

Prompt:

Most students in the United States attend school for 8 hours a day in order to learn subjects like math, science, language arts, history, and art. Some people believe that the traditional schooling model does not work and should be changed. Does the traditional school model work? Write a multi-paragraph argument essay in which you make a claim, address a possible counterargument, and support your thinking with evidence from both texts.

Study In Your PJs? What A High School 'Work From Home Day' Looks Like

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One cold Monday this month, all the students of Park Ridge High School stayed home: wearing their PJs, munching on pretzels and Oreos, hanging out on the couch.

It wasn't a snow day or measles epidemic. It was the school's first Virtual Day, where in-person classes were replaced with written lessons and real-time video chats delivered online.

The idea arose because the school, just north of New York City in Park Ridge, N.J., issued every student a Mac laptop last year, says Tina Bacolas, the school's head of instructional technology.

The school chose a software system called [Schoolology](#) that allows students and teachers to communicate by text and video and post assignments.

"Once we had that up and running, the idea of a virtual school day was thrown out there" as a way of testing those capabilities, Bacolas told NPR Ed.

"Our ultimate goal is to prepare kids for life after high school," says principal Troy Lederman. "Most colleges say that kids should be taking at least one online course, and there's a lot of careers where people can work from home."

And then there's the added benefit of having a backup plan for the school in case of snow days or other emergencies.

In a [video posted to YouTube](#) the week before the experiment, students were all for it. "I'm excited because I'm going to take my laptop to Starbucks and do all my work while I enjoy a Frappuccino," says a student in a cap and a hooded sweatshirt.

"I like to listen to music when I work and it helps me focus, so I think it will be really helpful," says a girl with a half-shaved head.

In student surveys taken after the event, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Virtual "attendance" was 98 percent for the day, better than a regular day.

Teachers, says Bacolas, were a bit less gung-ho. "We definitely have a population of teachers who are older, who were overly upset and cautious" about trying to teach through the platform alone. But 60 percent of teachers said the experiment pushed them to learn a new tech skill or software feature, and 70 percent used the day to introduce new material, not just review.

For this first-time experiment, teachers were required to come to school, and the building kept to the typical bell schedule, with virtual lessons held in real time.

About 50 students, or fewer than 10 percent of the student body, showed up. They told Bacolas that home wasn't a great place for them to learn because, among other reasons, "My baby brother is distracting"; "My mom has three dogs"; and, "I have soccer right after school so I might as well show up."

Nationwide, about [400,000 K-12 students are taking or have taken at least one fully online course](#), and far more schools are using platforms like Schoology to provide online assignments outside of traditional school hours. By and large the format seems to work well for students who use it as an occasional supplement, as Park Ridge High is doing — for example, to take an AP course that their school doesn't offer. Completely virtual schools, studies say, tend to have worse outcomes as a group.

Having a work-from-home day wouldn't work as well in some districts as it did in affluent Bergen County, where the principal said "99 percent" of students have high-speed Internet access at home.

A recent survey [of low-income families](#) with school-age kids by Rutgers University and the Joan Ganz Cooney Center found that nearly 1 in 4 relied on mobile phones only for Internet use at home.

Working from home also didn't work as well for a small number of students at Park Ridge: those who have special needs and require one-on-one, face-to-face support to stay on track.

The students' biggest request for the next Virtual Day was that the school take one step further into the world of telecommuting, by posting all the assignments at the beginning of the day and allowing students to truly go at their own pace — "showing up" only for the occasional real-time discussion.

TEXT 2:

As world changes, education must also change

PARIS, France — Until the Industrial Revolution swept the world in the 1700s and 1800s, a majority of people were unaffected by formal schooling or new technology. It was mostly the wealthy who benefited from education and new inventions. But the Revolution changed society. It allowed everyone to use and experience new tools. However, the education system failed to keep up, which left many people without the training needed to adapt to the new world. Technology sped up, but access to education slowed down.

It took about a hundred years for the idea of universal access to schooling to catch on. With universal access, everyone is entitled to an education. And in the last few decades, big strides have been made in achieving that ambitious goal around the world. Still, there is more to be done. Once again, technology is outpacing education. Lawmakers and education leaders must refocus on providing everyone with the opportunity to learn and must ensure that the education system is preparing students for the workforce.

Over the years, more and more people around the world have gained access to an education. The world is no longer as divided between rich, well-educated countries and poor, badly educated ones as it was once. The quality of schooling can cause a country to be rich or poor over the long term. In fact, many low-income countries have started to spend more money on education as a tool to improve their economies and create new jobs and businesses.

Countries Should Invest In People But work remains in bringing education to everyone — even in high-income countries. Some wealthy countries have succeeded in using their wealth to build roads and buildings and create things for people to buy. While they are flourishing in that regard, these countries have focused less on building up the skills of their people. They are not building a strong education system. These countries might be even richer if they tried to develop the skills and abilities of their people.

The quality of a nation's education system can have a wide effect on its economy, the system of buying and selling goods and creating jobs. In fact, education is a factor of the human development index. The index uses different factors to rank countries. According to the index, the ability to read contributes to the quality of life. Adults with lower literacy skills are far more likely to report poor health, have less trust in others, and not feel like they influence politics. For countries that fail to equip their residents with the proper skills, technological progress is unlikely to lead to a growing economy. Uneducated citizens are less likely to be able to contribute to their countries.

Graduates Must Be Ready For Jobs It is not enough just to make sure that everyone has access to school. It is just as important to teach students the skills they actually need. In many economies, graduates struggle to find jobs. At the same time, employers are looking for candidates to fill empty jobs at their companies. The graduates are educated, but do not have the skills companies need. Lawmakers must make sure that the education system trains students with the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world and ultimately get a job.

In the past, education was about gaining knowledge but today, it is about providing students with tools. Economies reward workers for what they can do with what they know. Since services like Google make it easy to find information, successful people must know how to use this information.

Educators used to teach students by breaking problems into smaller pieces and then giving techniques to solve them. But in the workplace today, workers often must take many separate bits of information and see patterns among them. Valuable workers are also curious and open-minded, and have the ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas.

Ability To Work With Others Is Important The ability to work with others is also becoming increasingly important. Today, new products and big ideas rarely come from individuals working on their own. Instead, they usually come from sharing and working together. School programs need to inspire students to work with one another and be open to new options.

One way to make the education system better around the world is to focus on what happens after school. Teachers should prepare kids to succeed in the workforce, not just in the classroom. This would help students develop professional skills and "soft skills" such as teamwork, communication and negotiation. There are also ways to better connect classrooms and jobs so students can make the move into the working world more easily. Policies that could help include counseling, job-search assistance, money for companies to hire youths with low skills, and income support for young people actively searching for work.

Transforming education for the modern economy is an ambitious goal. Governments will have to design smart ways of providing money so that businesses and schools will be willing to help fix education. Education systems will have to start inspiring entrepreneurship and better job training. Employers will have to invest money in training their workforces.

Education is increasingly a global system. As technology changes around us, education and curriculum must adapt quickly. Ultimately, however, the future of education depends on students. In order to transform our world, individuals must be willing to take advantage of learning opportunities and build their own futures.

