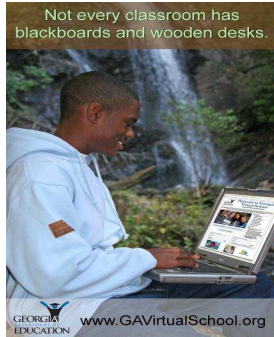


Online K-12 Schools Grow in Popularity

Associated Press

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For Briana LeClaire, a mother of three in Meridian, Idaho, it was a no-brainer to enroll her two school-aged children in Idaho Virtual Academy, a K-12 Internet school that has more than 2,000 students.



LeClaire is just one of the thousands of parents across the country who are choosing to enroll their children in virtual schools. Whether its home schoolers, child actors, elite athletes or children who are advanced or need more help, Internet schools for K-12 are growing. While online education used to be the domain of colleges and universities, that's no longer the case.

Proponents of the virtual schools say children not only are able to get a richer education but the flexibility online schools offer, make it the most viable choice in some cases. With public virtual schools, anyone in the state has an education choice. Online public and charter schools offer the education for free with the school providing necessary equipment including computers and broadband Internet access. Many times the teachers are located in regions near the students and communication is conducted via video conference, telephone and in person.

Currently K12's curriculum is used for 40,000 students in nationwide virtual schools and Packard expects that number to increase by a double-digit rate annually. He said the increase will be driven largely by awareness, as the stigma of an online education continues to dissipate. After all, public online schools are much different than home schooling, where the parents aren't required to follow state mandates. Public online schools are required by the state to take the same tests as the brick and mortar schools, and students have to be taught by certified teachers.

Anthony Picciano, a professor at Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center who specializes in education administration, said the number of students in online public schools stands at around 700,000 to 800,000 out of a school population of around 51 million. That number was between 130,000 and 150,000 in the 2001/2002 school year. Picciano, said that rate will grow, largely with high school students who may take advanced placement classes or supplemental classes online.

"The majority are high-school students, because there's the whole issue of socialization with younger students," said Picciano. "The nature of the primary school and even the middle school is not just to teach academic courses, but it's where they go to develop children emotionally and socially so they can work well with their peers." Supporters of the online schools say socialization isn't an issue, since most students are engaged in activities like field trips, after school programs or church functions where they learn the necessary social skills.

Ultimately, experts in the online K-12 world think there will be a blended approach for teaching students that mixes face-to-face education with virtual learning. The fact that students go on field trips or engage in learning co-ops is evidence that it's already occurring. It's also happening on a structured basis in many online schools like Odyssey Charter Schools, in Clark County, Nevada. Odyssey Charter Schools combines a full online curriculum with required on-site attendance. Students attend classes one day a week for four hours.

1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages specifically identified in the passage above associated with one electing to attend an online K-12 virtual academy. What K-12 schooling option would you prefer? Explain your reasoning and provide evidence to support your response. **(GPS – Grades 6 – 8: MRC a, d)**
2. Approximately what percentage of all school population students do not attend online public educational institutions? Assuming in September 1/8 of all students presently enrolled online, elected to withdraw and attend a traditional brick and mortar school, and by Halloween, 1/4 of these students returned to their original learning site. Identify the difference in population since the initial transition. **(GPS - Grade 6: M6P1 – M6P5; MRC; M6N1 d, g)**
3. Translate the verbal phrase located in the topic and/or introductory sentence from paragraph four regarding K-12 online education enrollment into an algebraic expression. Communicate your mathematical thinking clearly and coherently via interpreting and solving this equation. Explain the process of converting words into algebraic expressions. **(GPS Grade 7: M7P1 – M7P5; MRC; M7A1 a, b, c; M7A2 a)**
4. Translate the following verbal phrase into an algebraic expression and solve: The absolute value of the overall public school population divided by K12's curriculum presently being used for students in nationwide virtual schools equates to an unknown number. **(GPS Grade 8: M8P1 – M8P5; M8A1 a, b, c)**
5. Upon completion of this assignment, how far have we progressed through the 2008-09 series of *The Daughtry Times*®? Express your answer interchangeably as a fraction, decimal, percentage, and circle graph. **(GPS – Grade 6: M6N1f, g; M6D1c; Grade 7: M7D1f)**
6. Using contextual clues only, define the following italicized words: *mandates*, *dissipate*, *socialization*, *virtual*, and *structured* obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(GPS – Grades 6 –8: MRC a, c, d)**

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) adapted from georgiastandards.org. Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with the curriculum map and annotated adjacent to the respective grade level inquiry.

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