

# Florida Virtual School

## Summary

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is an online school that can be used as a complement to traditional public, charter, private, and home schooling, or as the sole source of schooling. It was established in 1997 to support Florida resident students and the service it provides is free. By 2010, the number of physical students using FLVS had grown to more than 97,000.

## Location

Florida, U.S.

## Aims

The FLVS website states that its commitment is to delivering a high-quality, technology-based education that provides the skills and knowledge students need for success in the 21st century.

FLVS has been built on the following beliefs:

- Every student is unique, so learning should be dynamic, flexible, and engaging
- Studies should be integrated rather than isolated
- Students, parents, community members, and schools share responsibility for learning
- Students should have choices in how they learn and how they present what they know
- Students should be provided guidance with school and career planning
- Assessments should provide insights, not only of student progress, but also of instruction and curriculum

## Description

FLVS has been described as a market-driven school choice program.

The State of Florida supported the development of FLVS to help address the technological and learning needs within its growing and changing student population. Since then, this Internet-based school has grown from 77 initial enrollments to more than 213,000 half-credit course completions in the 2009-10 school year. This equates to completion by more than 97,000 physical students.

The Florida Taxwatch Center for Educational Performance and Accountability's Final Report: A Comprehensive Assessment of Florida Virtual School (2007) reports FLVS to be the "only public school in Florida where funding is tied directly to student performance. Students must be enrolled, receive direct tuition, and successfully complete a FLVS course in order to generate funds." Six courses per semester equate to full-time funding.

Students within Florida have a right to select FLVS as their education option and courses are free. In the 2009-10 school year, 66 percent of enrollments were from students in public and charter schools, 27 percent from home school students, and seven percent from private schools.

FLVS identifies gathering data from its operation and its customers, then using the resulting information to inform change within its organization. Through that feedback, FLVS seeks to ensure that its offer stays current with the needs and expectations of its student, parent, school official, and district personnel customers.

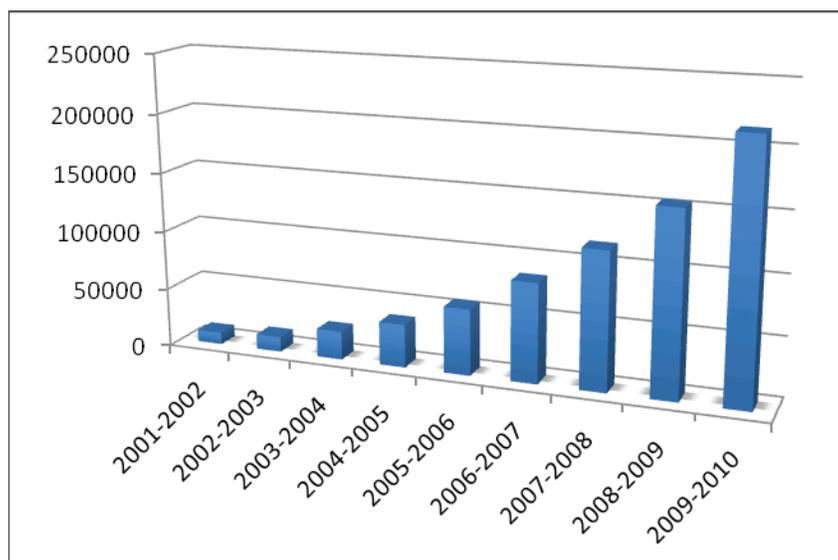
## Scale

FLVS offers more than 100 courses—including core subjects, world languages, electives, honors, and 14 Advanced Placement courses. FLVS courses are accepted for credit and are transferable. FLVS is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and its courses are National Collegiate Athletic Association approved. FLVS also offers Advanced Placement Exam reviews, even for students who did not take the course through FLVS.

FLVS served more than 97,000 students in 213,926 half-credit enrollments in the academic year 2009-10. Enrollment to FLVS courses is open to public, private, and home school students. Students outside Florida may enroll on a tuition fee basis.

FLVS provides virtual solutions to 67 Florida districts, 45 states, and 39 countries. It serves K-12 public, private, charter, and home-school students and effectively provides flexibility and personalized instruction to all Florida students.

FLVS completion history is set out in the graph below which shows the growth in course enrollments between the 2001-02 and 2009-10 academic years.



Graph of FLVS course enrollments by year.

### Staffing

FLVS has more than 1200 staff members who reside throughout Florida and beyond. All FLVS teachers possess a valid Florida teaching certificate and are certified specifically in the subject they teach.

### Cost/Price

FLVS courses are free to Florida resident students. Tuition fees are charges for non-resident students.

Regular and honors courses cost \$375 per semester. Advance Placement Program courses are \$400 per semester. An additional \$25 charge is levied for students living outside the U.S.

### Leading Practice

Elements of leading practice include:

- Enhancement of education through free access to online courses for a community of students, and organized at scale. It is notable that this is about enhancing and building upon school education rather than replacement.
- Development of systems of support and activities that encourage the sense of community beyond the courses alone.
- Focus on data gathering and feedback to ensure FLVS alignment with the needs and expectations of its community.

### Impact

The Florida Virtual School Stakeholder Survey 2009-10 suggests that 53 percent of parents believe their child learns more in the FLVS class than in a traditional classroom format, 31 percent indicate that the level of learning is the same in both learning environments, while just three percent consider that their child learned less in the FLVS course.

58 percent of students said their course was better or much better than traditional classroom experiences, while only seven percent considered it worse. 35 percent of students who did not complete their courses considered the FLVS course to be better or much better than the traditional equivalent, with 48 percent saying it is the same and 18 percent rating their online course as worse or much worse than their traditional classroom experience.

On average, both parents and students consider that the students spend similar amounts of time on their courses whether the course is FLVS or traditional.

Florida Taxwatch Center for Educational Performance and Accountability's Final Report: A Comprehensive Assessment of Florida Virtual School (2007) states somewhat sternly that "Financial investment does not automatically translate into improved student achievement. With approximately a third of the state's budget directed to public education, it is imperative that Florida make sound decisions as to these taxpayer funds. Programs that work must be identified, replicated, and enhanced; those that do not must be eliminated."

The Taxwatch Center's two over-arching queries in its review were:

- How does student achievement by FLVS students compare with that of students in traditional brick and mortar schools?
- Is instruction via FLVS a cost-effective approach?

The introduction to the report goes on to state "Research findings to both queries were positive. FLVS students outperformed their state-wide counterparts on two independent assessments, both the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test and Advanced Placement examinations. They earned higher grades in parallel courses. And this was accomplished with less money than was typically spent for instruction in traditional schools."

### Similar and Related Products

Accipio Learning—Provides live online teaching to secondary school students who cannot attend mainstream schools:  
[www.accipio-learning.com/](http://www.accipio-learning.com/)

Satellite Virtual Schools—A service to Local Authorities in England to enable children unable to attend school to receive support:  
[www.satellitevs.com/](http://www.satellitevs.com/)

Wikipedia also provides a list of virtual schools: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_virtual\\_schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_virtual_schools)

Read the Education Best Practices Whitepaper and other case studies at:  
[www.cisco.com/web/strategy/docs/education/CiscoEdBestPracticesWhitePaper-D2\\_V1.pdf](http://www.cisco.com/web/strategy/docs/education/CiscoEdBestPracticesWhitePaper-D2_V1.pdf)

### Sources

[www.flvs.net/areas/aboutus/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.flvs.net/areas/aboutus/Pages/default.aspx)

The Florida Virtual School Stakeholders' Surveys—Executive Summary 2009-10:  
[www.flvs.net/areas/aboutus/Annual%20Evaluations/Excu10\\_v3\\_r.pdf](http://www.flvs.net/areas/aboutus/Annual%20Evaluations/Excu10_v3_r.pdf)

Florida Taxwatch Center for Educational Performance and Accountability's Final Report: A Comprehensive Assessment of Florida Virtual School (2007).



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