

ONLINE K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL
GOOD OR BAD?

By:

Jenny Babbitt

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Online public school is a somewhat new phenomena in the United States. Online learning has been well known in college level education for some years and is widely accepted. While there seems to be a large debate currently on whether or not online school for grades kindergarten through senior year of high school is beneficial or not. I believe that online public schools are not beneficial for the students in the long run. I feel this way because going to a computer will not give children the appropriate skill set to enter the workforce and even put them at a disadvantage prior to attending college. Sitting in front of a computer cannot be the same quality of learning as a classroom setting and they miss learning the socializing skills that are imperative in day to day life and on the workforce. For these reasons I am strongly opposed to online public school.

To open my mind to the possibility of benefits of online public education I researched and read three different online articles. According to these articles there are three major benefits to online public education; individual attention to each pupil, geographical location and financial benefits.

The rise of the ratio of student to teacher has become an epidemic in the public school systems. Children are not getting the appropriate one on one attention as students have had in the past and this shows in declining graduation rates. According to an article by the Obridge Academy “Online schooling allows your children to have the attention and focus they need from their teachers in order to succeed. At Obridge Academy students get personalized assignments and lesson plans based on their teacher’s evaluation of their skills.” (Obridge Academy, paragraph 3, 2013) It is also discussed in the article that children learn more productively in smaller group settings and that it is beneficial to their education to do this. This shows the

importance of students having the ability to relate with their educator and feel that they are important that is hard to come by if they were in a class of over thirty other students.

Another benefit that online public education is able to offer than traditional public schooling is having the ability to be taught by teachers and have diverse relationships with fellow students from all over the country and globe. This was even evident back just four years ago when Dan Lips a senior analyst from the Heritage Population wrote an article of the upcoming benefits online education. He goes on to say; “The best teachers will use technology to reach many more students. Virtual and blended-learning programs will enable mass customization in education, allowing students to learn at their own pace in ways that are tailored to their learning styles and interests.” (Lips, D., paragraph 2, 2010) This is beneficial for all students, not everyone learns at the same pace and if a larger pool of teachers were available for parents to choose from and find the right fit for their children it would result in higher success rates for public school students. Aside from the larger pool of teachers to choose from, the other geographical benefit of online public school is in regards to students who are in rural areas that have a rarity of good schools available to them. Mr. Lips discussed the benefits to these students that online public school will give them an affordable alternative to the financial hardships of finding good schooling for this population of students. In the world we live in with the struggling economy this could be beneficial to a lot of people.

The last benefit that was discussed in my research was a financial benefit to the schools who in the past few years have dealt with huge budget cuts. In an article I read by Michael Van Beek of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy he specifically wrote about the benefits of online public education for rural and urban schools. He states; “Urban and rural schools generally have a difficult time offering as much high-quality instruction or as many academic options to

students because the best teachers tend to gravitate to the schools with the larger budgets and expansive opportunities. Access to quality instruction, therefore, has largely been tied to where a student resides, putting urban and rural kids at a distinct disadvantage. Online learning can make access to excellent teachers and instruction more equitable.” (Van Beek, M., paragraph 6, 2010) His explanation makes sense as to the well-known budget cuts that are experienced in Michigan and United States wide with public school. Online public school would make it easier for students to be connected with higher qualified teachers than the teachers that the traditional public school system can afford.

With the research I have conducted it has opened my eyes into the benefits for an online public school education. The big question though, is has it changed my mind? While the research has opened my mind, I will say that my opinion on online public schools has shifted, but I am not completely convinced. I do feel that there are obvious benefits for children who are in rural and urban settings that have trouble finding available and competent teachers. While that is important, I do feel they are still losing out on social skills that are going to be necessary when they leave the public school setting and have to socialize on a daily basis. The articles I read discussed how discussion boards would be a part of their online education, but I just don't feel that equates to face to face socialization. I can understand how technology is important, but eventually the ability to speak with a live person is something that is not learned over the computer, it is a skill that has to be perfected by practice. Which is something that cannot be done online.

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