



Supplemental Distance Learning Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What is SDL?	2
Structure of the Guide	3
Who should use this guide?	3
Selecting an SDL Resource	4
What does selecting an SDL Resource look like?	4
Cost	4
Alignment with Student Needs	5
Instructor and Student Technical Skills	5
Accessibility	5
What program resources are already in place?	6
Sharing your SDL Resource with Staff Members	6
Questions to Consider	7
Orienting the Students to SDL	8
What does SDL orientation look like?	8
Set Goals and Expectations and Support Student Success	8
Provide Tech Tool Training	9
What program resources are already in place?	9
Questions to Consider	10
Maximizing the Instructional Impact of SDL	12
What does maximizing the instructional impact of SDL look like?	12
Track Student Results	12
Provide Feedback	13
Use Results to Inform Instruction	14
What program resources are already in place?	14
Questions to Consider	15
Offering Continued Support	17
What does offering continued support look like?	17
Routine Check-Ins	17
Storing and Sharing Resources	18
Cross-Staff Communication	18
What program resources are already in place?	18
Questions to Consider	19

Introduction

What is SDL?

Supplemental distance learning (SDL) resources are the computer-based, print-based, or teacher-created lessons that have been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to be used to supplement student learning outside of their in-person or remote classes. Students complete SDL work outside of their regularly scheduled class time, and adult education programs must track their students' engagement time to be reported in eData.

SDL is governed by [Policy D.130 Distance Learning](#), which is updated periodically throughout the program year to reflect changes to approved computer- and print-based SDL resources and implementation guidance. As outlined in the policy, Adult Basic Education (ABE) Direct Service grant-funded programs are required to provide supplemental distance learning opportunities to their students. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs and Family Literacy Direct Service programs are strongly encouraged to do the same. Programs must inform all students about the availability of SDL, provide appropriate SDL activities to all students who wish to participate, and prepare students for successful engagement in distance learning activities.

All approved SDL resources, whether they are computer-based, print-based, or teacher-created lessons, must have all of the following characteristics:

1. They are aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRS) or the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS);
2. Both the student-facing and instructor-facing interface or layout is accessible and conducive to distance learning;
3. They have an acceptable level of instructional value, rather than simply providing students with practice questions; and
4. They are designed for or are appropriate for adult learners.

Because SDL resources are carefully vetted for their instructional quality, standards alignment, and appropriateness for adult learners, they can provide students with additional instruction focused on their specific needs and interests to help them achieve outcomes more quickly. If your adult education program is just getting started with SDL, or if you have been using it for a while and would like to evaluate and improve your use of it, this guide is for you. By exploring what is referred to as the “whole-program approach” to SDL, this guide will help you to explore where SDL is likely to come up within your adult education program’s structure and protocols, how different staff members can get involved to make SDL use a success, and what questions programs can ask to reflect critically on their current or desired use of SDL. For programs that would like support beyond what’s available in this guide, the team members of the Digital Literacy and Distance Education Technical Assistance Project are available to offer support and can be reached through [this form](#).

Structure of the Guide

This guide is divided into four parts, each of which explores a different element of the “whole-program approach” to SDL. In the whole-program approach, students receive the support they need to learn about and begin engaging with SDL as they move from intake and orientation to enrollment in the classroom to program exit. The four elements of the whole-program approach are listed below, each representing a different section of this guide:

1. Selecting an SDL Resource
2. Orienting the Students to SDL
3. Maximizing the Instructional Impact of SDL
4. Offering Continued Support

Within each section, you can expect to find a description of the element, an exploration of what resources may already be in place at your adult education program to make this element a success, and topics you might consider as you plan to improve that element of your SDL program. At the end of each section, you can also find a list of critical questions you can explore on your own or within a small team to examine your current or desired use of SDL.

Who should use this guide?

This guide is most effective when it’s used by a team. Because the guide follows SDL use from intake to program exit, it is likely that different staff members will have more input and relevant experience at certain parts of the whole-program approach than others. At the beginning of each section of the guide, the staff roles that are likely to have the most relevant input will be listed. Where possible, these staff members should be included in discussions about where and how changes suggested in each section of the guide will be implemented, even if it is ultimately one individual or a small team that makes the final decisions.

Some adult education programs may find that only certain parts of the guide are applicable to their needs. All sections of the guide can serve as a stand-alone resource, so feel free to select the ones that are most relevant to your program’s needs.

Selecting an SDL Resource

This section discusses: Selecting an SDL resource and sharing information about the resource with staff members.

Most likely audiences for this section: Administrators, digital literacy specialists (DLSS), instructors

What does selecting an SDL Resource look like?

If your adult education program is new to SDL or if you currently use SDL but would like to consider new options/curricula, the [Approved Distance Learning Curriculum search](#) on the [PA Adult Education Resources \(PAAER\) website](#) is a good place to start. The approved curriculum search provides readers with summaries of each of the computer- or print-based SDL resources located in [Policy D.130 Distance Learning](#).¹ Within the search, you can filter results by type of curriculum (online or print), subject, keyword, NRS level(s), and Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT). You can also use the cost filter to determine whether the resource is free or requires a purchase. When selecting an SDL curriculum, some of the major considerations include cost, alignment with student needs, instructor and student technical skills, and accessibility.

If you have a curriculum or teacher-created lesson that you would like the Digital Literacy and Distance Education team to review for possible inclusion in the list of approved resources, you can use the [Distance Resource Approval Request form](#) to submit curriculum requests or the [Supplemental Distance Lessons form](#) for teacher-created lessons.

Cost

All print SDL resources and most online resources require a purchase. Cost considerations for print resources can include the number of books purchased, type (instructor guides, student textbooks, and student workbooks), and after-purchase costs such as shipping, distribution to students, and postage to collect student responses to workbook questions. Typical online curriculum costs can vary depending on how many student and instructor seats you purchase. Please contact the publisher of interest for specific details.

Beyond access to the print or online curricula, some SDL resources include onboarding support for both students and teachers, technical assistance, and training on how to use the resource most efficiently. These additional services may be bundled with the overall price of an SDL program, purchased separately, or may be absent. When considering what you can spend on an SDL resource at your adult education program, don't forget to consider these additional services. Whether onboarding, technical support, and program efficiency are paid for up front or through an investment of additional staff time, you should consider them as part of the overall cost of a program.

¹ To find teacher-created lessons that are approved for SDL, visit the [PAAER Lesson Bank](#) and select the "Asynchronous" option under the "Class Type" field.

Alignment with Student Needs

In [Policy D. 130 Distance Learning](#), all SDL resources are approved for use with either ESL or ABE/ASE students. This is the main divider between resources, so please refer to the policy when selecting resources for the students at your program. Other important differences between resources include which NRS levels they are generally appropriate for and which academic topics they cover. Please visit the [Approved Distance Learning Curriculum search](#) on the [PA Adult Education Resources website](#) and use the search filters to find resources that will meet your students' needs.

When you search for curricula using the Distance Learning Curriculum search, the summaries that appear can give you more detailed information about each SDL resource. Some SDL resources focus heavily on a particular academic skill (e.g., it might be best suited for students building their basic literacy skills), while others serve as an all-around resource covering many academic topics and levels. Please review the resource summaries on the PAAER website and visit the publisher's website to see how well each potential SDL resource of interest matches your students' needs.

Instructor and Student Technical Skills

With online SDL resources, a base level of technical skills is required of both instructors and students. For example, both instructors and students may need to know how to log into the program; navigate its interface; operate a keyboard or mouse; upload/download documents; record audio or video; and complete multiple-choice, short-answer, or drag-and-drop activities. There is a section in each SDL summary in the Distance Learning Curriculum Search that outlines some of the basic technical skills needed, but publishers should be able to provide more detailed information. Before selecting an SDL resource, confer with all staff members who will be using it and consider how you will determine which staff and students will need instruction in the required digital skills for the program you choose and how you will support them in gaining those skills. Support for both instructors and students in developing the relevant digital skills can go a long way in fostering the overall success of SDL use at your adult education program.

Accessibility

Beyond technical skills, several other factors impact how accessible an SDL resource might be for staff members and students. In areas where internet access is unavailable or extremely limited, print or online resources with an "offline mode" may be the most accessible option. Additionally, some resources require access to a laptop or desktop computer, while others are mobile-friendly.

Beyond technology-based accessibility, also consider how the resources you select may or may not support students with physical or learning differences. This information is briefly covered in most of the curriculum summaries on the PAAER website, but more detailed information should be available from the publisher of interest. Most online SDL resources have provided an evaluation called a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) to identify how their platform conforms to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Finally, language can be another factor impacting accessibility. Many SDL resources provide supporting materials and videos in a variety of languages to help students log in and begin using the program. Additionally, many resources also ensure that instructional content is written at an

appropriate level to allow students to engage. If this is an important factor for the learners in your program, consider looking into what your SDL programs of interest offer before making a purchase.

What program resources are already in place?

As you consider which SDL resource(s) you might select for your students, remember that they will be just one of many resources you already have that are leading to the overall success of your adult education program. Use the list below to think about the resources you may already have and how they might support the successful selection and implementation of a new SDL program.

Program Staff: Staff members throughout different parts of your adult education program can provide invaluable information about student goals, needs, and technology skills and access. Before signing up for or purchasing an SDL program, consult with staff members who can help guide the selection process to find a resource that's the best fit for your students and their needs.

Digital Resources: Do you have a computer lab, a technology lending program, or go-to resources for digital literacy training? Perhaps you have staff members at your program who are especially adept with online resources. Consider what internal digital resources are available to you and how they might support your continued use of an SDL resource once you have made your final selection.

Resources from the SDL program: Both the free and subscription-based SDL resources have information on their websites about the resources and support they offer beyond the student-facing materials. From teacher training materials to technical support and beyond, most SDL resources offer resources and support that may be of use to your adult education program. Don't hesitate to reach out to a representative of a specific SDL resource if you would like to learn more about its offerings and how they might be able to support you in initial and ongoing implementation should you make a purchase or sign up for their services.

An LMS or File-Share Location: Many online SDL resources are capable of integrating directly into a learning management system. If you use an LMS at your program to assign in-class work to students, check to see if the resource(s) you're considering are compatible.

Students: Some SDL resources offer free samples or promotional trials before a purchase. If you have access to these promotional materials, consider getting your instructors' and students' opinions. They will likely have valuable insight into how relevant the materials seem to their needs, interests, and current digital skill levels.

Sharing your SDL Resource with Staff Members

Staff members at all points in an adult education program are likely to support students with SDL at some point, so their buy-in is an essential part of overall SDL success. Taking a team approach from the start might be helpful, as staff members will be able to provide insights about how appropriate an SDL resource is to student goals, how much digital literacy training will be required for students and instructors, and what additional program resources are available to support SDL success. In some cases, staff members may need to take on additional work to support student use of SDL resources (this can include anything from helping students log in, tracking and reporting student engagement

hours, or offering technical support), so clear communication and collaboration with staff members about what role they will take and how they will be supported is essential.

Where possible, it's helpful to allow staff members to become familiar with an SDL resource before rolling it out to students. Giving staff members access to trial periods, workbooks, and training materials will help them to feel comfortable and confident with an SDL resource before they need to support student use of the resource.



Questions to Consider

Now that you've considered what selecting an SDL resource will entail, use the questions below to reflect critically on this step in the process. Where possible, answer these questions as a team and work together to make a solid plan for addressing areas of weakness that may come up as you discuss the questions.

General Discussion Questions

1. What is our budget for SDL resource(s)?
2. What additional expenses, such as shipping costs or training costs, do we expect?
3. Does our SDL resource offer training or onboarding support? If yes, what can we do to take full advantage of it?
4. What academic topics and levels do our existing or potential SDL resource cover? Do we need to consider adding additional SDL resources to meet the needs of all of our students?
5. What accessibility features do we want to see in our SDL resource? How do our current or potential SDL resources support physical or learning differences?
6. What characteristics have staff members identified as valuable within an SDL resource? How can we incorporate staff input while selecting an SDL resource?

Online Curriculum-Specific Questions

1. What digital literacy skills are required for both staff and students to succeed with our existing or potential SDL program?
2. If staff and/or students do not have the requisite digital literacy skills, can we train them, or should we look at different SDL options (whether those are print resources or different online resources)?
3. Do our students have the internet connectivity and hardware required to engage with our existing or potential SDL resource? If not, can we support them with this, or should we consider print SDL resources?
4. Is our existing or potential SDL resource mobile-friendly? If not, do we need to look at other options?

Orienting the Students to SDL

This section discusses: Sharing information about SDL resources with students, providing students with basic technical skills, and helping students set SDL-related goals.

Most likely audiences for this section: Administrators, digital literacy specialists (DLs), instructors, student support coordinators (SSCs)

What does SDL orientation look like?

Orienting students to an SDL resource looks different from one adult education program to the next. At some programs, staff members provide information about SDL resources as part of their overall program orientation, meaning students learn about SDL resources and the adult education program at the same time. In other cases, instructors may introduce students to the available SDL resources after they have completed their adult education program's orientation and begun classes. In still further cases, some adult education programs may have dedicated staff members who are prepared to provide orientation to SDL resources any time a student is ready to begin.

Beyond timing and staffing, another variable is the format of the orientation. Some programs hold one-on-one meetings between students and staff, while others conduct their SDL orientations in a group setting. The orientation may also take place online in one program and in person in another.

Regardless of how your adult education program's SDL orientation takes place, there are several important factors to address. According to the [IDEAL Distance Education Handbook 10th ed.](#) (Vanek et al., 2025), the four elements of a successful orientation include setting goals and expectations, supporting student success, providing tech tool training, and addressing technology requirements and access. This guide explores how these four specific factors can be addressed in an orientation to an SDL resource.

Set Goals and Expectations and Support Student Success

An important and potentially overlooked step of SDL orientation is discussing student and program expectations. Share your program's expectations for SDL use during orientation, including any usage requirements. Consider storing your program's expectations in an easy-to-access location, such as a student orientation folder, so that students and staff can easily refer to them if needed. Beyond your program's expectations, it can also be helpful and motivational for students to set their own goals. Guide your students in critically exploring their available time for SDL study, then help them record and store their SDL-related goals in a place they can refer to later.

Beyond expectations about when and how often students engage with the SDL resource, also share how staff members at your program will communicate with students about their SDL use. Many online SDL programs provide automated feedback to students on their progress through lessons. If this is the case at your adult education program, show students how they can check their progress. It's also a

good idea for a staff member at your adult education program (such as an instructor or student support coordinator) to have regular check-ins with students to discuss their SDL progress and address any problems. Be sure to share when and how these check-ins will occur during orientation so that students will know what to expect as they progress.

Provide Tech Tool Training

Once students have set their goals, they need to know how to act on them. For this reason, the second step of a solid SDL orientation includes showing students how to log into their resource, navigate its interface, and advance through lessons. Likewise, if you use a paper-based SDL resource at your program, be sure that students understand the layout of their books and how they can submit their work as evidence of having completed the lessons or chapters. Many online SDL resources include videos and online guides that explain how to log into and engage with the resource. These can be a great resource for your students, and like the program expectations described in the previous section, you should share them in an easy-to-access location so that students can use them for support if they are struggling with a technical element of their SDL resource.

Beyond logging into the resource, other common skills required for use of an online SDL resource include, but are not limited to, the ability to connect to the internet, navigate the resource's interface, complete multiple-choice or drag-and-drop activities, type into text boxes, and record video or audio. For some students, a quick introduction to these skills during orientation may suffice, but others may need support to develop these foundational skills before they can independently engage with their SDL resources. A successful SDL orientation will likely include assessment of student skills, and, where needed, follow-up resources to help them develop the skills needed. These follow-up resources could include open access to a computer lab and/or additional meetings with the digital literacy specialist or student support coordinator.

After supporting students with their digital skills, check with your students to see what devices they have access to (e.g., laptops, tablets, or smartphones) and if they have reliable access to an internet connection. Some adult education programs can provide computer labs, technology lending programs, and Wi-Fi hotspots to their students. If you find that your students need support with technology access, SDL orientation can be a good time to share program resources.

What program resources are already in place?

Supporting students with goal setting, technical skills, and technology access may seem overwhelming at first, but remember that SDL resources work best when integrated with the supports your program already has in place. Use the list below to think about the resources you may already have and how they might support you as you orient students to SDL.

Program Staff: SDL orientation does not need to be a one-person job. Depending on how your program wants to set up SDL orientation, it is likely that instructors, SSCs, DLSs, and support staff may all be able to play a role. Take inventory of the skills, roles, and availability of multiple staff members at your adult education program to see who the best option may be to support with orientation to SDL resources.

Digital Resources: Does your program have access to a computer lab, a technology lending program, or other go-to resources for digital literacy training? Your program also has a DLS, who is skilled with digital resources, and who can provide additional guidance. How could you use these resources to support your students as they learn the required digital skills and access your SDL resources?

Resources from the SDL program: Many subscription-based SDL resources provide onboarding materials for both staff and students, instructional videos, FAQ pages, and technical support. Be sure to take advantage of these resources.

A LMS or File-Share Location: How do you currently share resources with students at your program? Whether it is a learning management system (LMS), a webpage, and/or materials that you hand out at orientation, consider how you could use existing resources to share SDL orientation materials with students.

Students: The students at your program are an essential element of the overall success of your SDL resource. Take inventory of what motivates your students, their existing digital skills, and any other strengths they bring to the table. Then, use those strengths as touchpoints when orienting students to your SDL resources.



Questions to Consider

Now that you've learned what an SDL orientation might look like and the resources that may already be in place at your adult education program, you are ready to start asking some critical questions. These questions will help you examine your program's expectations and resources and guide you in designing an effective SDL orientation.

General Discussion Questions

1. Where does an SDL orientation most logically fit into our program offerings? Should we add it to the existing program orientation, offer it separately, or something else?
2. Which staff member(s) should be involved in planning and delivering the SDL orientation?
3. What are our expectations about how often/how long students will engage with SDL resources each week? How can we make those expectations clear during SDL orientation?
4. What motivates our students to use SDL resources? How can we encourage them to identify and build upon these motivators?
5. Who at our program provides students with feedback on their SDL progress? When and how do they provide this feedback? How often is feedback provided?

Online Curriculum-Specific Questions

1. How can we use our SDL orientation to show students how to track their own progress through their SDL resource(s)?
2. How can we use SDL orientation to teach students how to log into their online SDL resource(s) and to advance through their lessons?
3. What staff members and/or resources do we have available for students if they are struggling with the technical side of their SDL resources?
4. Do our students have the internet access and digital tools required to use our SDL resources?
5. (If available) Are students aware of the digital access resources we provide that could help them engage with their SDL resources?

Print Curriculum-Specific Questions

1. Are students aware of how to submit work to demonstrate their progress?

Maximizing the Instructional Impact of SDL

This section discusses: Tracking student results and growth, providing students with feedback, and using student results to inform instruction.

Most likely audiences for this section: Digital literacy specialists (DLSS), instructors, student support coordinators (SSCs)

What does maximizing the instructional impact of SDL look like?

SDL resources provide an excellent opportunity for students to build their skills outside of the classroom. To make the most of the opportunity provided by SDL, you should have a plan in place for how you will track student results in their SDL resources, when and how you will provide feedback, and how you will use results to inform future instruction.

Track Student Results

All SDL resources listed in [Policy D.130 Distance Learning](#) provide instructional hours that are to be reported in the National Reporting System (NRS). The necessity to track hours applies to both online resources, which generally track time on the resource's website or app, and print-based resources, which typically fall under a teacher verification model where staff members award predetermined amounts of time as students submit work to demonstrate they have completed sections of their workbooks. *This SDL guide is not policy, so please be sure to consult [Policy D.130 Distance Learning](#) to determine how to record instructional hours for your SDL resources. If you have questions, reach out to your PDE advisor.*

Because SDL instructional time is the only SDL-related metric reported to the NRS, all adult education programs need to know how to track and report it accurately; however, SDL resources often provide additional data that can offer valuable insights into student learning. For example, many resources generate reports showing how well students understand the content of completed instructional units, often including the percentage of correct answers. This helps educators gauge student comprehension in a way similar to print resources, where staff compare student work against answer keys to assess understanding.

Generally, online SDL resources provide a student's overall score for understanding and instructional time, but many resources provide more granular data. This data can include answers to individual questions and/or breakdowns of how well students understood specific skills (e.g., reading for details, adding mixed numbers, or punctuating with commas), customizable timeframes for tracking data, report downloads to PDF or Excel spreadsheet, and/or student login attempts. In short, the more robust an online SDL resource's reporting capability, the more detailed its information will be.

If you're uncertain which reports are available with your online SDL resource, reach out to the publisher, review the [Approved Distance Learning Curriculum search](#) on the [PA Adult Education](#)

[Resources website](#), or log into your resource and spend some time becoming acquainted with the reporting section of the site. Each of the report types listed above may provide you with valuable information about when, how often, and with what level of success students are using your SDL resources.

Provide Feedback

Once you have a strong grasp on how often and how well students are engaging with their SDL resources, it is important to touch base with them on their progress. Most online SDL resources have a section on the app or webpage that students can use to check their own progress, but programs should also make sure that a staff member is providing students with regular feedback.

Providing feedback may look different from one program to the next, depending on schedules, resources, and staff time. At some programs, the SSC or DLS may have regular, scheduled check-ins with students, where the SSC or DLS and the student can review progress through the SDL resource, discuss questions, and work on overcoming any barriers that the student may face.

At a different program, instructors may be the primary source of feedback, either dedicating time in the class schedule to review results and answer common questions or providing individual consultations with students to discuss their progress.

In both scenarios, the staff member who has interacted with the students makes sure to update other staff members about student progress, as relevant to the overall support the student receives from the program. Beyond this, other important elements of these meetings are that they are regularly scheduled, provide students with feedback on their progress, and address student questions about both the content of their SDL lessons and any technical questions or barriers they may have.

Beyond the interpersonal check-ins described above, another important element of feedback is the in-app feedback that staff members can provide on students' submissions. Online SDL resources often allow teachers to include notes, grades, and feedback on the work that students submit through the website or application. Online SDL resources also often provide internal messaging systems, where students and staff members can message each other directly with questions about the SDL content. Please be sure that staff members and students know how to review feedback on submissions, individual progress reports, and internal messaging systems, and that there are clear expectations about how and when each type of feedback will be used.

With print-based materials, programs can help students track their progress by providing clear learning pathways, timely feedback on submissions, and guidelines for when and how staff will update them on progress. Print-based SDL resources do not provide the same detailed reports that are available with online resources, but staff members should still apply the same concepts when supporting students who use them. Having regular in-person, phone, or online check-ins provides print-based students with opportunities to check their own progress and get support with challenges they may be facing.

Use Results to Inform Instruction

The purpose of SDL resources is in the name – they're a *supplement* to a student's regular, in-class instruction. For this reason, tracking student results is useful not only to report instructional time or provide students with feedback on their progress, but also to determine where the student needs additional support. This can be accomplished in several ways.

In one example, instructional staff may assign SDL lessons that align directly with the content they are covering in class. In this way, instructors can use both in-class formative assessments and SDL submissions to determine whether students have grasped the content and are ready to move on. In a separate example, instructional staff may notice that there is a common topic that a class of students struggles with in their SDL resources, so the instructor plans additional in-class instruction on the topic to ensure students grasp the content. In both cases, there is a careful alignment between what happens in class and what happens in the SDL resource to ensure that the work students do supplements and reinforces what they are learning in class.

Some online SDL resources allow more flexibility than others in assigning specific lessons or topics to students. If you want your staff to have this level of control, check whether the resource allows you to assign specific lessons or units and how it works. Keep in mind that some resources lock students into a course of study based on their pretest scores, which may limit your ability to assign lessons or units freely.

What program resources are already in place?

The better your SDL resource fits in with the other resources at your program, the more impact it is likely to have on student learning. Use the list below to think about the resources you may already have and how they might support you as you maximize the instructional impact of SDL.

Program Staff: Because maximizing the impact of an SDL resource includes working with data, reporting instructional time, providing feedback to students, and aligning content with in-class instruction, multiple staff members will likely be involved in the process. Drawing upon staff job descriptions and skill sets as you assign roles, ensure that there's strong communication between staff members about student engagement and success with their SDL resources. When all staff members are on the same page about how often students engage, how well they understand the content, and what technical difficulties they may be facing, student barriers are less likely to go unnoticed, and the quality of their experience will increase.

Digital Resources: Understanding and manipulating reports, navigating an online SDL resource's interface, and finding/assigning content can be challenging. DLSs can help with this burden by training staff and students on the use of the resource, providing follow-up support as needed, and sharing resources that staff/students can refer to independently to help with common technical questions.

Resources from the SDL Program: Many subscription-based SDL resources (and some free ones) provide technical support, instructional videos, and FAQ pages for both staff and students. Be sure to take advantage of these resources!

An LMS or File-Share Location: Many online SDL resources are capable of integrating directly into a learning management system (LMS). If you use an LMS at your adult education program to assign in-class work to students, consider expanding it to also include SDL resources. When the students have one consistent location that they visit to complete classwork, it saves time and reduces the number of potential technical difficulties they may face.

With print-based resources, although the students' experience takes place entirely offline, digital resources are still needed to support staff members. Think of the digital resources you already have in place for recording student hours, communicating with students, and digitizing paper-based materials. These resources are likely to also be needed as you support students with their print-based SDL resources.

Students: Students may find it motivational to select an SDL topic that is of personal interest, so when it's possible to allow them to select a topic or instructional unit, consider doing so. Likewise, some students may want to use their SDL resources to get extra practice with a topic they find especially challenging. Where possible, allow student input to play a role in which topics they focus on while using their SDL resources.



Questions to Consider

Coordination between multiple staff members is essential to ensure that students receive the most instructional impact from their SDL resources. Consider bringing in all relevant staff members to review and discuss the questions below:

General Discussion Questions

1. What processes do we have in place to accurately record and report instructional time from our SDL resource(s)? If we have questions, have we reviewed [Policy D.130 Distance Learning](#) or contacted our PDE advisor for support?
2. Who collects data from our SDL reports, and where is the information stored? How can we ensure that all staff members who discuss SDL progress with students have access to this information?
3. How do we currently ensure regularly scheduled SDL check-ins with students?
4. How do we provide feedback on student work within our SDL resources? Do students know how to access and review this feedback?
5. Can we assign specific lessons or instructional units to our students within our SDL resource(s)? If yes, how do we want instructors to check SDL reports and use that information to align SDL lessons to in-class instruction?
6. If we have an LMS, how are we using it to share information with our students about SDL assignments and their progress through lessons?
7. Have we consulted our students to see which topics and/or instructional units they may find most useful for their learning goals?

Online Curriculum-Specific Questions

1. What specific types of reports are available with our SDL resource(s)? How could we use the information from those reports to better support our students?
2. Does our online SDL resource have an internal messaging feature? If yes, do we want to use it to communicate with students? If yes, how so?
3. Do our staff members have the technical skills needed to access progress reports and provide feedback on student submissions? How do we support them if they do not?
4. Do our students have the technical skills needed to access their individual progress reports and to view instructor feedback on their submissions? How do we support them if they do not?

Offering Continued Support

This section discusses: Supporting staff and students with continued SDL success after they have begun to use the program.

Most likely audiences for this section: Administrators, digital literacy specialists (DLSs), instructors

What does offering continued support look like?

Once you've established your use of SDL resources at your adult education program, it is important to schedule regular maintenance steps to ensure that staff members and students continue to have success. Key elements of continued support include routine check-ins, storing and sharing useful resources, and ensuring strong cross-staff communication.

Routine Check-Ins

In other portions of this guide, routine check-ins for students are suggested to ensure that they understand the content of their SDL resources. The same concepts apply here, but with a higher emphasis on addressing technical problems that staff members or students may have. Depending on your program's staffing and structure, this may look different between programs, but what remains consistent is that check-ins happen regularly, it is clear which staff members should be involved, and there is follow-up for any remaining questions. Some examples of what this could look like include the following:

1. The DLS has a rotating schedule for classroom drop-ins to share information about SDL resources with students and answer their technical questions.
2. The instructors regularly check and respond to student SDL progress during class.
3. The student support coordinator (SSC) schedules individual SDL check-ins with students at predictable intervals.

In each case above, while the staff member involved and scheduling are different, the regularity of check-ins and clarity about staff roles add consistency and continuity for students. In each scenario, the staff member(s) involved should also keep a record of the support they offered and follow up with students and other staff members to ensure the student's challenges have been resolved.

Continued support for staff members is also important. Just as students may have questions about their SDL resources, the staff members who use these programs may, too. Here, regular check-ins for DLS or peer support can be helpful. This may look like the DLS having routine, individual checks with staff members; an administrator providing time during team meetings for staff members to share challenges and work together toward solutions; or any other solution your adult education program may design. In either case, what remains consistent is that staff members can rely on receiving regular, scheduled support.

Beyond student and staff check-ins, whole-program check-ins should also be routine. All staff members involved in SDL use should have regularly scheduled opportunities to meet, share challenges, offer support to each other, and use SDL data to notice trends and opportunities to better support the students.

Storing and Sharing Resources

As you work on supporting students and staff members with your SDL resources, you will likely begin to compile resources that are helpful for common questions and challenges. This can include SDL company resources to troubleshoot technical problems, staff-created documents or videos addressing common questions, or external resources such as videos or tutorials created by other professionals who use the same SDL resource as your adult education program. As you find and begin to compile these resources, be sure to share them in a location where staff members and/or students can access them to get immediate support with their questions. Common places to share such resources include staff drives, adult education program websites, or learning management systems.

SDL publishers frequently update their materials, including both the student curriculum and the supporting resources for instructors and adult education programs. It is important to stay up to date with these new resources and offerings. One member of your team should be responsible for staying in touch with the SDL representative and distributing new materials and/or updates to other staff members as they become available.

Cross-Staff Communication

Effective cross-staff communication will increase the likelihood that all student concerns are addressed quickly and consistently. Consider creating a shared file where all staff members offering support can provide updates to each other. This can include details on support offered to students and/or solutions to technical problems. In this way, all staff members who are involved in offering continued support can access the file to see what other staff members have already done to support a particular student or to learn about technical solutions that peers have already discovered.

It is also useful to keep track of student goals related to SDL. The students may have set these goals during orientation, so you should periodically review if students are still on track, if they need support returning to their goals, or if the goals need to be revised. Ensuring that this information is in an easy-to-access location for all staff members will make your student support more efficient.

What program resources are already in place?

There are a variety of internal and external resources that will be helpful to you as you focus on offering continued SDL support to staff and students.

Program Staff: Offering continued support is most successful when it's a collaborative process, so be sure that all staff members understand their role in offering support and communicating with peers. Some staff members may be especially adept at using SDL resources and troubleshooting problems. Be sure to use these skills as an asset.

Digital Resources: Staff-created or external digital resources are an invaluable asset when you are supporting staff or students with technical problems. Compile your supporting resources, such as videos, FAQs, or tutorials, so that staff members or students can refer to them whenever they have problems with their SDL resource(s).

Resources from the SDL Program: Many subscription-based SDL resources (and some free ones) provide technical support, instructional videos, and FAQ pages for both staff and students. Be sure to take advantage of these resources!

An LMS or File-Share Location: An LMS or your program's website can be a great place to store any videos, FAQs, or tutorials that may support students with SDL-related technical problems. For internal documentation about SDL-related support offered to students, consider using a cloud-based file sharing application.

Students: Many students have technical skills that are useful for troubleshooting SDL-related problems. If this is the case at your adult education program, consider setting up voluntary SDL-peer support opportunities so that interested students can help their peers use their SDL resources.



Questions to Consider

As you begin to plan how you will offer continued support to staff members and students, consider the questions below:

General Discussion Questions

1. What schedule would we like to establish for SDL check-in meetings for both staff and students? Who will be involved, and when and where will they hold the meetings?
2. How will we keep a record of the SDL support offered to students, and who will be responsible for maintaining these records?
3. What resources (such as videos, FAQs, or troubleshooting guides) do we have that should be shared with staff and students to help them better engage with our SDL resource(s)?
4. Where and how do we share the resources mentioned above?
5. What procedures do we have in place for cross-staff communication about SDL support for students?
6. What existing resources (such as a shared team drive, a cloud-based spreadsheet, or a student case note system) do we have in place to ensure consistency within our cross-staff, SDL-based communications?
7. What resources can we use from our SDL program to support staff and student success?
8. Who among our staff stays up to date with SDL resources and updated training opportunities and distributes this information to other staff members?