

Project IDEAL Update



A Multi-State Collaborative
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IDEAL Update — Newsletter for Project IDEAL — Improving Distance Education for Adult Learners

Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington and West Virginia

Project IDEAL is a consortium of states working together to develop effective distance education programs for adult learners. The Project IDEAL Support Center at the University of Michigan helps consortium states by developing support materials and web-based tools. The Center also 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

Mark Your Calendar

Report Writing Workshop
August 4th – 8th



State membership fees cover sending one person to Ann Arbor for a week-long workshop to help each state analyze the data from its distance experiments and prepare a report on the findings. In addition, participants will share insights about “promising practices” in distance education. These will be incorporated into the next edition of the *Handbook of Distance Education* and the online course that are scheduled for release in October.

New Data Collection Tools

Finding out what really works in distance education requires careful research. To help states collect quality data on their programs, the Support Center has developed a variety of data collection instruments. These include (1) Seat Time Logs designed to track student hours of engagement with the curriculum they are studying as well as NRS and learner test data; (2) a Student Contact Log to help teachers organize their notes about individual students; and (3) a Time Diary that teachers can use to track the time they spend in activities associated with distance teaching.

The Support Center has also created a secure online data depository. Launched last month, teachers upload a copy of their logs once a month. IDEAL staff download the logs and summarize the data to help DLCs evaluate program progress. These data will be the basis for the report each state writes in August about this year's distance experiments.

Teachers and administrators in Pennsylvania and Ohio were the first to use the depository. Submissions went smoothly and state summaries were prepared by IDEAL staff soon after. A few people in each state asked for help with their first upload. Donna Walter (aka "DataDonna") is the data manager for the project. Donna talked with or emailed several teachers, taking them through each step in the process.

Contact Donna (drwalt@umich.edu) if you have any questions about the data depository.

COABE 2003 — See You in Portland!

Project IDEAL will be well represented at COABE's annual conference this year!

We begin with a welcome reception on Sunday, April 27th, from 11:00–1:00 at the Sheraton where you will have a chance to meet and share ideas with IDEAL people from around the country. *All COABE attendees with Project IDEAL connections are invited to attend!* If you haven't done so, please RSVP to Debbie Bourque (dbourque@umich.edu). We will also be sharing Project IDEAL experiences in a number of conference sessions. Speakers include IDEAL staff (Jere, Leslie and Shannon) as well as representatives from Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

To download a copy of Project IDEAL presentation titles, abstracts, and session times, go to: www.projectideal.org.

Welcome New Member States!

We're pleased to welcome two new states to the Project IDEAL consortium — West Virginia and Washington.

Arkansas

In the fall, Arkansas trained nine teachers in five agencies to deliver instruction at a distance. Four sites are using *GED Connection* and the fifth is using *PLATO*. Each teacher currently has 6-10 students. AR hopes to provide sufficient support for distance learners to ensure they can reach their educational goals. Teachers are tracking the time they spend to help AR figure out how much a distance program would cost.

Idaho

Many of Idaho's adult learners live far from established literacy centers. Idaho hopes to open up access to these students by making *SkillsTutor* available in Community Technology Centers located in their home communities. Teachers from the nearest literacy center will provide support for these learners. Teacher training using the IDEAL online course in distance education began in April. Recruitment of learners will follow. Idaho hopes to learn what is required to recruit and support learners in this distributed classroom program.

Illinois

Last year Illinois launched GED Illinois—an online GED preparation program for both classroom and distance use. Presently 1,200 students are online, most of them in classrooms. In April, IL will send out RFPs seeking six pilot sites to experiment with recruiting and supporting adult learners studying GED Illinois at a distance.

Kentucky

After completing a four-week version of the IDEAL online distance education course, four Kentucky teachers—working with their DLC—developed a systematic plan to test two strategies to increase the amount of time that adult learners spend studying *PLATO* at a distance. Sixty recruits will attend a face-to-face orientation session before beginning their home study using *PLATO*. Half of them will receive ongoing support from teachers using

email and periodic face-to-face meetings. A control group of 30 students will receive no orientation or support. KY is also developing a survey for a sample of adult learners who signed on to the state's adult education portal (www.kyvae.org). There is wide variation in how much time this group spent studying the state's major instructional tool: *PLATO Online*. KY hopes to identify barriers to more intensive use of its online learning tools.

Maine

In Maine, 21 administrators are taking the IDEAL online course this Spring to help them better understand the needs of distance learners and to prepare for future work in distance education program development. Cuts in state funding have forced Maine to put its experiments on hold this year. State staff are hoping to secure alternative sources of funding to participate in Year 2 activities.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts began experimenting with distance education four years ago. This year four teachers in three agencies are teaching 135 students. The teachers use various distance products, including *Crossroads Café*, *GED Connection*, *TV411*, and *Workplace Essential Skills (WES)*. The state's research effort is aimed at answering the questions: what supports do distance learners need to reach their goals and how much do they cost? Current distance teachers and administrators are taking the IDEAL online distance education course with an eye toward adjusting it to meet the needs of new distance teachers should the program expand in FY05.

Missouri

Missouri is finishing a 2-1/2 year pilot of their GED Online program. Using lessons from the pilot effort, they are redesigning the program for re-launch on July 1. They are also developing an online professional development

program for the state's adult educators. Missouri will design and implement distance experiments next year.

New York

In March, New York began training five teachers and five administrators in ways to support learners studying *WES* at a distance. They will finish the IDEAL online course in late May and then begin recruiting and supporting up to 40 learners. Experiments will run during the summer and again in September with a focus on two primary areas of interest: the design of initial intake and orientation activities and maintaining involvement of learners long enough to reach their educational goals.

North Carolina

NC is working with Central Piedmont Community College to enhance *Crossroads Café* for use by independent ESL learners. The College has developed a video "wrap-around" for the 26 videos in the series. In the introduction, a video teacher prepares viewers for what they are about to see; in the wrap-up the teacher reinforces and suggests exercises based on the lessons in the *Crossroads* program. NC will be conducting distance experiments with this new product using 14 teachers and seven administrators. They hope to support 80 learners this year. Currently, the state is evaluating proposals from potential sites.

Ohio

Ohio is working with 14 teachers and seven administrators in seven sites with a goal of supporting 100 adults studying *GED Connection* at a distance. Pilot sites in Ohio began recruiting in January. Today they are supporting the learning activities of the early recruits while recruiting and orienting additional learners. In April, during the Ohio Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference (OAACE), teachers and administrators,

gathered to discuss current issues with the DLC and members of the Project IDEAL Advisory Committee. Also at OAAACE, pilots presented their experience to date with distance education. Additional information about the pilot sites in Ohio is available at <http://literacy.kent.edu/ideal>.

Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania ABLE-TIU Distance Learning Project is in its third year supporting 19 pilot agencies teaching *WES* at a distance. This year six agencies were selected to add a new component for lower-level learners. Before they start to study *WES* at a distance, learners are participating in a *TV411* Facilitated Group class designed to help learners build a mindset for independent study. The PA experimental design will yield data on the impact of the class on learner persistence in *WES*. Also new this year is a pilot using *GED Connection* at a distance. Eleven agencies are involved. Overall, PA's goal is to serve 1,370 distance students using these three curricula. The primary research questions are these: Can distance learners meet the same standards as classroom students? If not, why not, and what are appropriate recommendations for standards for distance learners in Pennsylvania?

Rhode Island

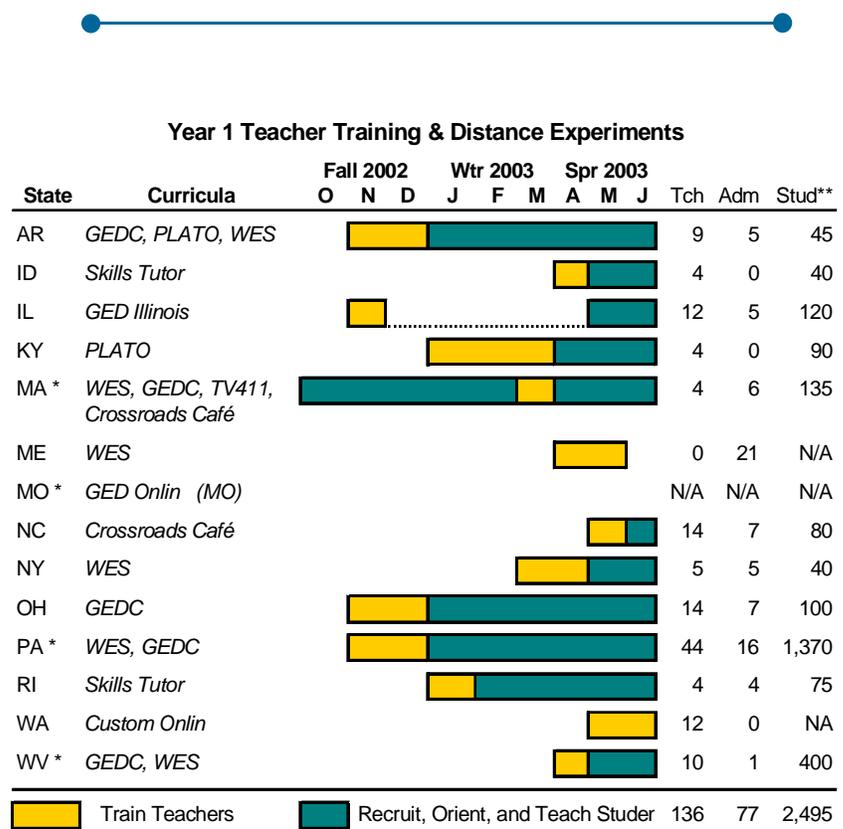
Rhode Island is targeting 75 learners for this year's distance experiment using *SkillsTutor*. RI's goal is to see what is required to recruit distance learners to study *SkillsTutor* and keep them studying long enough to reach their educational goals. Four teachers are participating in the pilot experiments. Initially, all students are being contacted at least three times by their instructors. In the second stage, students are divided into two groups. One group will continue to receive frequent contact by instructors to encourage their continued participation and progress. The second group will be contacted only if students request it. Experiments will run until September, when students will be post-tested. In September, RI's experiment will be expanded to include classroom-based learners to compare participation and progress.

Washington

Washington recently joined Project IDEAL. The Office of Adult Literacy is partnering with Washington Online, a provider of online community and technical college courses, to create and deliver basic skills instruction at a distance for ABE and ESL students. Adult educators will create the online courses beginning this summer and pilot test courses in the Fall. Proposed courses include writing in the workplace for ESL learners, computer skills for agricultural migrant workers, *WES* for a tribal population, and educational planning as an online supplement for students taking basic skills instruction in the classroom. To help the course designers better understand the program development process, they are taking the IDEAL online course in May and June of this year.

West Virginia

West Virginia's distance education program has evolved over many years and has utilized a variety of modalities—pre-taped video-based instruction, interactive programs, and online instruction. Currently only two people support all of the state's distance learners. WV's goal as a partner in Project IDEAL is to recruit and train 10 teachers to expand and improve learner support. In April these "Cyber-Teachers" will begin the IDEAL online course. They will be supporting learners in their use of *GED Connection* and *WES*. Implementation is scheduled to begin in May. WV hopes to develop a system that ensures students are provided with the instruction and support required for distance learning success.



NOTE: Most states are in the first year of experimentation.
 Many experiments continue through the summer and/or continue in Fall, 2003.
 * State had distance program prior to joining IDEAL.
 **Anticipated by the end of the year.

Print and Online Products

Training and support materials are being pilot tested in member states. Print products will be available for wider distribution in October.

- *Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners*
- Distance Learning 101: Teaching Adult Learners at a Distance. This online course includes a study guide for teachers taking the course and a trainer's guide for those who teach the course.
- An online distance education community tailored to each state's distance program

If you haven't received these materials, email Debbie (dbourque@umich.edu).

Assessment Issues

In 2002, IDEAL staff met with assessment experts to explore issues unique to distance learners. The working paper, *Assessment and Accountability Issues in Distance Education for Adult Learners*, was developed in response to that meeting. The paper lays out important issues states must address as they consider how to assess and count their distance learners at the state and federal levels. This paper is available for download from www.projectideal.org.

In 2003, assessment work continues as IDEAL staff dialogue with a second panel of experts. Discussions will focus on how alternative assessment systems—checklists and portfolios—can be adapted for use in measuring distance learners' educational progress. Another panel of experts will address accountability issues such as seat time and learner classification for the NRS.



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Travel Calendar: Fall, 2002 — Summer, 2003

Project IDEAL staff at the University of Michigan have regular phone discussions and e-mail exchanges with staff in consortium states. But sometimes it is helpful to talk face-to-face. IDEAL staff have been traveling to various states to provide technical assistance with research and training issues. We've had a great time!

Recent and Upcoming Visits to States

October, 2002

- **Pennsylvania:** Leslie Petty worked with Dehra Shafer and Deb Walker to train new and continuing pilot sites in using the online course.

November, 2002

- **Ohio:** Leslie Petty and Shannon Young assisted in Ohio's training led by DLC Kim McCoy and Trainer Andrew Venclauskas.

March, 2003

- **Kentucky:** Jere Johnston met with Deputy Commissioner Reecie Stagnolia, DLC Jane Martel, and the DAEL staff to develop an experimental plan that address the state's research questions.
- **New York:** Deb Walker worked with DLC George Marceau to introduce NY teachers to the online course and to discuss New York's program planning model.

April, 2003

- **Massachusetts:** Shannon Young attended a review and planning meeting for MA educators, state staff, and administrators who have been working on their distance learning initiative.
- **West Virginia:** Deb Walker assisted Kathy Hollingsworth and Ellen Killion in teacher training.

May, 2003

- **Washington:** Jere Johnston will travel to Washington to help DLC Jessica Peternell, her distance education trainers, and the state's curriculum designers launch their training effort using IDEAL's online program.

New Publication!

Jere Johnston, Leslie Petty, and Shannon Young teamed up with Nickie Askov at Penn State to write the NCSALL Occasional Paper: *Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education*. The paper was published in March and can be downloaded for free from <http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu>. Print versions are available from NCSALL for \$10. State directors of adult education will receive a complementary copy.