

TAPPED IN: An On-line Teacher Professional Development Workplace

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A shared need for more meaningful on-line interactivity than can be supported by Web pages and listservs has motivated several K-12 TPD organizations to join SRI in developing the Teacher Professional Development Institute, or TAPPED IN, a platform-independent, Web-aware, multi-user virtual environment (MUVE). TAPPED IN integrates synchronous and asynchronous communication, document storage and sharing, and interaction with virtual objects in a venue patterned after a real-world conference center. Teachers can log into TAPPED IN to share Web resources, hold meetings and workshops, engage in mentoring, and conduct collaborative inquiries with the aid of familiar discourse-support artifacts such as whiteboards, file cabinets, and bulletin boards. Our WWW user interface and joint-Web-browsing capabilities enable teachers to collaborate more effectively in the presence of Web-based resources. Users who have a Web browser that supports Java Telnet applets can connect to TAPPED IN through their Web browser by using our Java applet, TAPestry, which combines a live Telnet connection with a browser window. TAPestry allows users to project (or "push") a Web page to another user's Web browser. Unlike most MUVEs, TAPPED IN can accept email to TAPPED IN users from the Internet and to allow members to send, reply to, and forward email from TAPPED IN to any external email address. We have also developed a variety of data collection protocols and tools to automatically log usage data and transcripts of activities. Results of a pilot test indicate that teachers can learn to use TAPestry for Website tours in less than an hour and that satisfaction with the capability is high. The poster will illustrate TAPPED IN design and show vignettes of how it is being used.