



Distance Learning Guide

Please call us at (800) 858-8193 to discuss your Distance Learning program. We can help you with the student tracking forms and how to claim the student hours.

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What is Distance Learning (DL)?

Distance Learning (DL) is any means by which a student can take a course at home. It is usually associated with Internet delivered courses for professionals. DL can also be home-based study of GED, ABE and ESL using videos and worksheets issued by a school.

Traditionally, schools are reimbursed for tuition costs based on student seat time. Students sign a roster as they enter class, the teacher verifies the roster and the administration calculates the hours of attendance and submits the paperwork for reimbursement. In parallel to this the students take pre- and post-tests, usually the BEST or CASAS, to prove that the curriculum and instruction has been effective.

Many states have authorized funding for DL. In this system, the students work at home under the periodic instruction of their teacher, and then bring in completed worksheets and go through review tests and specific instructional points with their teacher. The same pre- and post-test system verifies the effectiveness of the instruction. As the students progress through the work the school claims the equivalent number of student seat hours.

Calculation of “Seat-Time Equivalent” hours to be claimed when using EASY

Several DL programs have used EASY over an extended period of time and found that for the first six units of EASY (The Beginner Series) a reasonable number of Seat Time Equivalent hours (also referred to as ADA) to claim is 90 hours, and that the second six units (Community Essentials) is equivalent to about 340 hours.

These hours can be argued from different points of view, and it will probably be necessary within any one state’s system to have a consistent claim method. However, there are variables that legitimately affect the rate of learning achieved by the local student population. Some states may choose to implement a student and teacher based logging system to capture the *actual* hours spent and submit claims based on these hours. Anecdotally, it has been observed that students typically under report the hours spent.

There is a well-researched observation that the rate of learning of adult students is heavily impacted by their native language literacy, i.e. if a student, now aged 45, had only 3 or 4 years of schooling in their home country and then had to go to work, that student will find it more difficult to learn the same material than a 23 year old student with 10 years of recent schooling.

Other factors are if the student’s native language has a roman alphabet and/or no written form. Both these factors create additional challenges for even the most motivated student.

In a system where a pre-agreed number of hours per student DL Session is to be claimed, we suggest that the teacher be given the allowance to categorize their students based on the variables above. Thus a student with a higher rate of learning might be allocated 10 hours per DL Session, while a student who had not been in school for 30 years and/or had no written native language be granted 20 hours per Session.

This will help prevent skewing of the student population since the teacher will not be penalized with a lower claim for the students with the greatest learning challenges.

If this is not permissible, we recommend that a consistent 15 hours be claimed per Session.

The ratio between the total of the second 6 units of EASY (Part 2: Community Essentials) to the total of the first 6 units of EASY (Part 1: The Beginner Series) should be maintained at approximately 3.5 or 4 to 1. This is supported by the comparative amounts of video, the number of worksheets and the greater breadth, complexity and difficulty of subject matter covered in the second series.

In order to assist teachers and administrators we have developed some tools to track student progress and assist you in claiming the hours due.

1. If the actual number of hours expended is to be used as the reporting basis, we suggest a logging format similar to that in the Student Summary Log downloadable at www.easyeld.com.
2. If a pre-agreed number of hours is to be claimed then we have 2 possible systems:
 - a: EASY has been broken down into 23 nominal sections of 15 to 20 hours work each, reflected in a reporting document, downloadable at www.easyeld.com and as the student completes the designated work the log is filled and used as the support document to claim the seat time equivalent hours. This plan and document was developed at El Rancho U.S.D. Adult School that has run a very successful program.
 - b: In the situation where teacher resources are very tight and the discrepancy in the student capabilities is very broad, it may be necessary to break the course into 30 sections – each section represented by and ended by a multiple choice test. In this option, the student should take ALL the worksheets, quizzes and tests and, where necessary self-check their answers, and then the teacher will quickly review the worksheets and tests and then administer a monitored multiple choice “Session Review” to ascertain and report the students progress.

These 30 multiple choice “Session Reviews” are available as pdf files on the web at www.easyeld.com/ and the Answer Keys (also as pdfs) are at www.easyeld.com/xxxx/ and the suggested student progress monitoring log downloadable at www.easyeld.com/ccc/.

Using EASY in Distance Learning (DL)

EASY, the ESL Series, was designed for both in-class and DL use, or a combination of two.

To accommodate the different technologies available to schools and students, EASY is available on VHS, DVD or CDROM. In addition, there is an “EASY Student How To Use” video. This explains to the student, in their own language, how to use the EASY Series from their homes in conjunction with the teacher. The available languages are Spanish, Hmong, Vietnamese, Haitian-Creole, Chinese and Korean. These “EASY Student How To Use” videos are also on every EASY DVD.

The worksheets, quizzes and tests in the EASY Student Workbooks are compatible to both class and home use.

Each DL Session represents about 10 to 20 hours of claimable instruction for the student who completes the Session Review at about 80% competency *and who has completed all the other worksheets at the same level.*

If the students do not complete all the material they will have trouble progressing in later units. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the rigorousness of the instructional process is maintained.

Student Suitability for Distance Learning (DL).

Many schools run successful DL programs with all levels of ESL student – including the lowest level. You will probably find that more than 50% of the students enrolling are at the beginner or literacy level. Some of these programs have been funded under Even Start and other Family Literacy grants. Several years ago, some schools had difficulty with the lower level students – this seems to have been because the curriculum offered was too high – not because the students were too low. EASY is designed to address the lowest level student up through intermediate. The Series can then be supplemented with other material as the students graduate from EASY and progress to the next more advanced level(s).

DL administrators should develop an informal checklist to confirm that the students they enroll are suited to DL. Some students need the student/teacher and student/student interaction in order to maintain their motivation to attend school and to succeed. Others are more suited to work at home. Even if they appear to have the need to be a DL student – reduced transport options, family commitments or multiple jobs – they also need the motivation to succeed in that environment.

It does not help the teachers, the DL program nor the student if the student is not likely to stay with the program.

Administration of DL Program using EASY.

These guidelines have been compiled after review of several successful programs.

Recruitment

To start the enrollment process, a school needs to post flyers on the campus and in the community. Other advertising can be through the Class Schedule that, in most communities, is mailed to every household. Translations into the predominant local native languages also help. TV and/or radio broadcast can also be used and the 30 episode TV version of EASY (TV-EASY) has been used in this manner. A successful technique is to recruit students into DL through Family Literacy Programs linked through the Districts Elementary and pre-schools.

A key element to the success of recruitment and retention is convenience for the student. As a DL teacher, consider meeting parents at their child's school and arrange small group meetings around the school schedule. You may find that being open in the morning meets the needs of many DL students.

A reasonable estimate is that at least 35% of students will come by word of mouth referral.

Given a large enough ESL population in the area, a program could plan to start with an average of 10 student visits per week, and that within 2 years it could grow to around 200 plus student visits per week with 2 to 3 teachers allocated to the program. A school can expect a waiting list of students.

Development of Skills Sets by DL Teachers

DL teachers develop additional and different skills than the classroom teacher. Teachers should be supported by their program administrators and benefit from professional development in this area. Groups such as TESOL and Project Ideal, run by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan offer resources, references and courses.

An obvious difference to highlight is that instead of having large multi-level groups as a class, with all the attendant difficulties and teaching skills needed for this, in DL there is more one-on-one time. This though means that there is a need to develop the skill to focus the student on their specific learning needs quickly and for a short time. There will not be the luxury of extended student visits because of the number of students the teacher will need to see.

Student Enrollment and Materials Control

The day-to-day administration of these programs depends on the planned outcome and any State mandated assessment requirements.

As in any school, enrollment requires a legal form of identification, such as a driver's license, and proof of residential address such as a utility bill. Contact information needs to be recorded.

If instructional hours are being claimed, the school must provide teacher referral time to both start and monitor each student's progress through the program.

Initial Meeting

During this initial meeting the objectives are to complete the administrative enrollment, make the student feel comfortable that s/he can do the work required and conduct the Pre-Test such as BEST or CASAS.

If the student scores, on CASAS less than 200 or on BEST (Plus) less than 50 on the oral and/or less than 54 on the literacy, the student should probably start at EASY Unit #1. Higher scores indicate that the student is possibly ready to start at EASY Unit 7. However, the teacher should ask some questions of the student before making this decision and may choose a starting point of EASY Unit 4 or Unit 5.

Play the *EASY "Student How To Use"* video in their native language. This can be played as many times as they wish. It is on one of the VHS videos supplied and it is a menu item on every EASY DVD. It is also on the web at www.easyeld.com in the Teachers Corner.

Arrange with the student that they provide a log and a notebook. They should log the hours they study and the activities that they did. They will need to keep track of questions they need answered.

Recommend them a (bilingual) and/or (picture) dictionary.

Help the student develop plans for their studying. This could include a weekly calendar with days and hours set aside for study. Simple forms and goals within this calendar can help.

Based on the results of their pre-test give them the appropriate VHS, DVD or CDROM unit and the accompanying worksheets as specified on the Student Log of the program you are following.

In some Districts a small \$10 or \$20 refundable deposit is required with the tape or DVD. Some schools also charge a nominal fee to cover the cost of duplication of the worksheets.

Keep the initial expectations at a moderate level. Do not set too much video to be viewed nor too many exercises to be completed.

Remember to impress on them that they must watch the instructional video about 5 times before doing any written work. Encourage students to speak along with the video and suggest that other family members watch and participate.

Finally discuss with the student the expectation of what to learn for the next meeting – this may include some initial workbook exercises also. Schedule the next meeting for 2 weeks.

Remember to assess the suitability of the prospective student to the DL program.

This initial meeting will take about 1 hour to 1 ½ hours. Subsequent meetings should be scheduled for about 20 minutes each unless monitored tests are to be taken.

Second Meeting:

Review with the student the progress made. Check the EASY Worksheets completed and put the %age scored in the Student Log. If you are using the multiple choice “Session Reviews” administer the “Session Review #1” and fill in the “Session Review” %age scored.

Here’s an example:

EASY Session Review #1 : Letters of the Alphabet.

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Worksheet %		Homework %		Quiz %		Story %		Practice %		Test %		Session Review
1.	80%	1.	70%	1.	90%	1.						_____/20 =
2.	65%	2.	45%									_____%
3.		3.										

At the end of the meeting, record the agreed number of hours to be claimed in the Student Logs.

Arrange the date of the next meeting(s). Meetings should be at intervals of at least one week to allow for the work to be done. Usually the students work schedule will be determining factor. These face-to-face meetings take about 20 minutes each, to which the student needs to add any time needed for any tests to be taken.

Third Meeting:

Review and respond to any notes that the student may have made while studying. Review and score all EASY Worksheets completed by the student and document results in the *EASY Student Log*.

If you are handing out Answer Keys to the student, make sure they understand how to use them.

If using the “Session Review” system administer the “Session Review #2” and update the *EASY Student Log*.

Subsequent Meetings:

When students complete a Unit, always have them take the Test provided in the EASY Student Workbook. Ideally, this should be taken at the school premises and immediately scored. If time and circumstances are a serious constraint, allow the student to take the test and possibly even self-correct it from the Answer Keys. Then conduct a “pop quiz” with the student selecting from the Test questions.

Students showing 80% or greater proficiency are ready to move on to the next unit, or the student is guided in order to improve their learning process.

At all meetings, review Worksheets, update the appropriate *EASY Student Log* and administer the appropriate “Session Review” and record the score.

When the Student completes EASY Unit 6, issue them the “*EASY Part 1: The Beginner Series Certificate*” that is found in the *EASY Teacher’s Guide* and the final EASY Certificate when they finish Unit 12.

For state accountability and reporting the student must also take at least one post-test in order to show progress against their pre-test that was taken at the start of their enrolment. This in turn means that the DL student must do a minimum amount of work between pre/post testing in order to record gain. For instance, if BEST Plus is being used the publisher (Center for Applied Linguistics) recommends a minimum of about 60 hours. (As mentioned above, that test is typically either BEST/Plus or CASAS.)

Miscellaneous:

If a student misses a meeting use phone calls and postcards to try and re-establish contact.

None of the schools surveyed have reported any material tape losses but some material will eventually be lost or damaged. This should be budgeted for – much as in the case of books etc. There is an EASY media replacement policy that can be reviewed on the web at www.easyeld.com under the Teacher’s Corner section.

If possible, a clerical administrator will support the teachers. The clerk will provide tapes/DVDs, worksheets and answer keys as needed and also maintain the student scheduling and progress files.

Resources:

Project Ideal – University of Michigan Project IDEAL is a consortium of states working to develop effective distance education programs for adult learners. The Project IDEAL Support Center at the University of Michigan helps consortium states by developing training materials and web-based tools. The Center provides technical support in the areas of teacher training, research design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. Through collaborative research and practice, we are working to provide quality distance education for adult learners across the country.

See their web site at <http://www.projectideal.org/>

University of Tennessee, Center for Literacy Studies, 600 Henley Street, Suite #312, Knoxville, TN 37996.

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), Louisville, KY.

TESOL and its state level affiliates.