

# Exploring an Online, Video-based Alternative to Face-to-face Teacher Professional Development

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The purpose of the research was to determine if a video-intensive, online method of delivering professional development would be a viable alternative to some of the time-intensive professional development in which teachers in the enhancing Missouri's Instructional Networked Teaching Strategies (eMINTS) Program now engage. Teachers in Year 1 of the two-year eMINTS comprehensive professional development (Comp PD) program receive over 100 hours of face-to-face professional development. This program is primarily delivered via four-hour, highly-interactive sessions in regional cohorts facilitated by instructors called eMINTS Instructional Specialists (eIS). Could some content currently delivered face-to-face be converted to an online, video-intensive format without significant loss of quality and learning?

To compare these two delivery methods, one session of the eMINTS Comp PD program, "Constructivism in the Technology-rich Classroom," was converted to a video-based, online course. The online course included a CD storing the video and used a Web browser to display the rest of the content, including animated graphics and "interactives" for teacher reflection and checks for understanding. The session content in both methods naturally divided into three major sections 1) An overview of the eMINTS program components, 2) An introduction to constructivist theory and 3) Standards-based lesson planning.

This study answered the following research question: Is there a difference in the knowledge and understanding of participants who received their training in an independent, online, video-intensive method versus an interactive, learner-centered face-to-face method? In the fall of 2005, each Year 1 cohort of eMINTS teachers experienced the Constructivism session either individually using the online method or using the face-to-face method. The primary goal of the session is for teachers to gain a foundational understanding of the program and its underlying pedagogy, and to begin thinking about how it would apply to their own classroom.

Data collection for this study occurred in December of 2005. All Year 1 participants were provided with the opportunity to complete a self-report, online survey, with 17 questions using a five-point Likert scale addressing content of the Constructivism session. They were also asked to identify their cohort and the method of delivery used. All results were anonymous.

Eighty-nine teachers completed all questions of the online survey. Data were sorted by method of delivery and the scores from each section of questions were combined to create three constructs for analysis. T-tests were conducted to compare the scores for teachers using the online versus the face-to-face method on each construct. The only significant differences found were in the section on the eMINTS Program components, which indicated a slightly higher level of understanding in those teachers who received the content as a face-to-face session. Ultimately the online, video-based method appears to be a reasonable alternative for this session.

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