Transcript for Ethics and Values in the Shared Educational Resources and Technology (SERT) Initiative
ETUG Fall 2024 Workshop: Navigating Ethics and EdTech – November 1, 2024
Presenter: Josie Gray

BRIANA FRASER:
So I am pleased to welcome Josie Gray. She will be presenting on Ethics and Values in the Shared Educational Resources and Technology Initiative. Over to you, Josie.

JOSIE GRAY:
Good morning, everyone. I am grateful to be joining you all from wâwâskesiwisâkahikan, also known as Lac La Biche in the very northern part of Treaty 6. My name is Josie Gray. My pronouns are she/her, and I am a manager on the Open Education team at BCcampus, and I am also the project manager for the SERT Initiative, and SERT stands for Shared Educational Resources and Technology. And in this session, I want to provide a little bit of description of what SERT is just for some background and context, and then talk a little bit about how I see some ethics and values showing up in what we're working on through the SERT Initiative.

So first, what is SERT? The Shared Educational Resources and Technology Initiative or SERT is an initiative funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. It is one aspect of the Ministry's Digital Learning Strategy, which is really coming out of the pandemic and recognizing a need for additional resources around digital learning in the B.C. post-secondary system. The goal of SERT is to support shared models for delivering educational technology and curriculum in the B.C. post-secondary system. Um, in some less obscure terms. Basically, it's looking at how can the B.C. post-secondary system share resources and collaborate in order to reduce costs and support digital learning opportunities for students.

So just to kind of a little bit about the SERT Initiative, what we're doing, we've set up an Advisory Committee. We are supporting some pilot projects in developing sustainability models. We are publishing case studies, and we are just starting to work on developing a toolkit. And what I've been learning as a project manager for the SERT Initiative is that generally, B.C. is great at developing new curriculum and technologies that can be used across multiple institutions. However, a key challenge that often comes up for these projects is how to sustain the work after the initial development funding runs out and kind of the mechanisms for bringing in additional users and institutions and how that all works practically. So, for example, getting stuck on questions like, where should the project live? Who is responsible for the operation and maintenance work? How is all of that funded? Who gets to make decisions about the project going forward? How do we find new users and onboard them? These sticky problems that often come up.

So as such, the Advisory Committee has been talking a lot about sustainability and breaking down different aspects of what we think plays a role in the sustainability of projects like these. And so far we've come up with five things that we're kind of looking at. The first is around the

business model and revenue generation. So what is the service being provided and how will they make money on a cost-recovery non-profit basis? Next is around governance and organizational structure. So where does the project live? What is its legal status? How are decisions made? What are the roles and responsibilities of people involved in the project? Next is around sharing agreements. That often has to do with licensing of curriculum or software, and basically agreements between people using the curriculum or software and those that are maintaining it. Then legal compliance, things like accessibility legislation, privacy, security, those types of things, and then fifth is community engagement. How to maintain and build and engage a community of users.

So as the project manager, I wanted to share some of my own reflections on values that I see showing up in the SERT Initiative. These have emerged through my takeaways from various conversations with the Advisory Committee members, as well as people who are working on projects being funded through this initiative. So these are not official values adopted by the Advisory Committee, but these are some of my own reflections based on my experiences as the project manager.

The first is the value of locally designed, maintained, and owned educational technologies and curriculum. So when things are local, it's more likely to ensure that it's designed for a B.C. context and is more likely to meet the needs of B.C. educators and students, and decisions are being made with the B.C. context in mind.

The next value is the value that comes from collaboration and resource sharing across the B.C. post-secondary system. For example, looking at community-owned and participatory governance models as a way to ensure that people who see value in a particular tool or curriculum can have a say in how it's maintained over time. In addition, leveraging the cost effectiveness that can come when multiple institutions pool resources to sustain a particular tool or piece of curriculum.

The next is non-profit. Recognizing that sustaining and operationalizing is work that requires resources and funding, but wanting to ensure it's done in a non-profit way to benefit the whole B.C. post-secondary system.

Next is the importance of educational technology and curriculum projects addressing legislative requirements in intentional and meaningful ways. So this includes ensuring privacy and security of student data, as well as the accessibility of tools and content for students with disabilities.

And then the final value I wanted to talk about is around openness. Now openness is showing up in the SERT Initiative in two different ways. The first is that SERT aims to share learning and resources around sustainability models openly, so we'll be publishing a collection of case studies as well as a toolkit with the hopes that they can better support future educational technology and curriculum projects in British Columbia. In addition, SERT is thinking about open EdTech and open educational resources. We're thinking about the values and challenges that

come with open licenses where they may or may not be appropriate in a B.C. context, and what are the specific sustainability models that can support open projects in particular?

So just to recap, values that I've seen come up as part of the SERT Initiative include locally designed and owned, B.C. system collaboration and resource sharing, non-profit and cost-recovery, revenue models, privacy and security of student data, accessibility, and openness. And these things are all interconnected in different ways, and it's interesting to think of the ways that they support or influence each other. For example, how does locally designed and owned EdTech allow us to better ensure the privacy and security of student data? How might multiple institutions collaborate and share resources to maintain a mutually useful set of curriculum on a non-profit basis? Or what are the specific mechanisms that are needed to be in place in order to sustain an open project? So these are all the kinds of questions that the SERT Advisory Committee are exploring through our work. And with that, thank you all very much. I really appreciated this time to present. And if you have questions either now or in the future about the SERT Initiative, you're welcome to email me at jgray@bccampus.ca. Thank you.