



NEO

BY CYPHER LEARNING

Inclusive Higher Education Certificate Program

Providing access to educational content for students
with developmental disabilities

Introduction

The Inclusive **Higher Education Certificate Program (IHECP)** is a unique non-profit organization within the Metropolitan State University of Denver. They offer **inclusive higher education programming** which leads to meaningful employment for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

IHECP provides students with the opportunity to attend classes, interact with faculty and explore all that college life offers, while developing their **social skills, learning independence, expanding their career options and earning potential**.

Cathi Allen, the Executive Director of the IHECP explains why NEO is a great solution for their particular program and how they use NEO in their daily teaching and learning activities.

How does NEO address your program's specific learning needs?

Cathi Allen, the Executive Director, IHECP: Our students have intellectual developmental disabilities and, because of that, traditional ways of learning in college don't work for them. The learning management systems that are available to college students are mostly language and reading-based. What **we really love about NEO is that our students are able to access educational content higher than their reading levels** because we are able to integrate NEO with other plugins such as Read&Write so that we use text-to-speech software.

How do you use NEO in your learning process?

Cathi Allen, the Executive Director, IHECP: The graphic interface that NEO provides us gives our students pictures and colors to go by, instead of just reading and reading lists of things, our students lose focus with that.

NEO allows us to really structure our lessons so that our students are familiar with what we start off with, what comes next, what's expected of them, and when they're done. Through this structure, we're able to teach these students information that they typically wouldn't be able to access outside of high school or even in high school.

Our students are able to self-monitor, not only do they know where they are, they know how they're doing. They get immediate feedback from their quizzes, they're able to learn because the quizzes show them what they got right and what they got wrong. They're able to go back and redo the quiz, **which I believe is a deeper learning system for them**. They're able to immediately correct their mistakes and learn from them.

We're able to watch our students move through the lessons and if they're not able to pass a lesson at the mastery level that we require, the students are able to go back through and retake quizzes. They're also able to take a look at a progress bar, see where they are in the class and where they are throughout the whole semester.



Why do students enjoy using NEO?

Kyle, Student IHECP: What I like about NEO is that we can go back over our notes and learn about what we got wrong on the quizzes, what we don't know, and what we need to know for our midterm. After you're done doing the quiz, before you push finish, you're able to go back over it and answer with a different answer before you push finish. That shows you a result, shows you which ones you got wrong and the correct answer. All of that really helps me out a lot.

Cathi Allen, Executive Director IHECP: The Inclusive Higher Education Certificate Program is really excited to be able to share our findings with other people about how we're using a graphic interface for students with intellectual disabilities. As far as we know, we are the only group in the nation who's able to bring in students through a Zoom process of video conferencing so that our students from literally four hundred miles away are able to join us in our classroom and learn at a higher level beyond high school.

Mackenzie, Student IHECP: You can connect with your friends on NEO, so if you have a question you can ask your friends to help as well. NEO has a way to connect you to your instructor so if you have a question you can ask her: "Hey, can you help me with this?" and she can go into NEO and change it for you.



What do teachers like about NEO?

Cathi Allen, the Executive Director, IHECP: What's really cool about NEO is that somebody who does not have a strong background in computers or programming **can actually build and structure courses that are meaningful for our students** at many different levels.

To be able to take a look at a course and go: well, maybe this section should be first, and literally drop and drag a section has been remarkable. The way that the pages look, I think it is very engaging for our students. We're able to pull out bits and pieces from the videos that they watch. Their content is in video format, but we scaffold their content and their learning through the vocabulary, the images, and pre-teaching visual analogies. **It makes for a stronger and deeper learning experience for our students,** but to be able to access something like this from a personal standpoint, to build something that is **so meaningful for our students and to use this to build our curriculum has been a wonderful process** for us as a program and for me individually.

