Open Education Resources Planning
Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2017

Attendees
- Michael Brown — Housatonic Community College
- Joe Campbell — Connecticut Technical High School System
- Nick Caruso — Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
- Doug Casey — Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology
- Kevin Corcoran — Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium
- Ken Wiggin — Connecticut State Library

Agenda

- Introductions

- Existing Initiatives and Resources

- Opportunities – Activities – Initiatives

- Next Steps

Meeting Notes
The points below represent an assimilation of ideas rather than a verbatim or chronological record of points shared.

The group convened and shared an overview of initiatives underway through their institutions and in partnership with others. These efforts include the following:

- Michael Brown: Housatonic Community College is rolling out an initiative that supports professors' use of open education resource (OER) through grant funds from Achieving the Dream (see www.achievingthedream.org), with a host of benefits including cost savings to students. Housatonic also hosted staff of 17 institutions in the Board of Regents in an OER awareness workshop that featured training on a no-cost homework replacement called MyOpenMath, provided by Lumen Learning.
- Joe Campbell: Joe shared his use of OER as part of a mastery-based learning initiative at the Connecticut Technical High Schools. As students move on different timelines to reach and demonstrate mastery of academic subjects and skills, OER has become key in supporting individualized learning at scale. Joe has

championed and supported the use of Amazon's Inspire platform to support OER creation, searching, and curation.

- Doug Casey: Through the Commission, Doug advocated for adoption of the U.S. Department of Education's GoOpen framework, which includes adopting OER as part of the Commission's state technology plan, choosing a state OER platform, and participating in communities of practice around OER, among other activities. Note that as of this writing (March 8), the Commission has endorsed a motion to adopt this framework, making Connecticut a GoOpen state.
- Kevin Corcoran: The State's Open Textbook Task Force, which Kevin and Martha Bedard co-chaired, completed its work and released in January a report with findings from a statewide OER survey among higher education faculty, summary of Task Force activities, landscape of OER initiatives among institutions of higher education in our state, barriers to adoption, and recommended next steps. Kevin also mentioned House Bill 7235, which calls for the creation under the Office of Higher Education of a Connecticut Open Educational Resource Coordinating Council to identify high-impact courses to leverage OER, seek grants, vet OER materials, and establish a public OER repository.
- Ken Wiggin: In addition to higher education and K – 12 uses of OER, Ken highlighted work that the Connecticut State Library has completed in providing an eBook library, on a platform developed in partnership with the New York City Library.

The group looked at the landscape of current activity nationally, regionally, and statewide around OER development and promotion, discussed challenges to adoption, and explored action steps as a group.

Landscape

The New England Open Education Resources Collaborative (higher education) summit will take place June 13 – 14 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Andrew Marcinek, Chief Information Officer at Worcester Academy and former U.S. DoE lead for OER, and Richard Culatta, Chief Innovation Officer of Rhode Island's Office of Innovation and former Director of the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. DoE, are co-leading the initiative. There are no published details yet on this event, though leaders of the GoOpen summit in Cambridge last September (notes from that event here) link to a Collaborative signup form here.

Leaders in OER adoption and innovation on a national level include the State University of New York (SUNY) system, the Michigan university system, and Tidewater Community College in Virginia.

In addition to the adoption efforts detailed in the Open Textbook Task Force report, Doug shared that a number of districts have already adopted OER practices, including Glastonbury's curriculum-development efforts on the Apple iBooks platform. Several districts have contacted the Commission to inquire about OER resources and initiatives

and have expressed interest in becoming GoOpen districts. Ken underscored that university, K – 12, and local libraries have served as champions and key subject-matter experts in to educators and students alike in OER use and publication.

While the discussion focused on K – 12 and higher education, Kevin mentioned SkillsCommons.org as a deep resource for open educational materials to support workforce training. There may be an opportunity for our work to tie into that of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

Challenges

The meeting attendees touched upon some of the common challenges in adopting OER. The list below is partial, and a more exhaustive overview appears in the Open Textbook Task Force report.

- Competition: College bookstores profit from the sale of commercial textbooks and have shown resistance to OER. However, students still need print materials, whether commercially or openly licensed, which has allowed campus bookstores to remain relevant and generating revenue by providing such print services.
- Initiative Fatigue: Many K – 12 teachers and higher education professors feel overwhelmed with the adoption of OER materials and practices. Initial shifts away from commercial publications takes training, support, and time to accomplish. Adoption remains a challenge when educators see OER as a fad or another burden to carry in addition to teaching, assessing, and scholarly publishing.
- Culture and Leadership: Schools and colleges need to embrace OER at least in pockets (e.g., funded pilots), and preferably from the highest levels of administration, or use will remain voluntary and marginal at best.

Activities and Opportunities

As the group explored common initiatives and next steps, a number of priorities became apparent:

- Measurement: Nick underscored the importance of providing baseline measurements of OER awareness and use. This data exists already for higher education (Open Textbook Task Force survey) but not at the K – 12 level.
- Priority: For educators and institutions, credit recovery and other "high-impact" classes remain the highest priority for the use and development of OER materials. There remains huge duplication of efforts in K – 12 and higher education in purchasing and developing texts and curriculum materials for near-universal courses such as Algebra I.
- Professional Development: The GoOpen community will offer a wide network of resources to support educators learning about OER. More pilots and incentives, especially in higher education, should help build the local and regional network

of teachers and professors who can support each other in the adoption of OER materials and practices.

- Awareness: At a higher level, many administrators and educators simply do not understand the definitions, benefits, and resources behind OER. Leveraging professional learning communities, leadership networks, and other channels to build awareness remains key to long-term adoption and success.
- Talent Development: This group should work with higher education and other certification bodies to include OER training, so that the emerging classes of teachers, professors, and administrators have a fluency in and comfort using open learning resources.
- Leverage Stakeholders: Key champions of OER should be those groups that advocate for high-quality teaching and learning, including the Board of Regents, CABE, CAPSS, regional K – 12 curriculum councils, and libraries. Enlisting these groups will provide key support for any OER awareness, training, and support initiative.
- Technology Infrastructure: Nick noted that conversations have taken place for years about OER, but the widespread availability of technology in the form of broadband in and out of school and affordable devices (computers and mobile), as well as free OER repositories, has made adoption feasible.
- Messaging: Adoption of OER needs to tie to current educational initiatives that have high visibility, adoption, and relevance, such as personalized and mastery-based learning. Other key messages to convey include the following:
  o OER brings cost savings to school districts and students
  o Open texts can be more current than commercial materials published years ago
  o OER is a practice versus a specific platform or technology
  o Choosing open resources is like choosing a textbook, a skill that teachers and professors can learn
  o Just as in healthcare we want the lower-cost, "generic" option with equal quality, so we can benefit from OER in the educational setting

Next Steps

- CEN Conference Session: Doug offered to host a panel discussion at the May 12 CEN conference to raise awareness of OER efforts across K – 12, libraries, and higher education. The meeting attendees agreed this was a good idea and looked forward to participating.
- GoOpen: This framework and community should provide a venue to share OER resources and best practices with districts, universities, and libraries statewide. More action items and opportunities should become apparent as we become state members and become engaged in the community of practice. With the Commission's recent endorsement of GoOpen, Doug will communicate opportunities through the broader educational community to encourage district-level adoption.
- Common Platform: Through the GoOpen initiative, we will adopt a statewide OER portal. The short list of providers includes Amazon, EdModo, Symbaloo,

Follett, Microsoft, and OER Commons. Doug will pull together a review committee to develop requirements, review platforms, and endorse one for the state. (Doing so does not prevent districts from using a different Learning Registry – enabled platform from the above list.)

- Data Gathering: We should look to develop a statewide instrument to gauge OER adoption among K – 12 school districts. Is there a need to do this among higher education, given that we have the Task Force survey? What about libraries?
- Information Sharing: The group agreed to continue work on building into the OER reference document at https://goo.gl/cKapnn.