

SHOULD ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS OFFER AN OPTION FOR ONLINE LEARNING?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

AS MANY PARENTS FRET OVER REMOTE LEARNING, SOME FIND THEIR KIDS ARE THRIVING

NPR Morning Edition | March 8, 2021 | Audio

3:18 minutes

This segment speaks with Bobby, a sixth-grade student in Massachusetts, about his virtual learning experience to reflect on why some students may be thriving in online learning environments.

- Bobby has ADHD and has seizures sometimes. While learning online, he can get up and walks around to get some of his energy out without distraction other students, which isn't the case in-person.
- With remote school, teachers often use video, which means Bobby can rewind as much as he wants in order to absorb the information he needs.
- Some school districts are trying to accommodate students who do better in an online learning environment. The Sioux City School District in Iowa, for example, expects up to a thousand children to sign up for a permanent online program for the 2021-2022 school year.

SUPERINTENDENT ON WHY SOME STUDENTS MIGHT THRIVE UNDER VIRTUAL LEARNING

NPR | March 28, 2021 | Audio

7:20 minutes

This segment speaks to Jamie Wilson, the superintendent of the Denton Independent School District in Texas, about the benefits of virtual instruction.

- Jamie Wilson states that a wide range of students have benefitted from virtual learning in different ways. Students with ADHD, for example, are able to focus for shorter periods of time with intermittent breaks. Other students prefer to work through the curriculum a little faster than others, and online learning allows some self-pacing to happen.
- Though some have concerns about social development within virtual settings, Wilson believes that students and families will choose to be involved in extracurricular activities at school.
- Wilson sees that in his community, parents are appreciative that the school system is trying to create a new option for them.

5 THINGS WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT VIRTUAL SCHOOL IN 2020

NPR | December 4, 2020 | Article

This article discusses five lessons that have been learned during the pandemic about online learning, based on conversations with teachers across six states.

- The digital divide means that not all students have equal access to the internet. Poor students, especially those who live in rural areas, struggle to get internet access, which creates an equity issue as teachers try to deliver online instruction.
- Relationships are extremely important in offering students a high-quality education, but these are difficult to develop online.
- In families where parents are working, there's often not the appropriate supervision for young learners. Sometimes, children are even babysitting siblings during the school day.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Virtual learning
- Pedagogy
- Self-pacing

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.