IDEAL
IMPROVING DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

Ohio's Project IDEAL Annual Report Fiscal year 2002-2003

Introduction

This report presents the objectives and outcomes of the first year of Ohio's exploratory project in distance learning for Adult Basic and Literacy Education 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. ***Project IDEAL, a Distance Learning Pilot Project,*** provides an opportunity for seven pilot sites to develop and expand services beyond the classroom through distance education, using GED Connection on-line instruction, videos, and workbooks. The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Literacy Link, the Kentucky Education Network (KET), and the National Center for Adult Literacy (NCAL) produced the GED Connection curriculum. The GED Connection Curriculum includes 39 half-hour video programs, three full-color GED Connection workbooks, free Web-based GED Connection learning activities, Teacher's Guide and an on-line Management System. The Distance Learning Pilot Project provides learning opportunities to adults who lack basic educational skills equal to those of a high school graduate.

Purpose

Nationally, it has been reported that many adults have difficulty attending GED classes due to work schedules, childcare responsibilities and/or transportation difficulties, just to name a few of the barriers to educational opportunities. Moreover, many GED teachers report that adults who are enrolled in their local GED programs tend to watch GED on TV to supplement their in-class instruction. These patterns of behavior are also evident when reviewing Ohio's data over the last couple of years, suggesting both a need to offer services that eliminate some of these barriers and the appeal of media based learning. Thus, the state decided to implement a multi-year project to explore the potential of using distance education as a way to increase access to GED courses for interested adults. The state chose to work with Project IDEAL, a multi-state consortium coordinated by staff at the University of Michigan. Project IDEAL assists states with establishing, developing, and implementing additional services for adult learners through distance education and helps states conduct research to explore the impact of their efforts. During the first year, the primary purpose of the distance learning pilot project in Ohio was to establish, develop, and implement a distance-learning environment in seven sites throughout the state. In addition to providing services, Ohio wanted to learn "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. Lastly, Ohio wanted to provide basic educational services to a segment of the population currently in need, but not being reached, and expand on existing services.

Recruitment Goals

Ohio's initial plan was to recruit eight sites, two from each of the state's four regions, selecting sites that varied in size, program type, and location (urban and rural). Interested sites were asked to respond to a Request for Proposal (RFP); proposals were scored in nine categories, with a range of 5-20 possible points for each category. Primary consideration was given to applicants who 1.) Exhibited working

knowledge of GED Connection curriculum; 2.) Described prior experience with integrating technology in the ABLE classroom **or** demonstrated prior experience using distance education to deliver instruction to adult learners **or** discussed accomplishments of organization in non-traditional learning projects **or** provided a statement of how this project would impact their local community; 3.) Provided description of the "GED Connection" pilot project to be funded and the need it addressed; 4.) Described the relationships among partners, the role of each partner, and how each partner would contribute to the implementation of the distance-learning classroom; 5.) Provided evidence of computer skills of the designated instructors; and 6.) Demonstrated existing Internet-ready computers that would be available for the pilot project and student use. After reviewing the RFPs, the Ohio Project IDEAL Advisory Committee selected seven sites instead of eight.

Timeframe

The official timeframe for this project was August 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003. However, due to some scheduling conflicts, activities that should have taken place prior to June 30, 2003, didn't take place until August 2003.

Action Plan/Time Line for Fiscal year 2003

Date	Product or Activity
August 2002	▪ Budget approved for project
September 2002	▪ RFPs completed, approved & sent to all ABLE-funded programs
October 2002	▪ Responses due from field ▪ 14 ABLE-funded applied to participate
October 2002	▪ Seven sites selected and notified to participate in the first round of Project IDEAL
November 2002	▪ Three-day training event held at Kent State University for pilot sites. ▪ Training dealt with distance-learning implementation, data collection by Leslie Petty and Shannon Young, use of distance learning product (GED Connection-videos, workbooks and On-line Management System) by Noreen Lopez, Dehra Shaffer and Milli Fazey ▪ Sites started with Distance Learning course D101. Schedule to end January 2003
December 2002	▪ Sites continue to work on the Distance Learning course D101
January 2003	▪ Sites completed the Distance Learning course D101 ▪ Sites began their Distance Learning efforts with recruiting Distance Learners
February 2003	▪ Sites began orienting and teaching Distance Learners. ▪ Sites participated in two conference calls, provided updates, and reviewed information concerning the logs designed by Project IDEAL, University of Michigan.
March 2003	▪ Sites continued collecting data

April 2003	▪ Teachers and administrators gathered to discuss current issues with Distance Learning Coordinator and members of the Project IDEAL Advisory Committee at the Ohio Association Adult and Continuing Education annual Conference (OAACE) in Columbus, OH ▪ Pilots presented their experience to date with distance education at OAACE ▪ Pilots presented their experience to date with distance education at COABE in Portland, Oregon. ▪ Pilot sites submitted first log submission to Data Depository
May 2003	▪ Pilot sites submitted second log submission to Data Depository ▪ * Distance Learning Coordinator (DLC) met with pilot sites
June 2003	▪ Pilot sites submitted third log submission to Data Depository ▪ * DLC met with pilot sites
July 2003	▪ * DLC met with pilot sites
August 2003	▪ Pilot sites gathered for one-day wrap-up session to discuss issues and concerns around Project IDEAL for year one. ▪ Pilot sites also discussed requirements and expectations for year two

*DLC: Distance Learning Coordinator

The Pilot Sites Personnel

Starting in October 2002, seven ABLE-funded sites were selected to participate in the first round of the distance-learning project. During the first year of implementation, two of the site coordinators were also Project IDEAL instructors. By November 2002, Ohio had seven sites, 14 instructors and a goal of supporting 100 adults studying GED Connection at a distance. A list of the sites and personnel participating in the first year's efforts is included in the Appendix.

Project Administration

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 state to assist with reading and evaluating the Project IDEAL application and assisted with training and provided technical support as needed. A list of key personnel and advisors is included in the Appendix.

The Beginning: Training

Although Ohio had a state license for the GED Connection videos, project staff was unsure if ABLE teachers had proper training on how to properly use this curriculum. Thus, the initial three-day training in November 2002, included instruction on how to utilize all three components of the GED Connection Curriculum. The initial training also covered the requirements and expectations of the pilot project, distance learning implementation and data collection. Additionally, prior to implementing distance instruction in the ABLE classroom, Ohio teachers and administrators were required to take an eight-week on-line course in teaching at a distance. The course, Distance Learning D101, was developed by Project IDEAL and provided an opportunity for participants to learn

how to apply principles of distance education prior to implementing distance instruction programs in their own environments. The course included several components: reading assigned chapters in the handbook, exploring the various components of CommunityZero Web portal, participating in on-line discussions, articulating issues dealing with distance education and developing a detailed plan for recruitment, orientation, and teaching. It also provided a mechanism for establishing a sense of community among the pilot sites. At the conclusion of the course, the Community Zero course site was transformed into a communication tool and resource site for the pilot sites to share information and support each other's efforts to implement distance education programs.

The Research Approach

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

Conference Calls and Face-to-Face Meetings

From February-August 2003, Pilots participated in two conference calls, two face-to-face meetings, and met with the Distance Learning Coordinator face-to-face at their ABLE program. The purpose of these activities was to:

- Provide ongoing updates as far as recruiting, teaching etc.
- 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
- Explore larger issues related to the goal of integrating distance education into an agency's adult education course offerings

These activities provided qualitative insights into the process of implementing and maintaining a distance education program. Including some of the challenges with the following areas:

- **Retention**
  - High numbers express interest
  - Small percentage qualify for the distance learning project
  - Small percentage actually stick with the program (lack of motivation)
- **Group orientation**
  - Doesn't seem to fit learners needs
  - One-on-one orientation may be more beneficial (independent learners)
- **Computer skills**
  - Learners not willing to attempt or utilize on-line component
  - Lack of access to computers
  - Aren't comfortable with using technology
- **Assessment**
  - Assessing learners at a distance (accuracies and accountability)
  - Actually getting learners back into the program for post-assessment
  - Collecting beneficial materials for portfolio assessment

Seat Time Logs

An issue for policy makers and administrators is how long students in any given program spend in a program; for classroom programs this is typically measured by "seat time." However, distance students do not attend for a set number of classroom hours, making it challenging to determine how much time they spend in the program. In an effort to understand how much time distance students spend in their programs, several Project IDEAL states, including Ohio, explored the possibility of using Seat Time Logs to monitor student study time. During the first year pilot, Ohio sites experimented with assigning seat time based on work completed at a distance in the GED Connection Curriculum. Instructors examined students' work and gave a certain amount of seat time credit for an assignment that was judged to represent completion of that assignment. The Project IDEAL Support Center designed the logs to help teachers keep track of their judgments. Learners were given credit based on teacher estimates of the time required to complete these components. The amount of time is shown in Table 1. Credit for viewing each video was based on asking a learner if they watched it; credit for completing the workbook or on-line activity was based on examining the learners' work. Two conference calls were held in February to assist teachers in maintaining the logs.

Table 1. Seat Time Credit Earned By GEDC Learners

Activity	Credit (Hours)	Definitions
Intake	3.0	Fill out state intake data forms and inform student about services available. Goal setting
Assessment	3.0	Standardized assessment (TABE, CASAS, etc.)
Orientation	4.0	Familiarization with GEDC product, Preview Test, study tasks (submitting assignments, etc.), setting pace, training in independent study strategies. Goal setting.
Tech Training	2.0	Computer and online training
GEDC Video+	0.5	Student self report: viewed or not
GEDC Workbook+	4.0	70% of all questions, or a negotiated subset of questions, are answered.
GEDC Internet Activities+	2.0	70% of all questions or a negotiated subset of questions are answered. *
GEDC Online Modules+	3.0	Student appears to have engaged the materials in some depth--teacher judgment.

*The number of hours earned by distance students is a function of the hours assigned for completing the work. The time estimates used were based on teachers estimates of the average amount of time it should take a student to complete the work in each unit of GED Connection.
+ Times were assigned for each individual program/chapter in which work was completed.

The seven ABLE-funded pilot sites began to recruit distance learners in January and provided distance instruction for four-five months (February-May). On average, distance learners were trained in late January through mid-February. In Table 2, data is provided on retention and seat time for the first year.

Table 2. Retention and Seat Time for GEDC Learners in Ohio

GEDC	Ohio	
	N	%
Total Learners Recruited	215	100%
Students Reaching 12-hour Status	183	85
Seat Time of 12-Hour Students	183	100%
12-20 Seat-Time Hours	62	34
21-30 Seat-Time Hours	34	19
31-40 Seat-Time Hours	28	15
41-50 Seat-Time Hours	21	11
51-60 Seat-Time Hours	10	5
>60 Seat-Time Hours	18	16
Median Seat Time Hours for 12-Hour Learners **	29.0	

** Given the skew ness of the data, the appropriate average measure is the median, not the mean. The mean seat time in Ohio is 35.8 hours.

In this four-to-five month period, the seven pilot sites recruited 215 adults to study GED Connection; 182 (85%) of them were engaged for at least 12 hours and qualified as enrolled students. This far exceeds the state's goal of serving 100 students through the pilot distance education program. On average, distance learners were trained in late January through mid February; they were engaged in learning for four months (February-May). The distribution of seat time for enrolled students is very skewed. The median number of hours studied by all enrolled students in Ohio was 29.0 hours. One third of the students fall in the category of 12-20 hours; at most, this represents learners studying GED Connection for eight hours beyond intake and orientation. Smaller percentages of students fall in each of the remaining categories of seat time. One fifth (21 percent) reached the 50-hour milestone that triggers a second assessment of educational progress. According to the last data submission in June, one student passed the official GED test (Six District Compact ABLE). Collectively, the pilot sites reported that **114 of the 215 students recruited were considered active. In addition, 205 learners completed orientation and 197 learners met their stated goals**. Table 3 provides data on seat time per pilot site, minus the credit the learner received during orientation.

Table 3. Seat Time Less Orientation

Center	Seat Time Less Orientation*							Total Number of Students
	12-19 hours	20-29 hours	30-39 hours	40-49 hours	50-59 hours	60+ hours	Less than 12 hours	
ACES	4	3	2				7	16
Canton City ABLE	6	5	1		1	4	17	34
Cuyahoga Community College	8	7	6	6	5	4	15	51
Franklinton Learning Center	1	7	4	1	1		11	25
Hamilton City ABLE	6	7	5	2	2	9	13	44
Ohio Hi-Point	3	1	1			1	18	21
Six District ABLE	5	1	1				17	24
Total	30	31	20	9	9	18	98	215

*Number of students at a site assigned to each seat time category.

Findings: NRS Data

Teachers using the Project IDEAL Logs collected several types of quantitative data. At the time of intake, data was recorded on each learner. The data included NRS demographic descriptors, learner goals, and baseline test scores on a standardized test (when possible). During the instructional period, teachers used the 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. The Project IDEAL Support Center at the University of Michigan organized and analyzed the data reported below.

Table 4. NRS Age

Center	NRS Age Categories					Total Number of Students
	16-18	19-24	25-44	45-59	60+	
ACES	1	7	7		1	16
Canton City ABLE		12	11	1	1	25
Cuyahoga Community College	3	18	23	4		48
Franklinton Learning Center	2	12	9	1		24
Hamilton City ABLE	2	16	14	6		38
Ohio Hi-Point	3	7	8	3		21
Six District ABLE	1	7	9	4		21
Total	12	79	81	19	2	193*

* NRS age information was reported for 193 out of 215 students.

Table 5. NRS Ethnicity

Center	NRS Ethnicity					Total
	Am Ind/Alaskan	Black/Af Amer	Hisp/Latino	White	Other	
ACES				16		16
Canton City ABLE		5		21		26
Cuyahoga Community College		29	2	16	1	48
Franklinton Learning Center		4		19	1	24
Hamilton City ABLE		1	1	36		38
Ohio Hi-Point	1	1		19		21
Six District ABLE		3	1	19		23
Total	1	43	4	146	2	196*

* NRS Ethnicity information was reported for 196 out of 215 students.

Table 6.NRS Gender

Center	NRS Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
ACES	4	12	16
Canton City ABLE	9	24	33
Cuyahoga Community College	16	33	49
Franklinton Learning Center	7	18	25
Hamilton City ABLE	13	26	39
Ohio Hi-Point	5	16	21
Six District ABLE	8	16	24
Total	65	145	207*

* NRS Gender information was reported for 207 out of 215 students.

Table 7. NRS Labor Force Status

Center	NRS Labor Force Status			Total
	Employed	Not Employed	Not in Labor Force	
ACES	9	7		16
Canton City ABLE	14	10	1	25
Cuyahoga Community College	23	20	5	48
Franklinton Learning Center	11	10	3	24
Hamilton City ABLE	15	20	3	38
Ohio Hi-Point	11	4	6	21
Six District ABLE	11	9	3	23
Total	94	80	21	195*

* NRS Labor Force Status Information was reported for 195 out of 215 students

The NRS data indicate that the largest proportions of distance students were between 19 and 44 years of age and a majority (70%) were female. The largest

proportion considered themselves to be White, with a smaller proportion identifying themselves as African-American. Participants were fairly evenly split between those who were employed (48%) and those who were either unemployed or not in the workforce (52%).

Survey Findings

At the completion of year one (June 2003), teachers and administrators were asked to complete on-line surveys about their experience in the distance education pilot program. Survey results provided insight into the effort required to teach in the program, whether or not distance students would have enrolled in classroom programs, methods of supporting distance students and the challenges of implementing a distance education program.

The majority of respondents (87.5%) reported that the amount of time allocated for their distance learning teachers on this project was sufficient for them to teach effectively and conduct all project related tasks. Based upon Ohio's contact with the pilot sites, teachers were funded for 10 hours per week. The fact that most respondents thought this time allocation was adequate is interesting, in light of the finding that most respondents (85.8%) reported that it either took as much time, or more time, to teach 20 distance students compared to teaching 20 classroom students.

The pilot sites selected different approaches for implementing their distance education programs. Only a minority of programs (10%) offered "pure distance" options, in which students interact with the instructor on-line, via telephone or regular mail. Half of the agencies offered either "partial distance programs" in which the distance interactions were augmented with limited face-to-face contacts between the teacher and student, and 40% offered "classroom supplement programs" in which the student met regularly with the instructor in addition to studying at a distance.

Findings suggest that their distance education programs were reaching students who would not have been likely to enroll in traditional classroom programs. Two-thirds of the participants indicated that, "only a few of my distance learning students would have enrolled in our traditional programs." This suggests that the distance learning programs may have the potential to reach an audience not currently served by existing programs within the state.

Most teachers appear to use multiple methods of interaction to support and provide feedback to their distance learning students. Three methods – use of the on-line management in GEDC, telephone contacts, and face-to-face interactions were each mentioned by 90% of survey respondents. Additionally, respondents reported they used an e-mail system not associated with GEDC (70%) and regular mail (50%) to support their students. The use of multiple methods suggests that teachers may be selecting the method most appropriate to interact with individual students.

Project administrators were asked to identify the administrative challenges they found in implementing and maintaining the pilot distance education programs. Several themes emerged in their responses. Administrators found it challenging to support and motivate students and to keep them active and retained in the program. In addition, they expressed concerns about pre and post-testing distance students and meeting NRS standards.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Distance implementation is a new and exciting endeavor for Ohio Adult Basic Education learners, teachers and administrators. With only a few months under their belts, pilot sites in Ohio are looked at as highly skilled professionals with enthusiastic attitudes. Since implementation did not start until January 2003, more time is definitely needed in order to accurately determine the pros and cons of distance instruction. During fiscal year 2004, pilots will have the opportunity of implementing the distance program for a complete year (nine months), which will provide a more comprehensive data results. Therefore, it is highly recommended that Ohio continue to participate with the national effort known as Project IDEAL. During this second year of distance implementation pilots will continue to collect data in order to determine "what works" and "what doesn't work" as it relates to distance learning. Pilots will also continue collecting data as it relates to the learner as well as how much time is being spent teaching and administrating a distance learning component in the ABLE classroom.

Additionally, during year two, pilots are also faced with how they are going to approach Ohio ABLE's Standards-Based Education (SBE) with their distance learners. All the pilots have stated that they plan to have a wider variety and more sophisticated samples of students' work for inclusion in the portfolios. In addition, pilots plan to work more closely with their adult learners to discuss and review the kinds of materials that should be included in the portfolio. The greatest challenge for all the pilots during year two will be aligning the GED Connection Curriculum with the new standards. During this instructional year, the pilots have been asked to work with the Distance Learning Coordinator and other members of Ohio's Project IDEAL Advisory Committee, in developing distance examples using Ohio's Uniform Portfolio System (UPS). As pilots start the second year of the distance pilot study and approach the third year of instruction, there are several issues that need to be thought about and addressed for future consideration. These issues include:

- Providing individual feedback regarding performance and progress towards goals
- Determining what is important and relevant for portfolio inclusion
- Discussing what makes a particular piece an appropriate choice for inclusion in the portfolio
- The kinds of work that should be included when working at a distance and what information will meet portfolio requirements
- Determining how much is enough
- Identifying methods to collect the information when working at a distance
- Demonstrating how the student work reflects the standards and benchmarks being used by the student
- Challenges of collecting evidence in a traditional classroom vs. distance learning environment

Recommendations for third year

a. Maintain the same number of pilots for pilot study
b. Develop a tentative plan for state-wide implementation of distance education options for fiscal year 2006
c. Explore the possibility of adding another curriculum to evaluate during the third year of the pilot study
d. Increase funding for pilot sites
e. Build and maintain partnerships with local area agencies to increase the awareness of distance learning opportunities for learners throughout the state**.**

Appendix

Pilot Sites Personnel

Key Personnel for Pilot sites	Pilot Agency	Curriculum Used
* Joyce Taylor (Administrator/Coordinator) Dianne Evans	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 Terry Zornow	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)