



# SIG Leader's Handbook

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## Welcome

The Massachusetts Computer Using Educators organization (MassCUE) would like to thank you for considering the establishment or continuation of a MassCUE Special Interest Group (SIG). The leadership role that you will be assuming in MassCUE is an extremely important one. SIGs are the life blood of our organization. They are essential to providing educators with the latest ideas, information, and developments in the field of educational computing. There is a great need to have convenient locations where educators can discuss, compare, and share their thoughts and discoveries concerning educational technology.

Technology must play a vital role in our schools if we are to truly provide a relevant education for our students. This will happen only if educators become informed technology users. A strong SIG structure enables MassCUE to further this process by serving more educators. This handbook is a call to action for all those who want to be involved in a leadership role within our organization. The time is right to step beyond the point of simple participation, and join with others in the shaping of technology use in our schools. Those people who will be supporting your effort and working with you truly believe that educational technology is an important part of improving the quality of education.

## What is a MassCUE SIG?

Presently, MassCUE supports two varieties of Special Interest Groups: Area SIGs and Topic SIGs. The purpose of an **Area SIG** is to bring educators together in a geographic area to discuss, share, train, and do what the group desires involving their computer interests and needs. The **Topic SIG** brings people together who are interested in a particular field of educational technology (for example, Special Education or Multimedia) and concentrating on that field and its relationship to education. SIG activities might include hosting guest presenters, hands-on workshops, and open-ended sessions for sharing ideas and practices. SIGs are open to all Massachusetts educators, whether MassCUE members or not.

Our annual MassCUE Conference is held in the Fall and allows a large group of educators to gather, share, and learn about interactive educational technologies. This wealth of information is dispersed at a single location. Our Special Interest Groups do the same thing with some additional benefits: (1) they meet with smaller groups of people making it more comfortable for educators to discuss and share, (2) their meetings are held on a timely basis and (3) in a convenient location.

MassCUE seeks to maintain a support system that will make it as simple as possible to lead a SIG. The SIG Coordinator, the SIG Committee, and the network of other SIG Leaders will be there to support you with their experience and expertise. They will be able to give assistance in areas such as: finding successful meeting topics, locating good speakers, making your meetings run smoothly through good organizational practice, attracting a loyal membership, and by making you aware of effective techniques to publicize your meetings. Communications between you and these colleagues will help in answering any questions you might have, and will make your job easier.

## **The Benefits of Having a SIG in Your School**

The benefits to you and your school system for hosting a MassCUE SIG are many. Think of your school as being the place where educators from your school system or a wider area meet to discuss what's on the cutting edge of technology. This forum, which you will lead, will allow you to make many new professional contacts, and place you in a position where you will learn first hand about new developments in educational technology. The new knowledge and relationships that you will establish within your SIG organization can only enhance your own understanding of technology's role in teaching and learning. This role will also provide you with the opportunity to develop your skills as an educational leader.

You have recognized a need, and are about to accept a challenge that will enable you to grow both personally and professionally. The most exciting part is that you will be able to share your growth by allowing many other educators to grow with you. That will be appreciated and respected by those who work with you.

The first step to formally take on a SIG Leadership role is to notify the MassCUE SIG Coordinator of your intention. Use the SIG Leader Registration Form which is found on the web site.

## **Getting Started**

### **What do I need for experience?**

You should be able to get along with people, have good organizational skills, be interested in the field of educational technology, and possess a willingness to be a facilitator that helps people to improve themselves as teachers and as professionals. Other than that, experience will come by doing.

### **Will I need special equipment?**

No special equipment is needed. Most of the hardware and software and peripherals you will be demonstrating will be brought by your guest speakers or group members. You will need a pleasant meeting room; a classroom is fine. It would also be convenient, but not required, to have a nearby portable computer or computer laboratory facility.

## The Very Important First Meeting

### Why is it important?

The first meeting of a newly formed MassCUE SIG is very important for many reasons. Most importantly, the first meeting is giving your group its credibility. A successful first meeting will show those who attended that their time was well spent, and that it will be worth while to participate in the future. The first meeting will also determine a positive "word of mouth" advertising which is really needed if a SIG is to survive.

### What will my topic be?

Most leaders have done one of two things to start a SIG:

(1) *Have an organizational meeting.* This traditionally does not attract many people, but with some carefully planned invitations, you can have selected members from nearby communities be sure to attend. These are people who you know will be interested in organizing the future direction of a local gathering of computer education enthusiasts. At this meeting you can plan future topics, delegate duties to various members, plan your yearly calendar, discuss needs of your community (training, hardware and software, curriculum integration, etc) or anything else you determine to be important to the establishment of the SIG. Giving these people ownership in the creation of the group will be very helpful in maintaining a stable group structure.

(2) *Plan a meeting around a "hot topic."* Determine a topic of educational technology that your area is in need of knowing more about, find a good guest speaker, and plan your first meeting around the interest of that topic. The topic should be global enough to attract local leadership.

### Who will come?

Here are some ideas of people you can invite:

- The SIG Coordinator can furnish you with a list of all the registered MassCUE members in your area. A form letter via the post office or e-mail will notify these people of your meeting.
- Send out flyers to fellow teachers in your town's school buildings via interschool mail.
- A letter to the Superintendents, Principals, and/or Technology Coordinators of local school systems asking them to send a representative from their school or district has sometimes had very positive results.
- Notify local Parent-Teacher organizations of your meetings. Parents are very interested in local educational technology. Other: Any way you can attract educators to hear what is going on is perfectly acceptable. Be creative!

## **Where should my meetings be held?**

Some leaders prefer to have their meetings at the same building every time. This allows members the security of knowing exactly where to go for each meeting. Other leaders feel more comfortable having their meetings rotate among different schools. The feeling here is that it gives more variety, and shows different facilities to your membership. It also might give a different group of people the opportunity to attend. Whatever works for you is fine. This might be something that you discuss with your membership during your first meeting. Again, letting them have a say in how the group is to be run will give them ownership.

## **How should a meeting be run?**

This is totally up to you and your membership. Organizationally you might do something like:

1. Welcome
  - Pass around Attendance Sign-In Sheet
  - Encourage new members to fill out Member Information Sheets
2. Explanation of MassCUE and the purpose of the SIG
3. General Announcements including upcoming MassCUE events
4. Have members introduce themselves (town/discipline/level)
5. Introduce your Topic and/or Presenter
6. Presentation/discussion of the topic
7. Conclusions/Wrap Up
8. Plans for next meeting date
9. Teacher Sharing (let members mingle)
10. Participants turn in evaluation sheets; hand out Certificates of Attendance

## **Ideas for Organization**

### **Roles**

SIG Leader(s): You, the person responsible for the actions of the group. In many cases the SIG Leadership role is shared by two Co-Leaders.

Secretary: One who takes minutes at each meeting and who writes articles for on CUE.

Marketing Coordinator: One who helps you in establishing a stronger membership in your county.

### **Tips**

Write an agenda for each meeting - this will help your personal organization and it can also be used as a handout at the meeting

Plan the entire year's calendar at your first meeting. This avoids questions and calls late in the year. Try for five meetings per year. Every other month starting in September would be optimal (September, November, January, March, and May dates avoid most of the holiday and vacation months). Some SIGs elect to meet every month during the school year.

Develop a data base containing information about your members. This can be created from Member Information Sheets collected at your meetings. The data base can be used for creating mailing labels and keeping track of phone numbers and contact information.

Send a "reminder" to your membership just prior to your meeting date. This should be sent around the first of the month of your meeting—timing is important here.

Develop relationships with local vendors and company representatives. They can be very willing to provide you with presenters and demonstrations. Place all their information in a data base.

Read the monthly MassCUE Calendar to keep in touch with what other SIGs are doing. Topics presented at other SIGs can provide you with ideas for future programs and presenters in your SIG.

Plan your next meeting directly after a meeting, while everything is still fresh in your mind. Early planning avoids many problems!

Get your members involved in planning your meetings—ownership is so very important.

## **Reimbursement for Expenses**

Your expenses as SIG Leader are reimbursable by MassCUE. This is one important way that MassCUE supports your group. Reimbursable expenses include those for printing, duplicating, and mailing flyers announcing SIG meetings and/or advertising your SIG, refreshments, and other legitimate expenses incurred in operating your SIG. If you are unsure as to whether an expense is reimbursable, contact the SIG Coordinator.

**Important:** Since MassCUE is a tax-exempt organization, it does not pay taxes and cannot reimburse you for any sales tax on SIG-related purchases. You can avoid being charged a sales tax when you buy something for your SIG by informing the sales clerk or vendor that you are making a tax exempt purchase and presenting them with the Massachusetts Certificate of Exemption. Copies of the MassCUE Reimbursement Form and the Certificate of Exemption can be obtained from the SIG Coordinator. To obtain a reimbursement, send your receipt along with a MassCUE Reimbursement Form directly to the MassCUE bookkeeper as directed on the Reimbursement Form which can be accessed at this website.

## **Free Advertising of Your Meetings**

### **MassCUE *Calendar***

This monthly publication is sent to every MassCUE member and is a major avenue for reaching your intended audience. Your meeting information is needed on tenth of the month preceding your scheduled meeting date. This information should be passed on to the printing in the *Calendar*. Information can be sent to the SIG Coordinator by email or via the post office (on paper or disk). Email is the most efficient way to get information to the SIG Coordinator and is encouraged.

### **Calendar Format**

The format for announcing meetings in MassCUE's monthly Calendar is printed below. Please use this format when sending SIG meeting information to the Calendar Editor and SIG Coordinator.. Information should be sent by the tenth of the month preceding that in which the meeting will be held.

SIG NAME:

MEETING DATE:

LOCATION:

TIME:

TOPIC:

PRESENTER(S): (Name, title, & school or organization)

DESCRIPTION: (Two or three sentences describing the topic)

CONTACT: (SIG Leader's name, phone number, and email address)

DIRECTIONS: (How to get to the meeting site)

**Using the MassCUE Conference to Your Benefit**

The annual MassCUE Conference is a gathering of many people. Some lead workshops that show educators what has worked for them in the classroom, some are vendors who are describing the latest technology products, and still others are there to spread ideas about educational technology. All of these people are potential presenters for your SIG meetings. Use this conference to scout workshops, speakers, and vendors for some of your future meetings. It's an excellent resource for you.

### **Conference SIG Table**

Our annual MassCUE Conference will have a table set aside for SIG information. Be sure to have some information about your SIG available; this can be in the form of a flyer advertising your next meeting or a "Fact Sheet" giving essential information about your SIG (the kinds of topics covered, when, where and how often you usually meet, contact information, etc.).

### **How the SIG Coordinator and SIG Committee Can Help**

MassCUE provides the resources your SIG needs through the SIG Coordinator and the SIG Committee.

The SIG Coordinator collects information about your meeting and makes sure it is published in the Calendar which is mailed to every MassCUE member. He/she also serves as your direct link to represent the SIG Committee at MassCUE's Executive Board meetings.

SIG Leaders form a community for sharing ideas and collaborating. Check the web site for up to date contact information.

SIG Leader meetings are held twice a year: in the fall for new leadership training and at the SIG Leader Banquet in the Spring. These meetings allow all the leaders from the state to meet and interact with each other.

Training opportunities for SIG Leaders are held on an as needed basis.

### **What Does Mass CUE Expect of Me as a SIG Leader**

It is expected that you try your best to hold meetings of interest to educators who are interested in using technology and want to learn more. You should try to hold at least three meetings a year and try to maintain an average of 6 people or more, although some meetings will have less, especially in the case of new SIGs. You will be expected to schedule meetings in advance, to advertise them in the monthly Calendar, and to send a brief report of each meeting to the SIG Coordinator or his/her designee.

**Words to the Wise--Good Luck!**

Stick with it. There will be times when you have meetings that three people will show up, and then there will be times when you have seventy people show up. After some gatherings you will wonder if you're really targeting the right people or bringing in the proper topics. All you have to know is that you are doing the best you can to help your fellow educators bring the power of technology to teaching and learning.