

Not Even Daycare

The most common misinterpretation of *The Case Against Education* is that it's only about college. In fact, my treatise analyzes not only high school, but K-8 as well. Where there is education, there is educational signaling.

Whenever I opined K-8 education, though, I made a major concession. While schools mostly waste taxpayer money and students' time, they nevertheless provide one indeniably useful service: *daycare*. Schools warehouse kids so their parents can work, keep house, and relax. Until a few months ago, I thought this benefit was inevitable. No matter how little useful knowledge schools deliver, the most bogus "education" of the young automatically *has to* provide daycare as a byproduct.

How wrong I was! How very wrong. Beginning last March, schools across the U.S. sent kids home - and started "virtual instruction" for kindergarten on up. What a joke. Obviously - obviously! - a kindergartener isn't going to do virtual instruction unless a parent closely monitors him. Any parent able to do kindergarten-level work might as well just teach the child himself. The same goes for the vast majority of 1st-graders, 2nd-graders, 3rd-graders, and 4th-graders. Mature 5th-, 6th-, 7th-, or 8th-graders *might* do their work without a parent breathing down their necks, but most won't. Once schools closed last March, I added my younger kids to my homeschool and haven't looked back.

To be fair, you could say virtual education was an emergency measure, and almost no one treated it as a serious substitute for classroom instruction. It was a classic, "We pretend to teach, they pretend to learn" situation. Most parents went along with the farce to let well-liked teachers save face.

Now, however, many school districts are doubling-down on the absurdity of virtual instruction for young kids. My school district, Fairfax County, initially announced that families would have the option to get two days of in-person instruction per week. This in turn means two days of daycare per week. That isn't enough to let both parents work full-time, but at least it's something.

Last night, however, Fairfax County Public Schools reversed policy.

Fairfax County Public Schools will begin the 2020-2021 school year with 100% distance learning, due to "worsening national and regional health conditions."

Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand made the virtual recommendation

Tuesday, and the school board agreed to accept his proposal, allowing the superintendent to move forward with his plans.

All instruction will be virtual for a full quarter. At least. The schools keep getting full tax funding. In exchange, they refuse even to provide daycare. This is poor service even by the low standards of the public sector. For all practical purposes, parents of virtual schoolers will be de facto homeschoolers, so they might as well cut the red tape and aggravation and homeschool de jure as well. At least in Virginia, homeschooling law remain lax. Why be an unpaid employee of your school district when you can easily be your own boss?

You could say, "At least let's give virtual education a chance." I refuse. I will not even give it a chance. I have been in school continuously for forty four years, and a parent for seventeen years. Giving this madness a chance is not worth my time. Sending my kids back to school to see their friends two days a week was a reasonable option. "Sending" my kids "back to school" to "see" their friends is at once laughable and sad. If my kids can't play with other kids in school, they have no reason to be there.

I've been calling for massive cuts in education spending for a long time. Now, however, the case for austerity is truly a no-brainer. If schools won't provide daycare, why on Earth should taxpayers continue to pay over \$10,000 per year per child? Every taxpayer in Fairfax County now has an ironclad reason to say, "I want my money back."

Of course, since we're dealing with government enterprises, you might as well save your breath.