Ty Ankrom's **Here's What I Think ...**

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education started #GoOpen to promote the use of openly licensed education materials.

Open education resources (OER) are an up-and-coming avenue for secondary educators to access free materials.

Through the DOE's effort, a regulation was proposed that would require all copyrightable intellectual property created with Department grant funds to have an open license.

At the time of the announcement, then-Education Secretary Arne Duncan said, "In order to ensure that all students – no matter their ZIP code – have access to high-quality learning resources, we are encouraging districts and states to move away from traditional textbooks and toward freely accessible, openly licensed materials."

ASCD, an educational global community, is supporting the #GoOpen effort and says on its Web site (www.ascd.org) that OER provides the following benefits:

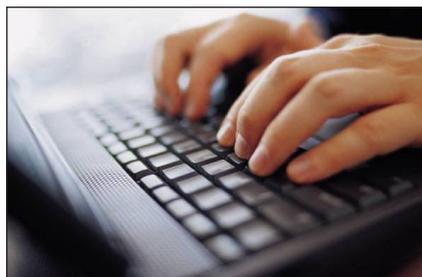- Empowering teachers as creative professionals by giving them the ability to adapt and customize learning materials to meet the needs of their students without breaking copyright laws.
- Increasing equity by giving all students access to high quality learning materials that have the most up-to-date and relevant content because OER can be freely distributed to anyone.
- Keeping content relevant and high quality that may be lacking in outdated textbooks, forcing districts to reinvest significant portions of their budgets to replace them.

While the effort has been around for more than a year, many educators aren't aware of how open education resources work.

In an *Education Week* article, author Sarah D. Sparks points out that not everything identified as open educational resources truly are.

"For example, a video that has a creative commons license might not necessarily be open; the agreement may instead allow it to be freely used but not altered

or repurposed, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's 2015 study of OER. Other materials allow sharing and modifications but only within a paid subscription service. That would also not be considered OER," she writes.

The Department of Education has created a page (https://tech.ed.gov/open/) that provides information and links, as well as a #GoOpen district launch packet that can be downloaded.

Other sites to visit are
- www.oercommons.org
- www.hewlett.org/strategy/open-educational-resources/
- www.edutopia.org/open-educational-resources-guide

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