Online Schools: Superheroes or Cybervillains?

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May 13, 2016

Donnell-Kay Foundation
The experience and performance of Online Charter Schools perfectly exemplifies the paralysis of current education policy.
Most online education is “blended” with in class time. 65% of courses are taken by juniors and seniors.

Full-time online programs allow students to enroll and earn academic credit based on successful completion of courses provided by the online school.

Full-time online schools can be managed by a state, district, university, charter school, not-for-profit, for-profit or other institution.
447 full-time virtual schools

- enrolled close to 262,000 students in 2013-2014.
- 33 States allow full-time virtual schools
- even split charter - district

Average enrollment differs by type of provider:

- For-profit EMO: 1027
- Non-profit EMO: 286
- Independently run: 266

Fewer minority or low-income students enrolled.
Included States

- Arkansas
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- DC
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- New Mexico
- Nevada
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Texas
- Utah
- Wisconsin
Methods

- Matched Comparison
  - more details at Credo.Stanford.edu
- Pre-post enrollment comparisons
- Panel data analysis
**Denotes significant at the .01 level.
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## Performance by Race/Ethnicity

### Online Charters vs TPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial-Ethnic Subpopulation</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Days of Learning</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Days of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-0.11**</td>
<td>-79</td>
<td>-0.25**</td>
<td>-180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.08**</td>
<td>-58</td>
<td>-0.22**</td>
<td>-158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.11**</td>
<td>-79</td>
<td>-0.29**</td>
<td>-209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>-0.09**</td>
<td>-65</td>
<td>-0.26**</td>
<td>-187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>-0.12**</td>
<td>-86</td>
<td>-0.30**</td>
<td>-216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>-0.09**</td>
<td>-65</td>
<td>-0.26**</td>
<td>-187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Expected Parental Roles

![Bar chart showing the effect size of different parental roles on days of learning for elementary, middle, and high school students. The roles include Monitor Assignment Completion, Actively Participate in Instruction, Parent Training Sessions, Verify Seat Time, and Other Role. The effect sizes are marked with asterisks indicating significance levels, with double asterisks (*) indicating high significance. The chart also includes a legend for the color coding of the bars representing different educational levels.]
Implications

1. Current online charter schools may be a good fit for some students, but the evidence suggests that online charters don’t serve very well the students that currently attend these schools, much less the general population.

2. Current oversight policies in place may not be sufficient for online charter schools.

3. States should examine the current progress of existing online programs before allowing expansion.
Impacts

Public response:

Advocates from all sides criticized online model
Response from providers: apples: oranges
Other researchers took aim at methods

Regulatory response:

Four states launch hearings or inquiries

Market response:

K12, Inc. stock price dropped 22% the month CREDO’s report was released
Issues

1. Desperate need to innovate
2. Market based protections are *WEAK AT BEST*
3. Isolation of students and parents
4. Authorizers face extreme challenges
Let’s Chat!
Thank you!