



IDEAL Consortium

A Project of the EdTech Center @ World Education

Report on the 2017 IDEAL Institute

First IDEAL Consortium Institute in a Member State

This year marked the first IDEAL Consortium Institute to hit the road. State-level staff, PD leaders, and teachers from our member states gathered in Minneapolis for collaboration, discussion, and presentations from national experts on key distance and blended learning issues, including: data-driven policy initiatives, blended learning models, and creative approaches in PD to support blended learning. The following states were represented at the Institute: Arizona, California, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan (NW Region), Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Texas.

EdTech Center Resource Update

The Institute marked the launch of the new EdTech Center website: <http://edtech.worlded.org/>. The new layout integrates the work of the IDEAL Consortium into the broader PD and technical support provided by the Ed Tech Center. It includes descriptions of the suite of updated IDEAL Consortium courses, including: IDEAL 101: Foundations of Distance and Blended Learning; IDEAL 102 study groups supporting in depth exploration of instructional or administrative issues; and three special topics courses on 1) blended learning, 2) use of OERs, and 3) using mobile devices for learning.

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.

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Challenges

Shift to Blended Learning Models Complicates Proxy Contact Hour Data. Several states rely on the NRS model for awarding Proxy Contact Hours (PCH) for time learners spend distance learning. There is concern about how to account for time spent using online curricula traditionally reserved for distance learning as a component of blended learning. Also of concern, many states have state distance learning policies that require programs to identify distance learning participants on NRS Table 4C as students with more than 50% of their time in distance learning. With increased popularity of blended learning, these states are recognizing the need to revise their state policies and create data collection procedures that will more incrementally account for time in different modes of learning.

Curricular Issues. As their blended learning programs develop, several Consortium member states have purchased state-wide licenses for online curriculum products better suited for use in blended learning. States are also looking for new curricula that align with new state standards established in response to WIOA requirements. For example, both Minnesota and Pennsylvania have adopted the College and Career Readiness standards, so have adopted or are creating CCRS-aligned curricula. The state of Texas is unique in that it has a history of strong local control and a multitude of approved curricula. The new challenge is ensuring these curricula are aligned with the Texas-authored ABE standards.

New or Rebooted Programming. Illinois, Maryland, and California are among the states focusing renewed effort on distance and blended learning. California, led by the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN), is in year two of its Digital Leadership Academy, through which OTAN leadership is helping a diverse range of agencies (e.g., community colleges, community-based organization, and school district-based ABE programs) reach technology integration, online, or distance and blended instruction goals.

ABE leaders in Illinois are rebuilding distance and blended learning efforts after struggling to sustain programs during the two years that Illinois went without a state budget. Maryland, which has had pockets of distance and blended, convened a state-wide working group in 2017 and is attempting to increase access to blended and distance by training teachers in several programs that have never had such programming.

Congratulations to Steve Quann, the 2017 recipient of the IDEAL Consortium Lifetime Achievement Award, for his work creating quality professional development in support of digital literacy, distance, and blended instruction.



ABE leaders hard at work at the IDEAL Consortium Institute in Minneapolis. Taking note of ideas from their peers on how to mitigate barriers to quality distance and blended learning.

Policy and Implementation Highlights

State-Level Program Reorganization

The two days of discussion made clear that use of blended learning has required reconsideration of program models. Traditional hub model states, like Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, which employ centralized or regional hubs to which local programs refer students for distance education, are empowering local programs that have never done distance education to take on blended learning. Conversely, Arizona has noticed a drop in distance learning students as more programs have introduced quality blended learning. In response, ABE leaders there are looking into creating distance learning hubs.

“It was great to be able to host the meeting locally because our whole Minnesota DL team could attend. It’s always great to show-off our work and to see what other states are accomplishing, too!”

*Tom Cytron-Hysom,
Consultant, Minnesota
Distance Learning
Leadership Team*

Leveraging New Partnerships

Both in response to WIOA and in recognition that many learners across the U.S. have not found or gained placement in traditional ABE programs, new partnerships are springing up. This is most striking in California. A new regional model distributes funding to consortia that include community colleges, k-12 adult schools, county offices of education, local workforce investment boards, libraries, and community-based organizations. <http://aebg.cccco.edu/About/Adult-Ed-Block-Grant-Framework>

Smaller scale, though also effective, interagency collaboration can be seen in Minnesota, where ABE, workforce development, and library leaders convene to build capacity on digital literacy programming through the Better Together Initiative <http://www.mnliteracy.org/educators/better-together-strengthening-adult-learning-communities>. In northwest Michigan, ABE Program Director, Christy Nelson, is collaborating with local employment and training offices as partners for enrolling students in distance and blended learning.

Presentation of Creative Use of Technology in ABE

English Now!

Priyanka Sharma (World Education) and Sherry Lehane (Providence Public Library) presented on English Now!, a collaborative project with Peer 2 Peer University (P2PU) that supports English language learning opportunities for adult learners on waitlists. Participants work through online content together in weekly learning circles, while they are on waiting lists for traditional programming. The library also provides tablets and hotspots to support extended independent learning. <http://thewell.worlded.org/learning-circles-address-wait-lists-for-english-classes/>

Texas Technology Integration Coach Training

Dr. Glenda Rose presented a unique PD program in Texas that motivates the use of technology in ABE instruction. The Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL) has created a seven-level train-the-trainer program that results in a certification called ‘Technology Integration Coach.’ This competitive ‘gamified’ model of PD has the potential to build program-wide capacity across the state.

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