



# Nebraska Adult Education Distance Education Policy

**This policy is to define and develop distance education policy for the state's Adult Education Program, including ABE, GED, and ESL components.**

**This document is based on the National Reporting System (NRS) distance learning guidelines and the incorporation of ideas and procedures developed by the distance education pilot project conducted in fall, 2011.**

## **The Need**

Nebraska is developing a distance education program as a means to improve the State's Adult Education outcomes. It is also a method of increasing access for the state student population as well as building capacity to serve more students with a wider variety of options available.

Distance education will also provide a manner for the under-skilled employed and unemployed adults in the state to access education by offering flexible hours and instruction through a variety of media. By the incorporation of technology, students who were not attracted to or able to attend the traditional ABE/GED/ESL classes will have another avenue to improve their educational and skill levels. Students enrolled in distance education will now have the same opportunity as traditional students to receive quality instruction taught by trained, knowledgeable instructors.

## **Pilot Project** (September 1-October 15, 2011)

Nebraska adult education programs piloted distance education in four representative programs across the state for GED prep students and three different programs for ESL instruction. The pilot project occurred in the fall months of 2011 in order to develop protocol, instructional methodologies and management systems before implementing distance education across the state in January, 2012. The pilot project focused on extensive training for instructors, appropriate recruiting of students for the project, best practices for delivering a hybrid approach to distance education and a logical method of extending the offerings across the state's local programs.

Those programs participating in the distance education pilot project, as well as those who opt to add a distance education component to their class offerings in the future, must complete and comply with the following:

- ♦ Teachers and directors must complete the required training from GED-i and/or USALearns prior to offering distance education classes.
- ♦ Programs must design and present a separate orientation for students participating in the GED-i distance education class option.

- ♦ All distance education classes must be based on a blended/hybrid model where students are required to pre and post test in a face-to-face setting, as well as meet on some type of a regular schedule with classmates and instructor.
- ♦ Student hours for distance education must be tracked separately in “distance learning” and “classroom setting” categories.

## Going to Full Implementation

Programs that wish to offer distance learning as a result of pilot data and/or the planned presentations at the 2011 annual adult education conference, will contact the state director, participate in all required trainings, use state approved curriculum, and manage distance learning according to state policy and NRS guidelines. Distance learning will be a voluntary delivery option with the programs participating being willing to follow policy as well as maintain traditional classroom instruction.

Information and technical assistance for the local program distance learning implementation is available by contacting the state office.

## Contact Information

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## General Distance Learning Requirements

### Definition of Distance Education

Distance Education is a formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to:

- ♦ Print
- ♦ Video
- ♦ Audio
- ♦ Broadcasts
- ♦ Computer software
- ♦ Web based programs
- ♦ Other online tapes

Teachers support distance learners through face-to-face contact at orientation and regular intervals, as well as, via mail, telephone, email, fax or online technologies or software.

## Definition of Distance Learners

Distance learners are students who receive distance education services as defined. However, adult learners in Nebraska will receive both distance education and traditional classroom education during the course of the program year. Students will receive a blended/hybrid approach to instruction and will be classified in one or the other at the end of the year. Attendance for distance education students must be collected separately.

## Approved Curricula

Nebraska currently recognizes *GED-i* and *USALearns* as distance learning curricula. As instructors become more experienced and skilled at working with distance education, Nebraska will look at extending the offerings to meet the needs of students. Any additional curricula added will be approved on an investigative and data analysis basis.

## Requirements for Measuring Contact Hours

Students in distance education must have at least 12 hours of contact with a NE Adult Education program before they can be counted for federal reporting purposes. Contact hours will be a combination of direct contact and distance activities. Distance learning instruction may include a wider range of activities accepted for the traditional classroom.

### These may include:

- ♦ Face-to-face contact: orientation, intake, pretesting, post testing, goal setting and transition counseling or activities.
- ♦ Live video broadcasts
- ♦ Computer software interaction

Direct contact hours must involve interaction between the staff in real time where identity of the learner can be verified.

## Proxy Contact Hours

Proxy contact hours must be associated with one of three approved models for distance education.

**Clock Time:** Assigns contact hours based on the time that a learner is engaged in a software program that tracks time.

**Teacher Judgment:** Assigns a fixed number of hours based on teacher determination of the extent to which a learner engaged in, or completed, the assignment.

**Learner Mastery:** Assigns a fixed number of hours based on the learner passing a test on the content of the lesson.

The model used in Nebraska programs will vary based on approved curricula. *GED-i* uses a clock hour approach with actual time clocked for each unit or assignment. Nebraska will use the *GED-i* recommendations. *USALearns'* student proxy hours should be calculated as follows: *When the student completes the unit final quiz, it signifies unit completion. Proxy time is awarded as 3 hours per unit for courses 1 & 2 and 2 hours per unit for course 3.*

## Assessment of Students in Distance Education

- ♦ **TABE:** On site administration of the TABE pre and post test will be required of students involved in distance education classes. Student contact hours will be tracked in the Nebraska Adult Information System (AIMS). Upon completion of the minimum hours required for instruction, instructors will be expected to post test and enter scores into AIMS. Intake, goal setting, pre and post testing must be administered on-site in a Nebraska adult education class center.
- ♦ Student contact hours will be tracked in the AIMS system. AT NRS Levels 1-4, testing will occur after a minimum of 40 hours of instruction. For students in NRS Levels 5 & 6, post tests will be administered after a minimum of 30 hours of instruction.
- ♦ **BEST Plus:** On site administration of the BEST Plus and BEST Plus Literacy (if used) will be required of students involved in the distance education classes. Student contact hours will be tracked in the AIMS system. Upon completion of 60 hours of instruction, instructors will be expected to see that students are post tested by a certified BEST Plus Administrator.

## Instructional Time

Instructors will count direct contact hours and proxy hours and report them in AIMS to calculate instructional time.

## Application and Approval Procedures to Operate a Distance Education Learning Program

After the pilot period, Nebraska will allow local programs the option of implementing a distance education program at their centers in addition to maintaining the traditional classroom options. Each program interested in offering a distance learning program will follow these procedures:

- ♦ Require that the program director and any staff members directly involved participate in distance learning professional development training provided by the curriculum developer and/or through the state office.
- ♦ Coordinate marketing efforts to recruit distance education students in a manner to encourage those most likely to benefit or succeed in distance education offerings.
- ♦ Maintain contact with local program directors and the state office about the progress of any distance education classes being offered.