

Broward Virtual Education Parent Survey 2007

As part of its Franchise Agreement with The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), Broward County Schools has agreed to survey parents of its online students annually to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of its virtual education program. In April 2007, an email letter was sent to 1098 parents throughout the state notifying them about the online Parent Survey and pointing them to the web-based instrument via its URL address.

The surveying process was comprised of two sections; section one posed school-specific questions as well as several questions about the learners and parents themselves. Parents completed this portion of the survey only once and then were redirected to the second section of the survey, where they were asked specific questions about their child's course and teacher. Parents were encouraged to complete section two as many times as necessary given the number of courses in which his/her child was enrolled. Of the 1098 emails sent to parents, 170 surveys were completed for section one or fifteen percent (15%) and 317 surveys were completed for section two.

The two-step surveying process described above allows stakeholders to have distinct information on the virtual school, as a whole, as well as feedback on the overall quality of courses and teachers. The remainder of this report shows parents' responses to all of the survey items.

Section One: General Feedback & Student/Parent Information

Which option best describes your child?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Public education student	88	51.8%	51.8%	51.8%
Private education student	14	8.2%	8.2%	8.2%
Charter school student	1	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Home-school student	56	32.9%	32.9%	32.9%
Other	11	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%

How does your child access his/her online courses?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Both school and home, but mostly from home	14	8.3%	8.2%	8.2%
Both school and home, but mostly from school	2	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%
Equally from school and home	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Only at home	149	88.2%	87.6%	87.6%
Only at school	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	4	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%

The main reason your child enrolled in the virtual school was:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
To take an extra course	16	9.5%	9.4%	9.4%
To take a course not offered at his/her school	6	3.6%	3.5%	3.5%
To raise a course grade/ grade forgiveness	18	10.7%	10.6%	10.6%
To balance academic and extracurricular activities	17	10.1%	10.0%	10.0%
Hospital Homebound	5	3.0%	2.9%	2.9%
Personal preference	52	31.0%	30.6%	30.6%
To accelerate graduation/ get ahead	19	11.3%	11.2%	11.2%
Other	33	19.6%	19.4%	19.4%
Don't know	2	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%

Has your child spoken to a guidance counselor regarding the virtual school experience?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	73	42.9%	42.9%	42.9%
No	97	57.1%	57.1%	57.1%

If your child spoke to a guidance counselor regarding the virtual school experience, was the guidance counselor helpful?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	66	41.3%	38.8%	38.8%
No	10	6.3%	5.9%	5.9%
Not applicable	84	52.5%	49.4%	49.4%

Q.7 Please rate the level of technical problems experienced by your child in his/her online course(s):

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
He/she never has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	66	39.3%	38.8%	38.8%
He/she sometimes has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	88	52.4%	51.8%	51.8%
He/she often has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	8	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%
He/she has a great deal of technical problems that interfere with getting work done	3	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%
Don't know	3	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%

Most questions relating to technical problems are resolved:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Within 24 hours	56	34.1%	32.9%	32.9%
Within 2 to 3 days	36	22.0%	21.2%	21.2%
In a period greater than 3 days	10	6.1%	5.9%	5.9%
This question is not applicable because my child never has technical problems.	50	30.5%	29.4%	29.4%
Don't know	12	7.3%	7.1%	7.1%

Please rate the quality of your child's experience with his/her virtual school:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Excellent	96	56.5%	56.5%	56.5%
Good	55	32.4%	32.4%	32.4%
Fair	10	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%
Poor	9	5.3%	5.3%	5.3%

Would you encourage your child to participate in other online courses?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	156	92.3%	91.8%	91.8%
No	13	7.7%	7.6%	7.6%

Would you recommend this virtual school to other parents?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	159	94.6%	93.5%	93.5%
No	9	5.4%	5.3%	5.3%

What part of the virtual school motto, "Any time, any place, any path, any pace," is most important for your child?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Any Time	91	54.8%	53.5%	53.5%
Any Place	22	13.3%	12.9%	12.9%
Any Path	13	7.8%	7.6%	7.6%
Any Pace	40	24.1%	23.5%	23.5%

Has your child experienced any school or district level barriers that have kept him/her from taking courses with the virtual school?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	10	6.0%	5.9%	5.9%
No	158	94.0%	92.9%	92.9%

What is the highest degree earned by your child's mother, father, or guardian?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
High School Degree	29	17.3%	17.1%	17.1%
Associate's Degree	25	14.9%	14.7%	14.7%
Bachelor's Degree	52	31.0%	30.6%	30.6%
Master's Degree	35	20.8%	20.6%	20.6%
Doctoral Degree	19	11.3%	11.2%	11.2%
Other	8	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%

I found out about this virtual school from:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
a school counselor	55	33.3%	32.4%	32.4%
a friend	35	21.2%	20.6%	20.6%
an ad in the high school newspaper	1	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
a newspaper article	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a TV news report or advertisement	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a radio advertisement	1	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
a home education office	1	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
a home school meeting or convention	7	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%
my child	25	15.2%	14.7%	14.7%
an Internet search	21	12.7%	12.4%	12.4%
a family member	7	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%
a community event or meeting (festivals, Rotary, etc)	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
other	12	7.3%	7.1%	7.1%

Do the virtual school courses engage your family in the learning process?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
yes	136	82.4%	80.0%	80.0%
no	29	17.6%	17.1%	17.1%

Section Two: Course/Teacher Items

On average, the number of hours per week your child spends/spent on this online course is:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
0 - 1 hour	3	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%
1 - 2 hours	24	7.8%	7.6%	7.6%
2 - 4 hours	107	34.7%	33.8%	33.8%
5 - 10 hours	134	43.5%	42.3%	42.3%
Over 10 hours	40	13.0%	12.6%	12.6%

Communication between your child and the teacher of this course is:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Great	200	64.7%	63.1%	63.1%
Good	77	24.9%	24.3%	24.3%
Fair	17	5.5%	5.4%	5.4%
Poor	9	2.9%	2.8%	2.8%
Don't know	6	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%

What communication mode did you/your child find most helpful with this particular virtual school course and teacher?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Email	173	56.0%	54.6%	54.6%
Telephone	133	43.0%	42.0%	42.0%
Instant Message	1	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Other	2	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%

Communication with your child and other students enrolled in this course(s) is:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Great	48	16.1%	15.1%	15.1%
Good	60	20.1%	18.9%	18.9%
Fair	34	11.4%	10.7%	10.7%
Poor	41	13.7%	12.9%	12.9%
Don't know	116	38.8%	36.6%	36.6%

Most questions relating to course content or assignments are resolved:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Within 24 hours	214	69.3%	67.5%	67.5%
Within 2 to 3 days	76	24.6%	24.0%	24.0%
In a period greater than 3 days	7	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%
This question is not applicable because my child never has questions about the course content or assignments.	7	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%
Don't know	5	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%

Please rate your child's learning experience in this online course(s) as compared to most traditional high school courses.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
My child learned more in this online course than in most of his/her traditional courses.	176	58.1%	55.5%	55.5%
My child learned the same in this online course as most of his/her traditional courses.	80	26.4%	25.2%	25.2%
My child learned less in this online course than in most of his/her traditional courses.	14	4.6%	4.4%	4.4%
Don't know	33	10.9%	10.4%	10.4%

The online teachers are required to speak to their students and parents once per month. Do you feel this expectation has been met?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
yes	292	94.2%	92.1%	92.1%
no	18	5.8%	5.7%	5.7%

My child's teacher has shown a special interest in my child's success with his/her online course.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
yes	275	89.6%	86.8%	86.8%
no	32	10.4%	10.1%	10.1%

Conclusion

Results from the 2007 Virtual School Parent Survey affirmed that Broward Virtual Education parents had a high degree of overall satisfaction with the virtual school, its quality of courses, and the quality of its teachers.

Parents were very pleased with the quality of their child's experience with FLVS, with almost 90% of respondents saying that their experience has been either "excellent" or "good." Parents were generally enthusiastic in their comments regarding quality of the student experience, sharing opinions such as, *"It has turned my daughter around 360 degrees emotionally and academically," "My child absolutely loves this school," "My daughter's...grades are better than ever,"* and *"She has learned a lot more than when she was at the physical school."* Other positive comments included that the teachers have made learning fun, administrators were very supportive, and students have benefitted by the independent, self-paced nature of the school. For other students, though, the nature of the school made their experience difficult—some struggled with the reading load, the general pace, and the computer time.

Most parents surveyed, 92.3%, would encourage their children to participate in other online courses as well. Of this group, most parents cited that they would encourage additional participation depending on their child's need for additional help outside the physical school and based on their particular child's level of independence, motivation, and sense of responsibility.

Ultimately, 94.6% of parents would recommend this virtual school to other parents. Several of the open-ended comments reflected the viewpoints of most others: *"For children who need other choices that aren't traditional, I would highly recommend these courses to my children's friends." "I would recommend the courses so their children can stay one step ahead." "I do only to the parents whose kids can work independently and are serious about school." "I think it solves many problems that some students may have in keeping up with work and/or extracurricular activities. It also offers individual attention with the teacher which is not always available in a classroom setting."*

Student-teacher communication was also favorable according to parents: 64.7% responded with a rating of "great," 24.9% responded "good," 5.5% said "fair," 2.9% said "poor," and 1.9% responded "don't know." Here are some additional specifics regarding communication:

- 99% of parents noted that communication was via either phone or email.
- Responsiveness of communication was generally perceived as good. 69.3% of parents said that most of their child's questions relating to course content or assignments were resolved within 24 hours and 24.6% said that resolution usually came within two to three days. These findings supports the response of 94.2% of parents who said that online teachers did speak to students and parents once per month, as they are required to do.

Related to communication, parents also responded favorably regarding instructors' level of interest in their students' success. 89.6% of parents said that their child's teacher had shown a special interest in their child's success with his/her online course, and although 10.4% said their child's teacher did not show a special interest in their child's success, almost all of the open-ended comments were extremely enthusiastic and positive. For example, *"Mrs. McCutcheon has gone over and above her call of duty when it comes to my daughter! I will never forget how she spent almost two hours on the phone with her until she understood a math concept that was going to be on the final last year!"* *"Ms. Cardenas was very helpful in motivating my child to think of the future. She was willing to discuss academic goals and she always gave my child positive feedback about her writing."* *"Ms. Salletta really encouraged my daughter in this course. She always had positive things to say and this helped boost my daughter's confidence and I think it helped her get better grades."*

Finally, when asked to rate their child's learning experience in this online course(s) as compared to most traditional high school courses, 58.1% said their child learned more in this online course than in most of his/her traditional courses, 26.4% said they learned the same, 4.6% said they learned less, and 10.9% said they didn't know. No indication was given in the open commentary for why some children may have learned less in their online course.