

Dear Senator Shelly Hughes and the Committee of Education,

My name is Amanda Abraham and I would like to testify on the many benefits virtual education and technology has had in my small community of Slana, Alaska. It is a community of maybe 200 people with 12 students attending Slana School, a one teacher K-12 school. My husband's family homesteaded to Slana in 1986. I have lived here since 2001. I have volunteered at the school for 4 years and have worked as an aide for 2 years. In this time the Copper River School District started implementing digital and virtual learning into the curriculum. As a parent I have seen the amazing outcome it has had on my own kids as well as those in the community.

With the Video Conferencing Units (VTC) in our high school, all the students in our rural school district get the benefits of having real high school level class taught by an actual high school teacher. It is the next best thing to having the teacher physically in the room. Each teacher is engaging and they interact with each student in their different classes. The students can also set up an individual time with the teacher during Plus period or after school sometimes through their school issued computers on Google Hang Out. That is when the student has the opportunity to have a one on one help without the whole class hearing which is a huge asset when you have students with disabilities in the classroom.

The elementary students are also receiving individual learning as well thanks to virtual learning. Our one teacher has grades 3rd through 8th and with virtual learning she is able to personalize each lesson and have each student work at their individual pace. With programs like I Ready and Edgenuity, one student can be working on fractions and another can be working on percents in Math. In language arts, one student can be working on punctuation and another on context. Each student has their own goals and their own path to get there. It's engaging and will not let them move on until they have the concept. Then the teacher will have one on one contact with the student to enhance the lesson.

It is hard to expect one teacher to teach all K-12 students and meet all the standards that the students are expected to learn. Adopting this technology, the burden is lessened for the single teacher schools and the elementary and high school students receive a fantastic education and experience in their home village or small town without having to move to Anchorage or a bigger town for the same opportunities. It has done wonders for our little school of 12 students in which 4 of them are high school students.

As a parent of 2 kids getting an education in a rural school, I personally worried about my children, especially when it was time to start high school. I feared my children would have a horrible high-school experience and lag far behind. That they would not learn what they needed to. Would we move? Would we home-school? We didn't want to move because we love our home but we thought about it. Homeschooling really wasn't an option because it just wasn't for us. My youngest is in 6th grade and has met her yearly goals in one semester. She loves school and is continually challenged to reach her next goal in a positive supportive way. My oldest is now a freshman in high school. He is receiving a fantastic high school education and we could

not ask for a better high school experience for him. He loves that he gets to take different classes with different teachers and he loves that he can interact and communicate with each teacher. Technology made that happen. Our School district taking advantage of technology made that happen. Teachers willing to learn and use the technology made that happen. We are more certain than ever now that when both of our kids graduate , they will be able to be successful after high school. Whether they go on to college or a trade school. They will be ready and able to meet the challenges of whatever comes next.

Sincerely,
Amanda Abraham
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