



Newsletter - April 2007

Spring Is Here!

Spring is here, and everything is growing, including MassONE. Last year at this time, there were 94,000 active users, while this year there are 114,037--a 21% increase. MassONE's resources and tools for enhancing teaching and learning have grown as well. For more information, read on, or log onto MassONE and explore for yourself!

Massachusetts Receives Grant for Student Communication

Massachusetts is one of four states that will receive a grant from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) to enhance the communications between student Board members and their peers across the Commonwealth. The six-month, \$2,000 grant is made possible through NASBE's Student Leadership Initiative, funded by the MetLife Foundation, to encourage leadership development among teens. The money will be used to develop online tools for student discussions on Board of Education topics using MassONE, the Massachusetts Online Network for Education.

Summer Online Courses Offered

The Partnership for Technology Professional Development (PTPD) will offer its final session of online courses this summer. There is no cost for Massachusetts educators to take the courses (although there is a fee to receive graduate credit). Although the courses are filling up quickly, there is still space available in the following courses:

- UDL in the General Education Curriculum
- Teacher Tech: Digital Media in the Classroom
- Principles of Curriculum Design
- Leadership for the 21st Century: Teaching, Learning, and Technology

To apply to take a course, complete the online application. Because applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis, it's a good idea to apply as soon as possible. For courses that are filled (21st Century Literacy Skills for Teachers and Creating Assessments Using Online Tools), you can apply to have your name added to the waiting

list. The application web site also includes a contact name for each course, in case you have questions about your application.

New Online Courses to Be Offered

The Department has received a number of proposals from districts for the Partnership for Online Professional Development (POPD). Once the grants are awarded, the recipients will work with online course providers to develop courses, which will be offered through MassONE in the fall of 2007 and the summer of 2008. These new courses will focus on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the revised draft K-12 Instructional Technology Standards. Keep an eye on the MassONE home page for announcements of the grant recipients, as well as details about registering for the new online courses.

MassONE Orientation Available

More than 400 educators have signed up to take the MassONE Orientation, which highlights ways that MassONE can enhance classroom instruction. The orientation, which was created by Virtual High School, 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.

Teachers Can Now Create Student Accounts

Classroom teachers can now create student accounts simply by rostering students into their classroom workgroup. The roster tool allows teachers to search for the names of students in their school, select the names, and then add them to the workgroup. The tool will also output a list of students' usernames and passwords. To access the roster tool, log into MassONE, click the Admin icon at the top of the page, and then click "Roster Members into MassONE."

Did You Forget Your Username or Password?

If you misplaced your username or password, you can quickly and easily retrieve them anytime. To do so, just go to MassONE's home page (<http://massone.mass.edu/>) and click "Forgot Username or Password?" To provide security, MassONE uses a two-step process. First you need to provide some basic information, along with a new password. Then MassONE will instantly email you a secure link, along with your user name and password. When you click the link in the email, your password is reset. You should do this as soon as possible, because the link expires after 24 hours. For security reasons the password reset tool cannot be made available to students. To reset a student's password, choose your classroom workgroup, click on the "Admin" icon at the top of the screen, and then click "Reset Password."

MassONE Offers Regional Administrators Training

The MassONE Administrative Regional Training will provide an overview of the MassONE online tools and resources and a more detailed look at recent upgrades and new developments. Also included will be information on managing user accounts, best practices, and innovative uses of MassONE so that participants can brainstorm new directions and plan for possible district-wide MassONE training. Four trainings are scheduled for May, with each session from 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m.

- May 15, 2007 Wayland - Claypit Hill Elementary School
- May 17, 2007 Georgetown High School
- May 22, 2007 Wareham Middle School
- May 24, 2007 Pittsfield Administration Building

Note that these sessions are for MassONE Admins or people interested in becoming a MassONE Admin. (For more information about becoming a MassONE Admin is available at <http://massone.mass.edu/Admins/>)

Pre-registration for these sessions is required.

Formative Evaluation Report on PTPD Courses

Sun Associates has completed its evaluation of the first session of online courses offered through MassONE as part of the Partnership for Technology Professional Development (PTPD). Sun Associates administered surveys, conducted interviews, held focus groups, and “observed” both the online courses and face-to-face sessions. Interestingly, the report states that “a vast majority, 88%, would strongly recommend the class they took to a colleague.” To read the entire report, see the news item about it on the MassONE home page (<http://massone.mass.edu/>).

Educators Share Their Thoughts about PTPD Courses

What it's like to take an online course? Sharing their thoughts about this question are participants from the Partnership for Technology Professional Development (PTPD). These participants came from across the state, representing Concord, Ipswich, Newburyport, Northampton, and Wilmington. Each person has taken or is in the process of taking a course taught by Virtual High School (VHS)— Creating Assessments Using Online Tools and 21st Century Literacy Skills for Teachers. Two of these people had no previous experience with online courses.

Participants seemed to agree that these courses offered some unique learning advantages, beyond just convenience and flexibility. Some people mentioned that they enjoyed hearing from other educators across the state, pointing out that, in a face-to-face course, you may not hear from every participant. A couple of people mentioned that participants can take more time to formulate their responses in an online class, so people's responses

tend to be more thoughtful. One person speculated that you may get more honest opinions in an online course, as well.

While several people missed the face-to-face communication that a traditional course offers, they were pleased with the quality of the interaction in the online course. In addition, people found the online course format complemented their learning styles. One person felt that the everyday format of the course helped prevent procrastination. Another person liked the convenience of having all of the course materials and assignments in one place.

All of the participants emphasized that, in order to be successful in an online course, you need to keep up with the work. To get the most out of a course, you need to put in the time online. You also need to be organized and be able to pace yourself. According to one participant, online courses involve more work than face-to-face courses--a trade-off for the convenience of anywhere, anytime learning. In addition, most of the work is reading and writing, so online learning may not fit everyone's learning style.

The participants seemed pleased with the quality of instruction in the online course. They were also aware that online teaching requires some unique skills. Just as participants need to be disciplined in keeping up with the online course work, the instructor needs to provide timely feedback, they said. One person mentioned that it was reassuring to receive weekly feedback from the instructor. It's also important for online teachers to provide participants with clear expectations ahead of time. Another important skill is troubleshooting. Several people pointed out that an online instructor needs to be sensitive to technical issues, including the fact that not all students have the same comfort level with technology.

Overall, both the instructor and the participants were happy to have the opportunity to participate in an online course. As the instructor stated, "This has been a great experience for me. . . I am so impressed with the willingness of teachers to share and support each other in this online environment."

The next issue of the newsletter will feature participants who took PTPD courses from the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA).

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, go to MassONE News Archives on the MassONE home page (<http://massone.mass.edu/>).