

How Remixing OERs Takes Student Engagement to a New Level

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are just that: openly available digital resources for teaching and learning that educators may use, modify, build upon and share with others. OERs are a little different from other free resources in that typical free resources may still carry restrictive licensing requirements with them, whereas OERs generally do not. [Creative Commons](#) provides a great example of what this means, as does [Open Educational Resources](#).

Using OERs traditionally, to save time or increase the quality of instructional materials, is a good start but that model represents a missed opportunity. You can completely transform learning for your students, from passive to active learning. One way this can happen is by using a popular technique called “remixing.”

Is Remixing the Key to Effectively Using OERs?

Most of us are familiar with [remixing](#), since it applies to the cutting and splicing of audio to produce a new composition. The concept of remixing, however, can apply to any cultural medium. With the advent of the digital age, it has become easier than ever to create remixes of various media. In fact, today’s remixes go well beyond the resident DJ at the club to music enthusiasts of all stripes uploading [their creations](#) to SoundCloud or using services such as [indiloop](#). People remix [viral videos](#) and pay homage to their favorite [movies](#). Remix in the digital age has even brought about new forms of writing.

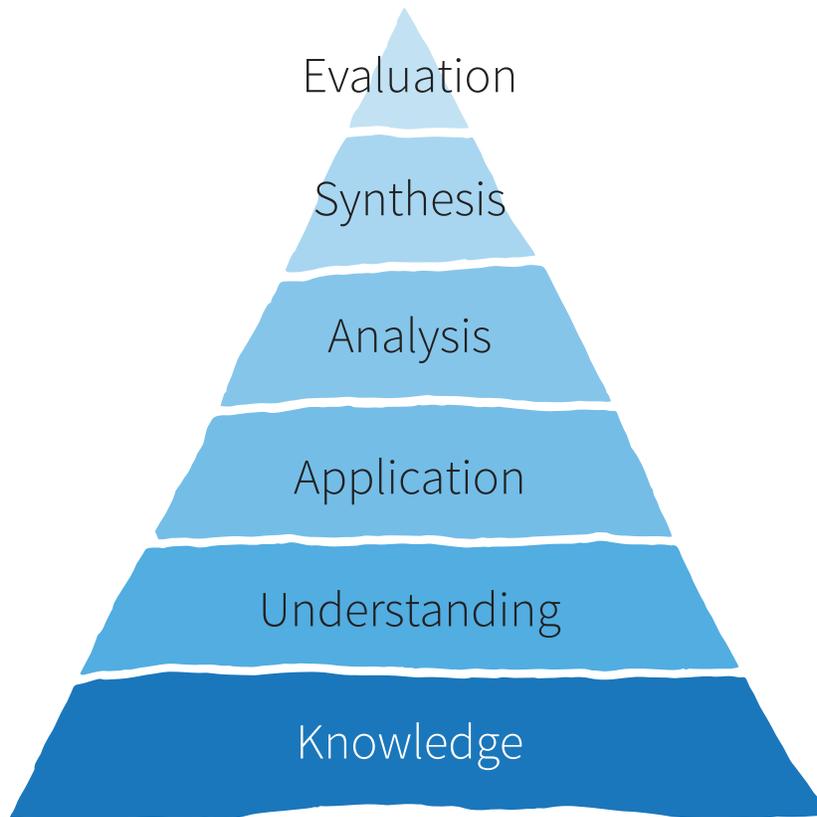
Although remix is not an immediate “plug and play” tool for education, the conceptual underpinnings represent a potential new frontier in 21st-century learning.

The Age of Remix: How Students Can Become Active Learners

Many of the benefits of OERs are obvious. At little to no cost, OERs are available anywhere, anytime, to anyone in the world. They have the power to immediately break down cultural barriers and strike a blow against the tyranny of textbooks. As an educator, you probably know the pain of trying to find or create all your own instructional resources yourself. OERs have the potential to greatly reduce or even eliminate time spent doing this.

Beyond serving as a resource bank, there lies a huge payoff for student learning that you might not even be thinking about. OERs represent the potential for true 21st-century learning. Students not only interact with base content in new ways, but by remixing that content they are actively creating new two-way forms of communication and information flow.

[Fran Kompar summed it up succinctly](#): OERs allow educators and students to benefit from four Rs and four Cs. You can re-use, re-mix, re-imagine, and re-distribute content, while engaging in critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Through OERs and remixing, it is possible to reach the highest level of [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) and create anew with every remixed lesson.



A Visual Representation of Bloom's Taxonomy

Realizing the Full Benefits of OERs

The bottom line regarding OERs? The following benefits apply for you and your classroom:

- Use them to maintain an arsenal of materials without breaking the bank—for you or your district.
- Share and discuss your own materials with a network of like-minded, committed educators.
- Use ready-made digital materials immediately in your classroom. The first step toward [“flipping” your classroom](#) is often to start by using videos and other materials created by others and available via OER sites.
- Break out of drill-and-kill mode. From sprucing up direct instruction with interesting visuals to turning the learning over to your students while you facilitate, OERs can help your classroom engagement hit new highs.

How Remixing a Lesson with OERs Might Work

When remixing a lesson, people often immediately think of [creative writing](#), such as fan fiction, but the digital tools that used to be available only on high-end design systems are available for everyone these days to the benefit of you and your students.

For example, consider what a traditional lesson might look like when teaching the Harlem Renaissance. First, let's keep the objective simple.

Objective: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to describe, using specific examples, how the Harlem Renaissance contributed to social change.

In a traditional lesson, the “hook” or introduction might consist of examining a piece of [artwork](#) from the era or listening to a jazz piece featuring [Cab Calloway](#), followed by direct instruction, discussion and note taking about how the artists, writers, and musicians of the Harlem Renaissance reflected and contributed to social change in America. At its worst, this might even take the form of “death by PowerPoint” as we manage to suck the life right out of one of the most incredible outbursts of creativity in the nation’s history!

In a remixed format, however, students would be empowered to tell the story. Following the hook, you could provide guidelines for the students to follow, wherein they would be challenged to create a short remix explaining how the Harlem Renaissance contributed to social change.

- One student, or a pair/group, might decide to juxtapose OER-provided images of slavery with the liberating images of the Harlem Renaissance in a slideshow format.
- Another might remix “Call & Response” spiritual music with popular jazz.

- Still, another student or pair/group might incorporate all these elements.

Those are just a few examples. Imagine your students reading the poetry of Langston Hughes as a voiceover for a slideshow of their own creation, or using the heartrending [words of W.E.B. DuBois](#) as a counterpoint to the growing acceptance of relationships of mixed ethnicity. Students could then do a “gallery walk” style activity and be assessed via a rubric as to the clarity and creativity of their work as they appreciate and learn from the work of their classmates. Today’s digital tools can make your lessons clear and relevant for this generation of learners.

Are You Ready to Start Remixing?

OERs offer an incredible, cost-effective way to enhance the learning experience. Going further than their traditional use via remixing provides the potential to transform how students gain knowledge. While the work required to get students using multimedia and approaching assignments or group work differently may seem daunting at first, the payoff is worth it. But if you want your students to go above and beyond, you have to first do so yourself.

Watch this short video walkthrough to see an LMS designed to help you measure and magnify the impact of your initiatives.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)