



## OHIO ASPIRE FY 2021 DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

The United States Department of Education's Office of Career Technical and Adult Education has authorized states to provide distance education (DE) as a formal option for delivering adult basic and literacy education services. This authorization acknowledges the reality that an increasing number of Aspire students have both the capability and desire to pursue their Aspire studies at a distance.

*Technology should be leveraged to provide access to more learning resources than are available in classrooms and connections to a wider set of "educators," including teachers, parents, experts, and mentors outside the classroom. It also should be used to enable 24/7 and lifelong learning.*

*States, districts, and others should develop and implement learning resources that exploit the flexibility and power of technology to reach all learners anytime and anywhere.*

U.S Department of Education, 2010

The Ohio Department of Higher Education Aspire Distance Education Policy defines the practices and procedures that govern the delivery of DE in Ohio Aspire Programs.

### State Context

Ohio Aspire recognized the need to explore DE in 2002 when the state joined Project IDEAL, a national project at the University of Michigan, funded to assist state adult basic education programs in establishing a distance option. State leaders recognized that a structured, monitored DE program could expand learning options for current students and increase access for educational services for Ohio's eligible Aspire population. By incorporating technology, students who are not attracted to or are unable to attend traditional Aspire classes, as well as those who want to supplement their in-class instruction, have another avenue to improve their skill levels. Students enrolled in DE have the same opportunity as traditional students to receive quality instruction taught by educated, knowledgeable teachers.

The formal relationship with Project IDEAL ended in 2006, but the Ohio Department of Higher Education Aspire Office continues to support distance education. All grant funded Ohio Aspire programs are required to offer distance education. See Appendix A: *Roles and Responsibilities*. The Distance Education strategy in the Aspire Instructional Grant provides details about each program's distance education services.

### Definitions

- As defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), *Distance Education* is a formal learning activity where students and teachers are separated by geography or time or both for the *majority* of the instructional period. Distance education can be thought of as anytime, anywhere learning. Distance learning instruction is delivered through a variety of media including but not limited to, audio recording, video, broadcasts, computer software, web-based programs and other online technology. Teachers

support distance students through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail, online technologies and/or software.

*Ohio does not allow the completion of paper-based assignments to count toward distance education hours. All DE models, including the Teacher Verification Model and Learner Mastery Model need to be created with assignments and tasks so that students can demonstrate the possession of digital literacy skills when completing assignments. Examples may include online submissions, audio and video recordings, and use of an LMS to submit assignments. We expect all Aspire programs to adhere to copyright laws when creating and choosing assignments and curriculum for DE models.*

In Ohio, distance education is primarily delivered via online software programs. The media options for delivering distance education continue to expand.

Most DE students in Ohio will receive both distance and traditional classroom education during the program year. This is called a blended approach to instruction. At the end of the fiscal year, based on the number of attendance hours in the DE class and the traditional class, the student will be classified, for federal reporting, as either a traditional student or a DE student (if more than 50% of the hours are DE). *The priority for programs is not how the students are classified for federal reporting; more importantly, the priority for programs is to provide the DE opportunity for all students in order to increase student access to instruction and successful completion of goals.*

## Approved Curricula

Approved curricula are available for beginning, intermediate, and advanced level ABE, ASE, and ESOL students. Ohio Aspire recognizes the following [list](#) of approved distance education curricula.

Details (including naming conventions) about the approved curricula are provided in the document linked above.

The Aspire office may approve additional curricula after vetting from the state office. **Beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, programs wishing to recommend additional distance learning curriculum for approval must submit a *New Curriculum Approval Application* for all DE models and submit to [aspiregrants@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:aspiregrants@highered.ohio.gov).** See Appendix B.

## Instructional Methods

**Distance students need to complete a local Aspire program orientation prior to being enrolled in Distance Education.** Contact hours for distance students, where the student and teacher are separated by time, geography, or both, can be direct instructional time with a teacher or proxy hours.

Instructional hours earned via online, computer instruction that occurs at a site other than in the Aspire classroom (e.g., a student's home, a library, a learning center), will be considered as proxy contact hours. There are three models used with Ohio DE-approved curricula to report proxy contact hours:

- **Clock Time Model**, which assigns contact hours based on the elapsed time that a student is connected to or engaged in an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time.
- **Learner Mastery Model**, which assigns a pre-determined and fixed number of hours of credit based on the student passing a test on the content of each lesson. Students work with the curriculum and materials and when they feel they have mastered the material, take

a test. A high percentage of correct answers (typically 70%-80%) earn the credit hours attached to the material. Students are required to take a mastery test at the completion of each instructional unit. Proxy hours are awarded for each test the student passes with a score of 70%-80%.

- **Teacher Verification Model**, which assigns a pre-determined and fixed number of hours of credit for each assignment/task based on teacher determination of the extent to which a student engaged in, or completed, the assignment. Proxy hours are awarded for activities completed by the participant and verified by the instructor. For example, programs that do not have a clock time model, but rather a point system. Another example includes students completing additional components of an online course that do not follow a clock time model nor have an assessment at the end.

Examples may include:

- a) Synchronous learning activities
  - i. Broadcast via video, phone, chat
  - ii. Classroom instruction delivered via online technology such as Google Hangout, Blackboard

DE synchronous scenario:

An instructional class that is offered live and virtually which delivers content via online technology such as Blackboard, Illuminate, etc. can be reported as distance education hours. The class name would be reported in ABLELink as DE-Virtual Class. In this example, students are separated by geography, which allows the class to still be coded as distance education. If your virtual class meets 2x per week, from 1:00-3:00pm, then in ABLELink those hours would be reported as DE. It is not necessary to have your curriculum vetted for DE approval during the timeframe of the class. If you are encouraging your students to work on additional assignments outside of the scheduled virtual class, then you do need to either choose curricula that is already on our approved curriculum list, or submit the new curriculum approval application to the state Aspire office for approval. Those DE hours would then be reported in the correct DE class in ABLELink.

At this time, standard follow-up with students, even if virtual, should not be counted as distance education hours as this is not a formal learning activity. If you decided to host a live virtual class for an hour where an instructor offered advising, career pathways information, etc., then an activity like this could be classified as Distance Education.

- b) Asynchronous learning activities
  - i. Moodle and other self-directed, Aspire-created courses
  - ii. Student instruction and support delivered through any means

## Assessment

The Ohio Aspire Assessment Policy applies to all Aspire students, including Distance Education students. Posttesting must occur according to test publisher guidelines as indicated in the Ohio Aspire Assessment Policy.

## ABLELink Reporting

Distance Education students must be classified in ABLELink. The Aspire program will set up all DE classes in ABLELink and enter and record students' DE attendance hours. *ABLELink Data Entry Procedures* (Appendix C) provides instructions. Classes are set up in ABLELink designated by the curricula used for distance education students. This naming convention is important for reporting purposes. Refer to the list of approved distance education curricula to review details for appropriate class names in ABLELink.

DE students will be counted in programs' Annual Performance Reports (APRs) as part of the unduplicated count of all enrolled students.

## Funding for Distance Education

All programs are required to implement distance education in their own programs and may need to fund additional time and resources, including curriculum, to support distance education.

All questions related to implementing Distance Education can be directed to [sschab@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:sschab@highered.ohio.gov)

### Appendices

A: Local Program's Roles and Responsibilities

B: New Curriculum Approval Application

C: ABLELink Reporting Directions

## Appendix A: Roles and Responsibilities

The Aspire program will offer distance education to its students

<b>Required Trainings</b>
<p>DE Basics and additional module(s) based on job roles, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DE Basics for Program Administrators</li><li>• DE Basics for Program Teachers</li><li>• DE Basics for ABLELink Support Staff</li></ul>
<b>Program Responsibilities</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide Aspire orientation to students that includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing students with a specific and detailed orientation to distance instruction;</li><li>• Determining the student's computer skills and suitability for distance instruction <i>Note: The State Aspire Program has no explicit criteria to deny a student who is interested in being a distance education student from participating, but local programs are expected to explain the expectations of all students in distance education to ensure their maximum benefit;</i></li><li>• Developing the individual learning plan with the student;</li><li>• Establishing a student portfolio for maintaining test results, RIF/R-RIFs, and other items;</li><li>• Assisting the student with obtaining a free e-mail account if needed; and</li><li>• Providing students with locations of computers that could be used for free (libraries, OhioMeansJobs centers, etc.).</li></ul></li><li>2. Provide distance instruction using one or more of the approved curricula.</li><li>3. Collect information and input appropriate data into ABLELink for reporting purposes that includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entering information monthly into ABLELink about the student, including progress, and seat time.</li></ul></li><li>4. Provide supplemental instruction and required assessments which include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre and progress testing the student with an approved standardized test per the Aspire Assessment Policy;</li><li>• Delivering any face-to-face supplemental instruction needed by the distance student; and</li><li>• Delivering instructional support and monitoring of student instructional activity.</li></ul></li></ol>

Appendix B: Ohio Distance Education Application for New  
Distance Education Curriculum Approval



Please submit this form to [aspiregrants@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:aspiregrants@highered.ohio.gov).

Name of Program	Date submitted
Name of Aspire Administrator	
Email	Phone

**New Curriculum for Approval**

Publisher:	<p><b>Curriculum Information – Instructional Model</b></p> <p>___ Clock Time Model: assigns contact hours based on the elapsed time that a student is connected to or engaged in an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time.</p> <p>___ Teacher Verification Model: assigns a fixed number of hours of credit for each assignment based on teacher determination of the extent to which a student engaged in, or completed, the assignment.</p> <p>___ Learner Mastery Model: assigns a fixed number of hours of credit based on the student passing a test on the content of each lesson. Students work with the curriculum and materials and take a test when they feel they have mastered the material. A high percentage of correct answers (typically 70%-80%) earn the credit hours attached to the material.</p>
Curriculum Product Name:	
Contact Name:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Website:	

**Cost**

Approximate cost per student \$	Approximate cost to the program \$
Other information about cost or pricing:	

**Audience**

Educational Functioning Levels	Instructional Content e.g. speaking, listening, social studies
ABE levels	
ESOL levels	

**Additional Information**

Is the curriculum aligned to the Common Core/Ohio Aspire College and Career-Readiness Standards or the English Language Proficiency Standards?
Describe the anticipated impact/effectiveness with adult students.
Describe the anticipated ease of use for the student.
What reports are available for teachers to monitor attendance and progress? (Please attach a sample)
Is training provided with the curriculum? If yes, who will provide the training?

**Only applicable if you are seeking approval for a Learner Mastery or Teacher Verification Model**

How do you plan to administer assessment and provide feedback in frequent cycles as the student progresses through each stage of the curriculum? (Learner Mastery). How many proxy hours will be assigned per proof of mastery through assessment?
What types of activities are included for the teacher verification model? What amount of proxy hours will be assigned per activity? What is your rationale as to what assignments are worth what amount of proxy hours? (Teacher Verification)
What online platform will you be using?
Please attach a full course syllabus

**ODHE Approval**

Approved <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	Date
Typed Name: _____ Title: _____	
Comments:	
ABLELink Class Name:	

## Appendix C: ABLELink Data Entry Procedures for Reporting DE Students

### Setting up classes

- Create instructional classes for the curricula that your program uses for distance education students. Use the ABLELink naming conventions identified in the curriculum chart in Appendix B. Programs should only create classes for the curricula used. Place a check mark in the box identifying the class as Distance.

The screenshot shows the 'Add Class' form with the following fields and options:

- Class name \***: Text input field (highlighted with a red box).
- Start time \***: Text input field.
- End time \***: Text input field.
- Site assignment \***: Dropdown menu.
- Primary instructor \***: Dropdown menu.
- Secondary instructor**: Dropdown menu.
- # of times/week offered**: Text input field.
- Days met**: Text input field.
- Class size**: Text input field.
- Subject areas (check all that apply)**:
  - Basic skills
  - GED preparation
  - ESOL
  - Literacy
  - Family literacy
  - Distance education (highlighted with a red box)
  - Other subject(s)
- If other, please specify**: Text input field.

Buttons: Save, Cancel

### Entering students

- Select a Distance Education class as one of the student's classes
- No other changes to the Registration Form data entry process are needed. Enter the rest of the information the same as if the student was an on-site student.

### Recording attendance

- Choose the appropriate class and enter the number of hours for the student, remembering that distance hours should be entered into the appropriate distance class and face to face hours entered into the appropriate face to face class.