

Hillsborough Online Parent Survey 2007

As part of its Franchise Agreement with The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), Hillsborough 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 641 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 641 emails sent to parents, 66 surveys were completed for section one or ten percent (10%) and 64 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	53	80.3%	80.3%	80.3%
Private education student	2	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Charter school student	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Home-school student	7	10.6%	10.6%	10.6%
Other	4	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%

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	3	4.6%	4.5%	4.5%
Both school and home, but mostly from school	1	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Equally from school and home	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Only at home	60	92.3%	90.9%	90.9%
Only at school	1	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Other	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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	14	21.9%	21.2%	21.2%
To take a course not offered at his/her school	2	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%
To raise a course grade/ grade forgiveness	12	18.8%	18.2%	18.2%
To balance academic and extracurricular activities	4	6.3%	6.1%	6.1%
Hospital Homebound	1	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%
Personal preference	15	23.4%	22.7%	22.7%
To accelerate graduation/ get ahead	7	10.9%	10.6%	10.6%
Other	9	14.1%	13.6%	13.6%
Don't know	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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	29	43.9%	43.9%	43.9%
No	37	56.1%	56.1%	56.1%

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	25	41.7%	37.9%	37.9%
No	3	5.0%	4.5%	4.5%
Not applicable	32	53.3%	48.5%	48.5%

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	24	37.5%	36.4%	36.4%
He/she sometimes has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	26	40.6%	39.4%	39.4%
He/she often has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	2	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%
He/she has a great deal of technical problems that interfere with getting work done	7	10.9%	10.6%	10.6%
Don't know	5	7.8%	7.6%	7.6%

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	23	36.5%	34.8%	34.8%
Within 2 to 3 days	10	15.9%	15.2%	15.2%
In a period greater than 3 days	5	7.9%	7.6%	7.6%
This question is not applicable because my child never has technical problems.	19	30.2%	28.8%	28.8%
Don't know	6	9.5%	9.1%	9.1%

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	34	53.1%	51.5%	51.5%
Good	19	29.7%	28.8%	28.8%
Fair	6	9.4%	9.1%	9.1%
Poor	5	7.8%	7.6%	7.6%

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	57	87.7%	86.4%	86.4%
No	8	12.3%	12.1%	12.1%

Would you recommend this virtual school to other parents?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	60	90.9%	90.9%	90.9%
No	6	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%

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	39	62.9%	59.1%	59.1%
Any Place	4	6.5%	6.1%	6.1%
Any Path	5	8.1%	7.6%	7.6%
Any Pace	14	22.6%	21.2%	21.2%

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	6	9.2%	9.1%	9.1%
No	59	90.8%	89.4%	89.4%

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	12	18.5%	18.2%	18.2%
Associate's Degree	18	27.7%	27.3%	27.3%
Bachelor's Degree	16	24.6%	24.2%	24.2%
Master's Degree	12	18.5%	18.2%	18.2%
Doctoral Degree	5	7.7%	7.6%	7.6%
Other	2	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%

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	42	64.6%	63.6%	63.6%
a friend	9	13.8%	13.6%	13.6%
an ad in the high school newspaper	1	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
a newspaper article	1	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
a TV news report or advertisement	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a radio advertisement	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a home education office	1	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
a home school meeting or convention	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
my child	7	10.8%	10.6%	10.6%
an Internet search	2	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%
a family member	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a community event or meeting (festivals, Rotary, etc)	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
other	2	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%

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	45	70.3%	68.2%	68.2%
no	19	29.7%	28.8%	28.8%

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	1	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%
1 - 2 hours	8	12.9%	12.5%	12.5%
2 - 4 hours	20	32.3%	31.3%	31.3%
5 - 10 hours	32	51.6%	50.0%	50.0%
Over 10 hours	1	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%

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	35	55.6%	54.7%	54.7%
Good	20	31.7%	31.3%	31.3%
Fair	2	3.2%	3.1%	3.1%
Poor	5	7.9%	7.8%	7.8%
Don't know	1	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%

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	34	57.6%	53.1%	53.1%
Telephone	24	40.7%	37.5%	37.5%
Instant Message	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	1	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%

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	5	8.1%	7.8%	7.8%
Good	13	21.0%	20.3%	20.3%
Fair	6	9.7%	9.4%	9.4%
Poor	7	11.3%	10.9%	10.9%
Don't know	31	50.0%	48.4%	48.4%

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	41	65.1%	64.1%	64.1%
Within 2 to 3 days	15	23.8%	23.4%	23.4%
In a period greater than 3 days	4	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%
This question is not applicable because my child never has questions about the course content or assignments.	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know	3	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%

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.	26	41.3%	40.6%	40.6%
My child learned the same in this online course as most of his/her traditional courses.	24	38.1%	37.5%	37.5%
My child learned less in this online course than in most of his/her traditional courses.	5	7.9%	7.8%	7.8%
Don't know	8	12.7%	12.5%	12.5%

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	57	93.4%	89.1%	89.1%
no	4	6.6%	6.3%	6.3%

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	53	85.5%	82.8%	82.8%
no	9	14.5%	14.1%	14.1%

Conclusion

Compared to the 2006 results, parents in this survey showed a slight decrease in their overall satisfaction with the quality of their child's FLVS experience, with only 82.8% responding excellent or good (as compared to 85% last year). Positive open-ended comments included:

- *Loves the freedom*
- *Materials...were presented in an easy to understand format.*
- *Amount of work required per section was appropriate.*
- *Communication from the teacher was adequate.*
- *I think it is a better tool for parents to be involved with a students progress.*

Some of the more negative comments might point to the slight change in satisfaction results over last year:

- *Had crashes and resulting incomplete work... Spent so much time fixing problems and re-doing her work, that she was losing focus and couldn't stay on track and keep up with the timing of the coursework.*
- *Hard due dates each week...*
- *She was very frustrated with the course, getting in touch with the instructor, trying to explain the problems, etc. She basically guessed at much of the work.*
- *Dates of (introduction) meeting were not given till the week before.*
- *I didn't care for the 9th grade English instructors tone. I also didn't like having deadlines that are carved in stone. Very little flexibility was granted us.*
- *The biggest problem is that some of the teachers won't respond to e-mails and phone messages within 24 hours. Teachers need to contact the students more than once a month. Even a five minute call every other week would help. Although this is more self taught, even hosting an online chat session would help.*
- *My son had to drop the course because it just created too much stress trying to keep up and send coursework to the instructor. Even dropping the course was difficult with several emails and phone calls.*

Even with this minor decrease in overall satisfaction, there was an increase in other indicators of satisfaction over last year: 87.7% of respondents said they would encourage their children to take other online courses (compared to 78% last year), and 90.9% reported that they would recommend the virtual school to other parents (compared to 88% last year).

Overall, communication was "up" over last year and even the year before, with 87.3% of parents responding that, in general, student-teacher communication was either "great" or "good" (as compared with 84% last year). Here are some additional specifics regarding communication: Responses regarding how quickly content and assignment questions were resolved proved favorable, with 65.1% of parents saying that most of their child's questions were resolved within 24 hours and 23.8% saying that resolution usually came within two to three days. The percentage of parents who said that online

teachers spoke to students and parents once per month as required was 93%, compared to 84% last year, showing another improvement over last year.

Finally, when asked to rate their child's learning experience in this online course(s) as compared to most traditional high school courses, 79.4% said their child learned more or the same in this online course. This comes as a decrease over last year's finding, which was 87% of parents who said their children learned more or the same in their online course. Various positive and negative comments about the learning experience included:

- *All subjects are covered. Not just the areas that are tested.*
- *Enabled my daughter to take AP chemistry in school.*
- *I think because it was her choice to take it she applied herself more.*
- *I think this because of not making the training class and too many questions he seemed to have.*
- *Difficulty with website stability when submitting her work.*
- *Since he had so many problems I had him withdraw before his grade was changed from a passing (low D) to an F.*

Based on parents' perspectives this year, it seems that their overall satisfaction was moderately favorable, communication was very favorable, but results were slightly less than favorable.