

Leaving Children Behind? It's Time to Embrace Online Education  
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It's 2010, but you wouldn't know it from looking at the American school system. Technological advances that we all take for granted in our homes, offices, and cars have yet to fully make their way into our children's classrooms. But online education can open doors of opportunity to children around the nation.

In a recent [Baltimore Sun piece](#), author Dan Lips, a senior fellow at the [Maryland Public Policy Institute](#) and a former education analyst here at Heritage, writes:

In school, most children are being taught in the same classrooms where their parents and grandparents learned. Despite a few computers in the back of the classroom, instruction happens the old-fashioned way.

In an age when the nation's school system is in great need of reform, virtual education can provide enhanced educational opportunities for students.

Online learning can enrich students' education by providing them access to courses that may not be offered in their traditional brick-and-mortar schools. It also allows parents to tailor their children's education, giving them the ability to choose the courses that best meet their unique needs and to learn at their own pace.

Online learning also has great potential for helping low-income students. Instead of being relegated to failing and often dangerous schools, online learning can give students access to high-quality teachers from other districts and states and provide them with content from around the globe. Furthermore, it can free up money for struggling districts, because, as Terry Moe and John Chubb point out in their 2009 book *Liberating Learning*, ["Schools can be operated at lower cost, relying more on technology \(which is relatively cheap\) and less on labor \(which is relatively expensive\)."](#)

While online education is not as widely available as it could be, some states are catching on to this innovative opportunity and finding success. [Lips reports](#):

In Florida, for example, 84,000 students attended the Florida Virtual School, which offers 90 different courses. In Pennsylvania, 7,000 students now attend PA Cyber—a statewide, online public charter school. Both programs have proven to be effective and popular options with parents and students.

Lips also points to the efficacy of online learning, noting:

[A 2009 report](#) by the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Technology in Learning found that, "students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.

It is time for more states to realize the benefits of online education and give their students the opportunity for better education. Instead of leaving children behind, it's time to embrace the opportunities of tomorrow.

Online: <http://blog.heritage.org/2010/09/28/leaving-children-behind-it's-time-to-embrace-online-education/>