



## **- Nebraska Adult Education Distance Education Policy – Effective: July 1, 2016**

This policy defines distance education and provides guidelines for the state’s Adult Education Program: to include Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and English Language Acquisition (ELA) components.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) lists thirteen considerations states must use when selecting providers, including three that deal specifically with how such providers use technology. Eligible providers should demonstrate how they “effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance.”

The foundations of this policy are based on the National Reporting System (NRS) distance learning guidelines. The goal of the policy is to describe the types of activities approved for distance education and set forth the guidelines prescribed by the state office for the requirements and procedures to implement distance educational activities in the state of Nebraska.

Nebraska’s distance education program is a means to improve the State’s Adult Education outcomes. It is also a method of increasing access for the state’s 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.

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.

The state of Nebraska has been utilizing Distance Education for several years. Programs that offer distance learning 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. Programs who have not yet offered distance learning will contact the director of Adult Education prior to implementation. Information and technical assistance for the local program distance learning implementation is available by contacting the state office.

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## - General Distance Learning Requirements -

As defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), 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:

1. Print
2. Video
3. Audio
4. Broadcasts
5. Computer software
6. Web based programs
7. 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.

*Note: In Nebraska, distance education is primarily delivered via online software programs.*

NRS defines Distance learners as students who receive distance education services. For NRS reporting, states can count a student only once, as either a distance education student or traditional classroom learner.

In Nebraska, all distance educational students will receive a blended/hybrid approach to instruction and will be classified in one or the other at the end of the year for NRS reporting. Distance education student hours must be collected as either distance education or classroom hours and recorded in to AIMS. At the end of the fiscal year the student will be classified, for federal reporting, as either a traditional student or a distance education student, whichever has a greater majority of time recorded.

Since 2011, Nebraska had only recognized *i-Pathways* and *USA Learns* for distance learning curricula. As instructors have become more experienced and skilled at working with distance education, Nebraska has extended the offerings to meet the needs of students. Nebraska recognizes the following as approved distance learning curricula:

Aztec	i-Pathways
Burlington English	MyFoundationsLab
GED Academy	USA Learns

*See Chart 1 for details about the approved curricula.*

Programs wishing to recommend additional distance learning curriculum for approval may submit a *Distance Education Curriculum Approval Application* and submit to [julie.katt@nebraska.gov](mailto:julie.katt@nebraska.gov). Any additional curricula will be reviewed within 90 days. Upon acceptance, the additional curricula will be added during the biannual review of the approved distance learning curricula: occurring in December and June. Therefore, any applications must be submitted no less than 90 days prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> of December or the 1<sup>st</sup> of June.

*See Chart 2 for Distance Education Curriculum Approval Application.*

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:

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

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

NOTE: Distance Education students must complete a minimum of twenty cumulative hours per month of classroom instruction and distance education. If a student does not meet this requirement, the online curriculum should be inactivated until the student can meet with the distance education coordinator for reevaluation of eligibility for distance education.

Proxy contact hours must be associated with one of three approved models for distance education. The model used in Nebraska programs will vary based on approved curricula. *See Appendix A for details regarding each approved curricula.*

1. **Clock Time:** Assigns contact hours based on the time that a learner is engaged in a software program that tracks time.
2. **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.
3. **Learner Mastery:** Assigns a fixed number of hours based on the learner passing a test on the content of the lesson.

### **- Assessment of Students in Distance Education -**

1. **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 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, and pre and post testing must be administered on-site in a Nebraska adult education class center.
2. 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.
3. **BEST Plus:** On site administration of the BEST Plus and BEST Plus Literacy (if used) will be required of students participating in the distance education classes. Student contact hours will be tracked in the AIMS system. Upon completion of 60 hours of instruction, instructors are required to schedule a post-test by a certified BEST Plus Administrator for students.

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

Those programs currently participating in distance education, 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:

1. The program director and any staff members directly involved in the facilitation of distance education must participate in distance learning professional development training provided by the curriculum developer and/or through the state office.
2. Programs must design and present a separate orientation for students participating in the distance education class option.
3. All distance education classes must be based on a blended/hybrid model where students are required to initially meet face to face with an instructor for a distance education orientation and pretesting. Thereafter, a student is required to meet with the instructor a minimum of two times per month. When the student reaches the required number of cumulative learning hours (*see Assessment of Students in Distance Education on page 4*) an instructor must ensure a post-test is completed.
4. Student hours for distance education must be tracked separately in “distance learning” and “classroom setting” categories in the Nebraska Adult Information Management System (AIMS).
5. Coordinate marketing efforts to recruit distance education students in a manner to encourage those most likely to benefit or succeed in distance education offerings.
6. By October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, program directors will report to the state office:
  - a. Names of participating distance education instructors
  - b. Training/Professional Development each instructor has completed in regards to distance education
  - c. Report the progress of any distance education classes offered to include student name, time, and EFL movement throughout the year

**Chart 1: Nebraska Approved Curricula for Distance Education**

<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Delivery Mode</b>	<b>Target Students</b>	<b>Proxy Hour Model</b>	<b>Criteria for reporting hours</b>	<b>Proxy Credit Recorded</b>
Aztec www.aztecsoftware.com (800) 273-0033	Online	ABE, GED	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system as validated by Aztec report. Must be printed and kept for verification.
Burlington English www.burlingtonenglish.com (855) 872-2875	Online	ELA	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system as validated by Burlington English. Must be printed and kept for verification.
GED Academy www.passged.com (800) 460-8150	Online	GED	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system as validated by GED Academy. Must be printed and kept for verification.
i-Pathways www.i-pathways.org (309) 298-1804	Online	ABE, GED	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system as validated by i-Pathways. Must be printed and kept for verification.
MyFoundationsLab www.pearsonmylaband mastering.com/north America/myfoundationslab/ (720) 949-4560	Online	GED	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system as validated by MyFoundations Lab. Must be printed and kept for verification.
USA Learns www.usalearns.org	Online	ELA	Learner Mastery	3 hours per unit for courses 1 & 2 and 2 hours per unit for course 3 completed with 80%+ on the unit assessment.	Print and keep monthly report of assessments completed for verification.

## Chart 2: Distance Education Curriculum Approval Application

Return to:

**Julie Katt**

Nebraska Department of Education

Adult Education

PO Box 94987

Lincoln, NE 68509

<i>Local Program Requesting Curriculum Approval</i>	
<b>Program:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Email Address:</b>	<b>Phone:</b>

<i>Curriculum Information</i>	
<b>Curriculum Name:</b>	
<b>Delivery mode:</b> (online, print, etc.)	
<b>Proxy hour model:</b> (clock, teacher verify, or learner mastery)	
<b>Criteria for reporting hours:</b> (include criteria for teacher verify or learner mastery models)	
<b>Target population:</b> (ABE, GED, ESL, etc)	
<b>Publisher information:</b> (electronic and telephone contact information)	
<b>Description:</b> (Briefly describe the main features of the curriculum and why you recommend it for approval. Include such features such as pre-and post-tests, prescriptive lesson assignment, feedback systems, and interface method. Use additional pages if necessary.)	