

# Virtual Schooling: Disrupting the Status Quo

## Talking Points

- The U.S. has shifted to a knowledge-based economy which requires students to master higher order knowledge and skills.
- Our current education system was designed in the early 1900s for an industrial-based economy that needed a standardized system for processing students in large batches with a fixed amount of time for each stage in the process of assembling an educated person—time is the constant, and learning is the variable.
- Online learning is a disruptive innovation that has the potential to help transform the current monolithic, factory-model education system into a more affordable, student-centric system for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Every student learns differently and benefits from a customized learning approach to maximize his or her potential.
- To be successful, a disruptive innovation must not initially compete against the existing paradigm by serving existing users—it should first target those not being served. In education these include rural schools with limited or no access to advanced/specialized courses, urban schools with scheduling conflicts and overcrowded classrooms, home-schooled students, students needing to retake failed courses, etc.
- Florida is a leader in the online learning movement. Florida Virtual School alone served over 70,000 students in the 2008-2009 school year.
- In an apples-to-apples comparison of per-pupil instructional costs, the Florida Virtual School is less expensive than traditional bricks-and-mortar schools.
- There is early evidence that the absolute cost of online courses is also lower because providers can use teachers and other staff resources in novel ways.
- Online learning has the potential to help push education reform toward an affordable, mastery-based, student-centric model where time becomes the variable and learning the constant.
- Policymakers must avoid replicating the old factory-model system online and shift to new metrics for the emerging education system: change the focus from inputs (money being spent) to outcomes (content mastery), re-define policies that were based on traditional classrooms (such as student-teacher ratios), encourage learning innovations, etc.

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