

Marion Virtual School Parent Survey 2007

As part of its Franchise Agreement with The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), Marion 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 640 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 640 emails sent to parents, 74 surveys were completed for section one or twelve percent (12%) and 95 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	54	73.0%	73.0%	73.0%
Private education student	5	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%
Charter school student	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Home-school student	14	18.9%	18.9%	18.9%
Other	1	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%

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	21	28.4%	28.4%	28.4%
Both school and home, but mostly from school	11	14.9%	14.9%	14.9%
Equally from school and home	5	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%
Only at home	36	48.6%	48.6%	48.6%
Only at school	1	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
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	11	14.9%	14.9%	14.9%
To take a course not offered at his/her school	11	14.9%	14.9%	14.9%
To raise a course grade/ grade forgiveness	16	21.6%	21.6%	21.6%
To balance academic and extracurricular activities	8	10.8%	10.8%	10.8%
Hospital Homebound	1	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Personal preference	13	17.6%	17.6%	17.6%
To accelerate graduation/ get ahead	4	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%
Other	10	13.5%	13.5%	13.5%
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	39	52.7%	52.7%	52.7%
No	35	47.3%	47.3%	47.3%

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	35	48.6%	47.3%	47.3%
No	6	8.3%	8.1%	8.1%
Not applicable	31	43.1%	41.9%	41.9%

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	18	24.7%	24.3%	24.3%
He/she sometimes has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	46	63.0%	62.2%	62.2%
He/she often has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	2	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
He/she has a great deal of technical problems that interfere with getting work done	3	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
Don't know	4	5.5%	5.4%	5.4%

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	30	40.5%	40.5%	40.5%
Within 2 to 3 days	15	20.3%	20.3%	20.3%
In a period greater than 3 days	5	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%
This question is not applicable because my child never has technical problems.	17	23.0%	23.0%	23.0%
Don't know	7	9.5%	9.5%	9.5%

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	27	36.5%	36.5%	36.5%
Good	33	44.6%	44.6%	44.6%
Fair	9	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
Poor	5	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%

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	62	83.8%	83.8%	83.8%
No	12	16.2%	16.2%	16.2%

Would you recommend this virtual school to other parents?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	68	91.9%	91.9%	91.9%
No	6	8.1%	8.1%	8.1%

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	36	49.3%	48.6%	48.6%
Any Place	7	9.6%	9.5%	9.5%
Any Path	2	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Any Pace	28	38.4%	37.8%	37.8%

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	9	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
No	65	87.8%	87.8%	87.8%

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	34	46.6%	45.9%	45.9%
Associate's Degree	16	21.9%	21.6%	21.6%
Bachelor's Degree	9	12.3%	12.2%	12.2%
Master's Degree	9	12.3%	12.2%	12.2%
Doctoral Degree	2	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Other	3	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%

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	41	55.4%	55.4%	55.4%
a friend	8	10.8%	10.8%	10.8%
an ad in the high school newspaper	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
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	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a home education office	2	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
a home school meeting or convention	1	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
my child	10	13.5%	13.5%	13.5%
an Internet search	3	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
a family member	1	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
a community event or meeting (festivals, Rotary, etc)	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
other	8	10.8%	10.8%	10.8%

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	52	70.3%	70.3%	70.3%
no	22	29.7%	29.7%	29.7%

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	4	4.4%	4.2%	4.2%
1 - 2 hours	7	7.7%	7.4%	7.4%
2 - 4 hours	43	47.3%	45.3%	45.3%
5 - 10 hours	33	36.3%	34.7%	34.7%
Over 10 hours	4	4.4%	4.2%	4.2%

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	41	44.1%	43.2%	43.2%
Good	39	41.9%	41.1%	41.1%
Fair	9	9.7%	9.5%	9.5%
Poor	3	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
Don't know	1	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%

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	38	41.3%	40.0%	40.0%
Telephone	50	54.3%	52.6%	52.6%
Instant Message	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	4	4.3%	4.2%	4.2%

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	14	15.6%	14.7%	14.7%
Good	32	35.6%	33.7%	33.7%
Fair	13	14.4%	13.7%	13.7%
Poor	6	6.7%	6.3%	6.3%
Don't know	25	27.8%	26.3%	26.3%

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	53	57.6%	55.8%	55.8%
Within 2 to 3 days	27	29.3%	28.4%	28.4%
In a period greater than 3 days	5	5.4%	5.3%	5.3%
This question is not applicable because my child never has questions about the course content or assignments.	3	3.3%	3.2%	3.2%
Don't know	4	4.3%	4.2%	4.2%

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.	37	40.2%	38.9%	38.9%
My child learned the same in this online course as most of his/her traditional courses.	27	29.3%	28.4%	28.4%
My child learned less in this online course than in most of his/her traditional courses.	15	16.3%	15.8%	15.8%
Don't know	13	14.1%	13.7%	13.7%

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	81	90.0%	85.3%	85.3%
no	9	10.0%	9.5%	9.5%

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	77	84.6%	81.1%	81.1%
no	14	15.4%	14.7%	14.7%

Conclusion

Results from the 2007 Virtual School Parent Survey show that Marion County Virtual Education has improved in a couple of key areas since last year.

Parents were generally satisfied with the quality of their child's experience with FLVS. 36.5% of parents surveyed said the quality of their child's experience with the virtual school was "excellent," 44.6% said it was "good," 12.2% rated it as "fair," and 6.8% rated it as "poor." These reflect improvements over last year's scores of 29%, 43%, 14%, and 14% respectively. However, most of the open-ended comments for this question were negative, and did not reflect the overall favorable score, possibly pointing to areas for improvement. Here is a sampling of representative parent comments:

- *The virtual class has allowed her to have a very good experience by affording her privacy she would not have otherwise had.*
- *His teachers through both Fla Virtual and Marion Virtual have been incredible.*
- *It allowed her to work at her own pace and the teacher was very helpful.*
- *Both of his teachers have been great...always ready to help.*
- *Once she found the protocol...things were better.*
- *My son required more supervision to get his work done than he was receiving, this is not necessarily the school systems failure.*
- *Wasn't informed or kept up-to-date on grades.*
- *The instructor does not respond to emails or phone calls in a timely manner causing the course to take longer This is causing alot of tension and frustration.*
- *Instructor would not respond to questions.*
- *He finds some lessons long and kind of distracting.*
- *He's just not motivated enough for an online course.*
- *A couple of the teachers have been slow to respond to questions or grading assignments, or marking them complete.*
- *Due mostly to his inability to work independently...and stay on task, not any fault of the system.*
- *This type of learning is difficult for Joseph because of his learning disability. It has taken us a very long time to get the work done.*
- *It did not encourage him to finish the courses. He felt out of the loop.*
- *Too much research on their own was required to complete assignments. The needed information was not contained in the lesson.*

Other indicators of satisfaction: 83.8% would encourage their children to take other online courses and 91.9% would recommend this virtual school to other parents.

Student-teacher communication showed a significant improvement over last year as well: 44.1% responded with a rating of "great" (compared to 29% in 2006), 41.9% responded "good" (compared to 21% in 2006), 9.7% said "fair" (compared to 21% in 2006), and 3.2% said "poor" (compared to 29% in 2006). Here are some additional specifics regarding communication:

- The modes of communication that parents thought were most helpful for their children were phone (54.3%) and email (41.3%).
- Parents were pleased with the responsiveness of communication. 86.9% of parents said that most of their child's questions relating to course content or assignments were resolved within three days. Also, 90% of parents said that the online teachers spoke to their students and parents once per month as required—another notable improvement, when compared to last year's finding of 69% for this item.

Parents had many positive comments regarding MVS throughout the survey. Here are just a few more in conclusion:

- *She was able to work at her own pace and she learned a lot more because it wasn't rushed.*
- *It allowed her to take an extra elective at school that she really wanted to take.*
- *The teachers are the best thing. They are willing, kind, and full of ideas on how to get the most out of online schooling.*
- *I also like how I can...keep a constant check on his grades and progress without having to wait 4 weeks.*
- *My daughter had an exceptionally, wonderful teacher who was ALWAYS positive and encouraging. She aided, greatly, in making this completed course for my daughter successful.*