

Name:

Class:

Date:

Read the passage and answer the following question(s).

Cyber High School

1

A generation ago, high school students most often attended a school close to home. Usually public, but sometimes private or parochial, school choices were limited to what was accessible and affordable. These days, a host of options unimaginable to our parents are available for high school students who, for whatever reasons, are not satisfied with the traditional options. One of these innovative options is the online school. Online high schools are “virtual” or “cyber” schools that deliver their courses entirely online.

2

Students who “go” to online high schools never actually go anywhere: they don’t travel to a physical location at all, needing only a computer and Internet connection to study wherever they are. Those students take classes, interact with teachers and other students, do research, submit homework and take tests, all via the computer. Indeed, their entire high school experience is filtered through the computer screen. Such schools are a feature of the modern world, existing solely due to innovative new technologies that have altered how our society works.

3

The benefits of an online high school are many, beginning with convenience and flexibility. Students who attend online high schools don’t need to travel to get to a physical building, saving themselves valuable time each day. Online high schools allow students the flexibility to choose their own schedules—early risers can work first thing in the morning, but late sleepers can choose to work later in the day. Also, online students can easily schedule their studies around other responsibilities (like jobs, families, or hobbies) instead of having to accommodate the traditional school schedule.

4

Online high schools can be more efficient for students, too. An online student can work at her own pace, speeding through the materials she’s mastered and focusing on those she hasn’t. There’s no need to wait for other students to catch up or any reason to fall behind in a subject not yet understood. Online students are also able to avoid many of the problems that exist in traditional schools, like peer pressure, cliques, or bullies.

5

Perhaps the biggest advantage of online high schools is the course offerings, which can be as varied as an all-you-can-eat buffet. In many brick-and-mortar schools—especially smaller schools with small student populations—a limited number of classes are offered. However, many online schools have huge lists of course offerings. This allows students to concentrate their studies on whatever they want. Online schools can offer students specialized instruction in things they are starving for, like art, music, or computer programming. They can even offer honors courses which many students might normally not have access to, providing a broader education to students than might otherwise be available.

6

Despite their clear benefits, online high schools have their critics, too. One argument is that anyone whose education happens entirely through a computer screen might become socially isolated. Such students might not learn to work well with others or have the friendships that are normally forged in adolescence. Critics argue that cyber students may also miss out on social events, like the prom or senior day, and activities, like school clubs or sports teams. They also suggest that students in online high schools may struggle academically because they get less feedback from teachers than students in traditional classrooms, although studies show that the majority of online students have no more trouble than traditional students in completing their work successfully.

7

One legitimate concern with online high schools is the question of accreditation. Some online schools are interested mainly in making a profit. Students may learn very little at these schools and their degrees end up meaning nothing, not being accepted at other schools or colleges.

Fortunately, students can be assured about the legitimacy of online high schools by checking the six regional accreditation agencies or the database of the Distance Education Training Council. If a student has any doubts about the legitimacy of a school, those agencies can provide the answer.

8

Ultimately, the decision to go to an online high school is a personal one. For students with the self-discipline to earn a degree online, on their own schedule, cyber high school can be a viable and appealing educational option.

Question #1

Which BEST explains how the author creates a favorable view of online high schools?

- A) by presenting the positives of online high schools before the negatives
- B) by beginning the passage with an explanation that online high schools are a new option
- C) by comparing online and traditional high schools first and then contrasting them
- D) by ending the passage with the observation that online high school students must be disciplined

Read the passage and answer the following question(s).

Defining the Age of Adulthood

1

You often hear young people argue that the age of adulthood should be a single age. They ask how someone can be old enough to vote but not old enough to take out a loan without a cosigner. They ask how someone can be old enough to fight for this country in our military but not old enough to rent a car. Objectively, it's hard to fault their argument, as allowing people to take on the rights of adulthood at different ages does seem to muddy the waters when it comes to determining exactly when one really does become "grown up."

2

The age of adulthood (also called the "age of majority") is the age when a person is considered an adult and is given many corresponding rights. In the United States, the age of adulthood is generally age eighteen. At that point people are allowed to work, vote, marry, join the military or enter into a contract. Of course, those rights do vary by state, and the right to drive and marry is given earlier in many places. Meanwhile, most car companies won't rent a vehicle to someone under twenty-five years old (or not without charging exorbitant rates). Ultimately, when it comes to instituting an "age of adulthood" that establishes exactly when a person is fully grown, the only consistency is the inconsistency: Those rules vary depending on state and by subject.

3

That inconsistency can be maddening if not downright illogical: How can someone responsible enough to drive a tank in the U.S. Army not be trustworthy enough to steer a rental sedan? How can someone wise enough to vote in a presidential election not be mature enough to pay his or her own bills? It doesn't seem to make sense.

4

Scientifically, however, it makes perfect sense. While it's long been understood that people develop at different speeds (for instance, some sixteen-year-olds are considerably more mature

than others), recent studies of neuroscience and behavior have begun to show that elements of the human brain itself develop at different rates. For example, researchers at Temple University have seen that logical reasoning develops in young adults before impulse control does. That means one might be able to recognize bad behavior before one is able to curb it. British researchers came to a similar conclusion, noting that the adolescent brain is underdeveloped in terms of risk assessment. Those researchers found that teenagers are affected by stressful and exciting conditions and are more likely to make overly hasty decisions than older people with more developed brains are.

5

That means it does make sense to allow young people different rights at different ages. Allowing eighteen-year-olds to vote is reasonable if you consider that their logical reasoning skills are fully developed at that stage, but it also seems sensible to delay them certain rights given their impulsive nature. Letting a teenager join the military (or even drive one of its tanks) is not an unreasonable decision if you consider most eighteen-year-olds are mature enough to work well when supervised, but it makes equal sense that a car company might not want to lease their vehicles to an age group prone to distracted driving or speeding.

6

In the end, providing the rights of adulthood to people at different ages really is the only logical choice. Doing anything else would ignore scientific knowledge of the development of the human brain.

Question #2

How is the argument in the passage structured?

- A) The author introduces a debate and fully discusses it, without presenting a final conclusion.
- B) The author frames a debate before arguing how two different positions regarding it are equally valid.
- C) The author presents a position on an issue before introducing and supporting the opposite position.
- D) The author provides a position on an issue and fully supports it, without mentioning different views.