase their level of involvement in distance learning – putting themselves, rather than the online curriculum back in the role of teacher.

*The IDEAL Consortium,
a project of the EdTech
Center at World
Education, Inc., works
with member states to
support the development
of quality distance and
blended learning
opportunities for adult
education learners.*

Policy Highlights

Proxy Hours versus Competency Model

Member states Minnesota, Arizona, and Texas make good use of the NRS model for awarding Proxy Contact Hours (PCH) for time learners spend with online curricula. Others expressed concern about the limitations of the model given Internet accessibility and the quantity/quality of digital learning resources available today, which allow for a more nuanced use of online learning. For example, blended learning, once considered educational programming with two components, complementary in-class and distance learning, now in some models might be implemented entirely within school (See “Station-Rotation Model” described here: <http://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/>).

Programs across the country that use PCHs to fund distance learning in ABE sites might find it difficult to move to innovative blended learning pedagogies due to the structure required to keep instruction in line with policy. Participants from states not using PCHs suggested that outcomes measures, rather than time equivalents, better reflect student progress, and that a competency-based model for accountability would better support learning. Members discussed the role that IDEAL Consortium could play in supporting policy shifts in this area by making recommendations to OCTAE.

OCTAE Report

Heidi Silver-Pacquilla and Alan Tucker from OCTAE discussed current initiatives, emphasizing the impact of WIOA on distance and blended learning. First, access for every learner to high quality instruction on demand is an OCTAE priority; implicit in this priority is a call for models of instruction that use technology innovatively.

Next, there is a new reporting requirement on NRS tables. Measurable skill still counts under WIOA, but NRS now requires reporting be structured in 90-day periods of participation (POP). A learner’s entries and exits within a 90-day period are all considered part of the same POP. The change is reflected on NRS forms 4C and 5A, concerning distance learning. Discussion followed about impact on ABE program structure, specifically whether the change may encourage managed enrollment scenarios to mitigate the negative impact of the new reporting structure on program performance.

“Technology moves so quickly; we don’t have time to figure out everything for ourselves. IDEAL is good because it helps states collaborate and learn from each other.”

Sheryl Hart,

*Adult Education State
Director, Arizona*



Featured Presentations

*Participants at the
IDEAL Consortium
Institute shared
quality resources:*

<http://tinyURL.com/hb78t6d>

Proxy Hours for Teacher-Created Materials

Destiny Simpson presented the process by which Pennsylvania evaluates and then assigns Proxy Contact Hours to teacher-created online learning modules. Pennsylvania's policy for supporting such use of PCHs makes it possible for teachers to leverage commonly available digital learning resources in learner-centered instruction by crafting curricula from multiple sources and presenting them to a learner via a Learner Management System (e.g., Moodle, Schoology, or Blackboard).

New Research Supporting Benefits of Blended Learning

Dr. Robert Murphy from SRI shared early findings from the Technologies for Adult Basic Literacies Evaluation (TABLE) study, which explored the use of several online curricula with learners working at Pre-GED levels in math and literacy. 14 ABE sites, 100 instructors, and nearly 2000 learners were studied. Early findings suggest the products were most often used to provide one-on-one instruction and additional practice opportunities outside of class. Many programs reported success with this approach despite technical challenges learners experienced and difficulty instructors had when trying to align in class and online learning.

Problem Solving in Technology Rich Environments (PS-TRE)

The American Institutes for Research is currently developing a series of research to practice briefs on the domains, or skill areas, of the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills. The PS-TRE brief to be released in early 2017 presents several strategies for integrating a problem-solving approach into computer skill develop.

Technology Resources for Distance and Blended Learning

Penny Pearson from OTAN shared with participants several resources for locating Open Education Resources (OER), including: [OER Commons](#), [NROC Project](#), [PhET](#) (Science sims), [NOAA](#) (Earth science), [NASA](#), [KHAN Academy](#), [National Science Digital Library](#), and [Curriki](#) and encouraged use of [the Achieve evaluation rubric](#) for measuring utility of an OER before using in class.

Tom Cytron-Hysom provided an update on the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment (described above), including a description of the new Information Literacy module and plans for developing Northstar 2.0, a new version of the assessment.

Advancing Adult Digital Learning Award

David Rosen, Ed.D, was recognized for his recent contributions to PD, including the publication of [Blended Learning for the Adult Education Classroom](#).



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