

Digital learning divides student population



My Stance on Life

Brianna Waggoner

With quarantine and social distancing becoming terms ingrained in our brains by now and the country going through many changes due to the dreaded coronavirus [COVID-19]

pandemic, many of us have had to switch gears and adjust to online learning. While this is a large and unusual change and is difficult to adjust to, online learning provides more opportunities for students, particularly those with cluttered schedules.

Online learning is especially strange at a time where children are required to take online classes

because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students are having to quickly change habits and focus more on school so that they are not falling behind in class. Likewise, teachers are needing to make changes to lessons to accommodate for teaching online. In comparison to traditional schooling, online learning can be beneficial if students and teachers put in the proper work.

From personal experience, online learning has proven to be much better compared to traditional schooling, especially if a student's schedule is made up mostly of classes in which the entire year does not rely on time outside of class. With

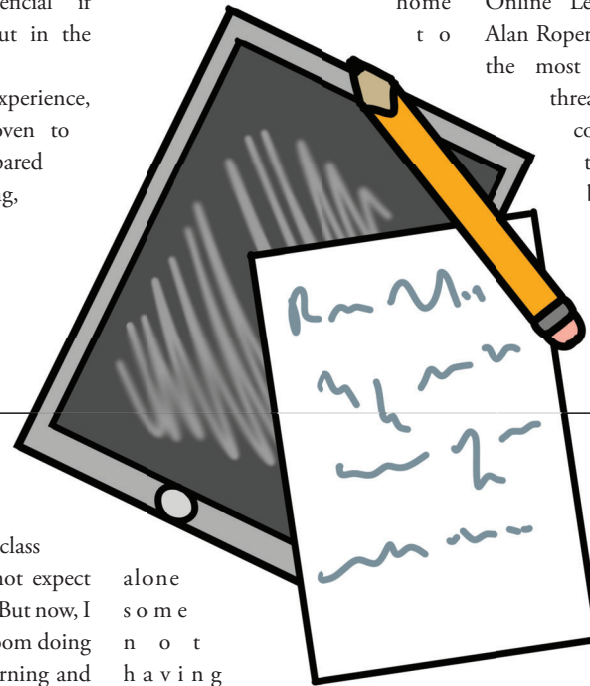
online learning, students are free to create their own personal schedules and adapt to changes easier. Though it takes more work to do compared to going to a physical school where schedules are already decided for students, if a child needs more time to complete classwork, he or she can take the extra time at his or her home

focus on the work.

Online learning does lack face-to-face interaction, unfortunately. Students and teens need social interaction and are more likely to understand a concept with face-to-face teaching. However, in an article on *EDUCAUSE* Review titled "How Students Develop Online Learning Skills," author Alan Roper suggests students make the most of online discussion threads in classrooms and communicate questions to teachers as soon as they begin to struggle. The article also mentions that participating in class discussions helped 52.6 percent of students understand a

topic, and that reading others' replies helped 15.8 percent of students.

When it comes to traditional learning versus online learning, the choice is dependent upon a student's skill set they have developed and the routines and goals they have created for themselves. Students taking online classes are recommended to set aside a specific amount of time daily to complete schoolwork and ask questions if needed. If a student chooses not to follow a routine, he or she risks losing valuable time in a day to effectively complete work, making online learning more difficult than if a set schedule was followed. In the end, though, online learning can definitely be a benefit to students with the necessary work and time put in.



Me vs. the World

Annalise Bassett

Instead of a school bell ringing overhead, we now hear a notification for an email from principal Rob Willman. It is the attendance email--now that we do not have physical classes, the teachers cannot take attendance.

eLearning is something new to all of us. It is not something we have fully done before. Sure, we have had *Google Classroom* for years, but that has generally been used to supplement in-class learning. While it is convenient and handy, teaching yourself via *Google Classroom* is just not the same.

And I get it, I really do. We have to do this right now. The outbreak of COVID-19 suddenly shut our school's doors--for the rest of the

year--without any of us expecting it. I did not expect newspaper staff meetings and band class on *Google Meet*. I did not expect clarinet lessons on *Zoom*. But now, I sit at the desk in my bedroom doing my schoolwork every morning and try to make it as normal as possible.

Using eLearning, it is difficult to teach ourselves. Some can do okay, but some cannot teach themselves online. Before break, I heard from several of my friends that they did not think they would pass all of their classes if we had eLearning. On my end, I worried about AP Biology--it is my most difficult class. So far it is not terrible to do online work, but we have only just started.

Some people do not have WiFi with a good enough connection to join video-chat lectures or to check *Google Classroom* for work, let

alone some not having WiFi at all. I

think it is awesome that the school has WiFi hotspots in the parking lot for students to use, and that *Spectrum* is offering free service for students right now. But what about the kids who live out of the range that *Spectrum* is willing to set up WiFi? What about the kids whose parents are working from home and cannot take them? What about the kids who do not have a license to drive up to school? It is not like we are supposed to have others take us places right now, so what happens with those kids?

Personally, my WiFi is not a

problem. Our WiFi is pretty fast, so I am able to work pretty easily over it.

Unfortunately, I had to stop using my school iPad, because

there are so many connectivity issues on the school's end. Every time I get on my iPad, I find myself having to reset the WiFi every 10 minutes to get anything done. For assignments I can only do on my iPad, like *SmartMusic* assignments for concert band, this is a big issue for me.

Ultimately, I am not totally against eLearning. There are obvious issues with it, but I like being able to work in the comfort of my bedroom while wearing pajamas.

However, I miss having the

experience a classroom offers. It is important to be able to ask your teacher questions in real time, without having to wait for an email back. Some do not email back as quickly as possible, which is understandable, but waiting on an answer poses a challenge.

Some classes work well online, but some are just not set up for an online platform. Band cannot play together on a *Google Meet* call. *SmartMusic* does not allow me the feeling of playing in a group. But what else are we to do, if we must do something for credit?

Until next year, when, hopefully, school starts up again in-person, eLearning works. It is not the worst option, which is not having the rest of the year at all. But remember, when we do go back, that in-person schooling is much more effective than any form of eLearning.

Art by Sam Haney.