


# Opening Doors to Open Digital Practice for Educators: The Open Page Project

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## Abstract

This paper outlines the design and purpose of an open educational resource (OER) project focused on developing digital literacies and open educational practice (OEP) within a Canadian Faculty of Education. Called The Open Page, the project features a Tool Parade of videos and podcasts created with and by Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students). Designed to enable students to build critical and participatory digital literacies with common classroom tools, and to encourage the development of OEP, the project assesses classroom uses of specific educational technology platforms. It also engaged student creators in analysis of various platforms' implications for student data and for differentiated learning. Featured on the University of Windsor Faculty of Education's website, The Open Page and its Tool Parade of OER offer professional development resources for faculty and practicing teachers and contributes to a common conversation about digital learning between educators at all levels. This paper will overview The Open Page and its creation, and the ways in which it represents an effort to focus pre-service teachers on the participatory and production capacities of the web for digital learning.

**Keywords:** open, OER, open educational practice, tool parade, educational technology



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## **Introduction**

In this era of knowledge abundance (Eye, 1974; Weller, 2011), the proliferation of edtech tools and classroom technologies seems endless and often overwhelming. Teachers at all levels, whether faculty, K-12, or pre-service, need clear, critical, concise information about the platforms available. However, educators' capacity to make meaningful and informed choices about digital tools is unevenly distributed. Educators may not have in-depth experience with assessing the pedagogical implications of a particular tool, nor with the ethical issues platforms raise for student data privacy. Neither do many educators have the time to engage in building their own participatory digital literacies (Borthwick & Hansen, 2017; Foulger et al., 2019).

This paper outlines an Open Educational Resource (OER) and Open Educational Practice (OEP) project aimed at encouraging Education faculty to build digital and data literacies in concert with their pre-service teacher students, as well as with practicing teachers in local school boards. The project, called The Open Page, is designed to address the challenges of abundance and informed choice by developing a Tool Parade of brief videos, podcasts, and pedagogical resources outlining the pros, cons, and classroom applications for a variety of edtech platforms. Together, these OER create an engaging, critically focused repository for teacher-to-teacher tool assessments.

Created through internal grants and extensive support from the Office of Open Learning, with a Principal Investigator from the Faculty of Education and a team of four pre-service Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students, the OER from The Open Page project are being shared in faculty meetings and on campus. They are also being showcased on social media, as well as in local PA Day sessions for teachers, and at provincial and national conference presentations led by the PI, student researchers, and the Office of Open Learning.

The Open Page site features the full Tool Parade: 13 short, captioned videos highlighting digital classroom technologies, and another 11 podcasts. Additionally, it features pedagogical resources and a "Going Online" guide for educators. Each of the videos and podcasts in the Tool Parade overviews a different edtech platform, through three critical lenses: classroom uses, data implications, and differentiated learning. The Tool Parade and The Open Page site together form the backbone of a blended Faculty of Education Service Learning course, taught by the project's Principal Investigator. First-year B.Ed. students in the Service Learning classes use the videos as a textbook to learn about tools and web communications, then contribute to The Open Page with researched podcasts and lesson resources of their own creation, and showcase the site to local schools and communities in professional learning sessions.

The project is not solely focused on outputs, however, but also on building capacity for change through its process. The Open Page aims to create a channel by which faculty and students can engage together in open digital practice and learning. Academia is a reputational economy (Willinsky, 2010). Busy faculty are more likely to take time to engage in building and reflecting on their practice if there is reputational value and visibility involved. The Faculty of Education in which this project is based recently dissolved its Learning Technologies Committee, as hardware is no longer their primary digital need: instead, there is interest in showcasing and sharing faculty practice with educational technologies so that we can learn from each other. This experiential collaboration therefore fills an emergent need in an innovative and sustainable way.

In order to build meaningful faculty-student partnerships at the core of the project, some of the Tool Parade videos feature faculty, while the others feature the four B.Ed. students who comprise the core Research Team for the project. All videos—student and faculty—were researched in collaboration with the Student Research Team, and all contribute to the same “teacher-to-teacher overview,” as do the podcasts featuring the Service Learning course students. The Service Learning scripts and research have also been supported by the B.Ed. Student Research Team and by the Principal Investigator.

The presentation will introduce readers to The Open Page and resources, but also to OEPs as a way of seeding a broad community of practice around digital literacy and differentiated learning. The project creates a common conversation between existing classroom teachers, preservice teachers, and Education faculty, reflecting the shared learning curve that knowledge abundance represents for all educators at this juncture.

The 2007 OLCOS report titled *Open Educational Practices and Resources* (Geser, 2007) described OEPs as “practices that involve students in active, constructive engagement with content, tools and services in the learning process, and promote learners’ self-management, creativity and working in teams” (p. 37). Cronin and Maclaren (2018) noted that

expansive conceptualisations of OEP acknowledge the complex, actual and situated practices of teaching and learning – where context influences the choice and use of OEPs, where OEPs may emerge before the use of OERs, and where critical approaches to open education may be realised. (p. 137).

In The Open Page project’s design, the OER videos serve as an emergent textbook for the Service Learning course in which the podcasts are created by student teams and then featured *with* the videos. The project is an active, immersive capacity-building experience that scaffolds project management competencies and data literacies, as well as hands-on practice with technical and creative production and open licencing.

The project is also hands-on open practice in contribution, and in the ongoing co-creation of the open web as a participatory space. The core of the architecture of the internet is the idea of the read/write web, a knowledge space that people can contribute to as well as consume. Behind this project is the premise that this “produsage” (Bruns, 2007) cycle of creation and consumption is important in a time of knowledge abundance. Educators’ contribution practices demand active scaffolding and intensive digital and data literacy development, particularly on a weaponized web. Thus, contributors to The Open Page—faculty and students alike—must scan and summarize significant research while designing for the attention economy of knowledge abundance. Student contributors, in particular, also build digital networks in the open and with local schools and boards, developing OEPs and engaging collaboratively in their field, as professionals.

The process of engagement also focuses on critical pedagogical analysis of tools and their teaching application, with particular focus on differentiated learning and the ethics of data privacy. This kind of intensive, critical, situated examination for authentic open audience models and scaffolds OEPs for the student Research Team, the faculty engaged in video production, and the Service Learning students.

Finally, the ongoing collaborative development and showcasing of the site promotes awareness of OERs and OEPs in practice, not just for faculty and students involved but amongst the K-12 educators exposed to the project through PD sessions or social media and news, and among parents and families who eventually attend the engagement sessions being designed by the Service Learning classes. While the use of OERs and OEPs are becoming more widespread in higher education, there is minimal existing research on these same practices in the K-12 sector, so this aspect of the project leaves significant room for future research.

Ultimately, The Open Page project aims to open doors for developing OER and OEP within educator communities, at all levels. The presentation will overview The Open Page as an inclusive, cross-sector initiative focused on building educators' capacity to engage meaningfully with knowledge abundance in K-12 and university communities.

### Author's Contributions

Conceptualization – BS, Writing – BS & NB.

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### Ethics Statement

Research Ethics Board review was not applicable to this project.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors do not declare any conflict of interest.

### Data Availability Statement

There is no data set for this project: it was experimental and production-focused, and results of its investigations are represented in the Tool Parade OER.

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