IDEAL Consortium
A Project of the EdTech Center @ World Education

Report on the 2018 IDEAL Institute

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

IDEAL Consortium Institute – We're Growing!

This year we hosted educational leaders from 13 member states at the annual IDEAL Consortium Institute. This group included leaders from New Hampshire and Virginia, both new to IDEAL this year. State-level staff, professional development leaders, and teachers gathered in Boston for collaboration, discussion, and presentations from national experts on key issues that impact distance and blended learning programs nationwide. The XPRIZE Communities Competition, evaluation of online learning products, differentiation of instruction in blended learning, and changes in the adult learning landscape (e.g., decreased ESL demand in many areas, increased technology demands in frontline service work) were featured. The following states were represented: Arizona, California's Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN), Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan (NW Region), Minnesota, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Texas, and Virginia.

State of the States

The State of the States is a much-anticipated IDEAL Consortium Institute activity. As in years past, participants from each state described new initiatives and pressing challenges they have faced implementing distance and blended learning. These reports provided an opportunity for supportive discussion on issues shared across the states.

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBER STATES

- **Arizona:** Growing blended learning across the state
- **California:** Drawing on IDEAL PD to support a Digital Leadership Academy; relying on innovation in other states to improve California's programs
- **Illinois:** Making use of IDEAL PD to support a train the trainer approach to improving learning options
- **Maine:** Relying on IDEAL PD to provide equitable and quality programming across the state
- **Maryland:** Laying a new foundation for strong distance and blended learning statewide by establishing new policies and providing PD for teachers across the state
- **Massachusetts:** Drawing on IDEAL PD content to support customized teacher education
- **Michigan (NW Region):** Using braided funding and collaboration with workforce system (Title 1 providers) to offer blended learning at American Job Centers

- **Minnesota:** Focusing on building participation of English language learners in blended learning
- **Pennsylvania:** Transitioning from one centralized program that provides all distance instruction to having local programs provide supplemental distance learning to their interested face-to-face students; to support this, offering an intensive professional development course based on the IDEAL 101 and 102 courses with almost half the state's programs participating
- **Rhode Island:** Exchanging best practices to strengthen use of technology in adult education through partnerships, statewide strategies, and practitioner trainings (including exploration of micro credentialing system)
- **Texas:** Networking with IDEAL colleagues for guidance on policy, professional development approaches and distance learning models
- ***NEW MEMBERS*** D.C., New Hampshire, and Virginia,

Shared Issues

Sound Data Practices Anchor Program Success. States launching or rebooting distance and blended learning voiced a need for support establishing data practices that inform program development. Many incumbent participants were able to share information about data systems and data collection practices. The databases in states like Texas, Arizona, and Minnesota make possible evidence-based decisions about investments in distance and blended learning. For example, in Texas, data showed the need for more focused effort to reach higher-level learners with distance learning. Data in Arizona showed that a multiyear focus on blended learning had been largely successful and that it was time to move to a focus on statewide distance learning.

"We are working with Moodle leadership to define modifications required for Moodle to better suit lower-skilled students.

Alison Ascher Webber, Director of Strategic Initiatives

EdTech Center @ World Education

Learning Management Systems (LMS): Flexibility in Online Learning. LMS have become increasingly easy to use, at a time when teachers are turning to new technology to support instructional differentiation. This dual reality was reflected in the reports from several states that have developed policy and professional development in support of using an LMS as a home base for sharing learning resources. In Pennsylvania, teachers use Canvas for distance learning delivery. Canvas allows for time tracking, which, combined with field testing to determine average expected time to complete teacher created lessons, makes it possible to collect proxy contact hours for teacher-created online learning.

Rhode Island relies on Google Classroom as their LMS. The Rhode Island report noted that shifting to use of the LMS made it possible to provide more flexible learning opportunities for learners than what was possible in a licensed proprietary product.

Moodle and Schoology were reported to be the most commonly used LMS. Several states use them state-wide, which allows focused professional development to optimize use. Further, some states have found that delivering professional development (PD) via the LMS helps teachers understand their learners' experience and demonstrate effective design decisions. Texas uses their LMS, Cornerstone, as its PD portal. It has over 4,000 active users, tracks online and in-person engagement, and links to badging for documenting skills. Taking a broader view, Jamil Steele, Senior Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy at the Illinois Community College Board, suggested that IDEAL member states collaborate in the development of inclusive instructional design, which member states could copy in their preferred LMS.

Andy Nash (World Education), Neda Anasseri (OTAN), Alison Ascher Webber (World Education), and Anthony Burik (OTAN) at a networking event with views of Boston Harbor.

Professional Development is Key to Success. Across all state reports, it was evident that consistent PD is critical for successful state-wide distance and blended learning.

➢ In California, OTAN offers the Digital Leadership Academy, a 2-year project for 20 selected practitioners. Participants meet both in person and online several times a year. IDEAL Consortium courses make up one component of their program. Upon completion, participants can develop their own online course.

➢ In Illinois, 80% of instructors are part-time and there is high turnover. Skill sets vary amongst this part-time workforce. To support equitable access to quality instruction, the Illinois Community College Board has initiated a professional pathway focused on digital literacy instruction and integrating technology. The initiative is based on a train the trainer model and includes the IDEAL 101 online course for 20 participants a year. Upon completion, these participants become mentors and leaders in their local programs.

➢ Rhode Island's adult learning practitioners possess a continuum of skill levels, from just learning to use technology to sophisticated ways for integrating it into instruction. To beef up capacity across the state, ABE providers have partnered with K-12 districts for tech coaches who work with 15 out of the 25 funded adult education programs.

➢ In Texas, the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL) provides a rich PD landscape for its ABE teachers. After new Texas state standards were published, programs nominated an instructional coach to learn the content standards and then train others. They were supported in this effort by ESL and ABE expert, Marianne Thatcher. Almost all of the 100 teachers completed the program.

Challenges

Blended Learning and Proxy Contact Hours. Several states reported concern about accounting for learner time and effort spent online in blended learning. Several were considering ways of reworking state DL policy regarding awarding Proxy Contact Hours (PCH). New member New Hampshire is beginning to untangle this issue by first ensuring that local programs all use the same definitions for different models for use of online curricula. Ensuring that practitioners using online curricula understand whether they are working in either a distance or blended learning model is the first step in making it possible for accurate logging of PCH.

Rhode Island has taken a different approach; to support more seamless integration of online resources into blended learning, the state no longer connects PCH to funding for providers. The strategy enables learners to use any curriculum without restriction.

Deb Hargrove (TCALL) receives a lifetime achievement award presented by Mitch Rosin (Aztec) and Glenda Rose (TCALL).

Accessibility in Distance and Blended Learning. A common concern echoed during the state reports was the challenge of creating or providing truly accessible online learning materials. Kathy Olesen-Tracey from Illinois suggested that relying on licensed online curricula (like i-Pathways) might make it easier to address accessibility issues than using teacher created materials. Arizona is working with teachers across the state, providing extensive training with resources for using assistive technology tools from CAST. OTAN, in California, is also focused on accessibility. OTAN leads by example, making sure all resources in the OTAN website are accessible and that the website itself is based on aspects of universal design.

Implementation Highlights

Digital Literacy: A Key Issue

"It's always great to show-off our work and to see what other states are accomplishing, too!"

Tom Cytron-Hysom, Consultant, Minnesota Distance Learning Leadership Team and leader of Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment Project

Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment. Institute attendees got a first look at the new, updated Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment. The update features a new website, new administrative features, and revised test modules. The new modules are based on updated standards and are fully functional on mobile devices.

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Brandon Olszewski, Director of Research at ISTE, presented along with Jen Vanek (World Education) on the relevance of ISTE's digital literacy standards for students. ISTE's approach focuses on developing empowered learners. The presentation prompted discussion about how to deliver holistic instruction supporting proficiency of applied skills in relevant contexts.

Shlomy Kattan (XPRIZE)

XPRIZE. Shlomy Kattan from the Adult Literacy XPRIZE introduced the Communities Competition to the group. Launching in 2019, the competition will foster innovation in support of use of XPRIZE finalist literacy and learning apps. Several IDEAL member state leaders expressed an interest in collaborating in support of a proposal.

Pennsylvania's Standards-Based Approach for Open Educational Resources (OER)

Chuck Klinger, Professional Development Specialist, together with Jeff Goumas, Executive Director of CrowdEd Learning, shared examples of work done in Pennsylvania to align delivery of OER to the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). Their collaboration resulted from shared understanding that the focus on depth of CCRS (complexity, evidence, knowledge) requires supplemental resources. In Pennsylvania, OER are used as supplements to FastForward by KET. OER are aligned with KET lessons and CCRS in a Canvas course, which teachers can copy and modify. This work is informing CrowdED Learning's initiative to crowdsource relevant CCRS aligned OER.