



Newsletter - December 2005

MassONE is up and running!

Have you had a chance to check out MassONE? (<http://massone.mass.edu/>) MassONE represents Massachusetts Department of Education's vision of an online system that enables communication, collaboration and information sharing among educators, students, and the Department of Education.

You are receiving this bimonthly newsletter because you had a VES account, which is now a MassONE account. Your user name and password have not changed. If you have forgotten your password, you can go to MassONE's home page (<http://massone.mass.edu/>) and use the new password reset tool.

MassONE continues to offer tools that were popular in VES, such as discussion forums and the Virtual Hard Drive. Recently added tools include a lesson planning tool, a survey/quiz creator, and expanded teaching and learning resources.

MassONE Videoconference

Mark your calendars! On January 18, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., there will be a videoconference for MassONE admins. This two-hour session will provide an overview of MassONE's tools and resources, as well as a more detailed look at how to register and manage user accounts. In addition, the session will examine best practices and innovative uses of MassONE, so that participants can brainstorm new directions and plan for possible district-wide MassONE training.

MassONE System Update

The MassONE team has been working to port all of the information from VES into the new system, which currently has more than 60,000 users. All of the tools are working, and all users should be able to access their accounts, along with all of the information they had previously posted to VES.

Over the next month, MassONE will complete the following:

1. The new workgroup creation tool will be ready for use. Currently when educators register for an account, they automatically are placed in their district and school workgroups, and one classroom workgroup is automatically created for them. In January, educators will be able to create additional workgroups.
2. The discussion forums will be linked more directly to the workgroups. Currently, when users go into the discussion forums, a list of forums is displayed. In January, after a user has selected a workgroup from the drop-down menu, clicking forums icon will display the forum for that workgroup.

MassONE in a High School Classroom

Jeff Krieger, a social studies teacher at Ipswich High School, was one of the panelists at the MassONE Launch in October. Jeff has used MassONE over the past two years to involve students in online discussions and has found the use of these discussion forums to be very beneficial for his students. Because the forums offer a different way to interact, Jeff says, students are more engaged in the discussions. Students have time to think before answering a question, so the discussion is richer. For students who are shy about speaking up in class, the online forums provide a better way to participate.

One reason Jeff likes using the discussion forums is that he finds they provide a good way to focus on the history standards and how they relate to today's world. In his Modern History class, for example, when students are studying imperialism, Jeff asks questions such as, "Is the U.S. and imperialist power today? Should we exert our influence around the globe?" In Jeff's criminal justice course, students researched a death penalty case on the Internet and then shared their opinions about it through the MassONE forums.

Jeff has also used the forums to engage students and get them thinking about history. At the beginning of his history course, he posts this question: "What historical figure would you like to have dinner with and where would you want to eat?" The question has elicited some interesting answers from students. A side benefit of this discussion question, Jeff points out, is that it has allowed girls to feel more connected to the study of history, which tends to focus mostly on men. Girls have expressed interest in figures like Eleanor Roosevelt and Sally Ride.

Jeff says he has seen an improvement in student writing as a result of using the discussion forums. Students are used to using instant messaging, with its shorthand and icons, he explains, and they need to build their writing skills and learn to make their words more powerful. The rich discussion has even made his job as a teacher more enjoyable.

Jeff's advice to other teachers: Don't be afraid of the technology. The discussion forums are easy to use, and they offer a great way to get started with MassONE.

MassONE Launch a Success

On October 31, nearly 400 educators gathered in Worcester to officially launch Massachusetts Online Network for Education. Commissioner David Driscoll introduced MassONE, saying “Using this site will give our teachers an opportunity to form an online community, allowing them to support each other, share ideas and curricula, and work together to make all of our schools better places for our children to learn. I encourage all of our teachers to take advantage of this important new tool.”

Commissioner Driscoll also announced the winner of the MassONE student logo design contest, 16-year-old Mallory Stockwell of Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School. The winning logo is featured throughout the MassONE web site. MassONE received more than 250 entries for this competition.

The event also included panel discussions with teachers, students, professional development providers, and Department of Education staff who have used MassONE’s online. Jeff Krieger, featured above, was one of the panelists.

New Publications

MassONE has a new publication providing an overview of its new tools. It is available online at

<http://massone.mass.edu/downloads/overview.pdf>

The Department of Education has published a new report, *E-Learning in Massachusetts*, describing some of the online learning activities currently underway in our state. The report also addresses issues that educators and students should be aware of when using online technologies. The report is available online at

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/news05/elearning.html> .