



## **Newsletter - December 2006**

### **Partnership for Technology Professional Development**

More than 100 Massachusetts educators will begin taking online courses in December through this new professional development initiative, which uses MassONE as the delivery system. The courses will be provided by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA), and Virtual High School (VHS). While some of the courses will be taught exclusively online, others have one or more face-to-face sessions to enhance the online work. Most of the instruction will be asynchronous, which means that participants can access a course, participate in discussion, and complete the coursework at times most convenient for them.

The courses will be repeated in March and June, and most of them still have space available for the 2007 sessions. If you are interested in taking a course, you need to complete the online application. The online application web site also contains course descriptions and syllabi. Because the courses are popular, it's a good idea to apply as soon as possible. Course applications will be accepted and reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis, with preference given to districts that are enrolling teams, followed by those offering stipends to teachers to share what they learned with their colleagues.

### **MassONE Instructional Orientation Now Available**

Beginning December 1, educators will be able to take the MassONE Instructional Orientation, an online guided tour of MassONE, created especially for MassONE by Virtual High School. Designed for classroom teachers, curriculum coordinators, department heads, principals, and assistant superintendents, the orientation features helpful tricks and tips to help educators use MassONE in their classrooms.

The Orientation highlights the value of using MassONE to enhance classroom instruction and develop twenty-first century skills, covering topics such as creating an

online classroom, working with the online calendar, communicating with students and parents, setting up a discussion forum, using standards-based lessons, constructing online assessments, and getting help within the system.

The Orientation is available at no cost to all MassONE users. It consists of 10 one-hour modules, which can be completed in any order, at any time. You can take all of modules or select just those that interest you. Eight of the modules will be available initially; the final two modules will be available in January, when MassONE completes the revision of its interface for the discussion forums.

## **MassONE Use in Boston Schools**

The Boston Public School District has incorporated MassONE in its new technology plan. One of the district's goals is to "establish high-quality, scalable professional development models," and MassONE is one of the strategies that the district is exploring. MassONE has worked with the district to create a seamless link from Boston's own portal, MyBPS, to MassONE. Now Boston educators are directly logged into MassONE simply by clicking a link within MyBPS.

At Boston's recent technology conference, MassONE was featured in a session on Anytime, Anywhere Learning. Instructional technology specialist Ed Considine, who is also the district's MassONE Admin, presented information about how to access the system and take advantage of MassONE's tools and resources. Instructional technology teacher Ingrid Roche talked about her use of MassONE in middle school computer classes, which is described in the next article. Following the conference, Ed has received numerous requests from teachers to set up accounts for students.

Boston is currently using MassONE to create "blended" professional development opportunities that combine face-to-face meetings with online discussions. For example, curriculum coaches for English language arts, history, and language learning have set up online workgroups for teams of teachers. These workgroups make it possible for teachers from several schools to communicate with one another, as well as with their curriculum coaches, to share content-specific best practices and strategies.

MassONE is also part of a pilot program called the MyBPS Formative Assessment (MFA) Project, which is funded through a Title IID Enhancing Education Through Technology Competitive Grant Program. Through this grant, elementary language arts/reading coaches and instructional technology support specialists have received training on how to create online courses using MassONE. This year these courses will be offered to elementary coaches and teachers to help them use formative assessments to inform their daily instruction.

## **MassONE in a Middle School Classroom**

Ingrid Roche, instructional technology teacher at the Curley Middle School in Boston, got the idea to use MassONE last year after hearing a conference presentation by a New Bedford teacher who was using the discussion forums with her students.

Ingrid felt it was important for student to have experience using a discussion board as part of a class, since they would probably take online courses in the future. Ingrid tried using the MassONE discussion forums in her computer class and found that her students were enthusiastic about communicating online. For her first project, Ingrid set up two discussion strands and required that students work in pairs to post to them every day during class. One forum allowed students to debate high-interest topics such as who might win a sports championship or whether or not students should be allowed to bring cell phones to school. In the other forum, students had a chance to share their thoughts on a book that all of them were reading in their the English Language Arts class.

In another project, Ingrid had students use the discussion forum to gather and report real-world data. Ingrid used the forum to create questions for students to answer, with topics including their favorite type of pizza, their birth month, and their career aspirations. After students answered the questions, they worked in pairs to tabulate the data and then create tables and graphs in Microsoft Word. Each pair graphed the data from a different question, and the pairs shared their graphs with their classmates at the end of the project.

Ingrid found that a major benefit of activities like these is that they help to build a sense of community in the classroom. Moreover, the activities gave all of the students a chance to express themselves—including the quiet students, those learning English, and those with disabilities.

## **Enhancements to the MassONE System**

The MassONE team continues to improve and upgrade the system. Be on the lookout for many improvements that will enhance your MassONE online teaching and learning experience.

- \* The password reset tool has been completely redesigned so that educators who have forgotten their passwords or usernames are able to get back online without delay.
- \* The account management tools now allow MassONE Admins to update, move, and delete users from their districts and schools.
- \* The survey tool was upgraded in September. You can now make surveys available to individuals who do not have MassONE accounts, including parents, guardians and others.

## **Future Enhancements to MassONE**

The MassONE team is working on some new enhancements for 2007, which will be announced in upcoming editions of this newsletter. Here's a sneak peek:

- \* The discussion forums will be upgraded to offer new tools and design enhancements, creating a more enjoyable and functional platform for class discussions. The new features will include watches and messaging for educators, as well as moderating, polling, and detailed user profiles.
- \* Student registration will soon be easier. MassONE will be integrating its account databases with SIMS allowing classroom teachers to register students.
- \* MassONE is evaluating the possibility of integrating Moodle into MassONE providing more course management tools. This will significantly enhance and improve users' ability to offer high quality online courses.

## **New Math Resources in the TLR**

There are new high quality math links in MassONE's Teaching and Learning Resources (TLR), thanks to Ginny Tang and her colleagues, who taught the summer content institute entitled "Differentiated Instruction in Mathematics." One of the web sites they used in their institute is Educational Java Programs (<http://arcytech.org/java/>). This site has a collection of interactive programs that students can use to practice their skills such as working with fractions, telling time, and using money. To view additional links that you can use in your teaching, log into MassONE, and then click TLR (Teaching and Learning Resources) from the blue navigation bar on the left.

## **Make Your Own Hotlist in MassONE**

What's a hotlist? It's an organized list of web sites that you have selected for your students to use. Creating a hotlist allows you to screen web sites in advance for your students, which saves class time and helps ensure that your students are using quality online resources that will meet your instructional goals. To make a hotlist in MassONE:

1. Click the VHD for your classroom workgroup.
2. Select "add folder" from the menu on the left, and type a name for your project.
3. Click the folder to open it.
4. From the menu on the left, click "Add link."
5. Type a name for the link you plan to created, and click "OK."
6. Then type the URL (web address) and click "OK."
7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 to complete your hotlist.

For more information on using the Virtual Hard Drive, click the "Help" icon at the top of the MassONE screen.

## **Study of MassONE by Intel/ Knowledge Networks Solutions Partnership**

MassONE greatly appreciates Intel Corporation for the sponsorship of a study on the usage of MassONE by educators across the Commonwealth. Knowledge Networks Solutions (KNS) was commissioned to do the study.

KNS reviewed 4 key areas of the MassONE program: functionality, reliability, accessibility, and adoption. During the spring of 2006, KNS staff conducted interviews with Massachusetts Department staff and educators for this study. In the summer of the same year, they surveyed both MassONE users and non-users to get data for the report.

Findings from the report reflect our understanding of the need to provide more training to classroom teachers in the use of MassONE tools. The report also underscores the need for planning in order to best maintain the MassONE system and support its users as use of the system scales up.

The complete report is available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.asp?id=3176>

## **Back Issues of Newsletters**

If you missed any previous issues of the MassONE newsletter, you can now find them on the MassONE web site. To access them, click MassONE News Archives on the MassONE home page.