

# The Upside to Hybrid and Online Learning

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As students, teachers and parents embark on a journey into uncharted territory, there is much concern about how hybrid and online education will impact student learning. The outcome will largely depend on how teachers and parents alike, use resources available to them.

Sure, online learning is a different experience, but it has been proven to have many advantages. One valuable asset of online learning is that discussion forums on platforms such as Quip or Blackboard are more in-depth. Students can take time to read and reflect on their peers' entries in order to compose and revise a well thought out response. They can also go back and revisit a current or previous thread, enabling them to draw more substantive conclusions on a specific topic.

Students are often more comfortable participating and asking questions online than in a traditional classroom. They also tend to be more honest and open about their thoughts, especially when confronting difficult topics. Education goes far beyond teaching academic and technical skills as it is also designed to educate students to be compassionate and civically engaged citizens. Jesuits call it " Care for the individual person."

When it comes to teaching an appreciation of cultures in elementary school or teaching the different manifestations of racial inequality and injustice in the United States to middle and high school students, online learning can have more of an impact, as it allows for a variety of different formats and modalities. Using visual representation such as pictures and videos of individuals telling their own stories, side-by-side written histories, helps to create a more accurate account and a more engaged connection with other human beings while challenging familiar and preexisting narratives.

Some of the more common visual online resources include:

- eBooks, text and digital images, animations
- Interactive maps, images, and video
- Interactive journals and blogs
- Podcasts

James Prosek, artist and author, challenges the limitations of language when he discusses his exhibit, *Art, Artifact, Artifice* at the Yale University Art Gallery. He says, “We prefer the world as filtered by our minds, where it can be made orderly and intelligible, because then we feel we know it, and knowing brings comfort.”

He goes on to say, “Racism, sexism, religious discrimination, intolerance of myriad kinds emerge from a belief that there is some ideal form or way of being.”

There are certain downsides to online learning, as in any model, such as an inequity in access to technology, which is an important issue and challenge throughout public education. And of course, it is a given that nothing replaces the valuable social interaction that students glean from an in-person classroom experience.

But during a time where the overarching concern and goal is individual and public health and safety, online learning should not be feared or stereotyped as an inferior method of learning. On the contrary, it can be quite exciting and effective if done

properly, with the added benefits of fostering self-discipline, time management and self-agency skills. So as the fall semester approaches, don't be afraid to get right in there and create a multidimensional and interactive experience for all.

Editor's Note: Gale Papageorge has served on multiple higher education diversity curriculum committees and has designed American Diversity Requirement classes at Fairfield University, where she currently teaches. She's been noted as a Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Scholar in Harlem, N.Y., and holds a Master's degree in American and African American Literature and a PhD in Comparative Ethnic American Literature. She is the author of several books including, *New Rhetorical Strategies for Reading African American Texts*, *A Dialogic Approach to Reading and Teaching Ethnic American Texts*, and a contributing author to *Patriarchy in Sandra Cisneros's The House on Mango Street: Social Issues in Literature*.