



Insight School offers online options for high school students

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<http://www.pnwlocalnews.com/pierce/bch/community/48849817.html>

Jun 22, 2009

Mackenzie Haynes just completed her freshman year of high school. And all of her subjects – algebra, English, science, history and physical education, including the journalism, writing and photography clubs – were completed online through Insight School of Washington.

Haynes, a 14-year-old Bonney Lake resident, is part of a growing number of students opting to complete their high school education via the Internet.

“I have been homeschooled all my life,” Haynes said. “I needed a different way of doing school, so my friend and I did research on these types of schools.”

What she discovered was a tuition-free, state-funded school based in Forks, Wash., that is part of a larger network of Insight Schools, headquartered in Portland, Ore.

Leigh Sims, who works under contract for Insight of Washington with media outreach, said the school was approved for a full, six-year accreditation in 2008 by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools. Like other public schools, it uses state-certified teachers and students must meet state education requirements to graduate.

“Each school has local partnerships with school districts, like Quillayute Valley, or other community organizations, to build and operate each online high school program,” Sims said. “Insight’s principal, executive director and other staff are based here in Washington.”

Approaching its fourth year, Insight Schools is the nation’s largest network of online public high schools.

“The local partners authorize the school, while Insight Schools provide operational resources, expertise and management, extra- and co-curricular programs,” she said.

Some of which have included online assemblies featuring Seattle Seahawks speakers and Emmy-winning journalists.

The opportunity to take part in online education attracts advanced students as well as those who were struggling in a traditional school setting, Sims said.

Its Web site touts more than 120 online courses, including honors and advanced-placement courses. It offers round-the-clock tutoring through smarthinking.com as well as 24-hour technical support.

Those benefits seem to be working.

“The school’s enrollment has been increasing since it started,” Sims said. “Online education is definitely a growing trend.”

Attending an online school may seem like a perfect world for some but, like other schools, it can have its drawbacks.

“I think the system needs some work,” Haynes said. “It is very hard to stay on track and it doesn’t give much slack. We have to go to the classes or else our grade will go down.” Still, she was confident that quirks in the system could be ironed out in the future.

Haynes' schedule included a quiz each day, which was graded by computer. At the end of each unit, typically at week's end, a test was administered.

"The test is normally graded by the computer; however, once in a while something will be graded by the teachers," she said. "In each course, we meet with our instructor once a week in an online virtual classroom."

While she may have studied the same subjects as her peers in traditional classroom settings, Haynes didn't need to worry about typical educational expenses.

"Because we already have Internet, there is no cost, besides the basic (online) time," she said.

And in case some may worry about socialization, Haynes isn't worried in the least.

"I have made many friends through Insight," she said. "I love that I can learn from someone else but be able to stay home."

Insight School of Washington can be reached by visiting its Web site at www.insightwa.net or by calling 866-800-0017.

Its e-mail address is info@insightwas.net and the mailing address is 12011 Bel-Red Rd., Suite 101, Bellevue, Wash. 98005. Visit www.insightschools.net for more information.

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