

**Homeschooling in the Digital Age:
Edupunk Philosophy vs. Traditional, the Case of Cameron Reardon**

Instructional Design Final Paper

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Table of Contents

<i>Background</i> -----	3
<i>Edupunk Philosophy</i> -----	3
<i>Traditional Classroom Philosophy</i> -----	3
<i>What is Homeschooling?</i> -----	4
<i>Traditional Homeschooling</i> -----	4
<i>Edupunk Homeschooling</i> -----	5
<i>The Case of Cameron Reardon</i> -----	5
<i>A Beka, Traditional</i> -----	5
<i>Edupunks in the Reardon Household</i> -----	6
<i>To Edupunk, or Not to Edupunk?</i> -----	7
<i>Resources</i> -----	8

Background

There are all kinds of instructional design models, and infinite variations of those models in instruction itself. All, however, are comprised of one of three things: edupunk instructional design, (what I will call) traditional classroom instructional design, or some combination of the two. That is not to say that if an instructional situation is a combination of edupunk and traditional that all combinations are the same, but all will have *some kind* of combination.

Edupunk Philosophy

As understood based on the descriptions in *Anya Kamenetz's DIY U: Edupunks, Edupreneurs, and the Coming Transformation of Higher Education*, an edupunk is an educator who rebels (in a way) from all aspects of the traditional classroom—he or she uses a combination of outside resources to create a curriculum that is most beneficial to the classroom and its learners (2010).

Traditional Classroom Philosophy

In the context of this paper, “traditional classroom philosophy” will be defined as the cliché classroom in which a teacher teaches with a white board, chalk board, or projector to a classroom of 25 – 30 students who read from textbooks or complete worksheets at home for homework. Though this is the blunt version of a traditional classroom (especially in today’s technologically advanced society), it will be considered one extreme of the metaphorical instructional line.

What is Homeschooling?

Homeschooling is a common option for students with various needs, some students might be moving at a more advanced pace than their peers, others might choose homeschool because they have a learning disability that hinders their ability to follow along in a classroom, and others may have other reasons. Nonetheless, homeschooling can be chosen for a variety of reasons as an alternative to the ever-popular public school system.

Traditional Homeschooling

Homeschooling is not well-known for being defined in a specific method, but a common conception is that students who are homeschooled do their schooling at their home using textbooks, worksheets, recorded lectures, etc. provided by a prescribed homeschooling program. It's very similar to the traditional classroom setting, differing only in that there are no other students surrounding them and that they cannot raise their hand in class to ask a question.

Traditional homeschooling can have its drawbacks, including the common myths we hear about homeschooled children, according to Michael Romanowski: that homeschooling makes kids socially awkward, that homeschooling does not teach kids how to be good citizens, that homeschooled students can't get into college, and that most homeschooled kids are only homeschooled because of religious reasons (2006). While these are, as stated, myths, they are nonetheless well-known and assumed to be true by most. The most likely reason, is that traditional homeschooling appears to leave out much in the way of socialization, mannerisms,

college preparation (or diplomas, if they continue through high school), or anything aside from Sunday services. Again, this is all myth, but nonetheless common.

Edupunk Homeschooling

Homeschooling, in an edupunk setting, would closer resemble an asynchronous online class that uses many different sources for content delivery, testing, assignments, etc. However instead of these different sources being used for the smaller categories of one class subject, when applied to homeschooling it would look more like a different source for each class. It would be a kind of do-it-yourself (DIY) curriculum that is built to meet the student's needs.

The Case of Cameron Reardon

After closely studying my younger brother, Cameron, and his homeschool curriculum, I have determined that my step mother (and for all intents and purposes, his teacher) has created an edupunk curriculum for him that accurately meets his needs. However, this curriculum has been used in only the last year. Previously, Cameron was enrolled in a homeschool program called A Beka, a traditional homeschooling program based around Christianity.

A Beka, Traditional

A Beka is very similar to the traditional classroom setting described in the background section—Cameron would receive textbooks, workbooks, and CDs in the mail (previously ordered by his teacher), and each day he would read from his textbooks, watch a simulated classroom video lecture, and do his homework in his workbooks. A Beka did not leave much room for outside learning, such as science experiments, field trips, physical education, or other

instructional items that require more than a book and video. Do not misunderstand me, A Beka was a very good curriculum that Cameron was able to follow and learn from. The problem, however, was that, as a young boy, he needed more stimulus in his classes to keep focus and interest in certain subjects, specifically his favorite subject—science.

Edupunks in the Reardon Household

Cameron has a more expansive and allowing curriculum now, consisting of the following:

- He uses The Rainbow by Beginnings Publishing for science, specifically Chemistry and Physics right now, a program in which he receives textbooks, home laboratory supplies (including chemical samples, for the Chemistry labs), and a lab workbook. The curriculum allows him to do the experiments he is learning about, rather than simply reading them, and it also allows for a flexible enough time to take field trips.
- He uses Saxon Math, a program that focuses on the common core standards of math and how to apply them.
- He uses BJU Press for his World History textbook, as well as field trips whenever possible.
- He uses Time 4 Writing for his English lessons, a website in which he completes writing assignments and gets real feedback from real teachers in a reasonable amount of time.
- He uses Rosetta Stone to learn Spanish.
- He does physical education by participating in sports at the local YMCA.

- He is also involved in several homeschooling clubs in his area in which he can get social interaction and in which his teacher can learn new ideas from other homeschooling parents.

To Edupunk, or Not to Edupunk?

So what is best for homeschooled students? That's something the designer has to ask his or herself based on their learners. For a young boy with an active imagination and a love for science, the edupunk-based route was a better way to go because it allowed for more experience and stimulation in the field, among other things. For learners of a different background, however, this might not be the way to go—perhaps, a physically disabled person, who cannot easily roam a museum or battlefield on a field trip, or who cannot easily (or safely) complete science labs. The choice of design still comes down to the learner analysis, above all.

Resources

Kamenetz, A. (2010). *DIY U: Edupunks, edupreneurs, and the coming transformation of higher education*. White River Junction, Vt: Chelsea Green Pub.

Romanowski, M. H. (2006). Revisiting the Common Myths about Homeschooling. *The Clearing House* 79 (3), 125-129.