



# Sharing Open Educational Resources with Families

*"The Maine Department of Education is pleased to support the identification of on-line educational resources and professional development to assist teachers in developing the skills and knowledge to more fully utilize rich technological resources to enhance teaching and learning."*

In 2010, Syntiro received grants from the Maine Department of Education to identify and facilitate the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in four subject areas: Mathematics, World Languages, Career Education and Development, and Health Education and Physical Education. In total the MDOE funded nine subject area OER grants through Title IID Enhancing Education through Technology - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Competitive Grant monies. These monies also funded OER grants in the following subject areas: Science, English Language Arts, Career and Technical Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and Social Studies. Expert teacher teams in each subject area have been reviewing OER and aligning them with Maine learning standards to support teaching and learning in Maine classrooms.

In addition to OER for teachers and students, teams have been identifying resources to support families as well. These resources are available to families to support them in partnering with schools to improve academic achievement.


Below is a brief description of OER and why they are important, some websites that can provide supports to families, and ways that you can help get the word out to families in your communities about these resources.

## What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?

Open Educational Resources (OER) are online resources that are open and free for teachers and families to use to help students/children achieve and learn. OER can provide families with activities and ideas to help their children learn or reinforce at home the concepts they are learning in school. There are lots of websites to help families to support the emotion, physical, and academic growth of their child.

## Why are OER Important?

OER come in a variety of formats. Some may come in game form to help a child better understand a concept or it may be a video, lesson plan or idea for a family activity. These resources can help families join in creative learning activities with their child, and make learning a family affair!



There are also resources available to better inform families about such challenges as cyber-bullying, internet safety, and so forth.

## What are some Sites that Provide Support and Resources for Families?

Some of the exciting and helpful websites we have identified that can support families include:

### **Ed.gov: Parents**

<http://www2.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml>

This site has many resources for families to support their children's education.

### **Family Education**

<http://www.familyeducation.com/home/>

Helps parents get involved in education.

### **Maine Parent Federation**

<http://www.mpf.org>

The Maine Parent Federation, Inc. is a statewide private non-profit organization that provides information, advocacy, education, and training to parents and professionals to benefit all children. They promote individual aspirations and community inclusion for people with disabilities. In existence since 1984, MPF is physically located in Farmingdale, Maine, but assistance is available on a statewide basis.

### **National PTA**

<http://www.pta.org/>

Online home of the national PTA.

### **Thinkfinity: Parents & Kids**

<http://www.thinkfinity.org/parents-and-kids>

This site is full of fun educational activities for families to do together!

## What Are Effective Ways We Can Share Information about OER with Families?

*The Maine Science OER Team Identified Ways to Engage and Inform Parents about OER*

Here are some great ideas for sharing information about the Maine Science OER project with the parents in your community:

- ① School or Classroom Newsletter or Website: Include a description of OERs and provide some of the talking points listed below.

- ⦿ At an Open House: Offer a presentation or set up a computer station in your classroom.
- ⦿ Host a Family Science and Technology Event and include a center or station where students and parents access and use OERs
- ⦿ Parent/Teacher Conferences: Provide a handout about OERs (including some of the talking points listed below plus a link to the OER Directory).
- ⦿ Assign a Take-Home Activity for students in which they work with their parents to find and use an OER.
- ⦿ Step-Up Events: When students from a lower-grade level visit your classroom or school for orientation, provide a station where they can access and use OERs.
- ⦿ Use the media-- Offer an overview of OERs during a Local Access Cable TV Program on educational topics. Consider showing a video clip of students engaged in using OERs.

#### **Talking Points for Parents:**

- ⦿ OER are free online resources that are aligned to particular topics being studied in your child's science classroom in Maine.
- ⦿ OER also may support your child's interest areas in science beyond what is currently being studied.
- ⦿ Many of these resources are interactive so they engage your child and advance learning in ways that only technology can.
- ⦿ Because they are posted online and many of them are updated, some may be more current than some textbooks.
- ⦿ To support your child in using these resources at home, it's helpful if you try out your own search for a topic of interest first in order to become familiar with the search engine and the resources that are available. Talk with your child about how he or she can use this collection to find resources that are helpful or interesting to him or her.

## **Where Can We Find More Information?**

For more information please visit either of these websites!

#### **Maine Science Open Educational Resources at:**

<https://sites.google.com/a/maine.edu/maine-science-open-educational-resources/home>

#### **Syntiro at:**

<http://www.syntiro.org/oer>