

@Home Schooling

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VISION

Learning is a personal experience of actively reconciling old knowledge with new. It is also a social experience where the learner constructs his knowledge with others. @Home Schooling makes use of affordable high-speed internet access and computers, advanced computer presentations, and scientifically formulated learning techniques to further the personal and social aspects of learning in a complete educational experience. We realize that technology does not instruct, but rather enables the teacher to present based on the needs of the student, and the student to actively own the education. Through a collaborative, relaxed and fun environment we offer a complete educational experience, where the student inquires into problems and learns by doing, with real classmates.

Collaborative approaches are inherently freer forms of education than lecture styles, and thus are slower paced and cover less material. This inadequacy is countered by the increased retention and understanding that comes from our learner based approach to education. Aside from the benefits of an active, social and personalized learning experience, @Home Schooling aims through holistic presentations to take much of the worrisome burden of memorization off the student's shoulders and allow them to focus their attention on understanding.

A relaxed, confident, focused mind is indeed more receptive than a stressed mind. @Home Schooling aims to remove the worries associated with knowing the material so that enjoyment can be the emotion guiding the student. The effectiveness of @Home Schooling learning boosts self confidence, a boost that is constantly reinforced by the relaxed, positive atmosphere, where any bit of knowledge is always two touches away. Grading is done through a plethora of evaluation techniques, which the student's are free to take as many times as they please. By removing psychological barriers to learning, the student can truly reach their potential.

Aside from cultivating exceptional skills and interests, @Home Schooling aims to shape a holistically balanced student, in both knowledge retention and skills development. The education is interdisciplinary, problem focused, process based, teamwork oriented, demanding of critical and innovative thinking, developing computer fluency, in order to create a lifetime learner, ready for the knowledge age.

While this vision is tagged for k-12 in home education, it could easily apply to other learning brackets and venues. One of the great benefits of @Home Schooling for young students and their parents lies in the inherent safety of a supervised education out of the home. We also offer easier opportunities for parental involvement in the education. @Home Schooling truly offers to the global village a relaxed, stimulating education that the individual can own.

A PERSONALIZED EDUCATION

Education in its most liberal form is a means to knowledge. An educator's mission thus lies not in choosing *what* the student learns, but how well he learns it, the quality of the presentation. Modern cognitive theory tells us learning is different for every child, a point traditional education practically has never been able to regard. We are just now reaching a time today when technology can offer us the tools to tailor the presentation to the student (according to intellectual development, competencies, weaknesses, preferred learning style and pace, interests, academic background). Technology can really free the educator to explore more effective modes of presentation that best appeal to the needs and interests of the student. The development of a truly personalized education is the purpose behind @Home Schooling.

While part of this revolutionary change is strictly technological, part is necessarily pedagogical. It has long been known that to teach by example is much more effective than by definition, as learning is basically the reconciliation of old knowledge with new. With individualized instruction, teachers can make examples applicable to each student. Teachers can focus on the student's reconciliation of knowledge and thereby dramatically increase the quality of learning.

Personalized instruction implies a stronger relationship between student and teacher. With the constant stream of information the teacher receives from the student (including personal interests and beliefs, reading level, standardized scores, study habits, academic, motivation for study), teachers can better adapt their presentation to the student and monitor progress. Teachers can also better diagnose learning difficulties (many which traditionally go unnoticed) and prescribe effective remedies, as well as identify skills.

A NEW TEACHER

The primary focus of the teacher is the medium of personalized instruction, including the audio and visual elements, the timely introduction of material, the conduction of group dynamics, and their own appearance and relationship to the student. All this requires a detailed understanding of the student, obtained from orientation evaluations, class time and daily meetings. To truly tailor a fit for the student, the teacher must adapt to constant feedback from students (both direct and indirect). Spend less time grading students, more time identifying gifts and cultivating these in the broadest spectrum of talents

While gearing the material towards each student individually, the teacher also is maintaining the general presentation to the class. Classes will thus be grouped according to learning styles and skills so the teacher can prepare a rough, general presentation and then interface them at points with individual students.

Teachers will less be concerned with presenting material isolated from the real world, and more about providing opportunities to use newly acquired knowledge or skills in a

real or simulated setting. A teacher's first job is not to explain, but introduce. Then s/he is there to provide feedback and reinforcements that will sustain the desired behavior.

In learner-based education, the teacher is a co-investigator with the student, not the primary source of knowledge, nor even the primary interpreter. The teacher's job is to facilitate a collaborative atmosphere by modeling effective learning behavior (both social, academic and motivational) and emotional intelligence. As a facilitator, the teacher motivates, guides, coaches and mediates when necessary.

A role as an interloper necessitates a trustful relationship between teacher and student. @Home Schooling is designed to allow teachers to assume more honest roles more easily. While the teacher does guide the curricula in a certain direction, the freedom for exploration inherent in collaboration and the wealth of information a click away means the student is not forced to accept one viewpoint. Such empowerment does much to remove the cynical bent students naturally take towards authority in their education.

While the teacher does talk less here than in a lecture, s/he concerns with a lot more than simply the material. The student is actually more active here in explaining the material than the teacher, and thus the followed curriculum is more flexible than traditionally (a certain boon to the teacher).

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Internet learning, though labeled a "distance education", actually does quite the opposite by increasing human interaction, as indicated by the predominance of collaborative and cooperative learning approaches in internet schooling. The social element of learning can now be realistically regarded, as the teacher through @Home Schooling has vigorous control of the presentation. Collaborative and cooperative approaches can function fluidly in this educational medium, where the flow of conversation and presentation are planned (though not entirely) by the teacher.

In class students work together and offer input forth to the group in a creative effort to problem solve, brainstorm, debate, or any number of group activities. Here students are positively interdependent. Activities are structured so that students need each other to accomplish their common tasks or learning activities. Such active social learning develops communication and group skills, not to mention emotional intelligences, to an extent unsurpassed by any other pedagogical approach. The teacher acts as a conductor of symphony; initiating, guiding, modeling.

A key feature of collaboration is the absence of competition. The class is on a voyage to explore the new and collectively create in a positive environment, and competition counters the relaxation necessary for student receptivity. All aspects of competition are tuned down as much as possible. Competition, while certainly baring fruit when competitor's are well versed and aimed at creating something outside them, does not work well when we're constantly introducing new material. And what we find in

friendliness is a break from the apathy and anonymity of modern life, a personally involved atmosphere.

Creating a friendly atmosphere is not the only way collaboration facilitates learning. Communication is central to reconceptualization, the opening and broadening of the mind to other perspectives. A sense for diversity is further developed by the personal nature of peer relationships in @Home Schooling, and the extensive socializing beyond class boundaries of our internet based education. Beyond breadth, collaboration develops a depth of understanding through the verbalization of thoughts, as the necessary justifications help cement and expand learning.

Much of an individual student's learning will come from their fellow student's, and not directly from teachers. Collaboration takes advantage of the fact that students can sometimes explain concepts to other students more effectively than someone who is vastly more knowledgeable, as the concept is fresh and the difficulties are ripe in mind.

An education that is too liberal and gives too many decisions to amateur explorers can easily spiral far off topic and not highlight the necessary points. It is the teacher's control over the presentation that supplements the innate freedom to explore of collaborative learning, providing the stability of a lecture without the passivity. @Home Schooling removes all distractions from the classroom, so that the student will only see the teacher's presentation, be it the teacher's picture, peer pictures or visuals. With such control, a collaborative approach takes advantage of the all important social aspect of learning, decreasing pressure and increasing retention and understanding.

AN ACTIVE LEARNER

@Home Schooling aims for comprehension, and this is no better achieved than by active exploration. We empower each learner with a far greater role in and ownership of the education learning. Class time will not be devoted to review of lecture notes or textbooks, as these narrow disciplined summations offer little excitement for students to pay attention and learn. Rather our student's will discover for themselves their education by exploring realistic examples with peers.

Part of this bold approach to learning involves the acceptance of failure as a necessary part in the process. To fail is to learn boldly, and this is what @Home Schooling will continuously emphasize to the student. Self confidence is a necessary trait for the active learner. Inquisitiveness and experimentation are the ethics emphasized by this approach.

We find in experimentation a genuine interaction with the learning environment. @Home Schooling offers a flexible environment where "what if" questions can be answered, and the student can fully assume the lead in the education. Laboratory work, role playing, and simulations are only some of the tools that allow the student to actively question the material. The tutor is still guiding the learner, outlining the experiment and

the evaluation criteria for the students. Multimedia facilitates the freedom to deviate from the present course and explore.

Beyond questions, student's actively decide and regulate their own education, particularly the rules they feel passionately about. Some of the common fears about working with groups include student fears that each member will not pull their weight as a part of the group. On the first day of class student's begin to outline acceptable group behavior as a code for the class to learn by, emphasizing that students are individually accountable or responsible for their work or learning.

Even homework (outstudy) will be largely at the student's discretion; consisting of some group outstudy and some personal outstudy (part of which concerns self evaluation, indulging in subjects of interest). Student disagreements with educational practice under @Home Schooling not only have voices, but they have force, a vested interest.

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Modern man has the bane of a bare, narrow vision, not only in general perception of life but regard of most things, including education. Emphasis has been placed on a thin band of talents, others being discarded without much discretion. Little attention has been paid emotional intelligence, with the predictable outcome being increases in crime and mental illness. Traditional education falls short in skills emphasis, supported learning styles and student motivation. As opposed to cultivating the whole person, focus has been on the development of specific talents (verbal/math faculty, memory, logical analysis). To those who are prematurely developed in a specific talent we traditionally call "genius", a practice harmful to the student and to those whom this misempowerment effects. To those who are not ready for rigorous academics, tradition throws them into it anyway, leaving them with feelings of failure and worthlessness. Complacency about particular forms of intellect is the central problem.

@Home Schooling aims to develop the whole person, recognizing that there a myriad of intelligences. Beyond traditional regards, there is spatial capacity (as seen in artists), kinesthetic ability (Michael Jordan), musical, interpersonal, and intrapsychic (attuning one's life to one's feelings - self knowledge) faculties. We aim to identify the student's needs in numerous capacities, particularly points of genius and those that need improvement.

@Home Schooling offers a balanced education, emphasizing both depth and variety. Classes are formed of student's with similar learning styles and pace, as well as academic background. The narrowed learning opportunities inherent in this necessary grouping are countered by extensive interclass collaboration. Traditionally lightly weighted, @Home Schooling stresses a social atmosphere and the value of emotional intelligence throughout year. In addition, we actively encourage engagement in local activities for physical and further social development.

There are also a number of different ways people learn best; in visual, auditory, or even hands on modes. In addition to sensory preferences, the cognition of learning varies individually as well. The innovative learner is imaginative, relating the material to personal experience for learning to take place. The common sense student wants realistic examples relevant to real life, while the dynamic one learns by actual involvement. @Home Schooling focuses the primary presentation with the primary learning style of the student, and supplements this with other styles. While we are a "virtual classroom", we do not let this limit hands on learning, as kinesthetic learning is an essential delivery mechanism. We have weekly labs when students make use of every day objects and their Lab Kits to both follow along and work in groups to solve and understand for themselves. With such balanced and personalized development, @Home Schooling students have a better chance of realizing their whole potential.

A RELAXED ENVIRONMENT

By stressing that getting good grades is primary, understanding the material is secondary, traditional schooling teaches students to be competitive, selfish and high pressured. @Home Schooling rather approaches learning in a cooperative, relaxed classroom. We simulate the conditions of our most impressive learning experience - learning before traditional k-12. Material is presented to accentuate the novel, instill wonderment, and encourage a playful, low pressure atmosphere.

Every day class will start with the sharing of music, movement and humor. Students can present their interests to the class and find points of contact while playing both physical and passive group games. The class then proceeds to the relaxation process, first a physical then a mental relaxation. The process consists of meditation and audio/visual stimuli, and need not take more than two minutes.

When learning begins, it does so with certain activity by each student. Exploration begins with significant abandon, and failures are only seen as learning experiences. Such an embracing environment strides to remove the self consciousness that can so limit our receptivity and focus.

INTERNET EDUCATION

We are just now entering a time when the full power of the internet in education can be realized as the technology is finally affordable. Particularly promising are high definition video conferencing and virtual reality modes. With these technologies, the presentation to the student can now be intricately prepared and fine tuned. Controlled collaboration through customized media can deliver ownership of the education to the student. With these capabilities, education can begin its gravitation to the internet, and truly start to democratize.

Aside from offering increased control, internet education tends to broaden a student's horizons. The relaxation inherent in education from home helps remove detrimental elements of self consciousness in the classroom. Freed of self imposed limits, students can truly begin to explore their potentials. The internet also supports a broadening of views through the variety it offers: no infrastructure can better cross geographic, cultural and professional boundaries. With @Home Schooling students have "virtual adventures", audio/visual interaction with teams of scientists on research and professionals on the job.

An education based on new technologies might sound too costly, but the rate of progress in the technology industries has fairly silenced those fears. Cost containment is actually inherent in today's distance learning. An education based on a technological medium can conserve scarce financial resources by maximizing the educational potential of information devices. Internet education eliminates expensive travel, has a minimal physical requirement and makes the best use of limited time. Here is the future of education.

RETENTION

@Home Schooling compensates for the slower pace inherent in collaboration by increasing retention of material. By stressing fun, novelty, activity and emotion in learning we can harness the student's attention and unleash potential. Aside from the heightened receptivity and enthusiasm @Home Schooling promotes, we aim to facilitate memorization through the use of memory maps, music and regular review.

Review can only be conducted after the student demonstrates understanding of the material. An important step to understanding is the realization of context. This is accomplished through the creation of mental maps of the material, a relation of the subject in terms of past material, present and future, as well as the student's knowledge base. Students will create memory maps of the material that has been covered as words, pictures or sounds and explain the map to the class. Students then choose another memory map that they like and add it to their running detailed summary of their study.

@Home Schooling next uses music to further retention of the student's understanding. We employ low backdrops of classical musical to our reviews, in addition to subliminal and peripheral images, which combined have been scientifically proven to greatly enhance many aspects of learning. During the music phase of review, the teacher encapsulates the material for the student in short and with rhythmical sentences that flow in unison with the tune. The material is then reviewed by the playing of fun, sociable games where students have the opportunity to verbalize their review.

Review will not only occur before tests, rather it is timed to best maintain retention. Put in context, material will be reviewed after 10 min., after 1 day, 1 week, 1 month, and 6 months (limited of course by the length of the class). Beyond the bare curricula, basic study, interpersonal and emotional skills will be continuously reinforced throughout the

school year. Such dedication to keeping the knowledge students have attained itself reinforces our tenet that understanding is the primary goal of @Home Schooling education.

CONFIDENCE

The key to releasing a student's potential lies in removing the limitations they see on their education and themselves. Our primary focus in orientation and the first days of class is to inspire confidence in the @Home Schooling approach, and particularly the teacher. Confidence in self generally takes longer to develop, and this is our main focus throughout the school year. A relaxed, collaborative, active approach to education in itself motivates high self confidence.

@Home schooling goes further to directly promote high self esteem. A negative self image is main reason why people learn slowly, as it erects mental barriers to our learning. We tell ourselves "I can only read so fast", or "I'm no good at math", and we fulfill the prophecy. If these barriers are removed by suggestion, ability increases to match your potential. @Home Schooling makes this suggestion evident in numerous ways. By recognizing an individual student's learning styles and levels, we can gear the presentation to enable them to succeed while maintaining a degree of challenge. With a presentation that is not too hard nor too easy, the student can see that expended effort directly influences the consequences.

Effort of course can only bring a student so far in the sometimes daunting challenge that is education. Fears of losing oneself in the flow of information are a traditional downer on self confidence. @Home Schooling uses the potentials of information devices to reduce these fears. If the student doesn't pick up the material right away, this is no problem, as the meanings and contexts are always immediately available. Furthermore, the extent of review and the emphasis on relating learned materials acts to further boost student expectations of the learning process.

Beyond generating positive expectations, teachers provide feedback and support for both successes and failures. These responses can help students better estimate the probability of success by creating performance requirements and evaluation criteria. With concerned, personalized reinforcement @Home Schooling acts to remove the pitfalls traditionally associated with education.

EVALUATIONS

@Home Schooling takes a holistic perspective to grading. Technology and the personalized nature of our education allows for a wider variety of evaluation tools, from which we gather a more complete reflection of the student's abilities. This variety allows the teacher to regard the student from many perspectives in a form that is comfortable to the student.

Student evaluation with @Home Schooling is constructed to minimize pressure. Tests will be geared to the student's learning and expression style. Students who do not pass to their own satisfaction can take the test again and again in alternative forms until they pass.

@Home Schooling makes use of a variety of evaluation techniques, including oral, group and written activities, projects, student portfolios, and some traditional testing. Review time is an integral part of @Home Schooling evaluation, a technique made reliable by cyberspace. Our review consists of playing games that allow students to demonstrate knowledge, both solitary and as a group. A relaxed, guided, active learner can better communicate what has been learned, and a personally involved teacher can better understand the student.

A strong relationship must be built on trust, so @Home Schooling is designed to allow teachers to assume more honest roles more easily. By removing much of the worry over memorization, exams can better assess the achievement of important course goals, and not the ability to memorize facts or to see through trick questions. An evaluation that emphasizes quality of quantity is certainly more in the spirit of education.

PARENTS

@Home Schooling offers control and opportunity for involvement in an education, both for the student and the parent. Before the education begins, the student and parent decide upon the content, with the guidance of an academic counselor. Everything from curricula to moral perspective can be customized to your liking, delivering ownership of education to the customer.

@Home Schooling is designed to alleviate the worry parents feel over their children's education. From school shootings to harmful social exchanges to doubts about the teacher, parents have a lot to preoccupy their minds. Our medium of audio and visual observation allows our virtual caretakers to constantly monitor your child. Also, each teacher will have the camera's view of your child, to ensure that they are attentive. In the event of absenteeism or an emergency, parents will be beeped. As our school operates on cable lines, the phone lines will always be free so you can contact your child. In the unlikely event of emergency, the proper local authorities will be notified simultaneously.

In addition to these measures, we employ software that inhibits the use of all other applications during school time (unless allowed by the teacher), so you can be assured that your child is not surfing the net during class. The teacher will also control your child's view, so that when your child should be listening to the teacher, it is only the teacher they will see and hear, and only when allowed can they interact with other students. You can be assured that we employ the most up to date, distinguished internet security for @Home Schooling.

Beyond security, @Home Schooling involves the parents in their children's education. Throughout the schooling, aside from weekly meetings with the teacher, certified academic and spiritual counselors and psychotherapists will be available via internet to discuss any problems you might have with your child's education. You can easily get advice on how to deal with poor academic or disciplinary performances, or how to best encourage your child's academic interests. Parents can also tune into their child's education online, where they can retrieve in text, audio or visual forms webcasts of their child in class.

CLASSROOM DESCRIPTION

With @Home Schooling, the student will experience two classrooms, the physical and the virtual. The physical classroom, which will be one room or part of a room in your house, will be an environment conducive to learning. We will include elements of the natural environment (trees, clay, plants, aquarium), with a minimum of distraction. It is here that the kinesthetic learning will occur, where students use their lab kits or safe household materials to create and understand.

The virtual classroom will be via internet, either cable or wireless access, in a video conferencing environment of no more than twelve students and two teachers (one professional, one GSI). @Home Schooling employs the current technologies to best simulate face to face conversation. We offer a clear, high resolution video stream that allows for a feeling of social presence, including eye contact and nonverbal communications. The video display is controlled by the teacher and will either be a view of the teacher, view of one or more students, a prepared visual part of presentation, shared application or the whiteboard.

@Home Schooling uses two types of shared applications which students can use in and out of class time. Student-controlled applications are open for any participant to modify documents at will, while teacher-controlled programs only allow student input at the teacher's discretion. A whiteboard is of the latter type, where teachers can outline and explain, while allowing students to add, remove, or edit documents simultaneously. Virtual reality and simulation technology will also be employed for group activity. Shared applications will be displayed side by side with the class video display.

The video display is the majority of the screen, and surrounding it is the toolbar. Here student's can access one-touch their daily schedule, zoom tool, calculator, ruler,

assignments/due dates, among other important options. The Classtalk icon allows students to view class recordings up to the moment in their preferred format, and to flag material that they have questions about and review what has been said and done. A journal icon, for both private and academic entries, is available on the toolbar so the student can instantly record thoughts in their preferred style. Also, class records and all relevant reading materials are toolbar icons. With @Home Schooling, students are offered the tools to motivate active learning and ensure understanding.