

Section Seven: Successes and Challenges

Narrative items

Label	Description
7.5	How does the consortium use an equity lens to examine and adjust its policies and procedures? Adult Options in Education is committed to applying an equity lens to our policies and procedures to ensure all learners have fair access to high-quality instruction, support services, and opportunities for success. While this work is ongoing, we have taken intentional steps to reflect on and improve our practices through the lens of equity, inclusion, and access. We begin by asking key equity questions when reviewing or updating policies: • Who does this policy serve or advantage? • Who might be left out or negatively impacted? • What barriers might this policy unintentionally create for learners or staff? • How can we adjust to better support historically underserved or marginalized communities? This equity lens is applied in areas such as the attendance policy, student intake and placement, class scheduling, access to technology and distance learning, and support for learners with disabilities. Specific equity considerations we have discussed and grappled with as a team under each of those categories are as follows: Attendance Policy: Our attendance requirement is 60%. The goal of the attendance policy is to set an expectation for the time it takes to make educational progress while acknowledging the real-life barriers many adult learners face, including work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, and transportation. A reduced attendance percentage of 40% is set for those who have conflicting work schedules. The policy is enforced with a degree of flexibility and compassion, including regular check-ins and individualized support for learners experiencing challenges or requiring schedule changes. It is also carried through keeping in mind growing wait-lists for students who are eagerly waiting to begin studying with us. Student Intake and Placement: Our intake process includes personal goal-setting conversations and diagnostic assessments to ensure learners are placed in the appropriate level and learning format. We consider factors such as language proficiency, digital access, work schedules, and learning preferences, ensuring equitable access to both ESL and academic classes. When learners have specific career or educational goals, they are connected early to navigation support and appropriate pathways.

Class Scheduling:

Classes are offered in the morning, afternoon, and evening, with a combination of in-person, hybrid, online-only, and HyFlex options. This range of scheduling formats helps ensure equitable participation for learners who work full time, have caregiving responsibilities, or rely on public transportation. Our goal is to remove structural barriers that can limit access for learners from historically underserved communities.

Technology Access:

While AOIE formerly managed a Chromebook and hotspot lending program for learners who need them, we now partner with PCs for People and refer students to them for low-cost refurbished personal devices as needed. For success with distance learning, we've worked to make digital learning more accessible by offering staff-supported onboarding to MobyMax, EdReady, and Northstar Online Learning, rather than assuming learners can navigate these platforms independently.

New Student Orientation: A mandatory orientation was developed to ensure that learners who need additional support with navigating Google Meet, Canvas, Gmail and Distance Learning would receive explicit instruction prior to starting class.

Support for Learners with Disabilities:

AOIE ensures equitable access for learners with disabilities through individualized instructional support, accommodations, and referrals. We partner with PANDA (Minnesota's ABE Disability Specialists) to assess learning needs and provide tools such as assistive technology, visual aids, and instructional strategies tailored to each learner. When appropriate, we refer students to Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to support co-enrollment in WIOA Title IV services.