

American Federation of Teachers Share My Lesson Response

Seven years ago, we launched Share My Lesson as a crowdsourcing site for educators. Teachers scavenge and share resources all the time; we wanted to facilitate that and help fill the real needs and resource gaps teachers were raising as they grappled with implementation of the Common Core State Standards. With Share My Lesson, a teacher in New York could upload a lesson and share it with an educator teaching the same Common Core standard in Wisconsin. We had three core values when we started SML: The site was open to all; it was free to subscribers; and educators would pick and choose the best content to add to Share My Lesson. While the AFT Innovation Fund helped some teams of teachers create content that was then available on SML and we have many partners that share materials on the site, our abiding belief is that teachers are professionals and know what resources best serve the needs of their students.

Fast forward seven years, and we have nearly 1.6 million members and more than 400,000 resources in every grade and content area. Our site is owned by teachers and vetted by teachers. Resources that are more popular, downloaded and viewed more often, and rated favorably rise to the top in searches. Resources that are not as good move to the bottom.

While some of Fordham's study assesses SML on factors that go beyond our mission, the institute is asking relevant questions about the supplemental resources teachers have available to them. The findings also strongly support Share My Lesson's core mission. SML aims to be a crowdsourced resource-sharing website, which means that users can upload their best resources, and another user can add to or change them to meet the needs of their students. We do not edit the resources or provide instructions on how an educator should use a resource in the classroom. We also do not provide a lesson plan template, nor do we seek out any specific type of classroom resource. In other words, we are open to receiving any and all resources that teachers think could benefit another educator.

SML is a response to what we heard from teachers. It was never intended to do the jobs of school district curriculum and instruction offices. And there are too many places where the enacted curriculum is the only curriculum. Teachers want the freedom to teach—the latitude to meet the needs of their students. They told us they could not wait for someone else to get it right. They needed “Monday morning” help—with engaging and relevant content, and tools to differentiate instruction. We know teachers are looking for standards-aligned resources. Users have the ability to upload their material and align their resources to the Common Core; Next Generation Science Standards; or individual state standards in English, math, science and social studies. However, we

also heard from administrators that they wanted validation that the resources were accurately aligned to the standards. To accomplish this, we asked our SML Cadre to assist in reviewing aligned resources for accuracy and quality. Our SML Cadre comprises American Federation of Teachers (AFT) members who are experts in their subject matter. When an SML member adds a standard-aligned resource, it will display the user alignment and standard in gray. Once the SML Cadre team signs off on a resource validating alignment and quality, the resource will receive a green check mark stating “verified by SML.”

Beyond the resources on SML, we also offer free webinars throughout the year with each webinar providing one hour of professional development credit. In March, we host our annual Share My Lesson Virtual Conference, which is an entirely virtual three-night conference that offers more than 30 webinars on a variety of topics. We had more than 22,000 registrations from across the country for our [2019 Share My Lesson Virtual Conference](#).

We also create [curated collections](#), which are the most popular and visited resources on the site. Our editorial content leader is a former teacher who scours the 400,000+ resources to assemble collections of materials on current issues, such as [impeachment](#) or [preventing gun violence in schools](#), or for holidays, such as [Thanksgiving](#) or [Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#), or best practices and tips for the classroom, such as [classroom management](#), [social emotional learning](#), or [bullying prevention](#). Check out our [Top Resources of 2019](#).

Finally, we recently launched SML Communities. Our communities allow anyone—school districts, AFT local affiliates, professional learning communities, and parents—to create an open or closed community and curate collections of resources, choosing what to share. These communities also allow community members to share their content with the group.

Our intent on SML is not to tell teachers how to teach, or what to teach, but to provide a free site where teachers can find, share and evaluate resources. And we accomplish this goal every day on Share My Lesson.