



K12 Inc. Statement on New York Times Article

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HERNDON, Va., Dec. 13, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- The *New York Times* article featuring K12 Inc. (NYSE: LRN) is unfair and one-sided, and advances an anti-parent choice policy agenda. Instead of presenting a factually accurate look at K12's online and blended learning products and education programs, the writer mostly editorializes, selectively picking and choosing some facts and omitting many others to satisfy a pre-determined narrative. The article omitted important information on the structure of online schools, student performance, teacher training and professional development, and the full scope of education programs and services provided by K12. It liberally quotes well-known critics but gives no room for leading voices supportive of technology-based education reforms.

(Logo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/pmh/20110113/PH29436LOGO>)

The *Times* makes conclusions on school performance based on the federal "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) metric, despite widespread agreement that AYP is broken, and warnings from the U.S. Secretary of Education that most U.S. schools cannot meet AYP. States across the country are applying for waivers from AYP.

The article did not state that in 2010 K12-managed online schools nationwide made 80% of overall AYP targets (academic + participation), nor did it mention academic assessments showing positive student academic growth. And the article ignored data that shows the longer students are enrolled in K12-managed online schools, the better they perform on state assessment tests. All of these data points were provided to the reporter.

The *Times* failed to explain that first year students who enroll in online schools often struggle on state tests after years of falling behind in traditional schools, a problem that is especially apparent in schools with fast-growing enrollment and the capacity to serve all children that choose to attend. In fact, recent analyses by an independent firm found that, in some K12-managed schools, the overwhelming majority of the new students came in behind grade level requiring more than one year of academic growth during the year to be proficient on state tests.

The *Times* suggests the cost for the K12 program was \$1,000, but did not make it clear that this figure was given in 2002 and referred only to the core curriculum in grades K-2 purchased by individuals. That price did not include costs for elective courses, foreign language courses, teacher salaries and benefits, school administrators and guidance counselors, computers, technology, special education services, facilities-based blended learning services, and everything else needed to operate a full-time, highly accountable online public school.

Independent studies and state reports show the total cost to educate a student in a full-time online public school ranges from approximately \$6,000 - \$7,000, less than the national average to educate a student in a traditional school (over \$10,000 per student, according to the U.S. Census). The article failed to mention that in Pennsylvania, the Agora Cyber Charter School offers a face-to-face educational opportunity for academically at-risk students through its brick-and-mortar Agora Learning Center in Philadelphia. In general, online schools receive significantly less funding than traditional public schools to educate a full-time student.

K12's products and services are used in over 2,000 schools and school districts in the U.S. The company's goal is to serve public education, empower teachers, and help children reach their full potential. K12's wide range of offerings – from individual courses (credit recovery, world languages, AP) and assessment tools, to blended and online school programs – enables districts and schools to choose solutions they want for the needs of their students. School districts and independent, nonprofit public charter school boards determine the level of products and services they want to purchase from K12.

Online schools are a challenging and rigorous model that requires commitment from all involved. They are not for every child, but are a good option for some, especially for students whose needs were not met in traditional brick-and-mortar schools. In all cases, the decision to enroll a child in an online school is made by parents, not the school. Parents are well informed by K12 and the online school staff regarding the rigor and the level of commitment required by parents and students to succeed in an online school. Annual surveys demonstrate that parent satisfaction with the K12 program has remained very high at over 90 percent or above for many years. Parents choose online schools because they believe the online school is a better option for their child.

The enrollment policies at online schools are set by the school district boards or the independent, non-profit governing boards, not by K12. Further, those policies are largely dictated by state law, which for the most part prohibit any kind of screening or cherry picking of students by public schools. Online schools are public schools and cannot deny access to eligible students based on their circumstances, academic need, or otherwise.

Educators and parents know that not every child succeeds in the traditional school building. Children need access to options in education. Online schools have helped drop-outs achieve the credits they need to graduate. They've helped struggling students get back to grade level through individualized programs, provided advanced learners access to courses not available in their local school, and helped students graduate and attend colleges and universities.

Every new innovation, no matter how powerful, is met with some opposition. K12 continues to invest in the development of new academic programs, curriculum offerings, and innovative instructional tools, and remains committed as ever to partnering with educators to help them meet the needs of all their students.

SOURCE K12 Inc.

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