Online High School Question

Posted by monica - 2011/08/31 08:21

Hello!

I am new to the forum, and I'm not even sure this is the place to post this question, as it's in reference to high school rather than college, but there's not really any objective forums out there about online high school.

My almost 16 year old is pushing me to allow her to enroll in the k12 online learning program in Ohio. I have serious reservations about this. But I'd like to make the best decision for her. She's a fairly serious child and her long term goal is to become a veterinarian. She was in the gifted learner program in elementary school, and as a high school student is in all Honors and AP (when available) classes. She is well liked by her peers and confident, and her school system is a suburban district with an "Excellent" designation by the state. There's funding issues, but really, aren't all local schools having funding issues?

My concerns are this:
I'm unable to find any statistics on the college graduation rate of traditional vs. online students. I assume this is because online public high school is still fairly new
I'm concerned that the online courses will be "too easy" resulting in lax study habits, thus making her poorly prepared for studying at a college level when the time comes.
I don't see any mention of SAT or ACT preparation.
I can't find any statistics on how this is viewed for college applications. Most research I've done says that colleges look at GPA (she is in the low-mid 4's), difficulty of classes and either SAT or ACT scores primarily, with some colleges having a focus on extra-curricular activities as well.

We had been at an impasse for several months, her father supports the idea, but hasn't been very willing to do any research on how this decision could impact her long term success. He tends to think that at 15, she's almost an adult and should be able to make her own decisions. I disagree, I think at 15 she's absolutely not capable of making a decision that could affect her entire life, that's what parents are for. I've told him repeated that "f*ck these traditional schools" is not a rational argument. This is a guy who has never helped with homework, never signed a report card, never read to the kids and has been generally uninvolved in their education by choice. All of a sudden he is an expert, and that's not sitting well with me :) I told both of them 6 months ago to "sell me" on the idea, but I'm not getting any facts from either of them.

So, any opinions on my concerns listed above, or any sites anyone knows of where I can find some statistics? THANK YOU!!

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Re:Online High School Question

Posted by VickyPhillips - 2011/08/31 12:13

Hi Monica,

You have a lot of great questions so I hope others will chime in. It is hard to find FACTS as opposed to

opinion about online learning so I am going to try and provide some objective research for you to consider.

FIRST, is online learning as GOOD as traditional learning at the K-12 level. In other words if your daughter switches to an online high school will she learn as much or perform as well on exams like the SAT or ACT or AP?

I'd direct you to read the New York Times education blog on the effectiveness of online learning (K-12)http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/19/study-finds-that-online-education-beats-the-classroom/

The research quoted here does show that overall:

"Over the 12-year span, the report found 99 studies in which there were quantitative comparisons of online and classroom performance for the same courses. The analysis for the Department of Education found that, on average, students doing some or all of the course online would rank in the 59th percentile in tested performance, compared with the average classroom student scoring in the 50th percentile. That is a modest but statistically meaningful difference."

What we do know is that overall online education is as effective if not more so than traditional learning in terms of showing good test scores -- that of course will be an important factor if you want your daughter to be well prepared for the SAT and other measures used by many (but not all colleges).

I do not know what state you live in but if you called and asked to speak with someone in the online high school they could give you some real data on the success of their students. They may be a new endeavor BUT they do have to collect data for the state ed dept do I bet they could give you some facts if you want to dig for them.

Colleges will be fine with a virtual high school and the research overall shows it should not hurt your daughter's chance at high SAT or other exam scores. Most online high schools, in fact, offer a wider college prep course range than residential high schools. Here in Vermont, where I live, the schools are small and rural so many kids are using online courses to do advanced college prep that is not available at their local schools.

One thing you don't say is WHY your daughter wants to attend an online high school.
Teenagers face a lot of peer pressure and I'd be concerned about the WHY or what is going on with your daughter that is making her decide on this route. Knowing that may help you guide her and understand her motives.

The downside to studying online at her age will not be that she might get a "lesser" education BUT that she will miss out on the social activities and clubs that are a a BIG part of high school. Colleges don't look at just GPA and courses but also at social activities and achievements like yearbook and student council and band and art. It will hurt your daughters college admission if she shows little in the way of social achievements and awards. Of course home-schoolers have dealt with that issue for decades by organizing other social outlets in the community for their kids.

So, if this were my child I'd not be concerned that she will get a lesser education online but I would be concerned about why she wants to leave regular high school and with making sure her reasons are sound and with making sure she still stays engaged in local community activities if she leaves the local high school.

Education at her age is as much social -- learning to be a part of the community and a peer group -- as it is intellectual, so I'd look to help her understand and balance these two aspects.

Good luck!
Vicky Phillips
Get Educated Founder

monica wrote:
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High School Online Supplement

Posted by phongsrisai - 2012/11/13 17:24

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I am a mother located in California who is trying to locate credible online high school courses to supplement the instruction my daughter is currently receiving in public high school in an effort to enhance the odds of being accepted to university.

Would anyone know:

What are the best sites you've found/why?

Is there an external measure given to the learning site, for instance, like some sort of accreditation or a "Better Business Bureau" of some sort?

Any suggestion is much appreciated!

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Re:High School Online CA

Posted by vicky - 2012/11/13 18:32

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Hi There,

Online highs schools are booming.275,000 students studied online last year and the number choosing to do so is escalating each year.

See our latest blog for a list of the best online high schools offered by university programs. All these virtual programs offer about 200 courses each and specialize in offering college prep and AP advanced placement college level work.

To find the best virtual schools look for 1) programs that hold regional accreditation (that is the same type of accreditation held by residential high schools); and 2) PUBLIC virtual high schools.

Avoid the legion of for-profit high schools that you'll see advertising heavily online.
These schools often lack regional accreditation AND have poor records with places like the Better Business Bureau for deceptive advertising. There is NO need to turn to these options for your daughter as there are high quality FREE virtual high schools open to citizens in California.

Really -- there are SO many great options for online high school studies these days it should be easy to find a great virtual program.

In California you will want to check out some of the FREE programs that have been approved for use by California residents. If your daughter is currently enrolled in a high school and under 21 years of age she should be able to take selected approved courses for FREE online through charter schools such as the California Virtual Academies at http://www.k12.com/cava/. This program is tuition free and has regional accreditation (WASC). The program offers more than 90 core, honors and advanced placement (AP) programs so probably you can find something good to supplement what your daughter has available at her local school.

Hope this helps!
All the best
Vicky Phillips
Founder - GetEducated.com

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