OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

TALKING POINTS

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching and learning materials that exist in the public domain or have been released under an open license. This means that the resources can be used free of charge and distributed widely. OER can be produced in any medium: paper-based text, video, audio, or computer-based multimedia.

APPEAL OF OER

COST: By sharing and adapting educational materials, content acquisition costs can be cut dramatically, allowing schools to make better use of available resources.

RESOURCES TO ADDRESS NEW STANDARDS: With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), conditions are ripe to explore the use of OER. Districts are looking for resources that align with the educational shifts present in the new standards and content creators are now able to create materials for use across dozens of states and by millions of students.

RAPIDLY UPDATE CONTENT: OER quality improves over time by enabling continuous adaptation and updating of learning resources. This improvement cycle contrasts with traditional materials that typically have to be used by students until a new purchasing cycle.

ADAPTABLE FOR PERSONALIZED LEARNING: OER create powerful opportunities by enabling educators to use, develop, and share quality OER to meet their students' unique requirements and needs.

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY: 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.

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT OER

QUALITY: Given the variability of free resources available on the internet, there is often a perception of inferior quality. Review processes for OER that measure alignment with state educational standards must be implemented in the same manner as with other instructional material.

As a part of their legislative mandate, Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction facilitated an OER review process in 2013 that serves as a resource and model for school districts considering the use and/or adoption of OER. The initial review, examined OER in select mathematics and English language arts courses. The goals of the review were:

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 the impact of OER on student learning.

A recent study from Utah examining standardized test scores of students using open science textbooks found no apparent differences in the results of students who used open textbooks compared with previous years when the same teachers' students used traditional textbooks.[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. On October 2, 2012, in remarks to the National Press Club, Education Secretary Arne Duncan called for the nation to move as fast as possible away from printed textbooks and toward digital ones.

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 the Common Core State Standards. 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. **OER Awareness and Capacity Building:** Increase district awareness of openly licensed instructional materials and provide resources to effectively locate, evaluate, and implement OER.
2. **OER Review:** Develop a dynamic and sustainable review process to evaluate alignments to the Common Core State Standards and act as a model for districts considering OER.
3. **OER Library Creation:** Create a library of reviewed openly licensed texts and units as well as links to other open education courseware available to school districts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

OER PROJECT
digitallearning.k12.wa.us/oer

OER REVIEW RESULTS
digitallearning.k12.wa.us/oer/library

WA K-12 OER BILL SSHB 2337
http://1.usa.gov/YkKm0p

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS – WASHINGTON
www.k12.wa.us/corestandards

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS - WASHINGTON
www.k12.wa.us/Science/NGSS.aspx

OER PROGRAM MANAGER
Barbara Soots
barbara.soots@k12.wa.us

[1]Wiley, David, John Levi Hilton III, Shelley Ellington, & Tiffany Hall. "A preliminary examination of the cost savings and learning impacts of using open textbooks in middle and high school science classes." *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* [Online], 13.3 (2012): 262-276.