



Advantages of Distance Learning for Adult Education

The current state fiscal crisis and subsequent placing of adult education funds into flexibility has forced adult education programs to make some difficult budget decisions. While some programs are choosing to maintain or expand distance learning, others are decreasing or eliminating it. The OTAN Distance Learning Advisory Committee is committed to supporting and expanding distance learning for adult students, and suggests the following points as advantages of distance learning.

- Potentially can serve more learners more cost-effectively (for example, if workbooks are online there are no printing or distribution costs)
- Addresses learner needs as technology changes by helping students learn 21st century technology skills, and by helping parents get up to speed with the skills their children already have
- Can serve agency families through partnerships with schools (for example, distance learning courses for ESL, GED or CAHSEE Prep can support district goals for K12 students)
- Self-paced, convenient, and individualized for each learner
- Addresses many barriers to participation and persistence, such as transportation, disabilities, childcare issues, work schedules
- One-on-one time with the teacher is an advantage for students
- Good way to keep learners connected to school when they have to “stop out”
- Not currently subject to 15% limitation, provides the opportunity to increase benchmarks for distance learning as long as established procedures are followed, at least through 2012-13
- Agencies can now charge fees and/or deposits for some classes
- Research shows that learning gains for purely distance learners are equal to those of classroom students
- Research shows that classroom students who also enroll in distance learning (blended model) meet their goals faster and achieve more learning outcomes
- Students enrolled in both distance learning and traditional classes accumulate instructional hours more quickly, and can therefore be post-tested sooner
- **All** classes could provide a blended model by encouraging students to participate in additional activities online or via DVD



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- Classes that are no longer being offered face-to-face can be offered through distance learning