OHIO ASPIRE
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, 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, print, 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.

In Ohio, distance education is primarily delivered via online software programs. The media options for delivering distance education are being expanded.

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 learning curricula.

Details about the approved curricula are provided in the document linked above.

The Aspire office may approve additional curricula after vetting from the state office. Programs wishing to recommend additional distance learning curriculum for approval may submit a *New Curriculum Approval Application* and submit to aspiregrants@highered.ohio.gov. See Appendix B.

Instructional Methods

Distance students, as with classroom students, must have at least 12 hours of contact before they can be counted as enrolled for reporting purposes. 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. These are the two models currently 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 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.

As with all services, the integrity of the curriculum and instruction are priority. The goal is to expand delivery options for distance education.

- **Teacher Verification Model**, which 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.

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

Assessment

Formal educational functioning level (EFL) assessment, including pretests and progress tests, must occur in person at an Aspire program. Programs must establish procedures for notifying students as to when and where posttesting should occur. Decisions about posttesting should be made based upon evidence of student progress within the curriculum, hours of instruction the student has received and/or days of enrollment.

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 D) provides instructions. Classes are set up in ABLELink designated by the curricula used for distance education students. See Appendix B for the class naming in ABLELink; for example, DE – Plato. This naming convention is important for reporting purposes.

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

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

Required Trainings
DE Basics and additional module(s) based on job roles

Program Responsibilities

1. Provide Aspire orientation to students that includes:
   - Providing students with a specific and detailed orientation to distance instruction;
   - Determining the student's computer skills and suitability for distance instruction
     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;
   - Developing the individual learning plan with the student;
   - Establishing a student portfolio for maintaining test results, RIF/R-RIFs, and other items;
   - Assisting the student with obtaining a free e-mail account if needed; and
   - Providing students with locations of computers that could be used for free (libraries, OhioMeansJobs centers, etc.).

2. Provide distance instruction using one or more of the approved curricula.

3. Collect information and input appropriate data into ABLELink for reporting purposes that includes:
   - Entering information monthly into ABLELink about the student, including progress, and seat time.

4. Provide supplemental instruction and required assessments which include:
   - Pre and progress testing the student with an approved standardized test per the Aspire Assessment Policy;
   - Delivering any face-to-face supplemental instruction needed by the distance student; and
   - Delivering instructional support and monitoring of student instructional activity.

Aspire
LEARN MORE. EARN MORE.

Please submit this form to aspiregrants@highered.ohio.gov.

Name of Program	Date submitted
Name of Aspire Administrator	
Email	Phone

New Curriculum for Approval

Publisher:	Curriculum Information – Instructional Model
Curriculum Product Name:	___ 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.
Contact Name:	___ 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.
Telephone:	
Email:	___ 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.
Website:	
	Adapted from *"Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners"* Project Ideal, 2008.

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?
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?
Is training provided with the curriculum? If yes, who will provide the training?

ODHE Approval

Approved ____ yes ____no	Date
Typed Name: Title:	
Comments:	

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.

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.