

Eye On Education: 'Flipped Classroom' Trend Has Students Learn At Home First

By Paula Ebben, WBZ-TV

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BOSTON (CBS) – A so called “flipped” or “blended” classroom is a growing trend in education. This is when a student takes a virtual lesson at home, and then comes into school to have it reinforced by a teacher. It might sound a little backward, but many school districts say they are getting great results with this model.

The Pierce Middle School in Milton is now running a pilot program with 8th grade math students. Students are accessing virtual lessons at Khan Academy. Teacher Mary Shapiro gets back data which helps her analyze how well each student is doing. For example, she can see how long a student spent on a particular problem, or where they might have gone astray. Shapiro believes this approach allows students to work at their own pace on Chrome tablets. “I am free to walk around and give them clues along the way,” she told WBZ-TV.

Khan Academy was created by Salman Khan, a graduate of MIT. He started by tutoring a cousin while he lived in Boston. First he instructed her over the phone, and then by videos he would upload on YouTube. Ten million students have now tapped into the more than 5,000 classes offered at Khan Academy, all for free. The lessons are simple narrations with colorful doodles. They cover a wide range of topics including math, science, and economics. Classrooms across the country are now using Khan’s lectures to supplement their math instruction.

Students in Milton, like Dominick Jancaterino, like this method. “I think the best thing is that you can move at your own pace, and if you want to tackle more difficult topics, you are able to,” he said. Mary Kenney is another student who likes it. “I think we can do a lot more things with it,” she said.

Technology in the classroom is necessary today, but it isn’t cheap. Donald Greene of the Milton Foundation for Education has helped raise money to wire classrooms and buy tablets. “The schools can’t do it alone. The town capital planning can’t do it alone, and the community groups and parents can’t do it alone,” he said

Shapiro likes the idea of a paperless classroom someday. She says it’s fine if some kids still want to use a pencil and paper, but added, “It’s all about where they’re comfortable, for a child that can just fly with a computer, why not?”

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