

Gabriel Mascarenas

Ms. Silva

English

28 March 2022

### The Benefits of Oasis Public Schools

In today's chaotic world of global pandemics, high crime rates, violence, and other threats to student well being, a system like the Oasis Public Schools system from the book would be ideal. Instead of requiring students to travel to and from school in person an online Oasis based school would allow students to connect from anywhere that has internet access and an Oasis immersion rig is available. Students would be much safer in their own homes. An entirely digital school system would also allow teachers to create more interactive and dynamic learning environments, improving the quality of education. Keeping students anonymous and allowing them to control their interactions with students and faculty would ensure their safety from bullying and allow them to hide anything they don't want to share. Overall making a public school system like the Oasis-based system in the book would be beneficial to overall student learning and success.

Oasis Public Schools keep students safe by isolating them physically from numerous dangers outside of their homes. If students are home for school they are no longer at risk on the commute to and from school. They will also be kept safe from bullies, fights, and other physical violence that takes place in and around regular public schools. "... he hadn't bothered to turn off his account's real-time emotion feature, which made your avatar mirror your facial expressions and body language. He was about to reply, but I muted him first, so I didn't hear what he said."

(30). Students would be able to mute or block other students, filter embarrassing speech or facial expressions, and filter their interactions with every other user exactly how they want to. “No one could even touch me. In here, I was safe.” (32). Wade explains in the story that, “Unlike their real-world counterparts, most of the OASIS public school teachers seemed to genuinely enjoy their job, probably because they didn’t have to spend half their time acting as babysitters and disciplinarians. The OASIS software took care of that, ensuring that students remained quiet and in their seats. All the teachers had to do was teach.” (47) This means that teachers would be able to keep students quiet and in their seats with software instead of wasting time policing them. Teachers at in person schools need to spend a significant portion of their teaching time dealing with disruptions in the classroom instead of actually teaching, which decreases the quality of learning for students who are more focused on the class. Students who choose not to pay attention are no longer a distraction for the students who choose to focus. Adding software to keep students from being a disruption without the teacher needing to intervene would be a valuable addition to the teacher’s virtual toolkit. The ability of students to be able to control their communication to other students and faculty is incredibly valuable for protecting them from bullying as well, allowing them to isolate themselves from any hostile communication from other students. This greatly improves the learning environment by filtering out distractions and other negative influences that may make it harder for students to learn.

A public school in the Oasis would allow teachers much more freedom to do virtual field trips, or show models and demonstrations of certain things generally difficult or impossible in real life. Wade explains that “... because here in the OASIS, the classrooms were like holodecks. Teachers could take their students on a virtual field trip every day, without ever leaving the

school grounds.” (47) Almost anything can be programmed in the Oasis, which would allow teachers to program virtual recreations of events, locations, or objects at will and for free. The schools in the OASIS would be far more engaging than schools outside of it, which is a clear advantage over in person schools where most field trips cost a lot of money, or are simply impossible. With scarcity of resources becoming an increasingly difficult problem for schools to deal with, this allows them to use far less physical materials in lieu of digital replicas. Teachers could create unique virtual experiences and environments for their students to learn in, which would make for a much more engaging learning experience that would keep students learning. Another major benefit of a virtual experience is that students are in no physical danger at any point, even on a field trip to somewhere uninhabitable by humans. Simply reading from a textbook for an entire school day can be very boring, so giving students an experience which can be interacted with will help them learn about things that might otherwise be very difficult to teach.

Oasis Public Schools would protect students’ privacy and identities, this way no one would be able to identify a specific student in the real world and cause harm to them. “...students were required to use their real first names, followed by a number, to differentiate them from other students with the same name.” (29) Students only use their first name and an ID number, which ensures that no personally identifying information for any student is leaked. As Wade describes in the book, the school must still collect identifying information from each student, “When I’d first enrolled in the OASIS public school system, I was required to give them my real name, avatar name, mailing address, and Social Security number. That information was stored in my student profile...” (28-29), but this information is still kept private from other

students as well as from all of the teachers. “None of my teachers or fellow students knew who I really was, and vice versa.” (29) Since this information is only accessible to staff who can’t do their job without it, this severely limits the chances of anyone abusing a student’s private data. The internet as it is in 2022 is already an incredibly dangerous environment for children if they are allowed unmoderated access to it, and the Oasis would be no different. If a student’s real name and address were leaked this can be very dangerous for them. “Swatting”, calling the police pretending to be the victim with a threat in order to have the police/SWAT team show up at the victim’s location and even have the victim shot and killed, is a particularly dangerous situation for students, so keeping their names and addresses private would make it impossible. Other less threatening issues like ordering food to another student’s door or similar pranks would also be impossible if students do not have access to each other’s personally identifying information. Protecting student privacy and anonymity is absolutely paramount in protecting them from very dangerous real world threats.

The Oasis as it exists in the book is an incredibly useful system both in and out of education, and developing a similar system in the real world would greatly improve how students learn. The introduction of an Oasis-like public school system would revolutionize the way that teachers do their jobs, as well as the way students think about school. It would create a less distracting, more engaging, and far safer learning environment much more conducive to student success in the long run. In a world full of dangers and issues beyond what a school board can solve, protecting students through anonymity, physical isolation, and anti-bullying software would ensure that every child can have free and equitable access to a much higher quality education than nearly any currently existing public school could provide.

Works Cited

Cline, Ernest. "Ready Player One", Ballantine Books, 2012, pp. 1-384.