

Decoding Technology

Professional Development Tools

by Tim Walker and Chip Donohue



New tech tools make it possible to access online training, courses, and professional development “on demand” from home or work, and shop the Internet for courses, credentials, and degree programs that best meet your needs and interests.

Tech Terms

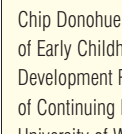
- **Distance Learning:** An educational situation in which the instructor and students are separated by time and/or location. Means of instruction may include written correspondence by mail, text, graphics, audio- and videotape, online learning, audio- and videoconferencing, interactive TV, satellite broadcast, CD-ROM, DVD, and FAX.
- **Face-to-face course:** Classroom setting where the instructor and students are in the same room at the same time.
- **Online course/Web-based course:** Course information, materials, and assignments are stored on a Web site that students access and use online. May include text, graphics, audio, video, animation, electronic-reserve readings, threaded discussions, and chats.

Tech Tools

You need to be sure your tech tools (the computer hardware, software, and Internet connection you have access to) meet the requirements of your distance learning institution or organization. Here are two samples of tech requirements we found helpful:



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- Georgia Virtual Technical College
www.gvtc.org/tech.asp

- North Iowa Area Community College
www.niacc.edu/progserv/distance/olfaq.html#tech

It also helps if you can “talk the talk” when you need technical assistance from the “Help Desk.” There are many lists of distance learning terms and definitions, but here are two glossaries we liked:

- American Society for Training & Development (ASTD)
www.learningcircuits.org/glossary.html
- U.S. Distance Learning Association (USDLA)
www.usdla.org/html/resources/dictionary.htm

Use a search tool like Google™ or Yahoo® to find online learning opportunities. Try using keywords like “distance learning” or “online course” with “child care” or “early childhood” or “child development.”

Tech Tips

Some of the best resources on how to learn online can be found online. To help you get started we’ve compiled some links to resources you can explore:
Are online courses for me?

- Florida Distance Learning Consortium
www.distancelearn.org/readyDL.cfm
- University of Central Florida
<http://learn.ucf.edu/1intro.html>

How to be a successful online learner (and many other helpful tips)

- Illinois Online Network, University of Illinois
www.ion.illinois.edu/

Tech Links

To find out more about which colleges, universities, and training organizations offer online courses, credentials, certificates, and degrees, see the online article “Promising Practices for Early Childhood Professional Development: First Annual Directory of Online ECE Degree and Certificate Programs” by Chip Donohue at www.ChildCareExchange.com or visit these Web sites:

- California Child Development Training Consortium, *Schedule of Non-Traditional Classes & Trainings*
www.childdevelopment.org
- Council for Professional Recognition, *National Directory of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Institutions*
www.cdacouncil.org/
- National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), *Distance Learning in Early Childhood Education*
www.nccic.org/faqs/distancelearning.html

Sources

Donohue, C. & Neugebauer, R. (2004, May). “Innovations in eLearning: New promise for professional development.” *Young Children*.

Donohue, C. (2003, March). “Promising Practices for Early Childhood Professional Development: First Annual Directory of Online ECE Degree and Certificate Programs.” *Child Care Information Exchange*, 150, 89-91.

Coming in September 2004:

Decoding Technology: Networking and Advocacy Tools