

Everything You to Want to Know about Florida's Virtual Education

Program Descriptions:

The **Florida Virtual School (FLVS)** was established as a statewide public school in 2001. Its motto is "any time, any place, any path, any pace." The winner of numerous state, national, and international awards, FLVS is now the national model in virtual education according to the US DOE and the Southern Regional Education Board.

Like public schools, FLVS receives state funding for each enrolled student, but unlike public schools, FLVS only gets those funds when a student successfully completes a course. Success is measured by outcomes rather than seat time, so there are no attendance records to be kept. The courses were built on the Sunshine State Standards and can be adjusted as new standards are adopted because the curriculum is provided in a virtual environment. The courses are free to any student in the state. According to Florida TaxWatch's research*, FLVS saved the State more than \$1000 per student compared to traditional schools in 2007, and FLVS produced students who earned higher grades and higher test scores than their public school counterparts.

On its main virtual campus for students in grades 6-12, FLVS offers over 95 interactive, engaging courses, including AP and Honors, taught by certified teachers, many of whom have a Masters or Doctorate degree and all of whom are teaching in-field. FLVS now offers a game through which students learn American History. Home education students can register directly through www.flvs.net for one or more courses. FLVS teachers direct the instructional process while communicating with parents regularly about their child's progress in each course.

Home education students may take as many courses through FLVS as they like and still participate in extracurricular activities at their zoned public school or at a private school. They can take as many dual enrollment courses as the college will allow. Some students with certain learning challenges and varied learning paces have been very successful in FLVS because of the one-on-one instruction and the extended time in which to complete a course. FLVS is a year-round program where students may enroll at any time. To ensure complete student and parent access, all teachers are full-time and available seven days a week, from 8am to 8pm.

* Florida TaxWatch Study, "Final Report: A Comprehensive Assessment of Florida Virtual School, " page 79

The Florida Virtual School - Connections Academy (FLVS-CA) is a partnership that brings the Connection Academy curriculum to home education students in grades 6-8 through the FLVS delivery system. The program is free to home education students who register at www.flvs.net.

This is a full-time program which requires the parent to keep attendance records and document 4 to 5 hours of instruction per day for 180 days. The textbooks, manipulatives, and supplies are shipped to the student's home at the beginning of the school year.

A "Learning Coach", who is typically a parent or other adult family member, provides daily instruction in partnership with a Florida certified teacher who has expertise in providing online instruction. The Connections Academy teacher answers questions, review assignments, adjusts individual lesson plans and assesses progress.

Noteworthy to consider is that the FLVS-CA option is a structured program with grade-level curriculum and follows the school calendar. In comparison, the FLVS curriculum, described above, offers students in grades 6-8 the flexibility to enroll at anytime in one

or more courses taught by Florida-certified teachers and completed on a flexible schedule.

School District Virtual - FLVS Franchise began as an initiative to help the county school districts replicate the curriculum design and instructional delivery success of FLVS. This partnership gives Florida students increased access to online learning through district virtual campuses, such as the Broward Virtual School.

The district selects FLVS courses to be taught by Florida-certified teachers employed by their school district. The district receives the full funding for any student enrolled in the school district franchise and pays FLVS \$50 per half-credit. In turn, FLVS provides the curriculum, delivery platforms, teacher training and mentoring, and district support.

In addition to the courses offered by the district, all FLVS courses are still available to any student directly via the FLVS main virtual campus and FLVS gets the funding. Home educated students can enroll in any course, free of charge, through either the school district franchise or directly with FLVS.

Noteworthy to consider is that franchise courses may only be offered during the traditional school year, the teachers may be full time or part time, and office hours may vary. All courses taken directly through FLVS are offered year-round and taught by full-time teachers with seven day, 8am to 8pm availability.

In order to increase their funding, some districts are offering home education students a diploma, using the transfer of credit rule, if the student enrolls full-time in the district virtual school for at least the final semester of their senior year. However, the student's right to participate in extra-curricular activities and dual enrollment may be affected.

The FHSAA is now requiring parents to provide the child's cumulative record in order to see where virtual courses for home education students are being taken. The FHSAA policy is that if a student is taking 50% or more of their courses in a Franchise, the student will be ruled a public school student. A parent can access their child's cumulative record in the guardian account and determine where the child is taking the course. A home education student can take as many FLVS courses as the parent desires. So, be sure to check the child's cumulative record as soon as the child is registered for a virtual course.

School District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP) for K-8 was passed by the 2008 Legislature and expanded in 2009. This legislation requires that school districts offer full-time virtual education, aligned with the Sunshine State Standards, in grades K-12 to each eligible student beginning with the 2009-2010 school year. A student who enrolls in the VIP is a public school student. To be eligible for the program, a child has to meet one of the following requirements: have been enrolled in a Florida public school during the entire previous school year, have been enrolled in the K-8 Virtual School Program* (which is no longer available), or be a child of a military family. Students who were in a home education program for the previous school year are not eligible for the district VIP.

The VIP is a full-time public school program, following a traditional 180-day school calendar. An on-site "Learning Coach," typically a parent, is established for each student. The parent, who will receive training, lesson plans, and instructional materials, will be required to complete every assigned lesson, and document the required 4 to 5 hours of instruction per day for 180 days per year. The school district must verify the attendance. District VIP students are required to take the FCAT. Districts must also provide computers and internet access to qualified students. Many school districts are using the federal free-and-reduced lunch (poverty) guidelines to qualify the students who will receive the technology.

* **K-8 Virtual School Program**, a full-time pilot program administered by the Florida Department of Education, began in 2005. The funding for the program was eliminated by the 2009 Legislature, but students already in the program were allowed to enroll in a School District Virtual Instruction Program. Initially, it was funded for 1000 students and later expanded to include their siblings. Students enrolled into this program became full-time public school students and were required to take the FCAT. Parents provided 4 to 5 hours of instruction per day for 180 days per year under the direction of a Florida certified teacher. The two approved providers were K-12, Inc. (operating as Florida Virtual Academy) and Connections Academy. Students in this program appeared to be home educated, since they were taught at home by their parents, but they were actually public school students, thus they were “grandfathered” into the School District Virtual Instruction Program.

To help you compare these programs HEF has created a [Guide to Virtual Education for Home Educators](#) (see next document listed)

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