

## Using VES as a Tool for Online Professional Development

This approximately one hour workshop will give an overview of the pros and cons of using the Department of Education's Virtual Education Space as a tool for a district's online professional development connecting technology to specific curricular areas using two professional development courses offered through the Taunton Public Schools as exemplars.

First, we will review the capabilities of Virtual Education Space and the basic functions that participants in online professional development need to master.

Secondly, we will discuss Taunton's first online professional development: "Improving ELA Skills for Educators using Virtual Education Space" – a summer course offered for teachers and administrators designed for individuals to improve their specific needs concerning writing and grammar skills. People who participated in this professional development series took pre and post tests and worked on ELA topics of which they were concerned while using hardware and online access at their homes. The instructor of the course as well as one of the participants in the course will speak to the benefits and difficulties of participating in this type of professional development.

Thirdly, we will discuss the progression of online professional development in Taunton by exploring the development of a "Technology Leaders" professional development program that was designed to refine online professional development and help create a group of teacher leaders who can support staff not only with online professional development using Virtual Education Space but also with using technology for effective communication and classroom instruction. The same teacher and instructor will discuss the changes that were made to deal with hardware issues, managing communication through Microsoft Outlook, using the forum feature in Virtual Education Space, among other developments.

Lastly, we will discuss how this group of technology leaders, trained through online and traditional professional development, presented a workshop for grades 5 - 12 teachers (without restrictions on participants' technology proficiency) on a district professional development day. In closing, we will discuss how these leaders hope to use Virtual Education Space with their students throughout the school year.

