In Brief

This report presents the objectives and outcomes of the second year of Ohio's exploratory project in distance learning for Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) students. This experiment was developed and implemented under a grant funded by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) office. The project was administered by the Ohio Literacy Resource Center (OLRC) and managed by the Technology Projects Coordinator at the OLRC. The OLRC collaborated with many other key personnel throughout the year. A list of key personnel and advisors is included in the Appendix C.

For a second year, Ohio worked with Project IDEAL, a multi-state consortium coordinated by staff at the University of Michigan. In Ohio, Project IDEAL provides an opportunity for seven ABLE-funded pilot sites to develop and expand services beyond the classroom through distance education, using GED Connection online instruction, videos, and workbooks. Ohio wanted to explore the potential of distance education for adult learners. Descriptive data about implementation and teaching practices as well as quantitative data concerning the enrollment and retention rates of distance education students were gathered.

The Issues

Ohio wanted to continue to discover "what works" and "what doesn't work" in regards to serving adult learners, as well as gain insight into the amount of teacher and administrator time required when working with adult learners at a distance. In addition, Ohio wanted the pilot sites to reflect on issues related to successful implementation and teaching at a distance by expanding services and integrating distance education in the Adult Basic and Literacy Education programs.

Lastly, Ohio explored the role of professional development in creating a pool of skilled distance educators by providing:

- Distance Learning D101, a course offered through its involvement in Project IDEAL to all new Project IDEAL instructors and,

- Distance Learning D102, a follow-up course to Distance Learning D101 titled Virtual Study Group, which is also offered through its involvement in Project IDEAL. All experienced Project IDEAL instructors in Ohio were required to take this course during Fiscal Year 2003-04.

Agency Participation and Recruitment Goals

Ohio renewed funding for the seven ABLE-funded Project IDEAL pilot sites who participated in the first year of the project for a second year. These pilot sites were funded to continue to develop, implement, and expand distance education using "GED Connection" on-line instruction, videos and workbooks. The seven Project IDEAL sites were asked to complete and submit a continuation proposal that demonstrated "satisfactory completion" of fiscal year 2003 pilot project, by having met all project requirements, including:

- Completed and submitted requested surveys and reports in a timely manner.
- Participated in conference calls and meetings associated with Project IDEAL.
- Used all three instructional components of the GED Connection curriculum, which includes the on-line lessons, workbooks and videos.

The recruitment target for each pilot site ranged from 20-80 students with the population of the local site taken into consideration. Each pilot site was required to double its enrollment of participating students from the project's first year. The target number could include active GED Connection students who were working at a distance as of June 30, 2003 and who were planning to participate in the distance project September 2003.

Seven pilot sites which included fourteen teachers and seven administrators participated in the second cycle of distance implementation. The actual learning period was 10 months from (September 2003-May 2004). A list of the sites and personnel participating in the second year's efforts is included in Appendix C.

Timeframe

Distance learning implementation for the second year started in September 2003. The instructional phase was scheduled for a 10-month period (September 2003-June 2004), using all three components of the GED Connection curriculum.

Table 1. Timeline for Fiscal year 2003-2004

Date	Product or Activity
September 2003	• Continuation proposal due • Approval notification sent to pilot sites • Pilot sites began recruiting distance learners
October 2003	• Pilot sites participated in conference call with Donna Data (U of M) to discuss requirements and expectations of uploading files for year two • Pilot sites begin orienting and teaching distance learners
October 2003	• *First round of D102A/Virtual Study Group launched with three experienced GEDC teachers from Ohio and Pennsylvania participating • Sites started collecting data • Pilot sites submitted the first log submission to IDEAL Data Depository
November 2003	• *D102A/Virtual Study Group ends prior to Thanksgiving • Sites continued collecting and submitting data to IDEAL Data Depository
December 2003	• Sites continued collecting and submitting data to IDEAL Data Depository
January 2004	• New instructors participated in conference call to discuss the requirements and expectations of the pilot project • New instructors started Distance Learning Course D101 • Pilot sites participated in two conference calls, provided updates and discussed the requirements and expectations of D102/Virtual Study Group
February 2004	• *Second and third round of D102B/C was launched • *Two Virtual Study groups (i.e. D102B and D102C) run at the same time with experienced GEDC teachers from Ohio and Pennsylvania • New instructors completed the Distance Learning Course/D101 • Pilot sites continued collecting and submitting data to the IDEAL Data Depository

March 2004	- Pilot sites continued collecting and submitting data to the IDEAL Data Depository *D102B & D102C Virtual Study Group ends - IDEAL Administrators/Coordinators met with members of the IDEAL Advisory Committee to discuss issues and concerns in Columbus, Ohio
April 2004	- Teachers and Administrators gathered to discuss current issues with Distance Learning Coordinator and members of the Project IDEAL Advisory Committee at The Project IDEAL Ohio Breakfast/Meeting at COABE in Columbus, Ohio - IDEAL Administrators/Coordinators presented their experience to date with distance education at COABE in Columbus, Ohio - Pilot sites continued collecting and submitting data to the IDEAL Data Depository
May 2004	Pilot sites continued collecting and submitting data to the IDEAL Data Depository
June 2004	- Pilot sites continued collecting and submitting data to the IDEAL Data Depository (LAST SUBMISSION FOR FY 2003-2004) *DLC met with Ohio Literacy Network and Ohio Department of Education to discuss project - Pilot sites gathered for one-day wrap-up session to discuss issues and concerns around Project IDEAL for year two - Pilot sites discussed requirements and expectations for year three - Continuation Proposal sent to pilot sites
July 2004	Pilot sites determined which Pre-GED curriculum they want to use for FY 03-04
August 2004	- Continuation Proposal due to Ohio Department of Education *DLC, along with representative from Ohio Department of Education, Pilot site Administrator and Instructor attended a week long meeting/workshop for Project IDEAL in Ann Arbor, Michigan

*DLC: Distance Learning Coordinator
*D102A, D102B, D102C: Represents three different cycles of the Virtual Study Group

Data Collected

Data from the pilot sites was collected using several methods. The pilot sites participated in conference calls and face-to-face meetings, maintained seat time logs for their learners, reported NRS data on students and completed surveys about their experience as distance students, educators and administrators. Each of these methods provided insights into the process of implementing the distance education pilot program within the state.

Qualitative Data

From September 2003–June 2004, pilots participated in four conference calls and three face-to-face meetings. These activities were designed to:
- Provide ongoing updates about recruiting, orientating, teaching and working at a distance.
- Allow pilots to share lessons learned to date, as well as discuss issues and concerns
- Provide a forum in which teachers and administrators could share information and provide support for each other's efforts
- Provide a forum where administrators could discuss issues and concerns pertaining to the project (i.e. employees, scheduling, compensation etc.)

- Explore larger issues related to the goal of integrating distance education into the program's adult education environment

Quantitative Data

Teachers collected several types of quantitative data. At the time of intake, data including NRS demographic descriptors, learner goals, and baseline test scores on a standardized test were recorded for each learner. During the instructional period, teachers used the Project IDEAL logs to record completion of work in each chapter of the GED Connection curriculum they were studying. On a monthly basis, teachers uploaded their logs to the Project IDEAL Data Depository located at http://www.communityzero.com/idealdata. In addition, at the end of the year (June 2004), teachers and administrators completed an online survey in which they described their experience and assessed the worth of the distance program. The Project IDEAL Support Center at the University of Michigan organized and analyzed the data. The information below contains the complete findings from the data.

Findings: Learner Demographics

Pilot sites recruited 304 learners; 275 of those learners were enrolled. Enrolled learners' ages ranged from 16 to over 60 years of age with half of the learners between 25 and 44 years old. Most of the learners were female (73%) and most identified themselves as white (73%). Enrolled learners were roughly evenly split between those who were employed (47%) and those who were unemployed (49%). **Please note:** the NRS findings for age, gender, ethnicity, and Labor Force Status for each pilot program are available in Appendix A and B.

Table 2. Demographics for Enrolled Learners

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Total enrolled learners		275	100
Age	16-18	20	7%
	19-24	90	33%
	25-44	137	50%
	45-59	24	9%
	60+	4	1%
Gender	Male	73	27%
	Female	202	73%
Ethnicity	Black/African American	68	25%
	Hispanic/Latino	4	1%
	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	<1%
	White	202	73%
Labor Force	Employed	128	47%
Status	Not Employed	135	49%
	Not in Labor Force	12	4%

Retention and Seat Time

Agencies ran their distance learning programs for an average of ten months (October-June). During this 10 month period, the seven pilot sites recruited 304 adults to study GED Connection; 275 (90%) of them were engaged for at least 12 hours and qualified as enrolled students. This more than doubles last year's goal of serving 100 students through the pilot Distance Education Program. In addition, this exceeds the number recruited during the first year effort of implementation when 215 learners were recruited with 182 considered active.

The Project IDEAL Seat Time Logs tracked the work students completed and served as an approximation of the classroom concept of seat time. The median seat time hours for Ohio distance education students is 33 hours of study. The largest proportion of students (41%) recorded between 12 and 20 hours of seat time, indicating that these distance learners studied up to eight hours beyond intake and orientation. Smaller proportions of students studied at a distance for longer periods of time, including 15% of learners with more than 60 hours of distance education.

Table 2. Overall Retention and Seat Time

Overall Retention and Seat Time	N	%
Learners recruited	304	100%
Learners enrolled (Reaching 12-hour Status)	275	90%
Learners enrolled that declared goals	275	100%
Learners reporting a Goal	249	91%
Average per teacher	23	
Seat Time of Enrolled Learner †		
12-19 Seat-Time Hours	113	41%
20-29 Seat-Time Hours	59	21%
30-39 Seat-Time Hours	36	13%
40-49 Seat-Time Hours	16	6%
50-59 Seat-Time Hours	11	4%
60+ Seat Time Hours	40	15%
Median: 23.0 **		

** † Seat time includes credit given for intake and orientation activities. Given the skewed distribution of the data, the appropriate average measure is the Median, not the Mean. The Mean seat time in Ohio is 33.0 hours.

Survey Findings

At the completion of year two (June 2004), teachers and administrators were asked to complete on-line surveys about their experiences in the Distance Education Pilot Program. Teachers and administrators completed separate surveys, focusing on issues appropriate for their role in the distance education program.

Teacher Surveys

The teacher surveys covered a range of topics, including the model of distance education used, how students were recruited, ways in which teachers supported students, orientation for distance students and teachers' interest in continuing to teach at a distance. These questions were aimed at gaining additional insight into the distance learning experience from the teachers' perspective

Teachers were asked about how students in their distance learning programs were recruited. The largest proportion of recruitment was attributed to students coming into an agency and being presented with distance education as one possible option (73% reported that "a few" and 27% reported that "a lot" of their students were recruited this way). Other students were attracted by advertising specifically for distance education (60% reported "a few" and 30% reported "a lot" of students were recruited this way.

Most teachers (92.3%) characterized their distance learning program as including supplemental face-to-face support. In this model, students did most of their work at a distance, but also had the opportunity to meet with the instructor face-to-face on a regular basis. Only a small proportion of teachers (7.7%) reported that they offered a "pure" or total distance program, in which there was very little face-to-face contact between the teacher and students.

Teachers used a variety of methods to provide support for their distance learners. All (100%) of the respondents provided support via telephone. In addition, 92.3% supported students in face-to-face meetings, 84.6% provided support by e-mail outside of the GED Connection On-line Management System and 76.9% used the GED Connection online management system to support their students. Slightly more than half (53.8%) reported they used regular mail to provide feedback and support to students. This range of methods suggests that teachers used multiple methods to provide the most effective support for their distance learners.

The majority of teachers (66.7%) reported offering only face-to-face orientations for distance students; the remaining teachers reported that their orientations were comprised of a mix of face-to-face, telephone and virtual approaches. Orientations were typically comprised of many activities, with two-thirds or more of teachers indicating that they included the following in their orientation sessions: goal setting, orientation to the distance learning curriculum, getting the student online and registered for the distance learning program, pre-testing on a standardized test, training in working independently, specifying ways the teacher and student could contact each other, setting expectations for the class and specifying how materials would be disseminated.

There is a great deal of interest among the pilot teachers to continue teaching at a distance. All (100%) of the respondents stated they would like to continue teaching at distance. However, half (50%) of them stated they were interested in working with another curriculum. Several expressed an interest in having a Pre-GED curriculum available to meet the needs of lower level students interested in working at a distance.

Administrator Surveys

Administrator surveys examined issues of concern to program administrators in implementing and supporting distance learning programs. Topics included staff assignments and time, incorporating distance education into their agency and likelihood of offering distance learning education in the future.

Results suggest that administrators perceive some challenges in offering distance education to their adult learners. The majority of respondents (75%) stated that teaching at a distance takes more time then does teaching in a traditional classroom. Interestingly, all of them perceive administering a distance learning program as taking about the same amount of time as administering classroom programs. This increased demand on teacher time has implications for staffing and cost issues. Furthermore, three-fourths (75%) of administrators and program coordinators also stated that integrating distance education in their traditional programs would be "somewhat difficult." Despite these concerns, all of the administrators indicated that they would like to continue to offer distance education, either with the same or with a different curricula. Additionally, half of the administrators and program coordinators reported that it was "somewhat likely" and another 25% thought it was "very likely" they would be offering distance learning in the next few years.

Administrators and program coordinators were also asked to share the benefits of offering distance learning classes to their students. Two common issues emerged from their comments: more options for learners and flexibility. To illustrate, administrators believed distance education provided more options for learners who could not otherwise attend a traditional classroom because of the flexibility of the distance program. One administrator stated that when students become employed they have the option to continue with their studies in the distance program, if they so desire.   Another administrator stated that distance education has allowed them to reach more learners in the rural areas and believes that it has helped them strengthen their relationships with various agencies within their community.

Conclusions / Recommendations

The pilot sites in Ohio continue to be looked at as highly skilled professionals with enthusiastic attitudes. Ohio was one of two states to successfully pilot test the Virtual Study Groups concept. During 2003-2004, the model was tested three times in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Based on the results, the Project IDEAL support center is currently recommending this professional development approach be implemented in all the member states that have experienced distance teachers. In addition, the Project IDEAL support team has worked with Ohio adult education practitioners to create several working papers around distance education issues in the adult education setting. Currently, these working papers include: *A pilot test of study groups; Professional development for experienced distance teachers; Using assessment to guide instructional planning for distance learners;* and *Assessment and accountability issues in distance education for adult learners.*

It is highly recommended that Ohio continue to participate with the national Project IDEAL effort. Ohio's affiliation with this national consortium will continue to strengthen its partnerships with other organizations and agencies around the country that have similar interest in implementing distance education in the Adult Education arena. During this third and final year of the pilot phase, Ohio participants will have an opportunity to fine-tune their efforts as well as add another curricula into their

settings. Working with multiple curricula at a distance will assist pilot sites in determining whether or not distance education is a feasible option for their program.

Furthermore, at the completion of the third year, the skilled pool of distance practitioners will be able to assist the Ohio Department of Education by providing invaluable insight and guidance. Their knowledge base will indeed assist the department with creating and developing guidelines and policies as it relates to distance instruction and implementation in the ABLE environment.

Recommendations

- Determine whether or not distance education will be an option for all Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) Programs in Ohio
    - Develop distance learning training for interested Ohio ABLE staff
    - Identify options for ABLE programs to participate with distance learning delivery
- Move forward with a state-wide implementation plan of distance education for Ohio
- Start to consider what support methods and options will be needed for distance learners, teachers and administrators/coordinators statewide
- Expand resources and content on Ohio's Project IDEAL Web site
- Start working towards creating and maintaining a core group of skilled distance professionals that will assist with distance education training and implementation statewide
- Explore as many curriculums as possible that are being utilize in other states and evaluate the positives and negatives of each
- Continue to build, expand and maintain partnerships with local area agencies to increase awareness of distance learning opportunities for learners throughout the state
- Explore distance learning policies implemented in other states (i.e. New York and Pennsylvania)

Appendix A.

Table 3. Seat Time for Enrolled Learners by Program

Program	Seat Time Enrolled Learners						Total
	12-19 hrs	20-29 hrs	30-39 hrs	40-49 hrs	50-59 hrs	60+ hrs	
ACES	20	9	5	2	1	3	40
Canton City	51	13	13	2	2	4	85
Cuyahoga Community College	4	17	6	3	2	19	51
Franklinton Learning Center	16	7	2	2	2	1	30
Hamilton City ABLE	9	10	5	7	3	9	43
Ohio Hi-Point	10	2	4	0	1	4	21
Six District ABLE	3	1	1	0	0	0	5
Total	113	59	36	16	11	40	275

Table 4. NRS Age by Program

Program	NRS Age Categories					Total
	16-18	19-24	25-44	45-59	60+	
ACES	3	11	20	4	2	40
Canton City ABLE	4	35	38	7	1	85
Cuyahoga Community College	1	14	33	3	0	51
Franklinton Learning Center	1	5	21	3	0	30
Hamilton City ABLE	10	13	16	3	1	43
Ohio Hi-Point	0	12	7	2	0	21
Six District ABLE	1	0	2	2	0	5
Total	20	90	137	24	4	275*

*NRS Labor Force Status Information was reported for enrolled learners (12+hours)

Appendix B.

Table 5. NRS Gender by Program

Program	NRS Gender		Total
	Male	**Female**	
ACES	15	25	40
Canton City ABLE	19	66	85
Cuyahoga Community College	14	37	51
Franklinton Learning Center	6	24	30
Hamilton City ABLE	12	31	43
Ohio Hi-Point	5	16	21
Six District ABLE	2	3	5
Total	73	202	275*

* NRS Gender Information was reported for enrolled learners (12+hours)

Table 6. NRS Labor Force Status by Program

Program	NRS Labor Force Status			Total
	Employed	**Not Employed**	**Not in Labor Force**	
ACES	16	23	1	40
Canton City ABLE	36	41	8	85
Cuyahoga Community College	30	21	0	51
Franklinton Learning Center	9	21	0	30
Hamilton City ABLE	24	18	1	43
Ohio Hi-Point	10	9	2	21
Six District ABLE	3	2	0	5
Total	128	135	12	275*

* NRS Labor Force Status Information was reported for enrolled learners (12+hours)

Appendix C.

Pilot Sites Personnel

Key Personnel for Pilot sites	Pilot Agency	Curriculum Used
* Joyce Taylor (Administrator/Coordinator) Sandra Golden	Six District Educational Compact ABLE/Kent	GED Connection
Sharon Halter (Administrator/Coordinator) Anita Salyer Dave Ozimek	Ohio Hi-Point ABLE	GED Connection
* Patricia Buchan (Administrator/Coordinator) Milton Clement	Cuyahoga Community College/Eastern	GED Connection
Kathy Petrek (Administrator/Coordinator) Nancy Schwab Sharon Katterheinrich	Hamilton City Schools ABLE	GED Connection
Lisa Ebert (Administrator/Coordinator) Marcia Pemberton Cheryl Nye	Adult Career Educational Services (ACES)	GED Connection
Jane Meyer (Administrator/Coordinator) Cheryl Schnebelen Lori Oliver	Canton City Schools ABLE	GED Connection
Ella Bogard (Administrator/Coordinator) Deanne Fouche' Jerusha McClendon	Franklinton Learning Center	GED Connection

* Also Project IDEAL instructors

Key Personnel and Advisors for the Pilot Program

- The Ohio Literacy Resource Center
  Kimberly S. McCoy, Distance Learning Coordinator
  Marty Ropog, Director (Advisory Committee)
  Tim Ponder, Midwest LINCS Coordinator (Advisory Committee)
- Northeast ABLE Resource Center:
  Andrew Venclauskas, Technology Trainer (Advisory Committee)
- Northwest ABLE Resource Center:
  Diane Ninke, Director (Advisory Committee)
- Southwest ABLE Resource Center:
  Lynn Reese, Coordinator (Advisory Committee)
- The Ohio Department of Education, Career-Technical and Adult Education:
  Denise Pottmeyer, ABLE State Director (Advisory Committee)
  Jeff Gove, ABLE Consultant (Advisory Committee)
  Cynthia Zengler, ABLE Consultant (Advisory Committee)
  Karen Scheid, ABLE Consultant (Advisory Committee)
- The Ohio Literacy Network
  Maureen A. O'Rourke, Executive Director (Advisory Committee)
  Robert Mentzer, GED on TV Coordinator (Advisory Committee)