



"The Early Show"

Profile: Study Hall; Online courses for high school students

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TRANSCRIPT

Just 10 years ago, schools were still working to put computers in every classroom. Now, as EARLY SHOW correspondent Debbye Turner tells us, the computer has actually become the classroom for a lot of high school students.

DEBBYE TURNER reporting:

The scene at Columbia High School is common across the country: hallways bursting with students trying to get to their next class. For honors student Erica Nouvoa, it's pre-calculus.

Unidentified Teacher: And that, then, will reveal the hypotenuse.

TURNER: After a full day of lectures, and catching up with friends, Erica's school day continues when she heads home and attends English class on her computer.

Ms. ERICA NOUVOA: I like the fact that I can do it at my own pace.

TURNER: This advanced placement course is available at Erica's high school. But taking the course online is more convenient for her.

Ms. NOUVOA: About 5:45 I think I'd have to wake up, I just don't like waking up that early.

TURNER: So Erica enrolled at the Florida Virtual School, which has been delivering course work over the Internet for 10 years. A decade ago, online learning could have been easily dismissed as a trend, but now it's more likely to become a national standard.

So far, 38 states have established so-called cyber schools. And in Michigan, an online course is now a requirement for a high school diploma.

Online learning is growing so fast, the US Department of Education has yet to track the numbers. But the halls of America's high schools aren't going to clear out just yet. That's because state-funded Internet courses are designed to supplement, not replace, a student's overall education.

Beyond state-funded programs, privately run cyber schools are serving the nontraditional student. Emilia Monell eventually plans to join the professional tennis tour. But for now, her morning practice sessions are followed by afternoons on the Internet, where she gets her entire high school curriculum from the University of Miami Online High School.

Ms. EMILIA MONELL (Attends Online High School): It's very rare to find an athlete who goes to traditional school these days. Most of it is online, at least in the tennis world.

TURNER: As Emilia's training required more time on the court, she lobbied her parents to search for an alternate to the classroom.

How would life be different, or more difficult for her, if she didn't have this option of online high school?

Mr. TERRY MONELL (Daughter Attends Online High School): She wouldn't be able to travel with the national tournaments and take time from school.

Mr. NED MONELL (Daughter Attends Online High School): She wouldn't have been able to train in Spain, which she did this past summer. She--there's so many things that the portable classroom is a must, because otherwise her options would be so limited that it probably wouldn't pan out.

TURNER: So far, Emilia's online experience has been panning out pretty well.

How are your grades?

Ms. E. MONELL: Straight A's, I'm proud to say. You know, I've worked hard, and I really value academics and so, yeah, I'm doing pretty well.

Mr. HOWARD LIEBMAN (Principal/Chief Operating Officer, University of Miami Online High School): Are you going to go back to that matrix...

TURNER: Howard Liebman runs the University of Miami Online High School.

Mr. LIEBMAN: We are a traditional college preparatory high school that delivers their education online. Whether that involves the text within a course, or whether it involves videos, or whether it involves novels. It's really a self-contained form of learning on the Web.

TURNER: But virtual high school means missing out on mainstays like school plays and prom.

Ms. E. MONELL: I get a lot of my socialization through tennis, you know. A lot of the academies have kids that are doing this same program. I might be, you know, not doing what some of my peers are doing, but I think that's OK.

TURNER: For Erica, a mix of high tech and high school works for her.

Ms. NOUVOA: I have all my friends there. I have my boyfriend there. If I stay at home all day, I wouldn't be able to talk to any people, except maybe over the phone. But it's not the same as face-to-face, it's not as real.

So do we have to memorize this?

TURNER: For THE EARLY SHOW, Debbye Turner, CBS News, Lake City, Florida.

T. SMITH: Experts say 500,000 to one million high schoolers are logging on for class, and that number's growing at a rate of 100,000 per year. We'll be right back.

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