

10 WAYS YOUR CMO OR DISTRICT CAN SUPPORT OPEN SOURCE IN EDUCATION

Sharing—of lesson plans, systems, videos, trainings, handbooks and so many other proven resources—is unequivocally good for kids. Our students need all of us to commit to sharing, and to do it as soon as possible. But how can charters and districts remove the obstacles and make true “open source” a reality? Here are a few things we’ve learned from our work in open source at Achievement First:



1 Name clearly that yours is an open source organization.

We tell AF network and school employees that if something will help kids, we should share it, and with quick turnaround. We named “sharing with and learning from others” as an integral part of our strategy, and we empower all our folks to be able to reasonably share without a lot of bureaucracy.

2 Internally champion folks who share.

It can’t stop with just naming it once. Leaders have to celebrate those who expand organizational impact by sharing, and the norms for sharing must be repeated often.

3 Name an open source point person.

This person can handle all requests from districts or charters for curriculum and materials—or visits. We’ve set up an email, sharing@achievementfirst.org, for this purpose.

4 Create an on-line portal to share your best—or all—resources.

The NEA’s effort to collect and share great lesson plans from across the country is a great example of this. (See betterlesson.com/mtp). Learn Zillion (learnzillion.org) is another great open-source curriculum site. Republic Schools (republiccharterschools.org) is already sharing (albeit for a nominal fee, which I think is within the open source spirit) a coding curriculum that AF plans to use in some schools next year. Achievement First’s beta site is achievementfirst.org/opensource. Match Education is sharing what they have learned about teacher and leader training in bite-sized videos (matchminis.org).

5 Highlight the most useful resources on your website.

Aspire Public Schools has been a leader in this work (aspirepublicschools.org/sharing-practices). Success Academy created a virtual school visit (virtualtour.successacademies.org/elementaryschool) and has announced plans to share lessons on its website. Achievement Network’s Lessons From the Field shares their lessons learned from work with hundreds of schools across the country (achievementnetwork.org/lessons). KIPP recently put together a strong sharing site, as well (kipp.org/our-approach/beyond-kipp).

6 Share by any means possible.

Ease of sharing should not be an obstacle. Every school or CMO has a way to share internally. The same tools can be used externally, through an email, a post on Google Drive, or on a jump drive.

7 Create formal sharing programs.

AF has a Leader Residency Program where future and current principals from district and charter schools in Connecticut spend time at AF learning some of our best practices. AF also partnered with YES Prep and Aspire to launch a Charter Network Accelerator that supports the development of early-stage CMOs, especially those led by people of color. Uncommon Schools—particularly Doug Lemov’s Teach Like a Champion work and Paul Bambrick’s Leverage Leadership framework—is the gold standard here. Summit Public Schools recently established Summit Basecamp, a program to support schools in leveraging its school model and technology program.

8 Host at least two “open house” days each year.

Allow visitors to see the school, and share with them your best practices and materials. AF has a series of visitor days each year, including recently hosting schools across the Charter School Growth Fund portfolio to learn more about best practices in close reading.

9 Make your school “open doors” for visitors.

AF tries to do this within reason. You can come and visit any time if you mostly want to be a “fly on the wall” and learn. We won’t over-manage your visit, as long as the purpose of your visit is for you (and your team) to learn and get better and you agree to our simple visitor norms. We are especially keen on helping folks who want to start a school or are school leaders trying to make their schools stronger.

10 When the scale for sharing grows too large, create another organization to manage it.

That’s what Uncommon, Achievement First and KIPP did in founding the Relay Graduate School of Education (relay.edu). Aspire did that in spinning off SchoolZilla (schoolzilla.com).