OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

KEY POINTS

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Open Educational Resources (OER) are freely available teaching and learning materials that can be downloaded, edited and shared to better serve all students. OER include all kinds of content such as textbooks, lesson plans, assignments, games, and other educational materials. They can be produced in any medium: paper-based text, video, audio, or computer-based multimedia.

APPEAL OF OER

COST SHIFTING: By sharing and adapting educational materials, content acquisition costs can be cut dramatically, allowing schools flexibility to reallocate resources to support learning and teaching.

FREEDOM TO UPDATE CONTENT: OER quality improves over time by enabling continuous adaptation and updating of learning resources. This improvement cycle gives districts more local control over their instructional materials and contrasts with traditional materials that typically have to be used by students until a new purchasing cycle.

EQUITY OF ACCESS: OER have the capacity to provide equitable opportunities to access strong content materials for ALL students.

> *OER can help school districts in their efforts to close elusive achievement gaps by providing resources that many educational institutions could not otherwise economically afford.*
>
> NAACP Endorsement of OER

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT OER

QUALITY: Review processes for OER that measure alignment with state educational standards must be implemented in the same manner as with other instructional material. The criteria used to judge quality and alignment needs to be the same regardless of whether the materials are print or digital, open, or all rights reserved copyright.

As a part of their legislative mandate, Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction facilitated OER reviews that serve as a resource and model for school districts considering the use and/or adoption of OER. The goals of these reviews were to:

1. Help educators select high-quality materials for their classrooms
2. Provide districts with information to help with materials adoptions and a replicable process and instruments to evaluate CCSS alignment of instructional material
3. Identify gaps in CCSS alignment that can be addressed by content creators or school districts

The OSPI OER Project website provides the results of this OER review as well as the process and instruments used.

EFFICACY: Further examples of efficacy and OER implementation case studies are needed to measure impact of OER on student learning.

In a study from Utah, researchers looked at data to compare how students using open and traditional textbooks performed in their science classes. When examining specific courses, researchers didn't find significant differences in outcomes in earth systems and biology courses, but they did find that students using open textbooks in chemistry courses performed significantly better.[1]

ACCESS: Though print options are available for many OER, in order to take full advantage of digital open resources, a network and internet infrastructure is critical. As districts look to shift to a one-to-one computing environment, where every student has a tablet, laptop, or other device, OER is a cost-effective way to provide digital content.

STAFF CAPACITY: Teachers need opportunities for sustained professional learning in using digital tools, locating OER, evaluating quality, understanding licensing, and adapting resources. Many online professional learning communities focused on OER are evolving to help meet this need.

POLICIES: Local districts and school boards often have existing policies and practices related to instructional materials adoption that need to be revised in order to encourage the use, adaptation, and development of open resources.

WASHINGTON OER PROJECT

In 2012, the Washington State Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create a collection of openly licensed courseware aligned with state learning standards and an associated awareness and professional development campaign. The Legislature saw this as an opportunity to both "reduce the expenses that districts would otherwise incur in purchasing these materials" and "provide districts and students with a broader selection of materials, and materials that are more up-to-date." Goals for the project are:

1. Ongoing OER awareness and capacity building.
2. Development support and review of district adapted and created OER.
3. Creation and maintenance of an OER Library

FOR MORE INFORMATION

OER PROJECT
k12.wa.us/oer

REVIEWED OER LIBRARY
k12.wa.us/oer/library.aspx

WASHINGTON HUB ON OER COMMONS
www.oercommons.org/hubs/washington

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[1] T. Jared Robinson, Lane Fischer, David Wiley, and John Hilton, III. "The Impact of Open Textbooks on Secondary Science Learning Outcomes." *Educational Researcher*, Vol 43, Issue 7, pp. 341 – 351.