

A brief and open letter about OER to my friends in K-12 Education

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Dear Colleagues,

If I were to ask each of you to consider which qualities or competencies make a person an excellent educator, I imagine there would be a few salient replies, and I am confident that among the most repeated responses would be a person's ability to understand, connect with, and engage an audience of learners. It is an ability that most teachers strive to develop because we have seen the positive impact on learning outcomes. As an educator speaking to educators, I am here to offer a viable means of amplifying these positive effects: integrating Open Educational Resources (OER) into teaching practices empowers us in our efforts to connect with and engage learners.

The affordances of OER give us the ability to leverage our understanding of specific learning audiences in increasingly dynamic ways. Allow me to illustrate this with a simple example. Sam and Cindy both teach World History in a public high school in the Southwestern United States. Both are excellent teachers who invest time and energy towards knowing their students' interests, personalities and cultural backgrounds. Sam teaches the course using the traditional textbook that has been used at the school for the past five years. He finds some of it to be out of date, or inaccessible

to his students, but he makes it work. Cindy teaches the same class using various resources from the OER Commons' [World History Textbooks Collection](#). These resources are openly licensed, so Cindy can revise and remix them. She compiles resources from several different OER texts, picking the ones that she knows will be the most relevant, engaging and accessible for her learning audience. If she finds that a key perspective is missing, she adds it to the resource before distributing it. Although Sam and Cindy are both excellent educators who work hard to meet the needs of their classes, Cindy's ability to do this is amplified by the affordances of OER.

Integrating OER into instruction will not make us better educators. OER are simply tools. What it can do is aid excellent educators in engaging learners by offering them more freedom to design instruction with specific learner audiences in mind.

Sincerely,



Christan Hatch-Garcia



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