2022-2023 Three-Credit Hour Course: Escape Room Challenge

- **Audience:** *West Virginia Teachers/Educators*
- **Type:** *Self-Paced with Rolling Enrollment*
- **Enrollment:** *September 1, 2022 - April 14, 2023*
- **Duration:** *September 1, 2022 - May 19, 2023*

Description: Classroom escape rooms are engaging exercises designed to afford teams of students an opportunity to work through problems related to a theme or subject concept. Students work together to solve puzzles and decode clues written by the teacher to find and unlock a succession of clues hidden in objects or props within a locked room. Given a time limit, the team's goal is to complete all puzzles successfully and "escape" the room. Teachers can adjust the number and difficulty of the puzzle clues and vary the location of the props in which the clues are hidden to make the game easier or harder and take up more or less time and space depending on the level of the students, the size of the room and the experience of both the teacher and the students. Escape rooms can contain digital components, and some are even conducted entirely online virtually. In this course, teachers will learn how to create a variety of clues and the basics of designing and facilitating an escape room and also explore digital escape rooms for their classes.

Course Goals:

- *Understand the nature of an escape room.*
- *Recognize some benefits and challenges to creating escape rooms in the classroom.*
- *Identify possible props and locks to use in an escape room.*
- *Recognize how solving puzzles and clues in escape rooms engages and motivates students.*
- *Set a purpose and topic for a classroom escape room related to their WV subject standards.*
- *Create word puzzle clues using text layouts and shapes for use in a classroom escape room pertaining to the topic.*
- *Understand how puzzles and riddles affect the brain.*
- *Create substitution clues, Caesar Ciphers, and messages written in mirror text with decryption keys related to their subject topic and standards.*
- *Recognize levels of difficulty and develop puzzle clues with varying levels to differentiate learning for students.*
- *Recognize how group work benefits students.*
- *Describe how team configuration contributes to team success.*
- *Create clues using visual images, hidden details, pictures, and symbols for use in a classroom escape room.*
- *Evaluate various options for facilitating escape rooms in the classroom.*
- *Create jigsaw puzzles and clues that reinforce previous knowledge and homework assignments.*
- *Outline a plan to implement an escape room in their classroom incorporating the clues that were developed throughout the course.*

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▸ *Understand how digital escape puzzles, clues and locks work.*

▸ *Understand how to create QR codes to assign online questions for students.*

▸ *Create a double word scavenger hunt puzzle with QR clues related to a WV Standard for their subject and grade level.*

▸ *Explore, choose, and adapt a digital escape room related to their WV Standards for use in their classroom for both hybrid and online assignments.*

Session Overviews

▸ **Session 1 – What's in an Escape Room?**
An escape room is a fun, exciting, team building, problem-solving, and educational experience adaptable to any subject and/or grade level. To better prepare you for creating and facilitating a classroom escape room you need to know a little about the history of, processes for creating, and participation in escape rooms. As you proceed through the course, you may come across advertisements from vendors who want to sell you packaged escape rooms or other things to help you provide escape room experiences for students but don't buy them! Be patient, by the end of this course, you will have access to various helpful sites and know many different ways to create escape room clues for free. You will also get ideas about inexpensive props which may be used and reused in a classroom escape room. Many of these activities and examples were developed by Robin Sizemore, former WVDE Science Coordinator, but you do not have to be a science teacher to develop escape room games.

▸ **Session 2 - Teamwork & Group Problem-Solving**
For students who play video games which offer fantasy, mystery, rapid action, and instant rewards as they conquer ever increasingly more difficult levels of problem-solving challenges, it's no wonder that standard classroom lectures, worksheets, and written homework questions do not do much to engage them. More and more teachers are discovering that escape rooms and "breakout" rooms in which students solve cryptic clues related to classroom content are one way of adding a measure of excitement and motivation for students in addition to challenging them.

▸ **Session 3 - Puzzles, Puzzles, and More Puzzles**
An escape room provides fun but also challenges the students' brains to try to solve one riddle or puzzle to unlock another clue, and so on until they ultimately escape the room after solving all of the puzzles. The clues can be written in letter substitution codes, ciphers, or visual clues that must be decoded. The clues should be increasingly more difficult as they proceed through the "room" and require students to employ various skills and methods to solve the riddles or puzzles. However, not every student will find the puzzles equally difficult. Puzzles clues can be differentiated for different groups of students depending upon ability, readiness, and experience.

▸ **Session 4 – Teamwork & Group Problem-Solving**
Escape rooms are the ultimate group experience as teams must find a way to solve the puzzles and escape the room. Group work can foster teamwork, enhance communication skills, and provide leadership opportunities for students. You, the teacher, can play a big part in determining how well the group experience will succeed by carefully deciding how many students to put in each team, knowing which students will work well together, planning how many teams will be solving

the puzzles and assigning team roles within the group or not! How the team members interact is partly dependent on how many clue-containing envelopes will be allocated per team - whether each member gets the clues to try to solve the puzzles independently or whether they must share the clues and communicate with one another which promotes collaboration and cooperation.

▶ ***Session 5 – Planning Your Classroom Escape!***
Teachers can create simple classroom escape games themed clues to introduce new ideas, reinforce subject content, or review for tests. They can also create sophisticated escape rooms with elaborately staged scenarios designed to make them think outside the box. Puzzles can be fairly easy or more difficult so that students must depend on their teammates to help them solve puzzles requiring different skills. Teams or classes can compete with each other. Individual students or whole teams who solve difficult clues first can be rewarded with bonus points. There are several different ways that teachers can facilitate escape rooms depending upon the resources, space, and time available. There is no one right way to implement your classroom escape room. The important thing is to build initial excitement and let the students do the rest!

▶ ***Session 6 – Escape Online!***
Now that you have successfully designed an "in class" escape room activity for your students, let's take it one step further and determine how you can provide online escape clue activities that your students can access either at stations in your classroom or at home. Online clues are different from those that are entirely "in person", but they can serve as an equally engaging educational experience. For students who have grown up with technology, online clues may be very popular, and they can be designed to interact with objects in the classroom in what is known as a blended, mixed-reality, or hybrid experience.

Course Grades

All grades in the course gradebook must be a checkmark for successful course completion. A checkmark indicates that all work has been completed and the work meets the expectations for that assignment. Quiz scores must meet the minimum expectations as stated in the course.