



# How VHS Learning Is Transforming Online Teaching Through Reflective, Research-Based Professional Development

In today's education landscape, online instruction is no longer optional — it's essential. VHS Learning is preparing teachers to meet this challenge head-on. Through its rigorous Online Teaching Methodologies (OTM) course and an array of follow-up professional development offerings, the nonprofit has helped more than 260 educators strengthen their craft, both online and in traditional classrooms.

## A Structured Approach That Sparks Growth

Designed as a four-week, graduate-level course, OTM prepares educators to excel in virtual environments through a combination of theory, best practices, and hands-on application. The course is fully asynchronous, allowing busy educators to engage with the material on their own schedule, while also participating in rich collaborative learning experiences. Each cohort is led by experienced VHS Learning instructors who model strong online facilitation techniques while guiding participants through weekly discussions, assignments, and feedback activities.

Topics covered in OTM include building a sense of community in online classrooms, crafting clear and measurable learning objectives, creating accessible and inclusive materials, applying consistent grading practices, and providing effective, personalized feedback. Teachers are also introduced to important professional responsibilities such as plagiarism prevention, implementing accommodations, and maintaining timely communication with students and families.

As an added benefit, participants experience the course from the student's perspective, giving them empathy and insight into what makes online learning successful from the learner's point of view. Teachers who complete OTM receive 45 hours of professional learning credit and have the option to earn graduate credit. For many educators, OTM is more than just a requirement — it's a professional turning point.

## Voices from the Field: Five Teachers, One Transformational Experience

Kerri-Anne Alexanderson, a seasoned AP Psychology teacher, joined the program with low expectations but quickly saw its value. "The techniques I learned during OTM I use daily," she said. "I've revamped assignments, improved how I communicate, and even rethought how I offer feedback to students and colleagues. It has elevated my personal teaching methods and sparked new ideas for my future practice."

Kelsey Falkowski, who has taught with VHS Learning for nearly a decade, emphasized how the course challenged her to think differently about assessment. "With online teaching, the phraseology of feedback is absolutely paramount. VHS Learning made professional development feel personal, not just another checkbox. I carry those lessons forward every day."

SUCCESS STORY



ASL teacher Kathleen Scruggs credited OTM with helping her feel prepared and confident from day one. “The course gave me tangible ways to reach students and create a sense of community online. The lesson on feedback in particular was a game-changer — it showed how powerful and meaningful our words can be for students.”

For longtime educator Lori Treiber, who completed three separate PD courses through VHS Learning, the reflection-based model stood out. “I thought I was doing a good job — and I was — but these courses made me better. Each session pushed me to reevaluate my practice, from designing an engaging homepage to delivering effective feedback. Every piece directly benefited my students.”

What ties these experiences together is the level of support and individualized attention each teacher received. “The mentors and facilitators created a safe space where I wasn’t afraid to ask questions or make mistakes,” shared Kristin S., another participant. “That experience shaped the way I now interact with my students — I’ve adopted that same growth mindset in my own teaching.”

### **A Ripple Effect That Reaches Beyond Online Classrooms**

The benefits of OTM extend far beyond online classrooms. Educators consistently report lasting improvements in how they build relationships, provide feedback, and support student learning — in any setting.

Even teachers who never plan to teach online walk away with a powerful new toolkit. “The skills you gain from VHS Learning’s professional development are priceless,” said Alexanderson. “It’s made me a stronger educator — and reignited my passion for teaching.”