



Newsletter - June 2006

Summer Is Here!

Summer is a wonderful time to relax and do things you didn't have time for during the school year--so consider surfing over to MassONE. You can try out some new tools, explore resources, and brainstorm ways to use MassONE in your classroom in the fall. Remember, you can access MassONE anywhere that you can connect to the Internet. MassONE's home page has information about its tools and services. You can also browse through the MassONE overview online at <http://massone.mass.edu/downloads/overview.pdf> or take a look at MassONE's training options at <http://massone.mass.edu/training/>.

New Professional Development Opportunities Coming

The Partnership for Technology Professional Development (PTPD) project is officially underway, with the partners spending the summer planning courses involving MassONE. The courses will focus on the use digital and online technologies to enhance learning for all students. The courses will be offered in three periods: Dec. 2006 to Feb. 2007, March to May 2007, and June to August 2007. Both online and hybrid formats will be used for the courses.

Worcester Public Schools received a grant to plan and organize this project, in collaboration with the Department of Education and selected partners. The partners, who will develop and present the courses, are nationally recognized for their expertise in technology and learning: CAST, MESPA (Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association), and VHS (Virtual High School). In addition, MassCUE (Massachusetts Computer Using Educators) will provide input on the course content, and Sun Associates will provide formative and summative evaluation services.

Courses will include topics such as 21st century literacy skills, curriculum design, data-driven decision making, maximizing learning with digital media, meeting the needs of diverse learners, and engaging students using MassONE's online components. The courses will be offered at no cost to the participants.

The program will use a train-the-trainer model, offering a cost-effective way to build a district's capacity to use technology in teaching and learning. In order to get the maximum benefit from the program, the Department recommends that districts enroll teams of administrators and teachers.

The Department of Education urges school districts to use their NCLB Title IID Entitlement Grants (Fund Code 160) to provide stipends to educators who take these courses. The recommended stipend is \$100 per educator. In return, the educators taking the courses can share what they have learned with their colleagues.

Priority for enrollment in the courses will be given to districts that are enrolling teams, followed by those offering stipends to teachers. Detailed course descriptions will be available in the fall. Stay tuned!

New Feature in Lesson Plan Tool

Beginning in July, MassONE's Lesson Plan Tool will allow educators to save a lesson plan as a PDF file. This is handy because it makes it easier to share the lesson plan with colleagues near and far. The file can be uploaded to a folder in the Virtual Hard Drive, uploaded as an attachment in a discussion forum posting, or sent as an email attachment. If a lesson plan includes additional files, such as slide presentations or movies, the tool will automatically create a ZIP file containing the PDF and the attachments.

Using the Lesson Plan Tool is also a great way to document your best work as a teacher. In addition, once you have created lesson plans, with worksheets and other related files, it will be easy to find them next year when you want to use them again. Creating a PDF allows you to store your lesson plan anywhere--on MassONE, on a CD or portable drive, or on your computer's hard drive. Give it a try!

Feature Added to Survey Tool

Educators now have the option of creating surveys that can be accessed by both MassONE users and non-users. A new feature makes it possible to create an external link to a survey, which can then be shared with parents, students, and community members, allowing them to take the survey. Keep in mind, however, that a survey accessed in this way will not include the survey taker's MassONE username, so you will not be able to track each person's answers.

Enhancements to MassONE Administrator Tools

District and School MassONE Administrators now have access to the Password Reset tool via the Admin icon. This tool allows admins to reset passwords for educators and

students in their school or district. Each reset will be logged and time-stamped to help address any possible password issues. Also, MassONE administrators overseeing a more than one district can now roster educators and students into regional workgroups across multiple districts.

MassONE Hits the Conference Circuit

MassONE's sessions at the Department of Education's spring technology conference in Worcester were filled to capacity. Participants watched demonstrations and listened to case studies showing how MassONE is supporting districts' professional development and how teachers are blending classroom instruction, online collaboration, and electronic file sharing. Participants had an opportunity to hear Lisa Rainen, a middle school teacher in Bedford (featured later in the newsletter), who shared strategies for engaging students using MassONE's discussion forums.

In May, the annual Title I conference in Hyannis included three sessions on how MassONE can enhance, support, and transform teaching and learning. Nancy Dawson, Director of Online Programs and Technology Professional Development Specialist in the Plymouth Public Schools talked about her district's use of MassONE in the humanities. Andrew Chen of MIT and EduTron Corporation (publisher of CLEAR Math software) shared his strategies for using MassONE in the summer content institutes he has taught. Donna LeBretton, Educational Technology Specialist at Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, described how she used MassONE to complement and extend her district's face-to-face professional development efforts.

Bedford Middle School Students Connect with MassONE

Lisa Rainen is excited about her students' response to MassONE's discussion forums. As the Gifted and Talented and Differentiated Instruction Teacher at the John Glenn Middle School in Bedford, Lisa saw how the forums engaged students in her gifted math class, as well as in her homeroom.

In her math class, Lisa introduced a forum as part of a geometry unit in which students were creating individual projects. The forums gave students a chance to discuss their projects and get feedback from their classmates. Students posted their works-in-progress, along with explanations, and then responded to one another every day, usually from home. The class also read and discussed the book *Flatland*, a work of science/mathematical fiction. In a six-week period, students posted 500 messages!

Lisa says that using the forum opened up how students felt about their audience, since they were interacting with their peers, instead of just the teacher. The forum helped encourage participation by the students who were shy about speaking in class, because the online format gave them plenty of time to think out what they wanted to say.

In her homeroom, Lisa used a discussion forum to help develop a sense of community. Students were thrilled with the forum, which they could use to discuss topics of their choice. Sometimes students discussed books Lisa read to them in homeroom or books they read on their own. Sometimes they enjoyed showing their classmates what they could do with ASCII and Java. Other times they just chatted. One benefit of using the online forum was that it allowed a hearing-impaired student to take a more active role in the group.

When she introduces the discussion forums, Lisa always sets down clear guidelines for students. They need to talk to one another with respect. They should learn to use the Web as adults do, using standard spelling and capitalization. They should never share their password with anyone. Lisa points out that it is easy for a teacher to delete messages, if necessary, but that she only needed to do so when students began sending too many large graphics files.

Lisa says she would definitely encourage other teachers to use MassONE's discussion forums. She is already thinking about how she might use them next year to extend students' learning in conjunction with a field trip to a high school genetics conference.

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.