

# ISKME's Journey to Transform Teaching and Learning: A Quest for Participatory, Equitable, and Open Education

A RETROSPECTIVE OF ISKME'S FIRST TWO DECADES 2002-2022

By Thad R. Nodine, Ph.D.



## Dear ISKME family and friends,

Looking back on our first two decades, I know at least one thing for certain: ISKME's successes in transforming teaching and learning were achieved only because a whole community of staff, board members, funders, and supporters were willing to believe in what was possible—and roll up their sleeves and help make it happen.

It hasn't always been easy to push the education system beyond its comfort zone, both in the United States and around the world, but together we've kept true to our vision for an education system that is participatory, equitable, and open. We've worked from the bottom up, building a grassroots movement to make our vision a reality. We've worked from the top down, supporting federal and state policy for open education. As a collaborative team, we modeled the changes we sought, and have been at the forefront of an international community of educators and leaders to advocate for open education and to equitably improve teaching and learning for all. Who knew we could actually change the world? We did, and we've left our mark on the education landscape.

There are so many individuals, past and present, who have played a crucial role in shaping and achieving ISKME's mission over the past 20 years, and I am immensely grateful for their vision and commitment. There are those from our earliest days – Mark Milliron, Andreea Serban, Ameer Evans Godwin, Cynthia Jimes, Jonah Houston, Hal Plotkin, Megan Simmons, Sylvia Warren, and Shep Ranbom; the people who provided guidance and support far beyond their philanthropic roles – Marshall Smith, Cathy Casserly, Suzanne Walsh, and A. Richardson Love; the funders who stepped in at key times to expand and deepen ISKME's impact - The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Metlife Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Ford Foundation, KnowledgeWorks Foundation; and all of the past ISKME team members who have made contributions to our work.



Finally, there's the lifeblood of our work today, ISKME's present staff and Board - Ameer Evans Godwin, Anastasia Karaglani, Anoop Aryal, Chris Adcock, Ethan Senack, Joanna Schimizzi, Megan Simmons, Michelle Brennan, Mindy Boland, Peter Musser, Selena Burns, Taylor McGrath, and Alex Fielding, Andreea Serban, Jason Goecke, Jonah Houston, Mark Milliron, Martha Kanter, Nicole Melander, Ramona Thomas, Sharon Dhall, Steve Elkes, and Steve Schoettler. This letter cannot possibly acknowledge everyone by name that helped build ISKME, but know that I am forever grateful for your support.

As we look to the future, with a team and community of such talented and passionate people, I know that ISKME will continue to positively impact millions of students and educators by transforming the way we learn and teach.

Here's to the next 20 years on the forefront of catalyzing change in education,

**Lisa Petrides, Ph.D.**  
ISKME CEO and founder

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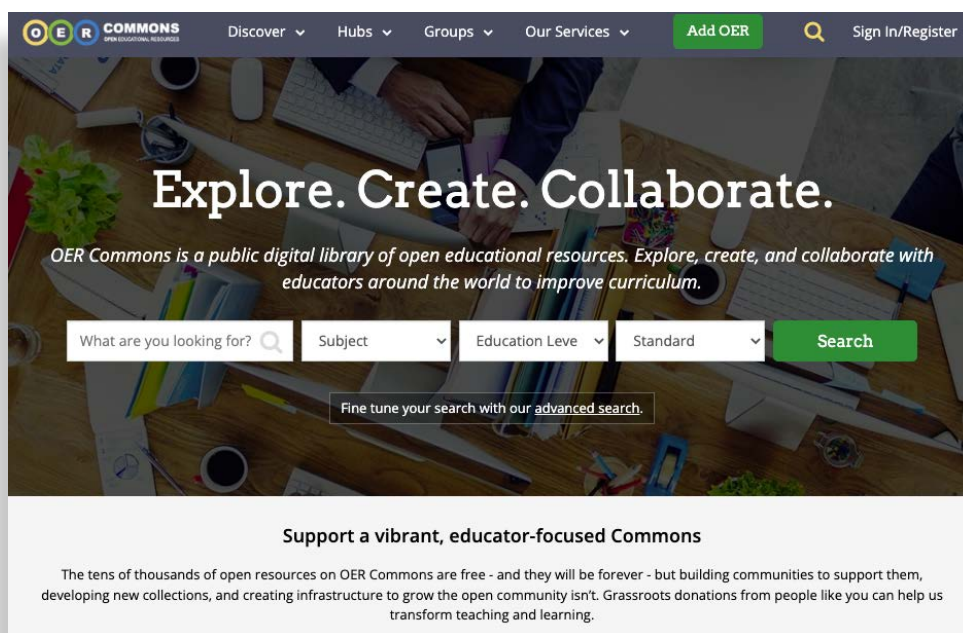
## Introduction

Imagine a nonprofit pioneer with global impact in participatory, equitable, and open education. Picture a visionary, yet hands-on NGO grounded in research and headquartered in a quaint coastal town on the edge of Silicon Valley. Envision an agile upstart that thrives as a knowledge partner and builder of learning communities across K-12 and higher education. This is ISKME, an innovative organization that also created, manages, and facilitates OER Commons, the most widely used and broadly accessible digital infrastructure for open education and the sharing of free curricular resources in the world.

ISKME's story over its first two decades heralds the staying power of a democratizing vision. It portrays people who are leveraging data and technology for the public good. It lifts up everyday heroes—instructors, librarians, researchers, and administrators—who share and crowdsource what they know to benefit students. Considering the divisions and dysfunctions in the world today, this dream-big story is for all of us to hear.

In its 20-year journey to transform education, ISKME generated groundbreaking research, built robust professional learning programs, modeled healthy collaborative partnerships, and led the development of international, federal, and state policies for open education. As part of this process, ISKME created OER Commons to facilitate access to and use of freely available, high-quality learning resources—that is, Open Educational Resources (OER)—by teachers, faculty, students, and others across the globe.

Access to free educational resources is meaningful, but to achieve deeper, lasting impacts for students, we must transform how educators engage and collaborate with each other. That's why ISKME's work is designed to understand, support, and catalyze teaching and learning communities to share and improve their practices as well as their resources. While this journey to transform teaching and learning has been met with challenges (see ISKME's Journey Map, next page), ISKME's track record reveals the power of open education to make learning more equitable and personalized, support knowledge sharing among educators, strengthen learning communities, and contribute to a more just society.



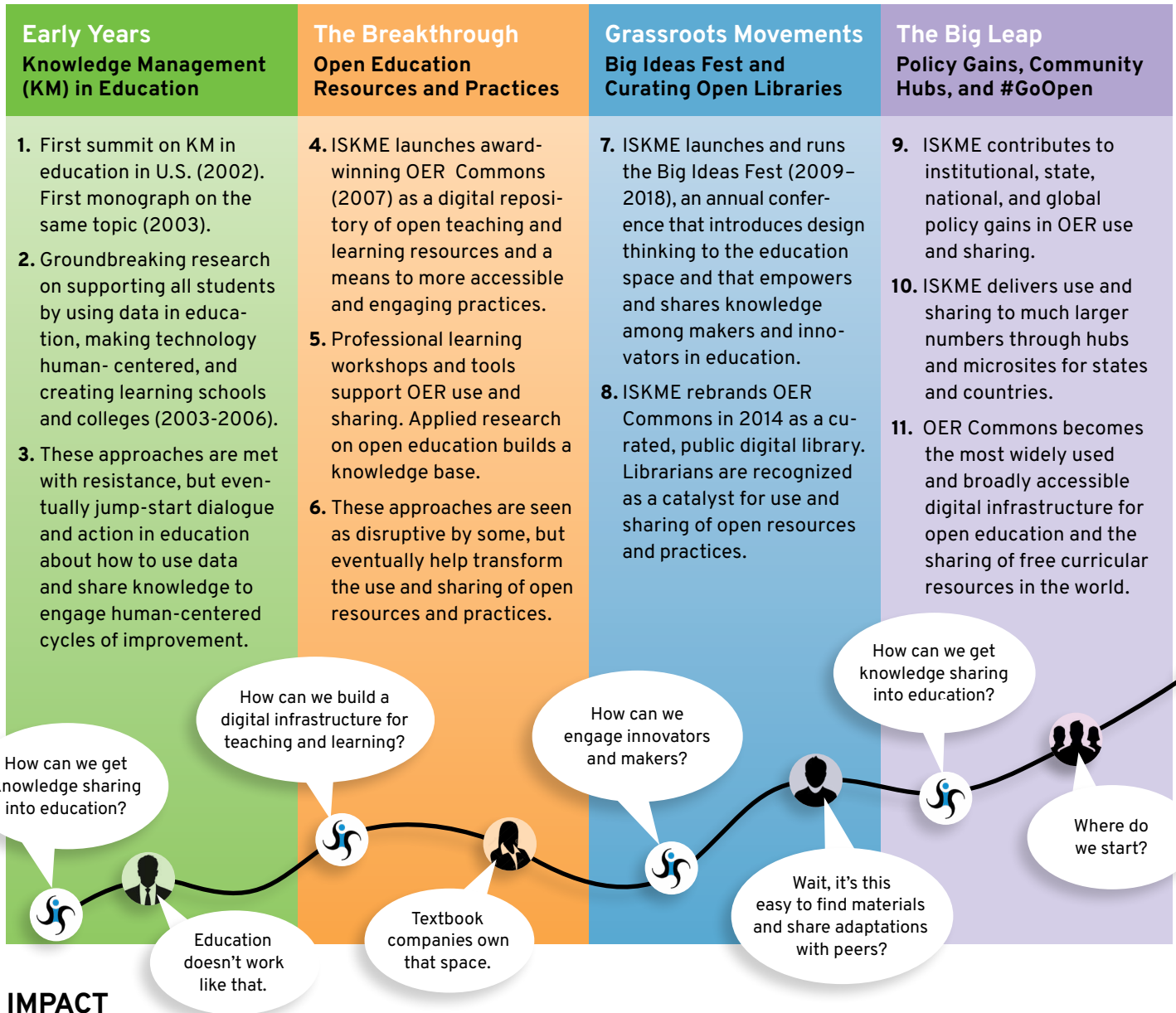
# ISKME's Journey Map: The First 20 Years



**PURPOSE:** Transform education by making learning and knowledge sharing participatory, equitable, and open.

## Vision and Values for Education pre-K to Graduate School

- Equitable and engaging learning for students
- Intuitive and enriching practices for instructors
- Supportive of learning communities
- Highest standards of quality and equity
- Supported by research and policy
- Contributing to a more just society



## IMPACT

- Providing access to and engagement around free and open education resources.
- Serving millions of students, instructors, and others around the globe.
- Contributing to the professionalism and knowledge sharing of teachers, faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Building communities of practice schoolwide, collegewide, systemwide, statewide, and globally.
- Saving students, schools, colleges, and states hundreds of millions of dollars in textbook costs.

## Early Years: Knowledge Management in Education

In 2001, Lisa Petrides, a professor at Columbia University, Teachers College, had a clear career trajectory as an academic specializing in organizational policy and leadership, but the longer she was there, the more she realized she wanted to see the impacts of her research applied in the field. Her colleagues were stunned when she told them she was leaving. “They told me I was throwing away what I had worked so hard to achieve,” Petrides recalled, “that I was making a huge mistake, that I would never work in academia again. But I knew that if I was going to create the kinds of change needed to improve education policy, leadership, and outcomes—through data-informed, knowledge-based decision making—I would need to do it outside the slow-moving confines of academia.”

“ISKME went from this kernel of an idea to truthfully international impact.

So if you think about it, 20 years from idea to global impact is a great trajectory.”

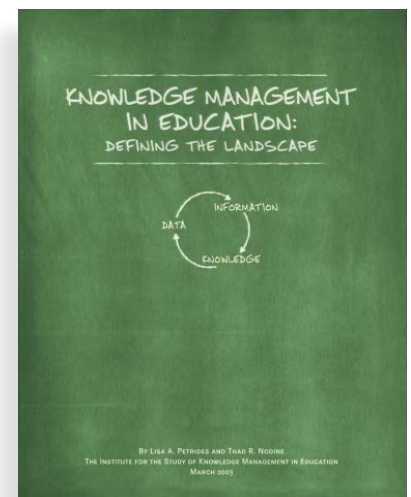
**Mark Milliron, President  
National University**

Petrides had received her Ph.D. in education policy from Stanford University, and she returned to the San Francisco Bay Area, hoping to find a more receptive environment for innovation in education. The dot.com boom had collapsed in March 2000, but the domain of data use and information sharing was reinventing itself annually, and Silicon Valley was in the thick of it. In 2001, the iPod was introduced, Wikipedia came online, and the Wayback Machine, an archive of all Internet content, was made available to the public for the first time. This was the year that Creative Commons was founded to allow copyright holders to voluntarily release a set of rights to the public and thereby permit the reuse, remixing, or sharing of their materials. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) announced in 2001 that it would make its course materials free and open to learners through its Open CourseWare.

But not all changes that year trended in the same direction. Also in 2001, Congress in response to the September 11 attacks passed the Patriot Act, which gave the government broader permission to monitor Americans via online surveillance. This brought widespread public attention to issues of data harvesting and sharing online, challenges that continue to be of concern for internet users. How technology is used really does matter.

As the world of data storage and information sharing was changing dramatically, Petrides founded ISKME (the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education) as an applied research institute. ISKME was incorporated in 2002 as a nonprofit organization, with the purpose of helping the education sector use data and information in meaningful ways to transform teaching and learning. At the time, there were significant pressures to improve accountability and outcomes in K-12 education, with similar discussions beginning in higher education as well. But very few people had framed these issues in relation to how a district, a college, or a state university system manages knowledge—and a very small number were working to empower teachers and faculty to share data and information with each other in order to improve teaching and learning.

In 2002, one of the first major actions that Petrides took, as founder and CEO of ISKME, was to convene a group of 40 leaders from K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and businesses to discuss the prospects and challenges of improving the use of data and the sharing of information in education, with the goal of helping more students and more diverse student populations reach their learning goals. This was the first summit on knowledge management in education in the United States, and in 2003 ISKME published the first

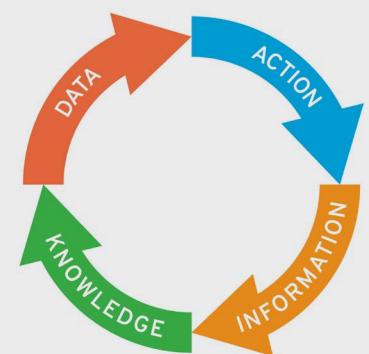


monograph on this topic, called *Knowledge Management in Education: Defining the Landscape*. According to Hal Plotkin, former senior policy advisor, Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education:

*“Dr. Petrides’ connection of knowledge management to education was such a **singular act of human genius** that it still boggles my mind 20-something years later, because she had envisioned essentially a new academic discipline that also overlapped with a related set of public policies, none of which existed at the time. And rather than be discouraged by the fact that these ideas were literally on nobody’s map, Lisa established an institute to do research in this area, and then to apply that research in the development of new services that would accelerate progress in the field. This is an act of intellectual leadership that Lisa has not received anywhere near appropriate credit for, but I think it helped light up similar intellectual light bulbs all over the country and all over the world at the time. And what a brilliant idea that is, that we should study **how we manage knowledge in education**, and that through the study of how knowledge is managed, we could accelerate progress in the creation and the sharing and the continuous improvement of that knowledge.”*

*Knowledge Management in Education* emphasized the **crucial roles that people must play** in engaging in and managing cycles of improvement, rather than expecting the purchase of new information systems or access to spreadsheets of data to be sufficient in bringing about change. ISKME later referred to these continuous cycles of improvement, in their most simple form, as a D-I-K-A model. Through this process, teachers, faculty, administrators, or others—**everyone can do this**—meet together to examine a challenge to student success or to institutional improvement. A first step is to examine student and other **data** associated with the problem. By talking about, contextualizing, and interpreting these data, people share **information** that can be used to make decisions, which draws upon and eventually creates **knowledge** beyond the data and information at hand. These decisions, in turn, lead to actions being taken to improve administrative processes, teaching practices, or the like. The final stage, which many projects or institutions fail to take, is to begin the learning cycle again, to examine data about the actions taken, to understand their outcomes and impacts.

ISKME's D-I-K-A Model for Continuous Improvement



According to Mark Milliron, president of National University and a founding board member at ISKME:

*“ISKME was **one of the first organizations asking K-12 schools, community colleges, and universities to look at their data**, right? Look at your data and stop caring just about whether or not your enrollment is up or down. Look at your data and try to understand are students progressing, are they completing, are they learning well? Where are your data, what do they tell you about different student populations, and what can you do based on these data? This was before the inception of what many people call the completion agenda.”*

Dr. Ramona Thomas, an entrepreneur, former education program officer, and current board member at ISKME, was working as a program officer for KnowledgeWorks, a philanthropic foundation in Ohio, when *Knowledge Management in Education* was published. Dr. Thomas was not familiar with ISKME, but she immediately shared the report with colleagues and referred to it frequently in her own work, because it brought together in one place many of the ideas she was working toward in education. She said recently,

*“At the time, knowledge management was still a term that was used mostly in the corporate sector. **People in education weren’t thinking about how to share information, resources, and knowledge for improvement**. This was cutting edge also for Lisa’s strategic vision about collaboration and using technology to make it easier for educators to communicate and do more advanced, better things in the classroom.”*

Right out of the gate, Petrides and ISKME team members produced a series of other groundbreaking articles, applied research reports, and books in related areas spanning K-12 and higher education: how to use technology to meet human needs in education; how to use data and information for improvement; and how to use external accountability mandates for internal improvement. Here are just a few:

- *Knowledge Management for School Leaders: An Ecological Framework for Thinking Schools* (2002)
- *Organizational Learning and the Case for Knowledge-Based Systems* (2002)
- *What Schools Can Teach the Corporate World* (2003)
- *Seeking, Managing and Disseminating Knowledge in Education Philanthropy* (2003)
- *The Democratization of Data in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Challenges that Institutions Face as They Seek to Improve Student Success* (2004)
- *Turning Knowledge Into Action: What's Data Got to Do With It?* (2004)
- *Anatomy of School System Improvement: Performance-Driven Practices in Urban School Districts* (2005)

ISKME also led and participated in projects with instructors to **create and expand the use of learning communities** focused on improvement, but traction was limited and the projects were difficult to scale. Ironically, not many schools and colleges wanted to be learning organizations, if the process started with shedding light on what was not working well. Even more so than now, educational institutions at the time were siloed by classroom, by department, by institutional division. Schools and colleges were very familiar with external accountability mandates, but had not yet invested in developing an internal environment that was supportive of examining challenges or problems openly. Given this landscape, many teachers, faculty, and administrators were reluctant to examine their own practices and related student data, particularly among colleagues.

During this time, Petrides sought support for ISKME's work, pitching these ideas to potential funders, and one in particular, an established leader in the education field, dismissed the overall idea of cycles of inquiry, improvement, and knowledge management in education, saying that "education does not work like that." Several months later, however, this same leader delivered a speech acknowledging the importance of knowledge management in education, drawing from these basic elements and affirming the direction of ISKME's work.

## The Breakthrough: Open Educational Resources and Practices

ISKME found a way to apply its research and to impact teaching and learning more directly when it launched OER Commons in 2007, a free public digital library of open educational resources and a platform for collaboration and sharing. The open education movement had its roots in the free software movement of the 1980s and 1990s and the open-source software movement in the late 1990s. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation provided leadership in supporting free access to open content in education by funding, with others, OpenCourseWare at MIT in 2001. UNESCO coined the term "open education resources" a year later at its Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries, an event that brought momentum to national and international efforts to support free teaching and learning resources. Soon afterwards, the Hewlett Foundation began field-building efforts supporting the development of OER, including at





Harvard, Carnegie Mellon, and Rice University, and at the Open University UK. In line with its mission, ISKME first became involved in OER through its research, when it received a grant from the Hewlett Foundation to understand the reach, depth, and impacts of the foundation's investments in the field of OER. According to Petrides,

*“The foundation wanted to know what was happening across these projects it had funded: What OER topics were available? What kinds of resources were they? What types of open licenses were being used? Who were the authors? Which resources had been used, adapted, or reshared? There were no standards in the field as to what metadata to collect about each resource across multiple platforms, and so our first step was to create a huge spreadsheet with fields for all the metadata that people might find useful in searching for content. This was a helpful first step, but the spreadsheet was unwieldy. We shared it with the foundation and suggested that we develop a database to organize and display the data and make it public for everyone to see, along with links to the sites where people could access each resource. Hewlett agreed, and that was the beta version of OER Commons.”*

In launching OER Commons, ISKME made it **easier for people to discover and use** free teaching and learning resources that were available on disparate open content sites worldwide. With its history in supporting knowledge sharing and learning communities, ISKME understood that facilitating the use of OER had the potential to **transform teaching practices**—that is, the way instructors connect and collaborate with each other around using, reusing, and sharing their labs, tutorials, assignments, curricula, textbooks, and courses. Expanding OER use also had the potential to make learning more equitable by trimming or eliminating the costs of textbooks for school districts and college students. As Petrides said recently,

*“For ISKME, the early underpinnings of OER were about sharing and improving education, with the implicit assumption that education is a public good. There was always a human rights and social justice aspect to it. OER is not a goal, but rather an approach that gets us to better teaching, better learning, and more accessible and inclusive learning.”*

To facilitate engagement and collaboration, the OER Commons platform introduced tagging and rating of OER for the first time. These processes were important in catalyzing cycles of improvement and inviting contributions from users through crowdsourcing. On OER Commons, anyone could search for and access OER without needing to sign in. Anyone who wanted to create or collaborate could set up an account and then produce, adapt, and share learning resources on OER Commons; you did not need to be a college professor or a curriculum expert to participate and engage. For its development of OER Commons, ISKME was honored by the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose, California, in September 2007, as one of five innovators from around the world for applying technology to benefit humanity and spark global change. ISKME was selected from hundreds of nominations from 68 countries.

In bringing OER Commons online, ISKME reinvented itself by creating, maintaining, and upgrading a new digital infrastructure—and by expanding its staff priorities to lead workshops, trainings, and other professional learning outreach for instructors, administrators, and other educators. ISKME created guides (including online tools and materials) on why to use OER, what OER are, how to find OER, and how to remix and reshare OER. Staff presented at national and international conferences. ISKME also stayed true to its applied research mission, producing a series of articles and reports examining the use and reuse of OER, including an article exploring author behaviors at Connexions (Rice University) and case studies identifying lessons from six OER projects.

This was an exhilarating time at ISKME, a small start-up with roughly ten staff members working to build a field that was brand new and piloting an online infrastructure to local, national and international audiences. ISKME wanted people to take advantage of new freedoms and permissions offered by open licenses, and to better understand how rights are retained and relinquished in the name of equity, in their region, their institution, and

globally—a new kind of awareness of use compared with the restrictions of traditional copyright. ISKME was also studying and reporting on the entire process as researchers. “We were a small staff holding onto a fire hose,” said Ameer Evans Godwin, senior advisor and former vice president of research and development. “But our vision was clear. We were putting new tools in the hands of educators that brought greater freedom, including digital skills, flexibility to customize their materials, and opportunities to connect with peers.” ISKME developed one of the first authoring platforms for OER, called OpenAuthor, where people could create and share resources, and encouraged instructors and others to work together in peer groups.



Adult Basic  
Education and Adult  
English OER



LAUSD Arabic  
Teachers



Oregon Early  
Learning



Karolinska Institutet  
Doctoral  
Education OER



Stem OER for  
Adult Education

*Instructors and others can collaborate, remix, and share their work on OER Commons through peer groups like the ones above, a feature that inspired the creation of hubs and microsites.*

Use of OER Commons ticked up, and new collections of resources were brought online steadily, but the process of engaging learning communities took time. Many teachers and faculty were not experienced with technology or eager to avail themselves of the internet—and copyright issues were not top of mind. Meanwhile, publishers of textbooks were seeking their own entry into online educational resources for profit. Hal Plotkin was being recruited by a major publisher of textbooks at about this time, and he described a meeting with a company representative:

*“He was very excited about the internet and digital technologies because their company could boost profitability by making sure that every student paid full price every time. It meant they could eliminate the market for used textbooks because they could rent access to the materials online. He even described a business scheme they would be test-piloting, where they would charge students based on how many minutes they had the learning resource open on their desktop. Those of us who had thought years earlier that there was something inherently democratizing about digital technologies were fools at that time, because it’s like a hammer. The hammer doesn’t decide if it’s going to build a house or if it’s going to knock the house down. The carpenter decides that. And the carpenters in this case were public policy officials.”*

According to Mark Milliron,

*“You have to remember, we take open for granted now, that having access to open resources is normal. Any university I go to now, any college, or any K-12 school district, they all have an open strategy, and they’re all talking about it. They’re on fire about open education. But **15 years ago you were considered crazy to be talking about this**, and textbook publishers were putting out major disinformation about it. There were educators who thought it was just insanity to think about curriculum in this broader way, as something that instructors and others collaborate on for the free use of others. ISKME was way out in front of this, going around and saying that this is a really good idea and here are the reasons.”*

For ISKME, the risks inherent in technology and data use made it all the more important that it persist in building and using digital infrastructure for public good in education—creating new ways to reach educators, build peer communities, and support their use and sharing of open resources and practices.

# Building Grassroots Movements: Big Ideas Fest and Curating Digital Public Libraries

## Activating Innovators through the Big Ideas Fest

From its start, ISKME had gravitated to the innovators and makers in education spaces—to the students, educators, administrators, researchers, policymakers, edupreneurs, and others who were passionate about transforming teaching and learning, and willing to roll up their sleeves. These were the people whom Petrides recruited for ISKME’s staff, but there were many others beyond ISKME’s staff. The year before OER Commons was launched, the first Maker’s Faire was held in the Bay Area to bring innovators together to experiment with hands-on activities in technology, the sciences, the arts, performance, and crafts. In 2009, ISKME created and led the first education space at Maker’s Faire, called the Teachers as Makers Academy. At the time, however, none of the major education conferences, and very few convenings, were geared toward groundbreakers and experimentation. There was no TED-Ed, no SXSWedu. Petrides saw an opening in the field for connecting and empowering innovators.

In 2008, Petrides was returning to San Francisco from a small education convening, when her flight was delayed for hours. She sat with a fellow meeting participant who was waiting for the same flight, Jonah Houston, a designer at the time with the design and innovation firm IDEO. According to Houston,

*“I was invited to the convening because of my perspective outside of education, as a kind of court jester, a non-expert. The meeting was fancy and all that, but nothing happened, there was no intellectual movement at all. And I thought, ‘Those are three days I’ll never get back.’ Lisa and I were both delayed at the airport and so we ended up sitting together ... One thing led to another, and we penciled out this vision for what it would look like and feel like for educators to be in a space where they could bring the tools and perspectives of design thinking to their thorniest problems.”*

Over the next year, Petrides and Houston met a dozen times, Petrides found a conference organizer who could take on the logistics, and the first annual Big Ideas Fest (BIF) was held in December 2009 in Half Moon Bay, California. The purpose was to create an ongoing, annual space that was outside the comfort zone of presentations at the typical education conference. They wanted to empower participants to share their questions and problems as well as their innovations, so that their experiences as creators could inspire others. The structure varied from year to year, but BIF regularly featured

- **Short, “rapid-fire” discussions and presentations:** Makers and innovators shared firsthand accounts of how a simple spark—a question, a curiosity, an empathetic attitude—had fueled remarkable change.
- **Action Collabs:** In these hands-on, design-thinking workshops, small groups brainstormed and examined core assumptions about a pressing challenge in education, prototyped their solutions, and tested those solutions with the group.
- **Community building:** Event structure provided ample time and creative channels for people to cross-pollinate ideas and build relationships with fellow participants.



ISKME's use of design thinking was an extension and application of its D-I-K-A model. Design thinking begins with gathering data and understanding the specific problem at hand, and it empowers educators at the ground level with the means for creating change. According to Houston, who is now board chair at ISKME:

*“The basic tools and mindset of design thinking are accessible to everyone, which makes it very applicable to ISKME’s mission, which is about democratizing education. Sometimes you might hear teachers say something like, ‘I can see things that are broken, but I can’t do anything about that.’ Design thinking can help to empower them by reframing their approach around what they can do: ‘In my classroom, what are my students struggling with?’ And then the second piece involves, ‘What can I do as an individual to address this?’”*

Houston went on to describe design thinking, in its most basic form, as comprised of two crucial concepts: **empathy** (“What are my students struggling with?”) and **intention** (“What can I do to address this?”). At the Big Ideas Fest, the Action Collabs immersed educators in design-thinking processes through examining a core problem and prototyping potential solutions.

Over its ten years from 2009 to 2018, the Big Ideas Fest brought together and inspired a community of innovators in education, while also expanding ISKME's scope and presence in the field. According to Mark Milliron,



*“The Big Ideas Fest became this catalyst event, and I would argue the physical events were like punctuation marks. People were doing the work all year long, and then they would come together at the Big Ideas Fest and share. As participants, we got to see these communities come together and say, ‘Look at this, look what we’re learning, look what we’re seeing.’ And it wasn’t always, ‘Hey, it all worked.’ Some of the best conversations were about ‘This isn’t working. Let’s roll up our sleeves and figure out another way to do it.’ The early thinkers who ended up taking off were in those early conversations, and those dialogues were always about trying to help low-income, diverse, striving students who are on all kinds of different pathways.”*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Big Ideas Fest took a pause, and with several other annual conferences on innovation having been launched, ISKME is developing other means to support makers and innovators from the ground up, with Big Ideas Fest as a future option.

## Curating Digital Public Libraries

As the Big Ideas Fest was fostering a groundswell of innovation among educators, ISKME was also engaged in **bottom-up strategies to expand the use of open resources and practices** through OER Commons. The organization reached out to school districts, states, community colleges, and universities, working with teachers, faculty, and administrators. A long-standing project with a school district in Philadelphia featured workshops with teachers on developing engaging practices for English language arts, with OER components included. A separate collaboration with science, math, English, and social studies teachers produced an integrated series of OER across the curriculum, with hands-on and personalized learning activities. A project with Bay Area community colleges supported faculty in developing OER in programs related to high-wage, high-demand jobs. ISKME also produced tools and how-to guides to facilitate sharing of open resources and practices through these and similar projects.

Many of these were pilot projects, dispersed across the nation. District by district, school by school, and college by college, ISKME was working with new groups of instructors and administrators, engaging them in discovering open resources, remixing and sharing them, and reflecting about their practices. At the time, state and institutional policies relating to open education were rare, which meant that funding and administrative support for OER development was limited. Open education represented a significant change to the status quo and was not integrated into existing mechanisms, such as through ongoing federal funding or pre-service and in-service professional development.

As a result of its bottom-up, grassroots strategies, ISKME found a way to position OER Commons differently in 2014—not just as a place to create and discover OER, but as a **full-service, public, open-access digital library**. At the time, ISKME was leading an OER development project that included pairing instructors and researchers



with librarians. One librarian had been regularly involved in helping teachers find instructional resources geared to the needs of their students, and so she immediately understood the benefits of having access to a curated collection of curricular resources that were easy to search for and use. Because of her professional service training, she was able to facilitate the teachers' engagement with OER.

ISKME received support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent federal agency

that provides library and museum grants as well as other services, to engage librarians with others in developing curated digital resources in New Hampshire and North Carolina. In New Hampshire, for example, School Librarians Advancing STEM Learning (SLASL) brought together Granite State College, the State Department of Education, the state's Institutes of Higher Education Network, and others to expand the role of school librarians in supporting the development and use of STEM courses and lessons through open access policies and practices. According to Ameer Evans Godwin,

*"This kicked off so many pieces: raising the leadership of school librarians, piloting a new professional learning program, and connecting collaborative curriculum teams with open digital resources that they used, re-mixed, and shared. This was a real differentiator and it set forward a cohesive vision for the continued development of OER Commons."*

Over the next years, ISKME expanded its work with librarians in other states and produced applied research about the roles of librarians in OER development and use. The research culminated in The Role of School Librarians in OER Curation: A Framework to Guide Practice, (based on digital curation practices at school sites in California, Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Washington) and Librarians as Leaders of Open Educational Practice, both of which identified **leadership roles for librarians** regarding collaboration and thought partnership, changes in curriculum and instruction, and open education curation and practice.

# The Big Leap: Policy Gains, Community Hubs, and #GoOpen

## Gains in Public Policy

From its founding in 2001, ISKME was always working to transform education through improved public policy as well as through applied research and better knowledge-sharing practices. This included attention to policy at all levels: institutional, system, state, federal, and international.

During ISKME's first years, state and national policy debates were dominated by concerns about subgroup accountability, including attention to standardized test scores, interventions, and performance-based funding. In this context, ISKME sought to empower schools, colleges, and educational systems to leverage these external mandates to help create internal, student-centered change—for example, through better organizational learning, the development of an ecological framework for knowledge sharing within education systems, better strategic planning and information sharing in community colleges, and efforts to democratize data to improve student success. Much of this work was directed toward better institutional and system policies and decision making among administrators.

In 2007, the year that OER Commons was launched, ISKME also took on a more direct policy role internationally. Lisa Petrides was one of 27 open education leaders invited to an international gathering in Cape Town, South Africa, which produced the historic 2007 Cape Town Open Education Declaration. At the event, Petrides' voice helped ensure that the agreement featured not just open educational resources themselves, but also a robust system of open practices around them. This declaration laid the groundwork for international open-education policy agreements in Dakar, Senegal, in 2009 and in Paris, France, in 2012, all of which supported the right of everyone to education. According to Zeynep Varoglu Hamet, programme specialist at UNESCO,

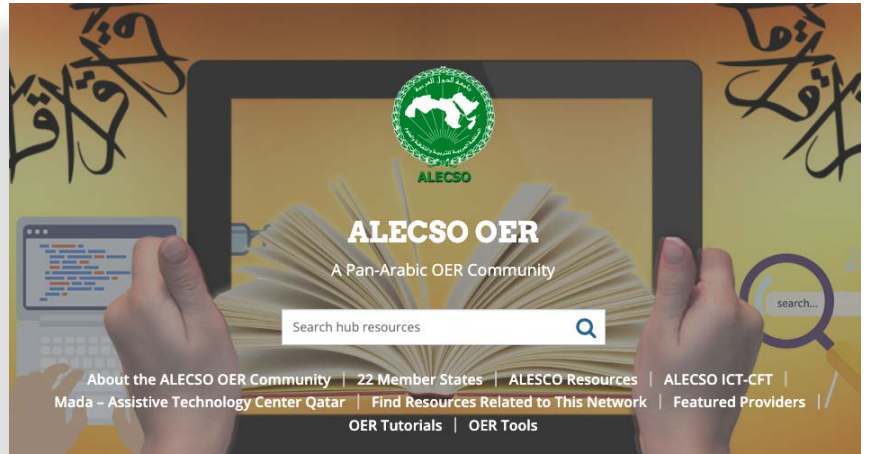
*“Since 2016, ISKME has been actively engaged in UNESCO's OER efforts by supporting widespread international cooperation, multilingualism with UNESCO member states, and building out the OER ecosystem through the development of teacher training tools.”*

Most recently, Petrides and ISKME set the agenda and framework for the Recommendation on Open Educational Resources adopted unanimously by UNESCO's General Conference at its 40th session in 2019. Petrides serves on UNESCO's OER Dynamic Coalition, which supports networking for OER development of its member states in five action areas: building capacity, developing policy, encouraging equitable excellence, nurturing sustainable models, and facilitating international cooperation.

According to Angela DeBarger, program officer at the Hewlett Foundation:

*“ISKME has played a key role internationally. Lisa and the team have been quite supportive of UNESCO's OER Recommendation, and 193 member countries signed on to say, ‘Yes, we agree that we should integrate OER into our education systems.’ And that's great, but now we're turning the corner to figure out, ‘What does this mean in practice? How can we think about sustainability? What are some tools and practices we can put into place?’ Lisa and the team have been core in those conversations, helping to shape what that looks like and how that plays out, and they're poised to do more. ... I think being a voice in the field that is centered around equity, and more specifically, **bringing the perspectives of educators and students into the conversation about open** ...because it's really people who are driving everything at the end of the day, and it helps keep the conversations grounded.”*

In the United States over the past decade, the tide has shifted federally and in the states toward policies that support open education resources and practices. A key step for federal policy came in 2010, when Congress established a \$2 billion federal investment in job training in community colleges, through the Department of Labor’s TAACCCT program (Trade Adjustment Assistance for Community College and Career Training). Grantees were required to ensure that all resulting curriculum, guides, toolkits, and the like be licensed for public use and sharing by others. This open licensing obligation was a substantial policy shift regarding intellectual property for recipients of federal funding, and it opened the door to data sharing policies in other federal departments.



In 2013, the U.S. State Department took on a stronger role in what had become an international movement of open education. ISKME was selected as a partner to support Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Undersecretary of Education Martha Kanter in launching the Open Book Project in the Middle East. The project’s purpose was to expand access to free, high-quality, open education materials in Arabic, with a focus on science and technology.

Following up on these successes, the Obama Administration in 2015 adopted an open government policy that included a formal commitment in education to “expand access to educational resources through open licensing and technology.” These policy changes also laid the groundwork for a federal role in supporting states in articulating and developing open education policies. This included a national initiative called #GoOpen, which drew from ISKME’s expertise in **supporting open education practices**. At the time, ISKME was shifting to support states, nations, ministries of education, and other entities through a range of open education services, including hubs and microsities, professional development, and other open-access innovation.

## Hubs and Microsites

As federal policy in the U.S. was becoming more supportive of open educational resources and practices, ISKME was again evolving its role in the space. The organization had already transformed itself in 2007 when, to facilitate knowledge sharing among educators, it rolled up its sleeves and became a developer of digital infrastructure. Two years later, ISKME adopted design thinking as a primary way to conceptualize innovation and to engage with makers in education. In 2014, after reconceiving OER Commons as a public digital library, ISKME began another major transformation: reducing its reliance on grant funding by offering values-aligned services that support larger-scale, deeper partnerships with educators and institutions. These services, which themselves help **reduce barriers and facilitate engagement** in open education, give ISKME’s mission of free, open, and accessible education a more sustainable path into the future.

In 2014, after reconceiving OER Commons as a public digital library, ISKME began another major transformation: reducing its reliance on grant funding by offering values-aligned services that support larger-scale, deeper partnerships with educators and institutions.

From its inception, OER Commons was set up to encourage educators and others to **collaborate online in curating, creating, remixing, and sharing** resources, including through “groups.” Since 2014, ISKME has developed hubs and microsities to offer more robust forms of branding, collaboration, and engagement for larger entities, including

states and countries. ISKME charges for set-up and ongoing technical management of hubs and microsites and then helps these communities build their own internal processes and teams to scale outreach and participation through professional development, curation, and thought partnership.

- **A hub** is a customizable, branded resource center within the OER Commons digital public library where a network of users can create and share resource collections, administer groups, and share news and events associated with a project, organization, school district, state, or other entity. Hubs can be viewed and shared with others on OER Commons.
- **A microsite** is a standalone library and collaboration platform that is built using the OER Commons infrastructure and its tools, but with unique branding, users, resources, standards, hubs, and collections according to organizational needs. Microsites are unique libraries that are not part of the OER Commons library, which means that resources and engagement are separate from other users on OER Commons.



**HUBS** are sponsored community wings within the OER Commons Digital Library.

**COLLECTIONS** are where Hub administrators determine what is placed on the shelves of their wing of the library. Collections get created in two ways:

1. Bringing in existing OER Commons Collections and Providers
2. Working with ISKME librarians to create custom Hub Collections by tagging resources with specific keywords, search parameters, endorsements

**GROUPS** are round tables where Hub members gather to curate, evaluate, and create resources.



**MICROSITES** are custom branches of the OER Commons Digital Library



**MICROSITES** are comprehensive “branch libraries” administered by ISKME’s partners. They can have resources described using a custom taxonomy or descriptors, and have their own ecosystem of Hubs, Collections, and Groups.

For both hubs and microsites, ISKME works with organizations to design sites that resonate with their goals and intended audiences. ISKME brings together microsite and hub partners for communities of practice convenings, professional development, and training sessions, including access to ISKME’s team of librarians to develop content collections. Through activity reports, administrators of hubs and microsites can use analytics to measure usage across groups, users, and resources to understand which OER is resonating with users and which groups or members are most active.

ISKME developed one of its first microsites in 2014 when it transformed the National Science Digital Library (NSDL) from a legacy website to a dynamic microsite that brings together and connects partners in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) around the use and sharing of OER in these fields. In line with ISKME’s emphasis on engagement and use across OER Commons, this and subsequent microsites such as GoOpen Michigan focused on opportunities for education organizations to partner with each other and contribute to multiple communities of practice with and for K-12 schools, higher





education, informal practitioners, and lifelong teaching and learning. ISKME's digital libraries and networking communities expanded dramatically over the next few years through hubs and microsites. By 2017, the organization:

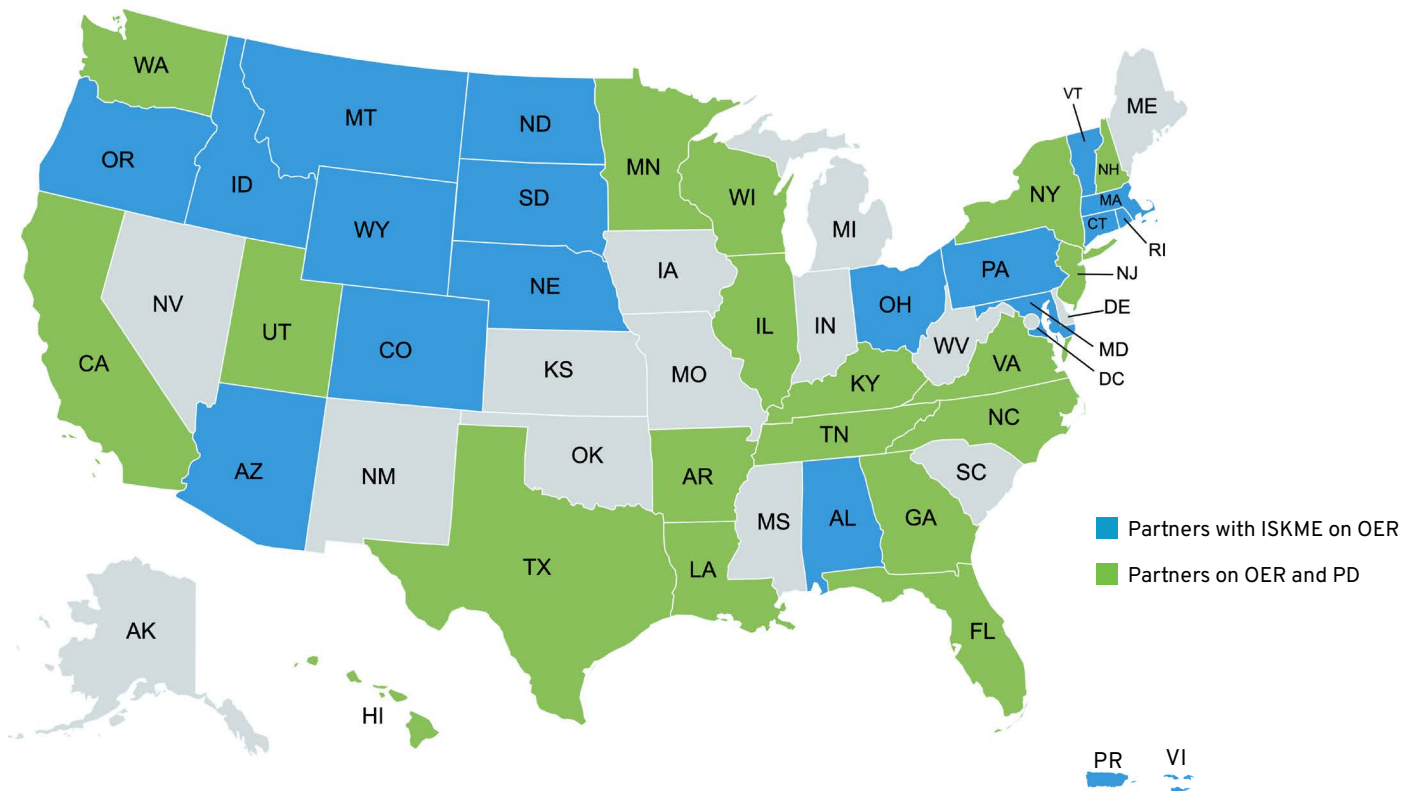
- **Strengthened OER adoption** through five new statewide microsites and hubs: Michigan, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin;
- **Established OER partnerships** in K-12 and higher education with OpenStax and NAACP;
- **Expanded its reach globally**, partnering with ALECSO in 22 countries throughout the Middle East; with UNESCO on their ICT Competency Framework for Teachers implemented in 22 countries; and with the Organization of American States in 16 Caribbean countries;
- **Advanced its applied research** around OER use and sharing, finding that open educational practices support practices aligned with deeper learning;
- **Won an award from the American Association of School Libraries** for Best Website for Teaching & Learning; and
- **Created a body of professional development tools**, trainings, and workshops to help educators and administrators take full advantage of open licensing.

ISKME's development of hubs and microsites for states, library consortia, and other entities benefited as federal policies became more explicit in supporting equitable access to and use of OER in K-12 and higher education. For example, as state departments of education gained access to federal funding for these purposes, they wanted their schools to have easy access to digital learning materials across all grade levels. They wanted the resources to span the curriculum and to be connected explicitly to Common Core, for example, and other state standards. They wanted the resources to be **freely available, culturally relevant, and adaptable for local learning needs**. And as the pandemic closed in-person access to many schools and campuses, state agencies became even more interested in free and open access to high-quality digital resources. Through the hubs and microsites associated with OER Commons, ISKME had a dynamic online platform that provided tools and strategies to address all these purposes. According to Ameer Evans Godwin, "During the COVID crisis, we heard that states and districts that had OER systems and supports in place had a greater state of readiness and faster response to school closures and the move to online learning than those that did not."

With supportive federal and state policies, ISKME could finally bring to scale its open practices, open resources, systemic supports, and professional development. By 2022, as a result, ISKME had expanded its partnerships for OER development and use to three-quarters of the states, plus U.S. territories and other countries (see U.S. map, next page). ISKME found that most state agencies and public administrators were initially attracted to OER as a cost-saving opportunity regarding textbooks and other resources for K-12 schools and for college students. Through engaging with ISKME and working to support OER use and sharing, however, administrators also realized that **equitable access to teaching and learning resources requires investment in open practices, engagement, and professional development**, since it's people who drive knowledge sharing. These issues were always central to ISKME's mission and strengths.

ISKME also found that most state and other public administrators are initially drawn to the standalone aspects of microsites, partly because these offer greater control and customization for developing and sharing K-12 resources internally, including aligning resources with state standards. Over time, however, as the state administrators become more experienced in the process of sharing resources, they start asking about linking their site resources to those of other states, challenging the silos that have traditionally existed in education and breaking down barriers.

## ISKME's Partnerships with States and U.S. Territories, 2022



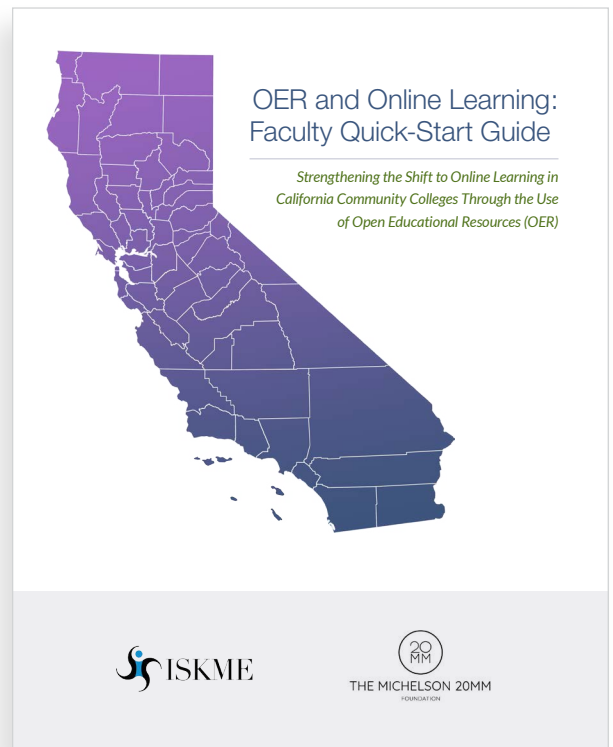
Note: OER = open educational resources. PD = professional development. Source: ISKME

As an example of a robust partnership and the vibrant open ecosystem that has resulted, ISKME has been working with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) since 2020, creating and managing its OERTX microsite, which reached 140,000 registered users in its first two years. To support use and engagement as user needs matured over time, ISKME created professional development opportunities through “OER Core Elements Academies,” then “Creator Communities,” and most recently “Advanced Skills Academies.” ISKME also conducted research examining OER development and use among the 158 two- and four-year public and private higher education institutions throughout the state. In two landscape reports released in 2019 and 2021, ISKME and its partners found that the share of Texas colleges and universities with formal policies or programs to support OER increased from 38% in 2019 to 45% two years later. The share of institutions offering at least one undergraduate course that is fully OER-based increased from 71% in 2019 to 85% in 2021. The 2021 survey also found that the institutions that are leading in implementing OER-based courses, policies, and programs appear to be taking a systems-based approach to OER. According to Michelle Singh, assistant commissioner of digital learning, academic planning, and policy at THECB,

*“Our latest landscape report is called Advancing an Ecosystem for Open Educational Resources, and **one of the findings is that it takes all of us... There has to be a collective support mechanism at each institution so that OER can thrive. We need to make sure that everyone, from your provost to your administrators, understand the goals of OER use and can provide support. We also realize that it takes more than the academic lens. It takes student success, institutional effectiveness, student activities... It has to be everyone across an institution to really set a strong foundation and to change culture at a campus.**”*

Similarly, ISKME has been working in California to support OER use and sharing across the 116 California Community Colleges (CCC), including by creating an OER Commons hub where CCC faculty can create, collaborate, and share open content and practices. In supporting usage of the hub, ISKME produced two quick-start guides for faculty that were funded by a COVID response Spark Grant from the 20MM Michelson Foundation. From a review of empirical research in the first guide, ISKME reports these student impacts, all of which have important equity implications for OER use in postsecondary education:

- **Increases in success rates** based on open textbook usage, particularly among Pell Grant recipients, according to a large-scale study.
- **Decreases in drop rates, in institutional costs, and in student costs to graduate**, based on a study of Z-Degree programs (zero textbook cost programs) at Tidewater Community College.
- **Increases in enrollment in courses** that had zero textbook costs, based on a study at a large university in the Pacific Northwest. This study also showed higher ratings by students for instructors using OER.



In discussing **equity and OER development**, Angela DeBarger at the Hewlett Foundation said that empowering educators to share resources and personalize learning materials for their students is important not only for teaching and learning, but also for democracy:

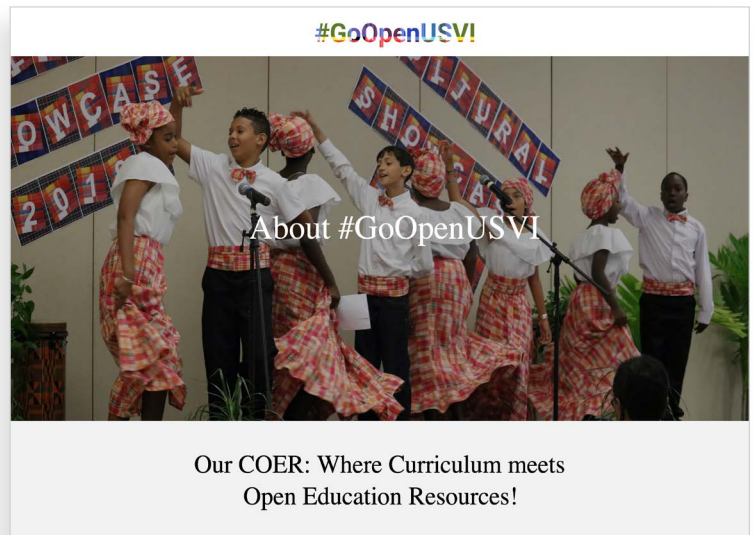
*“It starts with **who is at the table creating the content**. If it is educators, then are they representative of the students and communities who will be using that content? And are we doing enough to engage, to collaboratively work with students? ... To me, equity is about recognizing the lived experiences, backgrounds, and histories of students and their identities and allowing them to really bring their full selves to learning.... Part of what ISKME is enabling is making sure that people have access to the information that they need to learn, that they need to become engaged citizens in our society. Unlocking that is **an enabler for improving our democracy.**”*

In its own recent research on equity, OER use, and culturally responsive teaching, ISKME examined racially biased ideologies embedded in traditional classification schemes, such as those used in Library of Congress subject headings, and the need for a common vocabulary around issues of race, equity, and inclusion that could drive more equitable algorithms and search results online. ISKME also produced, in collaboration with the Science Education Resource Center at Carleton College (SERC), an evaluation framework to help STEM educators determine the accessibility of OER based on auditory, visual, and neurological learner needs.

OER Commons infrastructure was expanding in new ways, and ISKME realized that its operating norms needed to be fully aligned with its mission, as the organization was managing complex partnerships and overseeing intricate processes for updating and improving hubs and microsites. In 2020, ISKME restructured and established agile approaches in order to become more iterative, adept, and productive as a service organization focused on partnerships and infrastructure development. This, in turn, helped ISKME become more fully aligned in service of

the public good in education. For example, these are core values associated with an agile organizational approach:

- **Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools,
- **Working software** over comprehensive documentation,
- **Partner collaboration** over contract negotiation, and
- **Responding to change** over following a plan.



ISKME's alignment with these values comes across from the comments of its partners in discussing their work with ISKME. For example, Yvette McMahon Arnold, state director of instructional development at the Department of Education, U.S. Virgin Islands, emphasized ISKME's attention and staying power:

*"While we were building a platform for [#GoOpenUSVI](#), we were also building partnerships and relationships. ISKME takes a very close look and **makes a point to understand the work here, our culture, what our needs are, and they do so very professionally, as part of the support. ISKME didn't build a platform and keep going [to the next partnership]. They're still with us. They honor the service plan and beyond the service plan in terms of the level and frequency of interactions.... I can't say enough about the staff; they have been beyond patient.**"*

Rebecca Henderson, distance learning supervisor at the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania, described ISKME's expertise and flexibility:

*"ISKME has been very instrumental in **giving us the space and the freedom** to be able to feel confident in bringing people together as the system is updated, as it's rolled out, as new collections come to light. They're responsive to what's going on across the country, across the world, and they're communicative. They let us know what's new, what features are available. When we say, 'Hey, we want in,' they're like, 'Okay, here you go.' We have it right away. **We never have to wait.** Because of that, we're able to be much more responsive to our districts. It just makes life so much easier when you have an organization that genuinely cares enough to be that responsive to you, so that you can, in turn, be responsive to educators. And uploading our Pennsylvania Standards into the system so that educators can start aligning resources to the standards? That process was seamless. They said, 'We'll work at your pace,' not 'Here's our timeline to do this.'"*

Gina Loveless, who provides education technology services to the Michigan Department of Education and who mentors open education programs nationally, discussed ISKME's proficiency in supporting engagement:

*"[Michigan has] a [microsite](#) through ISKME as part of their work, but ... they do more than just support our use of our microsite. They have done a really nice job of **creating communities and making sure that we are networking with each other.... We're in K-12 but we're getting networking opportunities with higher education institutions that are talking about OER and how they use it, how they support their educators around OER..., and so they really go above and beyond just supporting our resource repository.... I just am thankful that they're on Team Michigan.**"*

## #GoOpen, K-12 Voices for Open, and Other Policy Development

As ISKME was partnering with scores of states, nations, and other entities to develop and support communities of practice on OER hubs and microsites, the organization was also involved in parallel work to support OER policy development in the United States. This work included active participation and guidance in the #GoOpen initiative, leadership in developing K-12 Voices for Open, and other strategic policy and leadership for open education.

The U.S. Department of Education and its Office of Educational Technology (OET) launched #GoOpen in 2015 “as a national movement encouraging states, school districts, and educators to use openly licensed educational materials to improve teaching and learning.” The department had already informed states in 2014 that they could use Title II funds to prepare teachers to create, use, and share openly licensed digital learning resources. In its 2017 National Educational Technology Plan, OET stated, “One of the most effective ways to provide high-quality digital learning materials at scale is through the use of openly licensed educational resources.” The same year, the department announced a new open licensing requirement stating that grantees receiving department funds under competitive grant programs (with some exceptions) must provide openly licensed copyrights for their grant deliverables created with those funds. Through #GoOpen, OET provided a popular branding for a national movement and a collaborative structure to build support for open education.

ISKME was selected to partner with the Department of Education’s #GoOpen initiative in 2018 and developed a set of guiding principles toward the advancement of national policies that support open resources and practices in K-12 education. The goals of #GoOpen included facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing nationwide; building evidence of impacts in states and districts across the country; and increasing equity and inclusion in education for all. OET and ISKME created and facilitated a #GoOpen 2021 Virtual Convening that included a #GoOpen pledge for states, districts, and individual educators.

In 2020, ISKME also launched K-12 Voices for Open as a grass-roots effort to build support for open education among school district leaders, including encouraging them to consider

OER when allocating new federal funding. The group is community-led, with working groups seeking to mentor district leaders and others around OER implementation. Rebecca Henderson, the district learning supervisor in Pennsylvania, is a member of K-12 Voices for Open, and she said that the collaboration grew out of some work groups that she and others were involved in with ISKME:



*“We were trying to figure out: **What does the future of open educational resources look like in this country? Who’s talking about it, and how do we collaborate together beyond state boundaries? How do we keep that discussion going on, with some tangible products? K-12 Voices for Open is really what started driving a lot of those discussions.**”*

In January 2022, OET announced that the department was sunsetting its federal leadership of the #GoOpen initiative and was passing the baton to ISKME to foster ongoing national engagement in K-12 open education. True to its mission and values, ISKME is already building a #GoOpen national community of educators and leaders who use and support open resources and practices to equitably improve teaching and learning for all. According

to ISKME, “We see this as a great opportunity to establish new #GoOpen leadership from within the community, building on the foundation developed by the U.S. Department of Education.”

Going forward, ISKME is working to integrate OER into state digital equity plans, including developing and sharing state policies for connecting OER to digital equity implementation associated with the federal Digital Equity Act; a [Digital Equity Plan Toolkit](#) to increase awareness among education leaders about the role of OER in digital equity; and webinars on [how OER can support digital equity for states](#).

ISKME is a leading voice in the [CARE Framework](#), which articulates a set of shared values for a sustainable OER ecosystem led by individual and institutional stewards contributing to equitable and open education. The Framework was created by Petrides and colleagues from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), EdTech Strategies, Michigan State University, and elsewhere. It is available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish, and Dyslexie, a typeface built for those with dyslexia.

In addition, ISKME is a partner with AAC&U in helping to create the [Institute on OER](#), a year-long engagement opportunity for teams from colleges and universities to plan and implement bold strategies to advance their institution’s adoption, sharing, and use of OER. Each team includes stakeholders across campus silos and divisions, including librarians, faculty, student services staff, and registrars. The institute is serving its second cohort in the 2022-23 academic year.

## Conclusion

When asked how the field of education has changed as a result of ISKME’s work, Angela DeBarger at the Hewlett Foundation spoke about ISKME’s successes in helping to build communities of practice around using and sharing open resources. “I’ve seen opportunities for collaboration and sharing that would not have been possible without OER Commons and ISKME,” she said.

**In discussing ISKME’s impacts on the education space, Mark Milliron at National University said,**

*“There are moments and movements in the world of education that make a powerful difference. I would argue that the moment Lisa Petrides decided to leave a traditional tenured path and create a movement leveraging everything from data and technology to open education and the broader collaborative creative community around the maker space, while engaged in applied research and shaping the policy world too, those moments have made a powerful difference in the world of education.... ISKME is a catalyst for all of that, and Lisa has been one of those passionate leaders that has met each moment and really helped drive a movement.... The state of Washington is making their 85 most used courses in the entire state fully open.... They have degrees where people don’t pay a dime for the curricular content. That all came from policy work, but it was informed by the practice work, right? State houses have adopted open, and even the federal government has now adopted open, and when you think back 15, 20 years ago, I don’t know if many people would have thought we would have gotten here. This is a classic example of what is novel becomes normal.”*

Over the past two decades, ISKME’s journey has helped support millions of teachers, faculty, students, and others—through agencies, departments, schools, colleges, states, and nations—in working together to create, use, and share freely available education content. This groundbreaking work was achieved through active partnerships with these innovative individuals and institutions. And ISKME’s own change agents—its pioneering team of educators, librarians, researchers, designers, developers, project managers, directors, and officers helped to

lead and model these forms of collaboration. As a result, there are now broadly based and popular free textbook movements, free textbook policies, and college degree programs with zero textbook costs. During the pandemic, OER helped to ensure that millions of students had access to free course materials online, and ISKME worked with thousands of educators during this time to support equitable and culturally responsive teaching practices, including strategies for localizing curriculum materials.


As ISKME moves beyond its first two decades, much work remains to transform the education space by making learning and knowledge sharing more participatory, equitable, and open. In pursuit of this mission, ISKME continues its work to ramp up research, policy, and practice supporting open education; build relationships, networks, and communities that share resources regionally, nationally, and internationally; and improve and expand the most widely used and broadly accessible digital infrastructure for the sharing of free curricular resources in the world.

**“ ISKME is a stellar example of impactful and innovative initiatives in the realm of open educational resources.”**

**JAMES NEAL**

Senior Program Officer  
Institute of Museum and  
Library Services

ISKME is also building out its own infrastructure, including its digital platform and its professional development, to reach even more students and educators—and in deeper ways, regardless of cultural or geographic barriers. The nation and the world need more education systems that reflect their learners, so that all students can see themselves represented in learning materials that engage them. “Now more than ever, there is an urgent need to build towards an education system that our learners deserve,” wrote Petrides and Ethan Senack, ISKME’s chief of staff, in spring 2022. “We need to support states, districts, and institutions in developing the culturally responsive teaching competencies to meet their learning outcomes and standards.” This features hands-on collaboration with educators to model teaching approaches that are student centered.

ISKME’s work reaches beyond national boundaries to bring high-quality teaching and learning practices to everyone, everywhere. Its vision for the future looks toward openness not just as a vehicle for change within education, but in strengthening democracy, tackling climate change, and solving other societal challenges. Onward charges ISKME beyond its first two decades, building a world that is more participatory, equitable, and open. 

## Acknowledgments

ISKME is an agile, dynamic organization whose story was a pleasure to write and whose staff, board, partners, and stakeholders are visionary and practical. Lisa Petrides, CEO and founder of ISKME, and Ethan Senack, chief of staff, were instrumental in guiding the development of this retrospective, facilitating access to interviewees, and providing insightful feedback at every stage. In interviews, many education leaders took time to describe the context, scope, depth, and impacts of ISKME's work, and I am indebted to them for their perceptions and expertise. Their names and comments can be found in the report. Mindy Boland, Michelle Brennan, Cathy Casserly, Ameer Evans Godwin, Jonah Houston, Kari Jones, Reg Leichty, Megan Simmons, and Ramona Thomas reviewed and improved drafts of this manuscript. Kari Jones edited and Daya Ceglia designed the report.

## About Thad R. Nodine

Dr. Thad Nodine is a writer, novelist, and president of Nodine Consulting, where he partners with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to advance strategies to help more students achieve their education and career goals, particularly Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other Students of Color, those from low-income families, and first-generation college students. Thad finds stories in academic projects, reframes research findings for broader audiences, and highlights the perspectives of those contributing to student success in schools and colleges. Recent work includes *Toward Racial Justice in California's Education Systems: An Introduction to Policy Spanning K-12 and Higher Education* (2022). Thad has a Ph.D. in literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a B.A. in government from Oberlin College.

## About ISKME

ISKME is a nonprofit organization that seeks to make education more participatory, equitable, and open. We believe that the development of equitable and inclusive learning environments will contribute to the creation of a more just society. Founded in 2002, ISKME began as a research institute - conducting applied social science analyses and exploring the frontier of educational practice. In 2007, ISKME launched OER Commons, expanding to more directly support the collaborative creation, discovery, and curation of OER. In recent years, ISKME has collaborated with state agencies, systems and consortia of higher education, K12 districts and schools, as well as NGOs and nonprofits around the world. ISKME supports innovative teaching and learning practices: building custom digital libraries, professional learning programs, and research studies, and is best known for our pioneering open education initiatives.