

Acknowledgements

EdTech Center @ World Education

Ever since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting immersion in distance education, much energy has been devoted to defining “the new normal.” To this end, program administrators and teachers have prioritized providing more flexible and personalized learning, contextualized digital skills development, intentional focus on equity issues, and increased collaboration among teachers. IDEAL Consortium member states have been taking the lead in two key ways: First, member states have a long track record of building capacity to provide distance education programming, and second, there has been a high degree of collaboration between member states on the breadth of issues that define distance education. This edition acknowledges the generous sharing of ideas, strategies, and lessons learned that characterizes IDEAL Consortium. As conveners of the IDEAL Consortium and providers of technical assistance to adult education programs across the country, we at the EdTech Center@World Education have been in a unique position to watch, document, and amplify innovation. We have updated this edition to honor and share the evolving work in distance education.

Our History

IDEAL Consortium was founded as Project IDEAL in 2002 by Dr. Jere Johnston as a consortium of states interested in developing distance education programs to meet the needs of adults for whom classroom options were either not available or not a good fit. Under Dr. Johnston’s leadership, collaborative research and program development facilitated by Project IDEAL demonstrated that distance education was a viable option for many adult learners. As a voice for member states, the Consortium has shaped distance education policy at the state and national levels and has provided professional development expertise for practitioners nationwide.

Since 2015, [The EdTech Center@World Education](#) has hosted what we now call IDEAL Consortium. Initially led by Dr. Jen Vanek (who now co-leads it with World Education’s Jamie Harris and Destiny Simpson from Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11/Open Doors Learning and Design), we engage in this work mindful of the foundation on which it rests—the collaborative leadership and expertise of Dr. Jere Johnston and the early members of Project IDEAL. Under Dr. Johnston’s stewardship, the Handbook evolved through several editions, each time incorporating the lessons learned since the previous publication.

After the transition of the IDEAL Consortium to World Education, the fifth edition, published in 2015, added substantial updates based on experiences in the field since 2008, particularly the expansion of blended learning programs and program changes required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The sixth edition (2018) provided key updates gathered over two years of watching the Handbook in use. The seventh edition (2020) included updates deemed necessary after practitioners across the United States were faced with rapid scaling up of distance education during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the transition was stressful, it spurred innovation that has moved the needle on more equitable access to technology-rich instruction.

Thank you to World Education’s Cynthia Peters for careful copyediting and Annalisa Crowe for building this edition into EdTech Books. This eighth edition shares the lessons we have learned as we move from the emergency transition in

2020 to remote instruction to the now more sustainable distance education programming. This edition is also more intentional about describing the critical role of equity in distance education for adult foundational learners. We are grateful to our new co-author Jamie Harris for her leadership on that content and to co-author Jeff Goumas for his leadership on the use of open and free resources. Now that most providers have had some experience with distance education, our audience has grown. This growth enriches our community of practice by bringing new ideas and collaboration in support of providing quality distance education to adult learners.

For information about the IDEAL Consortium Community of Practice, visit our information site:
<https://edtechbooks.org/-aoGw>.



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