



unleash the xPotential

Debunking the Myths About Online Learning

Rob Letcher

Director – High School Instruction

k¹², Inc.

Introductions



Rob Letcher

- 8 yrs. B & M and 5 yrs. “virtual”
- Director – High School Instruction for k¹², Inc.
- rletcher@k12.com

k¹²

- Founded in 1999 to create an excellent, traditional program in education
- Curriculum from K to 12 and k¹²-managed Virtual Academies in 23 states (10 HS)
- School districts and non-K12 managed schools in 10+ states
- Children are more likely to reach academic success if parents take an active role in their education

...and you are?



What are *myths*?

- Derived from the Greek word mythos
 - The word based on faith
 - Not necessarily factual or non-factual
 - Something in which one must *believe*
- Compared to logos, which can be proven

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth>



How do they come about?

- Lack of knowledge and understanding
- Often have an element of truth, but ‘grows’
- Missing schema
- Attempt to explain something
- Fear
- Purposeful ‘misinformation’

Uncovering the Myths



- Continuous Improvement
- During SY '06-'07 Focus Groups In Several States
- Participants had not heard of Online High School programs
- Comments exhibited common myths of the 'uninitiated'

Most Common Myths We Heard



- Online High Schools Do Not Exist
- It Is Easy and Takes Less Time and Effort
- No Accountability
- Rampant Cheating
- Students are Lonely
- No Teachers – Taught by a Computer
- It's a Fad
- Cheaper than Physical Schools

Myth #1: Online High Schools Don't Exist

What have *you* heard?



Research:

- Sloan Consortium '05/06 estimate of 700K *student* enrollments (1,2)– (1.5% of 48MM public school students)
- About 25 percent of all K–12 public schools now offer some form of e-learning or virtual school
- “Within the next decade every state and most schools will be doing so” (3)



Myth 2: Easier and Takes Less Time

What have *you* heard?

Research:



- Can take twice as much time and effort (4)
- Although it takes more time, teachers cite that they enjoy it more (5)



Myth #3: Online Schools Have No Accountability

What have *you* heard?

Research:

- State-led programs report to state's education agency
- Virtual public schools are accountable in the same ways all public schools are accountable, and in some cases, **more**
 - All NCLB/AYP requirements apply
 - State tests, including end-of-course and graduation tests
 - Reporting to the charter school authorizer
- Regional accrediting associations have developed a Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) for schools the cross regional boundaries. (2)



Myth #4: Rampant Cheating



What have *you* heard?

Research:

- No significant difference between cheating on regular paper assessments and web-based assessments. Only 3% of 796 undergrads admitted to cheating, similar to traditional courses.(7)
- 1998 survey conducted by the *Josephson Institute of Ethics* found that 70% of high school students and 54% of middle school students reported they had cheated on an exam in the last 12 months. (8)



Myth #5: Online Students Are Lonely

What have *you* heard?

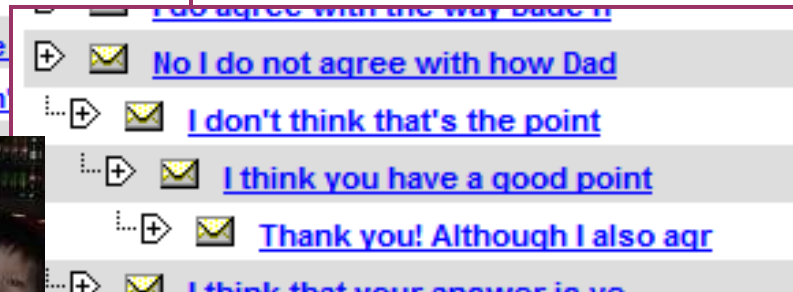
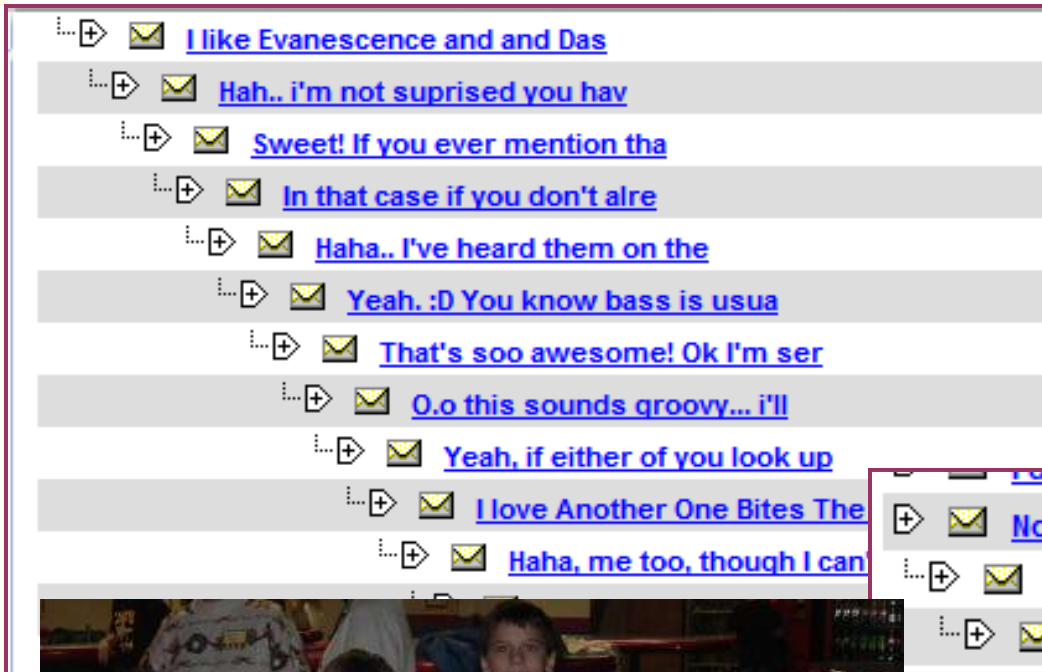
Research:

- The potential for learner interaction with others is generally greater in electronic distance education. (2)





Examples of Interactivity





Myth #6: There Are No Teachers

What have *you* heard?

Research:

Teachers are still necessary and integral to the success of online learning. It's not that online learning does not require a teacher – rather, what a teacher DOES changes. (9)



Myth 7: It's a fad

What have *you* heard?

Research:

- Estimate of 40,000 to 50,000 students enrolled in online courses in 2001 (10)
- Smith, Clark and Blomeyer estimated 700,000 for 2005–2006 (2)
- This growth will be sustained(11)
- If growth mimics post-secondary online enrolment growth-trends, the enrollment in online courses would easily approach several million students.
- “About 25 percent of all K–12 public schools now offer some form of e-learning or virtual school instruction. Within the next decade every state and most schools will be doing so” (12).



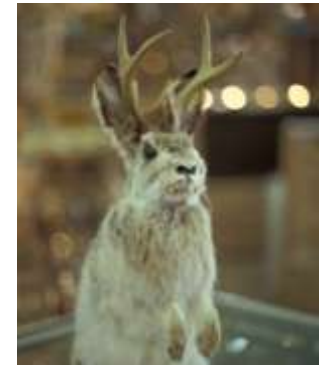


Myth 8: Cheaper than Traditional Schooling

What have *you* heard?

Research:

- About the same cost
- California Department of Education (Date) Report to the Legislature: AB 294 Online Classroom Pilot Program. (From *The State of Online Learning in California Sept 2006* report).
- Real costs in range from \$7200 to \$8300 per FTE for full-time virtual students
- Bottom line: Costs comparable to brick-and-mortar



What other myths have *you* heard?

How do you address them?



How can you *prevent* myths?





Remember...

- Myths are...
 - Lack of knowledge and understanding
 - Often have an element of truth, but ‘grows’
 - Missing schema
 - Attempt to explain something
 - Fear
 - Purposeful ‘misinformation’
- Use education and information to combat them
- Be sure you don’t unwittingly propagate them



More information?



Rob Letcher

rletcher@k12.com

www.k12.com

www.tinyurl.com/225gks