



Key Learnings from Fairfield-Suisun's OER Adoption

- 1. Strong district leadership:** Having supportive district leadership from the outset is key. District leaders need to signal their willingness to explore non-traditional forms of instructional materials that meet students' and teachers' needs.
- 2. Teachers in the lead:** Fairfield-Suisun emphasized the importance of involving teachers early and often during the piloting and adoption process. As the content experts and practitioners who will be delivering the materials, their experience and perspectives are a crucial part of the adoption process.
- 3. Quality over cost savings:** That OER is free doesn't always translate into a big cost savings. "While it's true that OER is free," says Ms. Roush, "its free like a puppy." Some districts will want to provide their students with printed copies of the curriculum which they can purchase from the distributor or print themselves.

While one-to-one laptop districts like Fairfield-Suisun can digitally meet the Williams Act textbook requirements, some will prefer to provide printed versions in order to ensure that all students have access to materials at home. Moreover, there are often the costs of purchasing "consumable" materials that are needed to fully implement OER. At the end of the day, districts may discover that adopting OER that's high quality is more important than any marginal cost savings.

- 4. OER means flexibility to customize:** OER advocates are fond of calling attention to one of its key attributes, the ability to "remix" the materials, but that wasn't the strongest selling point for Fairfield-Suisun. "There was some concern by our community that we were going to edit and change it in the middle of the year," recalls Ms. Roush. "Our governing board wanted to know that the quality and consistency wasn't going to be compromised."
- 5. No contract means not getting locked in:** Not having to sign a contract meant that Fairfield-Suisun has a lot more flexibility with its program adoption. Districts typically sign a multi-year contract with publishers that locks them into using a textbook and the professional development that comes with it. With the adoption of OER, Fairfield-Suisun now has the flexibility to request additional consumables, teachers' additions, or printed materials only when, and if, they needed them. "From the standpoint of the district this is ideal. If our teachers still like it after five years, we can just keep going. We don't need to re-up with the publisher," says Jenn Roush.