



*Improving
Distance
Education
for Adult
Learners*

Working Paper No. 8
**Exploring Distance
Education Curricula for
Adult Learners**

September, 2005



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 provides technical support in the areas of teacher training, research design, data collection, data analysis and reporting. The Center also produces working papers on topics of importance to distance education. Through collaborative research and practice, the consortium is working to provide quality distance education for adult learners across the country.

<http://projectideal.org>

Working Paper 8

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

Shannon Young
University of Michigan

Project IDEAL Support Center
Institute for Social Research • University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

September, 2005

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Lucy Detig, Lynn Hinson, Cynthia Love, and Deb Walker for their valuable feedback on various product descriptions. The author would also like to thank the vendors who contributed information, technical training, and access to their curricula for this paper. Finally, Project IDEAL would like to thank member states for providing access to their state systems and feedback on their experiences using curricula.

© 2005 Regents of the University of Michigan

First Printing: September, 2005

File: WP8ExploringCurricula!.doc

Activities of the Project IDEAL Support Center are supported by funds from member states and from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. The contents of this document do not necessarily represent the position or policy of the underwriters.

Contents

Instructional Models and Delivery Systems.....	2
Computer-Assisted Instruction	2
Teacher-Facilitated Multimedia Products	5
Purchasing Curricula.....	8
Media.....	9
Licensing	10
Training and Technical Support.....	11
Product Descriptions.....	13
<i>Aztec Action Learning and Workforce Readiness Systems</i>	15
<i>Connect with English</i>	17
<i>Crossroads Café</i>	18
<i>EASY: English Academic Success for You</i>	20
<i>English for All</i>	21
<i>GED 21st Century</i>	23
<i>GED Connection</i>	24
<i>GED Illinois Online</i>	27
<i>Madison Heights / Lifelines</i>	29
<i>On Common Ground</i>	32
<i>PLATO Learning Systems</i>	33
<i>Pre-GED Connection</i>	35
<i>Reading Horizons</i>	37
<i>SkillsTutor</i>	39
<i>Tutorsystems: Basic Skills Tutorial Software</i>	41
<i>TV411</i>	43
<i>Workplace Essential Skills</i>	44
Appendices	46
Appendix 1: Product Charts—Intended Audience and Instructional Delivery System	47
Appendix 2: Arizona (ELAA) Distance Education Product Evaluation Rubric	48
Appendix 3: Vendor Review Chart.....	50

Determining which curriculum to use is one of the most challenging and important decisions states make in developing a distance education program. While good curriculum selection is important in all educational settings, curriculum plays an even more important role in distance education where students often spend far more time interacting directly with the curriculum than they do with their teacher or other students. A distance curriculum must convey content, provide instruction, help motivate students and maintain their interest, and be both readily accessible and user friendly. It is no wonder that selecting appropriate curricula for distance education is a challenge, particularly since the majority of products developed for adult learners over the last ten years were originally designed for classroom use. As distance education gains in popularity as a delivery method for adult learners, increasing numbers of vendors are either adapting existing classroom-based products or designing new curricula specifically for distance education. As a result, states have the opportunity to offer a combination of educational products that address the different learning needs, styles, and goals of their distance students. By offering these options, states play to one of the great strengths of distance education—the ability to tailor instruction to the individual. With good curriculum selection and well-developed distance delivery design, teachers, programs, and states can better meet the educational needs of a diverse set of learners.

Curriculum selection for distance education should draw on the expertise of a diverse group of stakeholders. Curricula under consideration should be researched and reviewed by state curriculum staff, experienced distance teachers who will use the curricula, and administrative and technical staff who will be responsible for ongoing costs and technology needs associated with the delivery of curriculum. Questions to address in assessing curricula include:

- What is the purpose of the curriculum, for what level of learner is it written, and what are expected outcomes?
- Do pedagogy and content align with the state’s educational philosophy, standards, and goals for student learning?
- Is the curriculum likely to encourage interest and motivation in learning?
- Are content and instruction delivered in a format that is user friendly?
- Which technology will students need to access and how much training will be required to use that technology?
- Are appropriate progress measures included?
- Is the curriculum correlated to standardized measures of student progress?
- What are start-up and ongoing costs associated with using the curriculum?

- What training and technical support is needed to deliver instruction using the curriculum?

This working paper is divided into three sections. It begins by examining educational models and delivery systems and their potential impact on teaching and learning. The next section considers issues associated with determining the overall expenses associated with purchasing a curriculum. The final section contains descriptions of 19 products and includes vendor contact information as well as curriculum-specific feedback (where available) from the 2005 Project IDEAL Teacher Survey. Appendices include tables showing curricula reviewed in this paper by intended audience and by instructional systems, a content review template for ESOL curricula designed by Arizona state staff, and a list of topics to address in negotiating with vendors.

Instructional Models and Delivery Systems

The adult education curricula described in this paper can be divided into two primary educational models or approaches: computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and teacher-facilitated instruction using multiple media. In CAI, the software serves as the teacher, assessing student needs, assigning and directing learning activities, and providing feedback. Teacher-facilitated curricula, on the other hand, are usually designed to have a teacher play a more active role in the teaching and learning process. The teacher assesses student needs, offers guidance and suggests learning activities, and is responsible for providing feedback on student work. These two distinct instructional approaches each have strengths and drawbacks as well as different underlying pedagogy and expected learning outcomes. This section provides an overview of the types of instructional delivery systems being used by adult education curriculum developers. It is not intended to be comprehensive, nor can the unique features of various curricula be captured here. The division of curricula into these two educational models is intended to help readers more readily understand the educational purposes and ramifications associated with how instruction is delivered and the ways in which various media are used to deliver different types of instruction.

Computer-Assisted Instruction

Most of the CAI or educational software products described in this paper are designed around a direct instruction model in which the software provides the bulk of instruction, assigns activities, and assesses learning. Diagnostic instruments generate information on student learning needs, and then the software assigns a course of instruction designed to provide remediation. Students interact with the software, which directs all learning activities and provides instant feedback on progress. In many classroom settings, CAI serves as one component of a diverse set of instructional activities (e.g., writing assignments, role-playing, experimentation, group activities, etc.). It is often used primarily as a supplement to reinforce knowledge, skills, and information being taught in the classroom. In adult basic education distance programs, CAI is often the primary or sole instructional component. The distance education instructor who uses these products

serves largely as a guide or facilitator, tracking progress and providing additional support and supplemental assignments as needed.

There are five main types of CAI: Tutorial, Drill and Practice, Simulation, Instructional Game, and Problem Solving. Most educational software for adult learners, while providing the bulk of instruction using one model (e.g., tutorial), will also contain elements of other instructional approaches (e.g., games, problem solving).

Tutorial. Tutorial software follows a linear instructional progression. Learners begin by completing diagnostic assessments. The software uses the diagnostic results to generate a tailored lesson plan. Students are then introduced to new information and guided through an instructional process that is usually comprised of a series of steps that incorporate explanations of concepts or skills followed by opportunities to practice applying information and skills learned. Learning and practice activities are followed by a posttest to determine skill mastery. More sophisticated tutorial software programs include branching that provides students with additional instruction and practice activities based on their responses to lesson activities and posttest questions. Most questions in these programs are in either multiple-choice or short-answer formats.

Drill and Practice. This type of software assumes the student has already learned instructional content. The primary purpose of these programs is to provide opportunities for students to work on problems and practice applying information and skills learned to ensure mastery and/or to increase speed with which students can answer questions or complete problems accurately. Drill and practice programs evaluate student responses to problems, providing a minimal amount of explanation regarding student answers. When students select an incorrect answer, they are usually taken back to the missed question and provided with another chance to select the correct answer. Most questions in these programs are in a multiple-choice format.

Simulation. Simulation software models real-life examples of situations and behaviors and provides the learner with opportunities to practice the skills and abilities they would need to perform tasks in real life. Students are presented with a situation or problem and asked to make decisions or take action to resolve a problem or to complete an action. Students are then shown the consequences of their choices. Simulation software is often used to model dangerous or complex activities to provide experiential learning before a student performs the actual activity.

Instructional Game. Instructional game software seeks to provide instruction by having learners engage in a variety of games. Success is based on agility, quick thinking, and response time, all of which are combined to determine who wins the game. Students may compete against one another or against the computer.

Problem-Solving. Problem-solving software seeks to engage learners by providing them with a particular situation or issue that the student must figure out. Students use clues and information provided by the software to figure out problems, puzzles, etc.

CAI Products for Adult Education

The majority of adult education CAI products deliver instruction using tutorial and/or drill and practice approaches. Some include elements of simulation, instructional gaming, and/or problem-solving, but the focus is largely on direct instruction. Most include multiple choice questions and activities, although some also include opportunities for short answer or essay writing. Examples of tutorial software for adult learners include *Aztec*, *GED Illinois Online*, *MHC GED Online*, *PLATO*, *Reading Horizons*, *SkillsTutor*, and *Tutorsystems*. *GED 21st Century* is an example of a drill and practice product; it works in conjunction with the direct instruction provided through the publisher's print materials.

CAI curricula offer a variety of features to aid student learning. Animation and graphics as well as sound contribute to maintaining learner interest and providing additional instructional support. Other support features include calculators, dictionaries, test-taking tips, and access to progress and testing outcomes. These products also include management systems that enable teachers to assign additional learning activities, assess learner progress, import student data, track time on task, and view and/or download a variety of class and student reports. Most also include an internal messaging system. The specific features associated with various management systems can be found in the product descriptions section.

Considerations for Selecting CAI products

What factors are important in selecting instructional software? The target audience, the depth and breadth of the content covered, technology requirements, user-friendliness of the software and teacher support features are all important issues. A first step involves determining whether the intended audience is broad or targeted. Curricula like *Aztec*, *PLATO* and *SkillsTutor* are designed to serve learners at many educational levels. Products like *GED 21st Century*, *MHC GED Online*, *Reading Horizons*, and *Tutorsystems* offer instruction to a narrower range of learners. Once that decision has been made, a close examination of the depth and breadth of the coverage of specific content is needed. For example, how extensive are explanations of concepts and how many opportunities are provided for students to apply those concepts? Are sufficient explanations and practice problems provided when students don't readily master a concept? Do the systems provide instruction using different educational approaches and instructional types (e.g., games and/or problem-solving activities in addition to tutorials)? The extent of the branching used in these software packages varies and should be examined to determine whether instruction is merely repeated or is expanded and whether multiple tailored practice problems are available.

Aesthetic and technology issues must be considered as well. Screens should be clearly laid out with easily understandable icons and directions. At the same time, the software needs to be both interactive and interesting to help maintain learner interest. Students should be able to readily access the software, navigate among screens and menu options, see their progress, and know which activities they have yet to complete. The technology

associated with using the programs should facilitate rather than hinder the learner. Frequent system crashes, multiple technology requirements (e.g., CD-ROM, plug-ins, browser upgrades, etc.), long loading periods, and navigational problems can leave students frustrated and therefore, more likely to drop out rather than face technology challenges. Animated and still graphics should be simple and contribute to the instructional message. Sound should be used where needed to provide additional educational support, particularly to help lower-functioning ABE and ESOL learners.

For teachers, the reporting system should be easy to utilize and provide a range of reporting opportunities. Teachers should be able to see when the system is temporarily unavailable. They should also be alerted when a student has been locked out of a program or screen and be able to quickly address the problem. In addition, teachers should be able to easily access and assign appropriate lessons and activities.

Teacher-Facilitated Multimedia Products

Teacher-facilitated multimedia curricula available for adult learners utilize different media to appeal to different learning styles and can be organized into two general categories: products that include video, print, and online components and those that include just video and print components. Most systems deliver overlapping as well as complementary instruction utilizing the different media. For example, content delivered via print materials may be repeated in online activities, which may also include additional information and instruction. Most print materials contain pre- and post-viewing sections that provide guidance regarding which elements to attend to in the videos and that follow up with questions and activities related to video content. Teachers and students may choose to use any or all media for instructional purposes.

Video. The use of video as a delivery system offers many different instructional possibilities. Videos can portray real-life scenarios, tell stories, include demonstrations and interviews, and model behaviors and how-to applications. Most multimedia product developers now offer video in a variety of formats including VHS videotape, CD-ROM, DVD, and/or via the Internet. Many adult education series videos can also be seen on public or cable television across the country.

Print. Print provides students with both direct instruction and opportunities to practice what they've learned. Print is a comfortable, familiar medium for most students. ESOL products like *Crossroads Café* use print both as a direct instructional tool and as a support mechanism for helping learners understand video content. These texts include pictures and transcripts of dialogue from the videos to help students better understand stories and instructional content.

Online. Online activities associated with the multimedia products discussed in this paper tend to be less software-directed than CAI software and may require learners to understand how to utilize browser functions to navigate the web. Activities include reviewing video clips and responding to questions about the content of the videos, visiting other websites and completing activities either on those websites or in response

to content learned from the websites. *GED Connection* (GEDC) and *Workplace Essential Skills* (WES) are examples of products that utilize other web resources in addition to the main product website. Some multimedia online activities, such as those in *TV411*, complement instruction provided in the print and video portions of the curriculum by providing practice opportunities.

Multimedia Products for Adult Education

Two main product developers/distributors provide the majority of products for adult learners: INTELECOM and Kentucky Educational Television (KET). INTELECOM has developed a series of ESOL, civics, and cultural literacy products using print and video including *Crossroads Café*, *Lifelines*, *Madison Heights*, and *On Common Ground*. Each series delivers instruction by utilizing real-life and/or fictional portrayals that address a variety of social, cultural, civic, and everyday life issues. KET distributes video, print, and online products including GEDC, *TV411*, and WES. KET also distributes the print-video series *Pre-GED Connection*. Like the INTELECOM products, these curricula deliver both direct instruction and simulations of real-life issues and situations using various media. Other multimedia products included in this paper—*Connect with English*, *EASY*, and *English for All*—offer instruction for ESOL learners.

Considerations for Selecting Teacher-Facilitated Multimedia Products

Multimedia products utilize different media to deliver different and complementary instruction. While these systems can be complex to use, they offer a variety of methods for delivering instruction, have the potential to appeal to different learning styles, and present instruction using readily accessible media. Some of the criteria for selecting a multimedia product are the same as those for selecting a CAI program: target audience, the depth and breadth of content, technology requirements, and teacher support features. However, because the role of the teacher in using multimedia curricula differs sharply from the role of the teacher in using instructional software, additional emphasis on teacher training and support is needed.

Deciding Whether to Use CAI or Multimedia Curricula

Ideally, states would have the ability to use a combination of teacher-facilitated multimedia and instructional software products, drawing on the strengths of each to provide teachers and students with a menu of distance learning options. However, given the limited funding available for many adult education programs, this is often not possible, and states or agencies find it necessary to make decisions about which curricula to purchase. Several factors come into play in determining whether to purchase CAI or multimedia curricula.

Educational approach. Because of the differences in how they are designed, instructional software and multimedia curricula often use different educational approaches. When deciding about curricular choices, states and agencies should consider their goals for the students they serve. Do they want to prepare students to take specific

tests—and focus on the skills needed to do that, or do they want to help students develop broader thinking and problem-solving skills? As discussed earlier, most CAI programs available for adult distance education are based in either the tutorial or drill and practice models. These programs tend to be effective in helping students to master skills assessed by many of the standardized tests, but typically lack opportunities for students to engage in creative or generative work. In contrast, many multimedia curricula provide greater opportunities for students to engage in problem-solving activities, to work on projects, or to generate original text. However, these programs may not focus as intensely on skill building. These differences suggest the value of combining both approaches to provide a broad range of educational experiences for the adult learner.

Accountability. A closely related issue is accountability. How will student learning be assessed and for what purposes? Will distance learners be included in state and/or national reporting systems? Does the state accept intermediate progress measures or focus on standardized test outcomes? What constitutes educational advancement or success? Each of these questions must be addressed in terms of curriculum selection and expected outcomes. In addition, it is crucial to explore the relationship between the curriculum content and the content covered by the assessment tools used to determine student progress.

Most product developers provide correlations or crosswalks to a variety of standardized tests and/or state and national standards and benchmarks. Not all such correlations are created equal, however. They range in the extensiveness of the comparison as well as in quality. Just because a product developer has correlated its curriculum to the TABE, for example, does not mean the product is well suited to help students improve TABE test scores. Reviewers should carefully examine instructional content in terms of assessment measures that will be used to ensure they are appropriately matched.

Teacher role. Other considerations focus on the role of the teacher. In instructional software, the role of the teacher is largely one of facilitator or manager. As the software is responsible for much of the instructional content and delivery, the teacher serves largely as support system, providing additional guidance, assigning supplemental materials, and monitoring student progress. The role of the teacher in using multimedia products is often more complex. While teachers also play a facilitation role, they spend considerably more time responding to student-generated work. In general, the teacher's role is intended to be far more active than it is in CAI products. The teacher is responsible for providing guidance and support in how to use each medium, what content to attend to, and what work the student will complete. The teacher may also be responsible for the distribution and retrieval of curriculum materials.

Accessibility of materials and technology. An important issue for distance education is how agencies provide learners with access to materials and required technologies. It is important to determine what technologies students will need to use the curriculum (e.g., DVD player, computer with high-speed Internet access, etc.), where they can access these technologies if they do not have them available at home, and how they will receive materials such as videotapes and workbooks. The best-designed curriculum is useless for

distance education if students are unable to easily access it and use it at their convenience.

Teacher feedback to students. Another issue centers on how teachers provide feedback to learners on their work. CAI software and some online components of multimedia curricula provide instant feedback to students on their work. However, in multimedia curricula, the feedback process for print-related and some online text-based student work is rarely instant. There are two issues here: how much student work the teacher needs to review and the ease of accessing those student materials. Because CAI provides direct, instant feedback on student performance, a teacher's task is considerably smaller than for multimedia curricula, which require the teacher to respond to a greater portion of student work. One result of this difference is that it is likely a teacher using a CAI curriculum could support more distance learning students than could a teacher using a multimedia curriculum. On the other hand, teachers using multimedia curricula may develop stronger relationships with their students because of the greater amount of feedback and communication required. In addition, distance teachers can usually access their students' online work more easily than their print work; this is due largely to logistical issues—the challenges associated with distributing and retrieving print materials. Results from the 2004 Project IDEAL Teacher Survey illustrate this. Teachers were asked to estimate how often they reviewed learner work. Of the 61 teachers who responded to this item, half said they review student print-based work at least once per week with 31% reviewing print materials only once per month. Yet 82% reviewed students' online work at least once per week with only 3% reviewing online work once per month.

The choice of CAI or teacher-facilitated multimedia curricula hinges upon a variety of factors. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses which have board implications for teaching and learning. By carefully reviewing the characteristics of individual curricula, states and agencies can select those that are best matched to their institutional needs and to the educational needs and goals of their students. For an example of a rubric developed by Arizona to review ESOL products, see Appendix 2.

Purchasing Curricula

Understanding how vendors price their products can be one of the most complex aspects of selecting a curriculum. Each vendor has a different formula for calculating product price, and prices change depending on a variety of factors. Vendors are often willing to negotiate and usually provide discounts for bulk purchases. In comparing various packages, states should request both the start-up costs of purchasing the product and the ongoing costs associated with using the product after the first year. Ongoing costs may change drastically depending upon whether the vendor requires an annual license fee, how many materials are reusable, costs associated with distributing and returning materials, and what training and technical support are required, among others. Having a breakdown of each component of start-up versus ongoing costs can better enable states to make informed choices in curriculum selection. See Appendix 3 for a list of topics to address with vendors before purchasing curricula.

Components states should explore before purchasing include:

- Number of end users planned: bulk vs. individual user purchases
- The medium or media through which curriculum is delivered (i.e., print, video, online, CD-ROM, DVD, LAN/WAN)
- For multimedia systems, whether media are purchased separately or as part of a package
- Licensing: state or site, annual or one-time
- Reproduction and/or distribution costs
- Replacing consumable materials
- Training and technical support requirements
- Participation in pilot-testing activities

Media

Costs associated with using multimedia products tend to hold steady across years. States or agencies purchase an annual license to use the product and must continue to purchase consumable materials (i.e., student workbooks). Start-up costs also often include training as well as the initial purchase of master copies of videos for reproduction. In subsequent years, reproduction costs are likely to drop somewhat as agencies reuse videos. For distance programs, states must also consider the costs associated with distributing materials and the replacement costs when materials are not returned.

Pricing components associated with instructional software systems include fees associated with licenses, virtual seats, and technical support. Other costs may include teacher and student training and server access and use. The issue of how costs are determined in relation to the purchasing of “virtual” seats is described below.

Purchasing Virtual Seats

An additional consideration is the method through which vendors determine the price of their virtual seats. A virtual seat is the means through which students are granted access to online software programs. There are three primary approaches to charging for virtual seats: student, seat, and concurrent. In the per-student model, the client purchases one unique seat for each student. Once the student leaves the program, the seat cannot be reassigned or used by another student. If a state purchases 100 seats, it can serve up to 100 students. Vendors who use this approach include Achievement Technologies (*SkillsTutor*) and Harcourt Achieve (*GED 21st Century*). In the per-seat model, a state or agency purchases a number of virtual seats each of which may be assigned to one student at a time. Once a student has completed his/her studies, the agency may reassign the seat

to another student. If a state purchases 100 seats, up to 100 students can be enrolled at any given time with an unlimited number of possible learners served over the course of the year. Vendors who use this approach include MHC (*GED Integrated Online*), *GED Illinois*, and BLS (*Tutorsystems*). In the concurrent user approach, the state or agency purchases a number of seats each of which can be used by only one student at any given point in time. If a state purchases 100 seats, up to 100 students can be using the software at any time of the day. The state may enroll as many learners as it chooses, but only 100 can be actively using the software at point in time. Examples of vendors who use this approach include *Aztec* and *PLATO*.

Types of Virtual Seat Allocations

License Type	One Virtual Seat Equals
Student	1 student only
Seat	1 student enrolled at a time; potential for multiple students to use a seat over the course of year.
Concurrent	1 student using software at any point in time; multiple students enrolled at the same time; potential for multiple users on any given day.

Licensing

Many vendors either offer or require states or agencies to purchase annual licenses to use their products. Licenses provide the client with rights to use, reproduce, broadcast and/or distribute elements of the product and generally include a discount off list prices. For example, KET offers both state and site licenses for the products it distributes (*GEDC*, *Pre-GED Connection*, *TV411*, *WES*). Licenses are available for rights to reproduce, distribute, and broadcast the videos associated with these products. In addition, KET offers state and site licensing for its online management system. INTELECOM also uses a licensing system for its adult education products (*Crossroads Café*, *Lifelines*, *Madison Heights*, *On Common Ground*). Agencies pay an annual license fee for rights to use the product. In addition, agencies must purchase a master set of the video materials for reproduction purposes. States that participate in any pilot-testing associated with INTELECOM products have license fees waived and receive materials at a discounted rate.

Other vendors require the purchase of a one-time license for use of their products. For example, *Connect with English* requires a small, one-time state-level license fee for the right to reproduce the videos associated with the series. MHC also requires a one-time institutional fee for rights to use its *GED Online* software. Costs for these products drop considerably in subsequent years.

The chart below includes additional vendor-provided information associated with purchasing products described in this paper.

Vendor-Specific Purchasing Information

Product	Notes
Aztec	Aztec Learning Systems software and Employability Skills software may be purchased separately or bundled.
Connect with English	Videos purchased from WGBH: one-time license plus per-video-set duplication rights. User duplicates videos. Print materials are available from McGraw Hill.
EASY	CDs and workbooks are included in the price with unlimited duplication rights for all print materials. Videos may not be reproduced.
English for All	All EFA materials are available via the web for free. Videos may also be purchased in CD-ROM, DVD, or VHS videotape formats.
INTELECOM products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossroads Café • Madison Heights • Lifelines • On Common Ground 	Agencies purchase a distance learning (site) license from INTELECOM, which includes video/DVD reproduction and broadcast rights along with a copy of the Teacher Guide for Distance Learning. Agencies must then purchase course sub-masters for reproduction purposes, or they may elect to purchase finished tapes/DVDs at reduced rates. Print materials may not be reproduced unless otherwise indicated. Shipping and handling is 10%.
KET-distributed products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED Connection • Pre-GED Connection • TV411 • WES 	Each state license is negotiated separately with KET. State licenses allow for unlimited reproduction and distribution of videos as well as broadcast rights. The statewide online management system license includes unlimited usage. Video reproduction costs are not included in totals. Print materials may not be reproduced. Shipping cost is 9% for purchases over \$1000.
Reading Horizons	Virtual seats are available. Seats may be reassigned once a student has left the program. The price of virtual seats drops with larger bundle purchases.

Training and Technical Support

Two types of training need to be considered: teacher and student. Each impacts the cost and success of using a distance product. Technology requirements and technical support also contribute to the cost of purchasing and utilizing a distance curriculum.

Teacher training. Teacher training for distance curricula varies greatly, ranging from products that need little or no training to use to those that require extensive training. In addition, not all developers provide training. In instances where face-to-face training is provided, the purchaser is generally responsible for making arrangements for all travel and lodging expenses for the trainer(s). Curriculum-related materials may or may not be included as part of the general training fee. The chart below indicates vendor-recommended training requirements for teachers using curricula described in this paper. States should determine whether follow-up training will be necessary, whether state staff will prepare new teachers to use curricula, and whether additional technical support is provided.

Vendor Information on Teacher Training

Product	Training Requirements
Aztec	Phone or web-based training. 1 ½ hrs. Training is included as part of the license fee.
Connect with English	No training is provided.
EASY	Length of training negotiated with vendor.
English for All	Training optional; three hours in a lab setting.
GED 21 st Century	Training optional. If desired will provide.
GED Illinois Online	Training on web-based tools is available for both instructors and students for a fee. Training and professional development opportunities are available to help instructors in teaching and learning online.
INTELECOM products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossroads Café • Madison Heights • Lifelines • On Common Ground 	Length of training negotiated with master trainer provided by INTELECOM.
KET-distributed products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED Connection • Pre-GED Connection • TV411 • WES 	Three types of training: one day, one and one-half days, or three days. Three-day trainings include a “train the trainers” session that enables state staff to deliver additional training. All sessions include teacher materials.
MHC GED Online	Training is included in one-time institutional fee.
PLATO	Declined to provide information.
Reading Horizons	8-hour day
SkillsTutor	8-hour day
Tutorsystems	8-hour day

Student training. As mentioned earlier in this paper, students’ facility with the media used to deliver distance instruction is crucial to their persistence and success. States should determine the amount of training students will need, what technology students will need to access to study the curriculum, and whether that training can be easily handled in an orientation session. In general, most vendors do not provide training for students to use their products.

Technical support. An additional potential cost involves technical support that will be required for distance teachers and learners to use the product. If the product is Internet, CD-ROM or DVD based, states should determine whether the vendor will provide individual user support or whether each educational agency will be responsible for answering questions and troubleshooting technical problems. States should determine whether technical support is provided as part of the package fee or is an additional annual

or monthly fee. On-site agency technical support staff should be consulted regarding technology requirements, any technology-related training needed that is not covered by the vendor, and students' access to technology and fluency using technology associated with a product.

Product Descriptions

This section contains descriptions and contact information for 19 adult education curricula. Products are listed in alphabetical order. These products represent a sample of the available distance curricula. Many curricula described here have been or are being used by Project IDEAL member states. The list is not intended to be comprehensive nor were other distance products intentionally excluded. As mentioned above, many developers are adapting existing classroom-based curricula for distance uses or are designing new curricula for distance application. It is beyond the scope of this paper to include all the available products. Print-only products were not reviewed for this paper, but may be included in future versions if IDEAL members states decide to include more print-only products as part of their distance offerings. Products that offer instruction using CD-ROM and/or LAN access only were also not included in this paper as most instruction would need to occur at an educational site. In addition, licenses for individual users for these products can be prohibitive. The chart below lists the product descriptions included in this paper.

Product Descriptions Provided for

Aztec	MHC GED Online
Connect with English	On Common Ground
Crossroads Café	PLATO
EASY	Pre-GED Connection
English for All	Reading Horizons
GED 21 st Century	SkillsTutor
GED Connection	Tutorsystems
GED Illinois Online	TV411
Lifelines	Workplace Essential Skills
Madison Heights	

Each description begins with a chart listing contact information, target audience, media used in delivering instruction, minimum technology and platform needed to operate the product, methods for purchasing parts or all of the curriculum, product-specific assessments, and where available, information on correlations that have been completed by the vendor or an outside reviewer.

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

The information chart is followed by three main sections: (1) Product Description, (2), Communication, Classroom Management, and Reporting Tools, and (3) Teacher Feedback. Detailed information is included in each section where available and appropriate. In general, video-print products do not include communication, classroom management, or reporting tools. Therefore, this section is not included for those products. Approximately half of the curricula described in this paper were used and reported on by Project IDEAL teachers. A teacher feedback section is included for those products.

At the end of the each project year, Project IDEAL teachers are asked to complete a survey regarding their distance teaching experiences. In the survey, teachers are asked to consider how well the distance curriculum they used covered the skills students need, to indicate whether they assign supplemental materials, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, and to decide whether they would recommend the curriculum to other distance teachers. In 2005, 191 teachers completed the survey with 170 providing information about the various curricular products they used with their distance learners during the 2004-05 school year. Teacher feedback is provided for products listed below.

Teacher Feedback

Curriculum	N*	Curriculum	N*
Crossroads Café	4	PLATO	55
English for All	5	Pre-GED Connection	4
GED Connection	31	SkillsTutor	12
GED Illinois	5	Tutorsystems	5
MHC GED Online	17	WES	6

*Number of teachers who provided feedback on each curriculum.

While numbers of respondents for a given product may be small, teachers' open-ended comments and overall feedback are nonetheless of value for potential purchasers.

Aztec Action Learning and Workforce Readiness Systems

Developer/Publisher	Aztec Software Associates, Inc.
Phone	(800) 273-0033
Web address	www.aztecsoftware.com
Target Audience(s)	ABE, GED, and Workforce Training
Delivery Methods	Web, CD-ROM, LAN, print, diskette
Technology Requirements	Internet access, CD-ROM player, FlashPlayer
Platform: Minimum Requirements	Windows 95B
Purchase Methods	Concurrent virtual seats
Assessment	Pre and posttests for each course
Correlations	Modules are competency-based and have been correlated with the ACT Work Keys, ASVAB, CASAS, COMPASS, GED 2002 Exam, Pre-GED and TABE

Product Description

Aztec is an interactive, competency-based skills development CAI program that offers instruction in ABE and GED content as well as in work-based skills development. Each module is comprised of a series of lessons that include pre- and posttests, instructional content, and individual skills practice. Many lessons are presented using everyday literacy and life skills content.

Aztec's ABE modules focus on basic and intermediate language arts and math. ABE materials begin at the 2nd grade level and include lessons with progressively more difficult content. A minimum reading level is recommended for each module. A Spanish-language audio feature enables lower-level learners to hear on-screen instructional text in Spanish or in English. Additional software features include an optional audio component and games-based formatting for practice items. GED modules address the five content areas for the GED 2002 exam.

Aztec offers 60 print-based workforce training modules that provide ABE-level students with instruction and practice in workplace reading, writing, and math. The modules also include instruction in workplace behaviors. *Aztec* also offers an online version of its workbased skills program called Workforce Readiness. Modules from all *Aztec* programs purchased can be integrated to create new courses.

Aztec has developed an online Flash-based version of its curricula. The curriculum is available either via CD-ROM or Web.

Communication, Class Management, and Reporting Tools

Aztec's management system enables teachers to build customized courses and assessments and track student progress. Teachers can select from a list of courses and/or

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

develop new courses comprised of lessons from all available content areas. Individual lessons may be assigned without requiring students to complete pre-testing. In addition, the management system enables instructors to import different assessment measures to address program-specific accountability requirements. Student data and class rosters can be imported from ASCII, PeopleSoft, and/or tab-delimited formats. Additional data collection features include demographic data as well as customizable data collection fields. Reporting options include testing and practice activity results, mastery levels, start and completion dates, time on task, and recommendations for further learning activities. Student support is concentrated in the feedback provided by program software, which direct student activities based on their responses to multiple-choice questions. Additional support tools include an audio component, a calculator and an electronic note pad. *Aztec* includes an internal messaging system.

For an additional fee, *Aztec* offers a customized development feature in which programmers will take client-generated instructional content and adapt it to the existing system. New coursework is formatted using the same structure and navigational tools as all other *Aztec* lessons.

Connect with English

Developer/Publisher	WGBH Boston / McGraw-Hill Contemporary
Telephone	(800) 532-7637
Web address	http://www.learner.org
Target Audience(s)	High beginning to intermediate ESOL
Delivery System	Print, video, CD, cassette
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR, CD-ROM, audio cassette player
Purchase Method	Videos available from WGBH; a one-time license is required to purchase videos. Print materials published by McGraw-Hill Contemporary
Assessments	None
Correlations	None

Product Description

Connect with English is a video/print series developed in 1998 that is designed for high beginning to intermediate ESOL learners. The series follows the life of a woman as she pursues her dream of having a singing career. Produced by WGBH-Boston, the series contains 50, 15-minute episodes in which the lead character travels from the east to the west coast. Stories are presented in a variety of settings and address social and communication skills in everyday situations. A variety of topics are addressed including job hunting, family issues, meeting people, education, business, and medical care, among others. Each segment also includes a section in which a group of non-native speakers discuss and reflect on the storyline.

Connect with English print materials include four conversation books, four grammar guides, four comprehension guides, reading practice activities, video transcripts, and a Home Viewer's Guide. Workbook content progresses in difficulty as learners' language proficiency increases. The conversation books address themes from the videos and include activities and optional projects. They include paired, team, and class activities (e.g., role playing, surveys, games, and interviews). The grammar guides provide practice using vocabulary and grammar associated with the videos. The Home Viewer's Guide is intended for independent study and is available in all-English, or in bilingual versions in Mandarin, Korean, Spanish, and Thai. Each lesson contains summaries of episode contents, character names and vocabulary, and questions about story content. Also included in the Home Viewer's guide is a Culture Corner section in which students learn about North American culture.

Audio cassette tapes and CDs are available for the *Connect with English* soundtrack. The program also includes a Distance Learning Faculty Guide.

Crossroads Café

Developer/Publisher	INTELECOM
Telephone	(800) 576-2988
Web address	http://www.intelecom.org
Target Audience(s)	ESOL
Delivery System	Video, print, cassette
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR, audio cassette player; DVD or CD-ROM for transcripts of video programs
Purchase Method	Licenses and materials are available from INTELECOM
Assessments	Unit tests and checklists; formal and informal assessments available via print, cassette, and/or video.
Correlations	BEST, CASAS, EFF, MELT, SCANS

Product Description

Crossroads Café is a video and workbook series that includes 26 lessons focusing on English language skills development for ESOL learners ranging from low intermediate to advanced learners. Produced in 1996, the series is set at the fictitious *Crossroads Café* and follows a diverse cast of characters as they participate in the process of setting up and running a small café. The curriculum is designed to help learners develop their communication skills and to enable them to understand elements of American culture. Topics and issues addressed vary widely from relationships to racism to employment to community involvement and adjusting to a new culture.

In addition to the main storyline, each video includes a Culture Clip, a documentary-type segment that addresses cultural issues that have been raised during the episode. The Word Play feature includes animated clips on uses of the English language in specific contexts.

Two workbooks accompany the video series and include lessons in listening, reading, writing, grammar, speaking, and pronunciation. A usage key indicates which activities are designed for different learning levels.

The curriculum also includes a Photostories workbook designed to support lower-level learners in understanding the series content. Photostories materials can be used with students working at any level. A Partner Guide is available for tutors and/or teachers who are working one-on-one with learners to help them practice their language skills.

The *Crossroads* videos are available with a wrap-around instructional feature. These segments appear at the beginning and end of each video and include additional instruction and guidance in using the materials. The wrap-around segments were developed by staff from North Carolina's Central Piedmont Community College.

Pilot testing is underway to deliver *Crossroads Café* online via course management systems used in New York and Florida. The pilot test includes streaming video of all *Crossroads* segments.

Crossroads Café is aired on public television and cable access stations across the country.

Teacher Feedback

Four Project IDEAL teachers provided feedback on *Crossroads Café* in the 2005 Teacher Survey. All thought it covered the important skills and topics ESOL students need. Three of the four teachers would recommend it “Strongly” or “Very Strongly.” The fourth would recommend the curriculum “with some reservations.” Only one teacher assigned supplemental materials.

When asked about strengths, one teacher noted that *Crossroads Café*

is very useful for the intermediate to advanced learner. Issues covered are those that many individuals and families face regardless of national origin.

Another wrote:

The curriculum is excellent as a distance curriculum for ESOL students who are fairly advanced and are seeking to improve their listening comprehension.

When asked about the weaknesses of the curriculum, two teachers noted that the curriculum is not suited for beginning learners. No other comments were provided.

EASY: English Academic Success for You

Developer/Publisher	Digital Education Productions
Telephone	(800) 858-8193
Web address	http://www.easyeld.com
Target Audience(s)	ESOL
Delivery System	Video, print
Technology Requirements	VCR or DVD player, TV, computer with CD-ROM
Purchase Method	Materials are available from Digital Education Productions
Assessment	Posttest for each unit
Correlations	BEST, BEST Plus, CASAS, EL Civics, SCANS; FL, MD, and TX state standards

Product Description

EASY is a beginning to intermediate ESOL video and print product that includes twelve instructional units. The program begins by introducing students to the alphabet, counting, telling time, colors, how to handle an introduction, etc., and progresses to more advanced topics including health care, personal finances, education and employment. Each video includes characters who describe and demonstrate everyday activities (e.g., going to the bank) using simple terminology. Instruction includes grammar and vocabulary activities. Many lessons include characters' dialogues printed on screen.

EASY includes a Teacher Resource guide with lesson plans and activities, a how-to-use video for teachers, and student workbooks. Each DVD also includes how-to-use video segments for learners in Chinese, Haitian, Hmong, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese languages.

Digital Education Productions is in the process of developing and testing an Internet version of the curriculum that will be available for use in early 2006. The online system will offer interactive practice activities for learners that include listening and speaking activities as well. The online learning system will mirror the interface of the CDs and will include a class management system for teachers. The company is also in the process of developing distance learning assessments for use with *EASY*.

EASY is broadcast on selected PBS and cable stations.

English for All

Developer/Publisher	CyberSTEP Project / Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN)
Telephone	(916) 228-2580
Web address	www.myefa.org
Target Audience(s)	ESOL
Delivery System	Web, CD-ROM, DVD, VHS videotape, print
Technology Requirements	Internet access with QuickTime 5.0, Flash Player, and Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0; TV/VCR, CD-ROM player or DVD player
Platform: Minimum Requirements	Windows 98; Mac Power PC, System 8.6
Purchase Method	Online materials and management system are free. CD-ROMs and DVDs can be purchased from OTAN. VHS tapes are available from Western Media (800) 648-8006.
Assessment	Unit posttests
Correlations	CASAS, SCANS, California ESOL standards, Latino Adult Education Skills (LAES) Project skill modules

Product Description

English for All (EFA) is an interactive English language skills development software program. The curriculum is designed for high beginning through intermediate ESOL learners. EFA is comprised of five stories with four video episodes per story for a total of 20 programs. The programs follow a diverse cast of characters as they engage in day-to-day work-related, social, educational and personal activities. Stories focus on employment, family life, government, education, parenting and the changing roles of men and women. Programs include a “friendly wizard” who narrates and helps guide learners through the episodes and activities. Each program includes an introduction followed by objectives, vocabulary, comprehension, life and “special” skills, grammar, a conclusion, and test sections. The Special Skills lessons model decision-making and problem-solving skills by showing two possible outcomes to a problem or issue and exploring the results of each outcome.

All lessons and activities are available online. For students who do not have a fast Internet connection, EFA offers CD-ROM and/or DVDs that can be used in conjunction with the website. Print materials containing additional activities are available for download from the site. A set of VHS videotapes is also available for purchase.

Communication, Classroom Management, and Reporting Tools

EFA includes an online management system through which teachers can create and manage classes and review student and class reports. The report feature includes the number of activities a student has attempted and/or completed and the percent correct for each activity and test a student completes. Students also have access to their own unit-

level report, which shows them activities they have worked on in a given unit, whether they've completed an activity, and what score they received on an activity or test. EFA includes an internal messaging system.

Student Support. EFA provides students with voice and text-based support. The programs include an audio component for vocabulary activities as well as transcripts for each of the video clips. In addition, the website includes a word-level translator (Babylon.com) that provides access to dictionaries in 13 languages.

Teacher Support. EFA houses a teacher resource library. Teachers can access over 60 lessons created by other teachers and/or post their own lessons for public use.

Teacher Feedback

Five Project IDEAL teachers provided input in the 2005 Teacher Survey regarding their experiences teaching distance learners using EFA. All five had predominantly positive things to say about EFA with two calling it an “excellent” curriculum. Four indicated the curriculum covers the important topics and skills students need “Very Well.” Asked about strengths of the curriculum, one teacher noted:

The real strength of the curriculum is that the students can readily relate to the story content. These are very real people and normal everyday situations. The students also relate to the characters and like the instant problem-solving techniques and solutions. They work on reading, listening, writing, speaking and learn American Culture in the process.

When asked about weaknesses, one teacher noted the program was not written for beginning ESL students. Another mentioned her students sometimes had difficulties with the technology associated with using the program. Another suggested more “vocal interaction” is needed. All five teachers assign supplemental materials, particularly in the areas of grammar, writing, and comprehension.

GED 21st Century

Developer/Publisher	Steck-Vaughn (Harcourt Achieve)
Telephone	(800) 531-5015
Web address	www.steckvaughn.com
Target Audience(s)	GED
Delivery System	Internet
Technology Requirements	Internet access; Netscape or Internet Explorer
Platform: Minimum Requirements	Windows 95B; Macintosh OS X
Purchase Method	Virtual seats, single user, and site, LAN and WAN licenses
Assessments	Two ½ length and 2 full-length practice tests in each content area
Correlations	GED 2002 Exam

Product Description

GED 21st Century is a CAI GED test preparation program. The program includes prescriptions for software-based activities as well as for print-based remediation using Steck-Vaughn pre-GED and GED Books. Prescription levels can be set at 65%, 75% or 85% pretest performance levels. Students work through Skill Builder activities in each content area. Skill Builder questions resemble GED test questions. Each student response choice is followed by a text-based explanation.

Lessons can be downloaded for offline work for students with slower Internet connections. The software is also available for single user, LAN and WAN.

Communication, Classroom Management, and Reporting Tools

GED 21st Century includes an online management system that offers a variety of reporting features including class rosters, test performance, item analyses at the student level, and time on task. Class and student data can be imported into the management system.

Student Support. *GED 21st Century* includes a student reporting system that tracks individual progress and time on task as well as test results and recommendations for study. Other support features include GED 2002 test information, test-taking strategies, math formulas, instructions for using the Casio fx-260 calculator, and essay-writing tips.

GED Connection

Developer/Publisher	PBS LiteracyLink / KET
Phone	(800) 354-9067
Web address	http://litlink.ket.org/
Target Audience(s)	GED students, grade 10.5 and up
Delivery System	Video, Print, Web
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR, Internet access, web browser with QuickTime Player
Purchase Method	Workbooks, videos, and OMS can be purchased from KET (www.ket.org/enterprise). Site and state licenses are available.
Assessment	Two online ½ length practice tests and print-based pre- and posttests for each content area
Correlations	GED 2002 Exam

Product Description

GED Connection (GEDC) is a multimedia product that delivers instruction in the five GED content areas using video, print, and web media. The series is designed for advanced ASE students and includes 39 lessons with content delivered via each medium for each lesson.

Video. Videos are 30 minutes in length and include documentary footage, historical reenactments, examples of scientific and other experiments, and interviews with a variety of professionals including scientists, business people, writers, etc. Each content area includes one video describing the types of questions that are on the Official GED test.

Workbook. GEDC includes three workbooks. Each workbook unit is correlated to the videos and includes a “Before You Watch” section that introduces key ideas and alerts students to concepts presented in the videos. Also included in each lesson is an “After You Watch” section that provides direct instruction in the topic. In addition to content and skills development activities, the workbooks provide tips and strategies for taking the GED exam. Each content area has a pretest that can be used to tailor instruction. A diagnostic chart provides explanations as well as workbook page numbers, video segments, and online activities a student should review if he/she misses a particular pretest question.

Internet. The Web component offers complementary instructional elements and practice activities. Students are directed to their Home Space from which they access lessons and activities. Each Internet Activity includes an overview section, a key concepts section, a writing activity, and a quiz. Students are often directed to websites outside the main website, where they read articles and in some instances, complete activities provided on the site. Once students have completed an off-site assignment, they return to the main

lesson page to complete a short quiz. Each Internet Activity finishes with a follow-up section that provides quiz feedback and recommendations for further study.

In addition to the Internet Activities, GEDC includes five Learning Modules for each content area. These modules explore certain topics in more depth, asking students to complete 5-6 additional activities, many of which include reviewing content on external websites.

Other online features include a portfolio system that provides students with text boxes in which they can record answers and store relevant information. Students also have access to a similarly formatted journal for storing personal information and notes. Additional online resources include links to reference materials (dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, atlas, and conversion tables) and a GED calculator.

Videos are shown on selected PBS stations across the country.

Communication, Class Management, and Reporting Tools

The Online Management System (OMS) provides teachers with reporting and communication tools including an internal messaging system. Teachers can track, review, and provide written feedback on individual student assignments and assessment results. The “Manage My Virtual Classroom” feature shows the class roster, including which online tests and activities need reviewing and how many days have elapsed since a student last accessed his/her online activities. A journal feature allows teachers to write up lesson plans and record other student data.

Reports can be generated at the class level and include the online modules and activities and whether students have attempted or completed them. The OMS does not include a section for teachers to record student workbook or video activities.

Student Support. Students are provided with a portfolio that includes areas for responding to online activities, creating journal entries, and taking notes.

Teacher Feedback

Thirty-one teachers responded in the 2005 Teacher Survey about their experiences using GEDC. Overall, the majority of teachers indicated they believe the curriculum covers the knowledge and skills students need “Pretty Well” or “Very Well.” Only one teacher did not think coverage was good. All but four of the 31 teachers said they assign supplemental materials with the majority assigning extra work in math and essay writing.

Teachers listed the multimedia approach of GEDC as one of its strengths along with the workbook content. One teacher noted:

The multimedia approach of GED Connection is ideal; students are able to work from the workbook, video or online.

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

Another noted:

This curriculum has wonderful workbooks. It is organized in a very systematic fashion. I think it is the strength of their product.

Weaknesses teachers cited focused primarily on instructional content and technology. Eleven teachers commented that they felt GEDC lacked sufficient instructional breadth and that opportunities for practice were often missing. Teachers also pointed to student difficulties with the online component, noting that some students have difficulty navigating the site while others find the content of the Learning Modules too difficult.

Finally, when asked about whether they would recommend the curriculum, the majority (n=16) indicated they would recommend GEDC “with some reservations.” Thirteen teachers would recommend it “Strongly” or “Very Strongly.” One teacher would not recommend GEDC.

GED Illinois Online

Developer/Publisher	Illinois Community College Board/Center for the Application of Information Technologies
Telephone	(309) 298-1804
Web address	www.gedillinois.org
Target Audience(s)	GED
Delivery System	Internet
Technology Requirements	Internet access, IE, Netscape, Safari, or Firefox, Flash, Adobe Acrobat
Purchase Method	Site license plus virtual seats
Assessment	Diagnostic pre-survey; posttest for each lesson
Correlations	GED 2002 Exam

Product Description

GED Illinois Online is an instructional software curriculum designed to prepare learners for the GED exam. The curriculum was developed in partnership between the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Center for the Application of Information Technologies (CAIT) at Western Illinois University. *GED Illinois* is being offered under special legislation enacted by the Illinois State Legislature in spring of 2005 that allows this curriculum to be offered to other states or educational entities.

GED Illinois is an Internet-based curriculum covering the five GED content areas. The curriculum is designed for use with students reading at a 9th grade level. The curriculum is presented in 192 lessons that address skills and information in each of the five GED content areas. The content is presented using a variety of instructional methodologies incorporating skill building and review activities. The activities incorporate the use of interactive techniques that provide immediate feedback to the learner. *GED Illinois* includes supplemental materials assignments for each lesson.

Each content area offers the option of a pre-survey assessment of the student's understanding in that content area. Based upon the pre-survey, suggestions are given to students as to which lessons within that content area on which to focus. The curriculum was designed to be teacher-facilitated either in an asynchronous format, in a blended distance-learning format, or as a classroom supplement.

Communication, Classroom Management, and Reporting Tools

GED Illinois comprises three separate web-based systems: a student section where the curriculum is presented; a teacher center where all the necessary classroom management and communication tools are housed; and a program center for administrators to manage the teachers and classes. The three sections work together to form a complete instructional and management package that was designed by teachers and administrators to meet the needs of their students. Included within the system are: an internal messaging

system, tutorials, an online calendar, student tracking features, and discussion boards. All tools are available for students, instructors and administrators. The website incorporates accountability features at the teacher and student levels tracking login information and activity completion.

Support materials for students, instructors and administrators are available from the website. Manuals on how to use the system are available on the website in PDF format. Additionally, toll-free phone and email support is offered to all users via the Help Desk.

Teacher Feedback

Five teachers provided feedback in the 2005 Teacher Survey on *GED Illinois*. All five think the curriculum covers the knowledge and skills students need “very well.” All five also assign supplemental materials.

Strengths of the curriculum include that it is “easy to use” as one teacher noted. Two other teachers commented:

GED Illinois is an excellent curriculum because it has a lot of resources that can be used with students. These resources are available through the curriculum not in addition to.

Its depth—the fact that supplemental material is part of the system. My learners noted that they appreciated the explanations.

When asked about weaknesses, one teacher noted that the curriculum needs more testing. Three teachers commented that *GED Illinois* has a lot of reading.

Very reading intensive—this is made difficult by scrolling. Plus, I found some questions where I truly believe the answer is wrong.

When asked whether they would recommend *GED Illinois*, four teachers indicated they would recommend it “Strongly” or “Very Strongly” with the fifth teacher recommending it “with some reservations.”

Madison Heights / Lifelines

Developer/Publisher	INTELECOM
Telephone	(800) 576-2988
Web address	http://www.intelecom.org
Target Audience(s)	ABE, ASE, Family literacy
Delivery System	Video, print, CD-ROM
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR, CD-ROM
Purchase Method	Site licenses and materials are available from INTELECOM
Assessment	None
Correlations	EFF, GED curriculum framework, Pre-GED curriculum, NRS core outcomes for adult secondary education and ESOL, and SCANS

Product Description

Madison Heights/Lifelines is a family literacy and basic skills program that is comprised of two different, complementary series. *Madison Heights* is a 10-part drama series that focuses on real-life issues families encounter and provides instruction in basic literacy and critical thinking skills as well as in early childhood education. *Lifelines* is a documentary series that follows families from various backgrounds. The series chronicles various issues families face as they work on their education, parenting and community interaction skills.

Each series comes with two workbooks. Each workbook contains four sections: Solving Problems, Language Workout, Family Ties, and What Did You Learn? Solving Problems guides learners through a series of steps designed to help students resolve a particular issue or problem and then asks them to relate the problem to their own personal experiences. Language Workout focuses on GED-related reading, writing, and vocabulary. Family Ties suggests a real-life project in which the student and his/her child can engage. The What Did You Learn section provides a self-evaluation chart for students to monitor their learning activities.

Transcripts of the video segments are available on CD-ROM.

Pilot testing is underway to deliver *Lifelines* online via course management systems used in New York and Florida. The pilot test includes streaming video of all *Lifelines* segments.

MHC Interactive: GED Integrated Online Solution

Developer/Publisher	McGraw Hill Contemporary
Telephone	(800) 621-1918
Web address	www.mhcontemporary.com
Target Audience(s)	GED
Delivery System	Online
Technology Requirements	CD-ROM, Internet access; Internet Explorer v 5.0 or higher
Platform: Minimum Requirements	Windows 98
Purchase Method	Virtual seats and institutional license
Assessment	Pre and posttests for each content area
Correlations	GED 2002 Exam

Product Description

McGraw Hill Contemporary Interactive GED Integrated Online Solution (MHC) is an interactive instructional software program that provides 115 lessons focused on preparing students for the GED 2002 test. The software provides diagnostics and tailored instruction, including supplemental materials assignments. Lesson content is stored on the student's hard drive to enable faster work for students with slow Internet connection speeds. Students can work offline and then upload to the MHC site. Online user manuals are available for teachers, students, and administrators.

Communication, Class Management, and Reporting Tools

MHC includes an online management system that teachers can use to set up classes, assign students, monitor student progress, and provide feedback. The software includes an internal messaging system as well as a class board where teachers can post notices. The internal messaging system includes a feature that enables teachers to see where in a lesson students are having difficulty. An assessment tracking feature provides space for recording standardized and GED test scores for each student.

Teachers can generate student- and class-level reports. Reports contain assessment and unit results and include time on task. Reports can be downloaded into spreadsheet and text file formats. Class rosters can be imported from a tab-delimited text file. MHC provides a template for import file format requirements.

Student Support. MHC includes a glossary with definitions of terms used in the lessons, a calculator, and review cards that contain brief overviews of topics in each content area. Also included are U.S. and World timelines, which contain short descriptions of major events in history. A Notepad feature enables students to take notes that are then linked to each unit. MHC's management system also includes a student section where students can view their instructional progress and assessment results.

Teacher Feedback

Seventeen teachers provided feedback in the 2005 Teacher Survey on MHC. The majority indicated they believe the curriculum covers the knowledge and skills students need “Pretty Well” (n=9) or “Very Well” (n=6). Only one teacher did not think coverage was good. All but three assigned supplemental materials. Supplemental assignments focused mainly on math and writing skills development. When asked about topics that were missing or not covered well, several teachers indicated MHC did not address the needs of some lower level learners.

Teachers pointed to the breadth of the instructional content and the user-friendliness of the program as two main strengths of MHC. A sample of teacher comments on MHCs strengths appears below.

[MHC is] fun to use—lots of videos and extra tools; messaging system is very easy to use and can be accessed from anywhere in the program; cool supplements, like interactive timelines and the same calculator that they’ll have for the test.

This curriculum does offer the five GED subject areas in a logical pattern for study. The curriculum also offers pretests and posttests to help the student get ready to take the GED exam. I also like the explanations given for most of the lessons.

Weaknesses of MHC included problems with technology (downloading, program functionality), a lack of instructional depth, and assessment issues around pretest difficulty and repetitiveness of test questions.

When asked whether they would recommend the program, sixteen indicated they would recommend the program. Half would recommend it with “Some Reservations” with the other half recommending it “Strongly” or “Very Strongly.”

On Common Ground

Developer/Publisher	INTELECOM
Telephone	(800) 576-2988
Web address	http://www.intelecom.org
Target Audience(s)	high intermediate and advanced ESOL, ASE
Delivery System	Video, Print
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR, CD-ROM, DVD
Purchase Method	Licenses and materials are available from INTELECOM
Assessment	None
Correlations	National Social Studies Standards

Product Description

On Common Ground is a video-print series that introduces students to topics related to citizenship and how government works at the local, state, and national levels. The series contains 15, 30-minute video dramas that portray real-life scenarios and focus on fundamentals of democracy, U.S. history, and problem-solving within political systems. *On Common Ground* is intended for high intermediate to advanced ESOL students and ASE students and can be used to prepare learners for the U.S. citizenship exam or for the GED 2002 test.

On Common Ground includes two student workbooks. Each contains “Preview the Story” and “Remember the Story” sections that guide learners to focus on certain elements of a story and that review content and implications of each story’s theme. In each lesson, students are asked to identify personal experiences that they can relate to a subject and to complete a project on the topic. Students also learn how to graphically organize information. Journal activities encourage learners to reflect on story contents and to identify with specific characters and/or situations presented in the stories.

On Common Ground is available on VHS or DVD. Transcripts of the video segments are available on CD. The series is aired on public television and cable access stations across the country.

PLATO Learning Systems

Developer/Publisher	PLATO Learning, Inc.
Phone	(800) 869-2000
Web address	www.plato.com
Target Audience(s)	ABE, pre-GED, GED, ESOL
Delivery Methods	Internet, LAN
Technology Requirements	Internet access; Adobe Reader, Internet Explorer 6.0 or Netscape 7.1 (for PC); Netscape 7.2 (for Mac)
Purchase Method	Virtual seats; state and site licenses
Assessment	Diagnostics, pre and posttests for each unit. GED program contains one practice test for each content area.
Correlations	Aligned to 50+ standardized assessment systems, including the ACT, CASAS, GED 2002, TABE, SCANS, WorkKeys; also correlated to various state standards and benchmarks

Product Description

PLATO is a self-paced, CAI curriculum that offers approximately 2500 hours of instruction, skills practice, and mastery testing for adult learners. Materials are designed for learners ranging from the 3rd – 14th grade reading levels. *PLATO* is designed to function either as an independent instructional system in which the software recommends activities or as a supplement to teacher-mediated instruction. Teachers may use software recommendations for individual students or assign specific lessons or courses.

Lessons and courses include instruction ranging from ABE to GED 2002 test preparation. Other courses focus on employment skills development, parenting, and life skills. *PLATO* also offers ESOL programs including *English Discoveries*, *Reading Horizons*, and the *Rosetta Stone Library*. ESOL lessons include practice translating texts as well as spelling, grammar, and vocabulary development activities.

PLATO includes an audio component and a variety of presentation formats. The level of software interactivity depends largely on when in the product's 40-year history a particular lesson was developed.

Communication, Class Management, and Reporting

PLATO's management system provides teachers with student progress reports that include information on unit activity results, test scores, time on task, and general progress at the individual and class levels.

Teachers can provide written feedback to students via *PLATO*'s internal messaging system, which is only available on LAN versions.

Student Support. *PLATO* includes various tools for students including a calculator, dictionary, and glossary.

Teacher Feedback

A total of 55 teachers provided feedback in the 2005 Teacher Survey on *PLATO*. The majority of teachers indicated the curriculum covers the knowledge and skills their students need either “Pretty Well” (n=20) or “Very Well” (n=31). Only two teachers thought *PLATO* does not cover the knowledge and skills very well.

Eighty-five percent of respondents said they assign supplemental materials. Supplemental assignments focused on math, writing, and GED test preparation.

Strengths of *PLATO* included its “user friendliness,” assessments, and the depth, breadth, and quality of instructional content. A sample of teacher comments on the curriculum’s strengths is listed below.

User friendly, GREAT reporting system, aligned well with our certification goals and catered to students level of learning.

The examples and instruction are quite good. It seems very easy for students to use and it is easy for me to follow what they are doing and when assignments need to be upgraded or added to.

It assesses, instructs, evaluates, and gives instant feedback. Instant feedback is very important to my students. It is basically student friendly.

The most frequently mentioned weakness of *PLATO* had to do with technology issues. Sixteen of the 44 teachers who addressed this item commented on technology-related problems. Problems included plug-ins, length of downloading time, lack of technology support, and difficulty access lessons. A sample of teacher comments on technology-related issues is listed below.

Sometimes the software is crazy! It times out and also for it to run properly, a student must have a fast Internet connection, not dial-up.

Students continue to have difficulty accessing the program... Frustration often turns them off to using the program.

Lock outs are common and the teacher does not know a student is locked out until the student calls—which sometimes they do not—they just quit.

Eight teachers listed the instructional model as a weakness, noting that a teacher is often needed to explain content. Three identified problems with instructional content. One noted that *PLATO*:

Moves on to the next concept not stopping on the topic a student is struggling in. It has one way of instruction and if the student does not understand it or learn from that form of instruction, the student feels a failure.

When asked whether they would recommend *PLATO* as a distance curriculum, all but one teacher said they would recommend it with 35% recommending the product “with some reservations” and 63% recommending it “Strongly” or “Very Strongly.”

Pre-GED Connection

Developer/Publisher	Kentucky Educational Television
Telephone	(800) 354-9067
Web address	http://litlink.ket.org
Target Audience(s)	Pre-GED
Delivery System	Video, Print, Web
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR, Internet access, Browser with QuickTime Player
Purchase Method	Print and video materials can be purchased from KET. Site and state licenses are available.
Assessment	Pre and posttests for each content area.
Correlations	GED 2002 Exam

Product Description

Pre-GED Connection (Pre-GEDC) is a multimedia instructional product designed for use with learners reading between the 6th and 8th grade levels who are not yet prepared to handle the materials covered in GEDC. The product includes workbooks in the five GED content areas that provide additional content and skills practice students may need prior to engaging the GEDC workbook and online content. The videos recommended for use with Pre-GEDC are a subset of the GEDC videos.

Pre-GEDC includes an online component, which is comprised largely of suggested reading materials, topics and questions for further consideration, and links to other websites. No tailored portfolio activities have been developed for Pre-GEDC.

The GEDC videos used with Pre-GEDC are aired on selected public television stations across the country.

Communication, Classroom Management, and Reporting Tools

Pre-GEDC includes an email messaging system, but does not include a management system.

Teacher Feedback

Four Project IDEAL teachers reported on Pre-GEDC in the 2005 Teacher Survey. Three noted it covers the important topics “Pretty Well” with the fourth indicating it covers the topics “Very Well.” All assign supplemental materials in the five GED content areas.

When asked about the product’s strengths, one teacher commented: “Pre-GEDC has lots of practice pages and excellent examples.” Another noted Pre-GEDC has: “pretty good explanations and descriptions of how to do math.”

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

Weaknesses included “online areas [that] were sketchy at best” and problems with teaching word problems.

All four teachers would “Strongly” recommend this curriculum.

Reading Horizons

Developer/Publisher	HEC Software Inc.
Phone	(801) 295-7054
Web address	www.readinghorizons.com
Target Audience(s)	ABE and ESOL
Delivery Methods	Internet, CD-ROM, LAN
Technology Requirements	Internet access; IE 6.0
Platform: Minimum Requirements	Windows 98
Purchase Method	Virtual seats; CD is included with virtual seat purchase
Assessment	Diagnostic and posttest with four interim progress tests; testing must be conducted in person with an instructor or administrator
Correlations	None

Product Description

Reading Horizons is a phonics-based, CAI tutorial program designed to provide supplemental instruction for ABE and ESOL learners. Based on Orton-Gillingham basal reading instruction method, the software begins with the 42 sounds of the English language and progresses to slides, blends, and then words. The program teaches phonetic skills, decoding, word formation, common site words, sentence structure, word meaning, and spelling skills. The programs' 30 lessons are designed to enable students to decode and comprehend a range of vocabulary from sight words to high-school level, multi-syllable words. The software uses diagnostic results to create a learning prescription. Each lesson includes four instructional components: word study, phonics, reading, and vocabulary. Each lesson is followed by a "mastery drill and practice" section in which students have the opportunity to practice lessons learned. The drill and practice section includes a branching feature that provides additional practice problems for areas with which a student has difficulty.

Reading Horizons includes a voice-recording feature that enables students to compare their pronunciation with that of the system's. This feature also includes a video of a native English speaker demonstrating sounds and words as well as an "ESL say" graphic showing vocal, mouth, and tongue placement for pronouncing sounds, blends, and words. In addition, *Reading Horizons* includes a Spanish language feature. Spanish-speaking learners can use a toggle button to hear instruction in Spanish while viewing the lesson in English.

Communication, Classroom Management, and Reporting Tools

Reading Horizons provides an online teacher management system that includes standard reporting features. Teachers and administrators can assign lessons, set mastery levels, and monitor student progress. Other management features include time-on-task,

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

individual and class results for the four instructional areas that accompany each lesson as well as students' errors and scores on each lesson. Teachers can import and export student demographic data.

Reading Horizons includes a Teacher's Lounge. This feature includes a teacher discussion board where any teacher who uses the curriculum can communicate with other teachers and administrators. The system also includes an online tutorial for teachers to learn how to use the software and to teach using a phonics method.

No internal messaging system is included.

SkillsTutor

Developer/Publisher	Achievement Technologies, Inc.
Phone	(888) 391-3245
Web address	www.skillstutor.com
Target Audience(s)	ABE, pre-GED, GED; vocational education and workforce preparation and training
Delivery Methods	Internet
Technology Requirements	Internet access; PC—Netscape 4.76, Internet Explorer 5.5 SP2; AOL v 6. Macintosh: IE 5.1.5, Netscape 4.76, AOL 5. Macromedia Flash v 5; Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0; Javascript enabled
Purchase Method	Virtual seats
Assessment	Diagnostic and unit-level pre and posttests
Correlations	CASAS, GED 2002, ITBS, TABE; most state and national standards; vocational standards

Product Description

SkillsTutor is a test preparation, CAI curriculum that offers skills-based tutorials for students functioning at the 6th-12th grade levels. Content areas include reading, writing, language arts, math, science, information skills, and social studies. The software provides over 1500 learning activities that provide instruction in the “core skills” commonly found on standardized assessments. All instruction is geared at facilitating student success in taking tests.

In addition to academic skills preparation materials, *SkillsTutor* offers lessons in general life and work skills. An affiliated program, *Employability and Work Maturity Skills 2*, provides over 100 lessons in remedial math and reading as well as courses in career development, job search skills, and workplace productivity and effectiveness.

Communication, Class Management, and Reporting Tools

SkillsTutor offers an online management reporting system that enables teachers to obtain information on individual students and classes. The system catalogues student assignments and activities, produces rosters, and reports on usage. Individual student reports contain pre- and post-testing results, time on task, whether students have completed particular assignments or testing, and whether a student has attained a teacher-determined mastery level on a given subject.

SkillsTutor does not include an internal messaging system.

Teacher Feedback

Twelve teachers provided feedback in the 2005 Teacher Survey on *SkillsTutor*. All 12 indicated they think the curriculum covers the knowledge and skills students need either “Pretty Well” or “Very Well.” All but one assign supplemental materials with the majority assigning either “A little” or “Some” supplemental work. Supplemental assignments were given in math, writing, and reading. Four teachers noted that the essay-writing portion of *SkillsTutor* is not covered well.

Strengths include the program’s “user friendliness” and the breadth and variety of instructional content. A sample of teacher comments is listed below.

The students find it very ‘user-friendly’. It is not difficult to access, is an easy program to maneuver in, and contains a good number of learner levels so that all students find the right difficulty of practice problems.

It is user-friendly, self-grading, and covers many of the topics learners will encounter on the GED.

Good explanations and graphics, easy to use for students and teachers, good record keeping on-site for teachers, and website works consistently and is well maintained.

Weaknesses teachers listed also focused on instructional content.

It does not contain any open-ended questions so learners cannot develop or strengthen critical thinking skills.

Some of the students needed added work because of the limited number of activities for each section.

For people with learning differences and learners with lower levels of reading, there is not enough explicit and additional instruction.

When asked whether they would recommend *SkillsTutor* as a distance curriculum, 11 teachers indicated they would “Strongly” or “Very Strongly” recommend the curriculum with one teacher indicating she would recommend it “with some reservations.”

Tutorsystems: Basic Skills Tutorial Software

Developer/Publisher	BLS, Inc.
Telephone	(800) 545-7766
Web address	http://www.tutorsystems.com/
Target Audience(s)	ABE & ASE, Workbased skills
Delivery System	Online; CD-ROM; printed worksheets; student manual
Technology Requirements	Internet access and/or CD-ROM. Sound card desirable.
Platform: Minimum Requirements	Windows 95
Purchase Method	Licenses and virtual seats
Assessment	Diagnostics; posttests for each unit
Correlations	ABLE, CASAS, CAT, HSCT, LEAP, OEPT, TAAS, TALS, and TABE

Product Description

Tutorsystems is a CAI curriculum designed for ABE and low-ASE students that includes 10 courses and approximately 200 hours of instruction. The software includes 62 “master objectives” and 359 “instructional objectives” in reading, grammar, and math. The software is designed around a branching system that tailors instruction based on diagnostic results. Lessons include graphics and text-based instruction.

Lessons can be assigned based on standardized or state tests results, system-based pre-test diagnostic results, and/or teacher choice. The software has been correlated to a variety of standardized assessments and benchmarks, which teachers can use to assign lessons. Each lesson includes a pretest and a mastery test. Students must pass the mastery test at a pre-set level before advancing to the next lesson. The majority of instruction occurs via the software, though students are also directed to worksheet and activities provided in the Student Manual.

Tutorsystems also offers a workbased communication skills development program called *Career English Series*. This program is designed for students at the ninth grade reading level and above and focuses on developing students’ written communication skills. The program includes approximately 100 hours of instruction.

Communication, Classroom Management and Reporting Tools

Tutorsystems provides an online tutor component through which teachers and students can communicate either via IM or through voice chat using Internet Explorer. This synchronous communication feature also allows teachers to view student work with students during the tutorial, thereby enabling them to provide direct instruction and answer questions while concurrently viewing a lesson. *Tutorsystems* does not include a messaging system.

The *Tutorsystems* Record Keeper includes a variety of classroom management features. Teachers can create new classes, add students, assign pretests and lessons, and view student progress. Reports can be generated at the student and class levels and include test scores, completion rates, mastery rates, and time on task.

Student support. *Tutorsystems* includes a “define” feature for students. Students can select any word in a lesson and ask for a definition. The system provides dictionary definitions from a variety of dictionaries. Students can view their scores as well as time on task.

Teacher Feedback

Five teachers provided feedback in the 2005 Teacher Survey on *Tutorsystems*. Four of the five respondents indicated that *Tutorsystems* covers almost all of the important topics “Very Well.” These same teachers would recommend the curriculum “Very Strongly.” The fifth teacher found the curriculum didn’t sufficiently cover the knowledge and skills students need and therefore would not recommend it. Four of the five teachers assign supplemental materials.

When asked about strengths of the program, one teacher noted:

I get very positive feedback from students about *Tutorsystems*. Those students who have struggled with math in other programs, have been very successful with the math in *Tutorsystems*.

Weaknesses focused primarily on students’ technology issues in accessing the product. As one teacher noted: “My students had many problems downloading the program before they could use it.”

TV411

Developer/Publisher	Adult Literacy Media Alliance / KET
Telephone	(800) 304-1922
Web address	http://www.tv411.org
Target Audience(s)	ABE, Workplace and family literacy
Delivery System	Video, print, online
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR; Internet access; Flash 6
Purchase Method	Videos and workbooks available from KET (www.ket.org/enterprise)
Assessment	None
Correlations	CASAS Life Skills, EFF, TABE 7/8

Product Description

TV411 is a motivational video-print series that provides instruction in literacy and life skills for adult basic learners. A complementary online component is also available.

Video. *TV411*'s video segments are modeled on popular television formats and include interviews with sports, entertainment, and literary figures as well as profiles of adult basic learners. Also included in the videos are sketches in which characters demonstrate how literacy is used in everyday life.

Workbook. Workbooks are presented in a magazine-style format that includes articles, interviews, and activities designed to complement information and skills introduced in the videos.

Internet. *TV411* has developed interactive online activities designed to provide learners with opportunities to practice skills introduced in the series. Content areas include reading, writing, math, and vocabulary lessons, as well as articles (e.g., financial planning, parenting, health) and lessons on a variety of topics related to daily life (e.g., using the library, financial planning, parenting, health, etc.). The online component does not include a teacher management system.

Student Support. The online component includes a calculator, dictionary, and editing checklist students can access as part of their studies.

TV411 is aired on selected public television and cable access stations across the country.

Workplace Essential Skills

Developer/Publisher	PBS Literacy Link/KET Enterprise
Phone	(800) 354-9067
Web address	http://litlink.ket.org/
Target Audience(s)	Workforce Training
Delivery Methods	Video, print, online
Technology Requirements	TV/VCR, Internet access, Browser with QuickTime Player
Purchase Method	Workbooks, videos, and OMS can be purchased from KET (www.ket.org/enterprise). Site and state licenses are available.
Assessment	Diagnostic (“Skills Preview”) and post assessment for each workbook
Correlations	TABE, CASAS

Product Description and Key Features

Workplace Essential Skills (WES) is a multimedia employment-related skills development curriculum designed to facilitate a job search and/or to improve existing employment situations. Students are introduced to résumé writing, job search processes, and interviewing techniques as well as to business-related math, reading, and communication. WES is divided into four modules or strands: employment, oral and written communication, reading, and math.

Videos. The WES video series is comprised of an orientation and 24 30-minute videos that model workplace behaviors, present students with common issues employees face, and introduce different ways in which reading, writing, and math can be utilized on the job. The videos are linked to the workbook and Internet activities. Each video follows both real employees as they utilize specific skills on their jobs and fictitious characters encountering the types of problems job seekers with limited experience are likely to face.

Workbooks. Workbooks provide workplace content-area instruction as well as opportunities to practice skills introduced in the videos. Each workbook begins with a section entitled “Before You Watch,” which points out key ideas and issues in the videos. Also included in each lesson is an “After You Watch” section that provides direct instruction in the topic.

Internet. The Web component is comprised of two learning activities per unit. The first is a video-based activity in which students review a clip from the video for that unit. The second learning activity includes links to employment-related websites where students can gain additional information and/or practice specific skills (e.g., calculating percentages). Within each activity are four sections: About, Key Ideas, Activity, and Follow-up. Students record their answers or responses in their Portfolio.

WES videos are broadcast on selected PBS stations across the country.

Communication, Classroom Management, and Reporting Tools

WES includes an Online Management System (OMS) that provides teachers with reporting and communication tools and includes an internal messaging system. Teachers can track, review, and provide written feedback on individual student assignments and assessment results. The “Manage My Virtual Classroom” feature shows the class roster, including which online activities need reviewing and how many days have elapsed since a student last accessed his/her online activities. A journal feature allows teachers to write up lesson plans and record other student data.

Reports can be generated at the class level and include the online activities and whether students have attempted or completed them. The OMS does not include a section for teachers to record student workbook or video activities.

Student Support. Students are provided with a portfolio that includes areas for responding to online activities, creating journal entries, and taking notes. The text boxes are designed solely to store information. No formatting options are available, and students must copy their writing to traditional word processing software to make and save content and formatting changes (e.g., to format a resume or cover letter).

Teacher Feedback

Six teachers provided feedback in the 2005 Teacher Survey on WES. Respondents indicated they think the curriculum covers the knowledge and skills students need “Pretty Well” or “Very Well.” Five of the six teachers assign supplemental materials focusing on math, reading, and writing. When asked about topics that were missing or not covered well, teachers pointed to math and writing activities.

Strengths of WES included the multimedia approach and instructional content.

Videos, workbooks, and on-line offer a variety of instruction.

The material is well organized. The major vocabulary is presented before each lesson is a strong necessary addition to WES. The online component gives students the opportunity to prepare for the workplace using technology.

Weaknesses included insufficient content and students’ difficulty using technology.

Not specific enough, almost too much at one time for some students. Supplemental activities may be needed especially for the lower level student.

[Needs] online orientation to the site. Buttons for activities are not self-explanatory. Organization of questions encourages skipping.

The topics are covered; however the explanation and practices are too vague.

Four teachers would recommend WES “Strongly” and the other two would recommend it “with some reservations.”

Appendices

Appendix 1: Product Charts—Intended Audience and Instructional Delivery System

Appendix 2: Arizona (ELAA) Distance Education Product Evaluation Rubric

Appendix 3: Vendor Review Chart

Appendix 1: Product Charts—Intended Audience and Instructional Delivery System

Distance Products by Intended Audience

ABE/Pre-GED	ASE/GED	ESOL	Workplace	Life/Civics/Govt
Aztec	Aztec	Connect with English	Aztec	Madison Heights
PLATO	GED 21 st Century	Crossroads Cafe	PLATO	Lifelines
Pre-GED Connection	GED Connection	EASY	SkillsTutor	On Common Ground
Reading Horizons	GED Illinois	English for All	Workplace Essential Skills	TV411
SkillsTutor	MHC GED Online	On Common Ground		
Tutorsystems	PLATO	PLATO		
TV411	SkillsTutor	Reading Horizons		

Distance Product by Instructional Delivery System

Instructional Software	Video, Print, Online	Video & Print
Aztec	English for All	Connect with English
GED 21 st Century	GED Connection	Crossroads Café*
GED Illinois	TV411	EASY**
MHC GED Online	Workplace Essential Skills	Madison Heights
PLATO		Lifelines*
Reading Horizons		On Common Ground
SkillsTutor		Pre-GED Connection
Tutorsystems		

*INTELECOM is in the process of pilot-testing online versions of *Crossroads Café* and *Lifelines* using course management systems (e.g., Blackboard)

**EASY is in the process of pilot-testing an online version of its curriculum. The Internet version will include a management system.

Appendix 2: Arizona (ELAA) Distance Education Product Evaluation Rubric

Name of Program: _____

Vendor: _____

Program Characteristic or Feature	Poor 0 Points	Fair 1 Point	Good 2 Points	Excellent 3 Points	Total Points
The program conforms to state-approved content standards.					
The program addresses the four modalities of listening, speaking, reading, & writing.					
The program addresses a variety of learning styles (e.g., auditory, kinesthetic, visual).					
The program addresses a variety of ELAA functioning levels.					
The program requires “reasonable” hardware (e.g., average PC, VCR, cassette player).					
The program provides operating directions in languages other than English.					
The program is easy to use.					
Information in the program is up-to-date.					
The program presents content in an interesting and engaging way and involves the student.					
The program allows users to repeat lessons as often as necessary.					

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

Program Characteristic or Feature	Poor 0 Points	Fair 1 Point	Good 2 Points	Excellent 3 Points	Total Points
The program offers supplementary materials (e.g., workbooks, audiotapes, videotapes)					
The program has an assessment tool to measure learner progress.					
The program challenges students as much as a face-to-face class.					
The program provides teacher-tools (e.g. teacher's manual, answer keys, grade book)					
The program has enough content to successfully serve a learner for at least 12-weeks or 180 instructional hours.					
The program requires students to turn-in assignments on a frequent basis.					
The program has support services (e.g., Tech Support, Help Menus)					
The program comes from an established and reputable vendor.					
Sales and training personnel from the vendor are accessible, experienced, and knowledgeable.					
The price of the program is competitive with similar programs.					

Evaluation Scale: 0-15 = Poor 16-30 = Fair 31-45 = Good 46-60 = Excellent

Appendix 3: Vendor Review Chart

Vendor:	Web:
Rep:	Telephone:

Which learner population(s) does this curriculum serve?

- ABE Pre-GED Beg ESOL Int/Adv ESOL ASE/GED
- Workplace Literacy Family Literacy Other

Which instructional content areas does the curriculum address? _____

Number of lessons/units: _____ Total hours of instruction provided: _____

Assessment system: _____

Correlations to standardized assessments and state standards: _____

Product Costs

Institutional or state license fees: _____

What is included in a license? _____

Is the license renewable? _____

How many learners can be served with this license? _____

Individual component costs:

Video _____

Print _____

Online _____

Management System _____

Are tailored packages available? _____

Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners

Cost? _____

Training

Necessary/Desirable? _____ Provided? _____

Cost: _____ Length of session: _____

For Curricula with an Online Component

Online Management System offered? _____

Online Management System Features

Feature	Yes/No	Notes
Allows import of student information		
Create and manage classes		
Internal messaging system		
Chat Room		
Discussion Board		
Tracks time on task		
Assign supplemental materials		
Other		

Technology Requirements

Feature	Notes
Video	
CD/DVD	
Online: browser requirements	
Standalone Platform reqs	
Plug-ins	
LAN/WAN Server requirements	
Other technology	

Is Technical support provided? _____

What does it cost? _____