

California Adult Education Digital Learning Guidance

Reader's Guide

Chapter 5: Adopting Models that Work

Chapter Summary

Digital Learning Models

Digital learning models, including distance education and blended learning, provide flexible and personalized learning opportunities beyond traditional classroom settings. Blended learning combines in-person and online instruction, allowing learners to control aspects such as pace, place, and time while supporting autonomy and competency-based progression. Common models include flipped classrooms, station rotation, lab rotation, individual rotation, and flex models, each offering different structures for integrating technology into instruction. The HyFlex model expands flexibility further by allowing learners to choose how they participate — in person or online, synchronously or asynchronously. This model emphasizes equivalency of learning experiences, accessibility for all learners, reusability of instructional materials, and strong learner choice, making it particularly effective in adult education environments.

Planning and Implementation

Effective planning and implementation in adult education requires alignment with federal and state policies, along with thoughtful selection of delivery models such as blended, hybrid, HyFlex, or fully online formats. Programs must address common barriers, including limited access to devices, unreliable internet connectivity, varying levels of digital literacy, and competing responsibilities such as work and family commitments. Educators may also encounter challenges such as limited professional development opportunities and insufficient time for planning, collaboration, and implementation. Successful programs rely on a strong infrastructure that includes sustainable funding, ongoing professional learning, technical support, and comprehensive learner services. Collaborative curriculum development allows educators to share expertise, incorporate diverse perspectives, and improve instructional quality. Interoperability — ensuring that digital tools and systems work seamlessly together — is essential for reducing technical challenges, supporting efficient navigation, and enabling learners to focus on learning rather than troubleshooting technology.

Reporting Considerations

Accountability is a central component of adult education programs, with effectiveness demonstrated through federal and state reporting requirements. In California, annual reports must address areas such as data integrity, fiscal accountability, professional development, and technology and distance learning plans. The National Reporting System (NRS) provides definitions and guidance for tracking participation in distance education, including methods such as clock time, teacher verification, and learner mastery. Establishing clear procedures for documenting proxy contact hours is critical for accurate reporting. The Workforce Innovation

and Opportunity Act (WIOA) emphasizes measurable skill gains, which can be demonstrated through standardized testing, credential attainment, or transition to postsecondary education, with funding decisions tied to program performance and effective integration of technology.

Guidance Engagement Questions

Digital Learning Models – What assignment or support resource could you review to understand whether your current model fits learners’ lives? What would be the challenge in adapting for varied types of engagement?

Comparison of Models (Table: Delivery Mode, Technology Requirements, Learner Control, and Staffing and Instruction) – The table compares three models: Distance Education, Blended Learning, and HyFlex. Each offers a different level of learner control over time, place, and pace. Looking at your specific student population, do you think they would benefit more from the total flexibility of HyFlex, or do they thrive better with the shared schedule of a Blended/Hybrid model? Why?

Planning and Implementation – Different digital learning models fit different content subject areas. For example, a blended format for ESL versus significantly differs from a fully in-person model for hands-on culinary arts. Looking at your own curriculum, which parts of your course are non-negotiable for in-person instruction, and which parts could be moved online to create more flexibility for your learners?

Onboarding and Orientation for Different Models – Different digital learning models fit different learner context. Looking at your curriculum, which parts depend on being together in person? Which parts might work well online? What lesson or support workflow could you map into “best in person,” “works online,” and “could go either way” categories?

Reporting Considerations – California allows different models for tracking proxy hours (distance learning hours), such as the Clock Time Model (automatic tracking) or the Teacher Verification Model (instructor estimation). If you are using a tool that doesn’t automatically track time, what criteria will you use to verify that a student’s completed assignment is worth a specific number of hours?