

Marion Virtual School Student Survey 2007

As part of its Franchise Agreement with The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), Marion County Schools has agreed to survey its online students annually in order to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of its virtual education program. The surveying process is a two-part procedure in which two distinct surveys are “sent” to students. The first survey is a general survey asking students some school-specific questions as well as several questions about the learners themselves. This survey is conducted in a mass email to students at the end of the school year; they are asked to go to a particular URL and complete the survey. Students complete this survey only once during the school year. The return rate for this portion of Marion’s data was 41 surveys or 6% of all the students who completed, were active, or who had dropped their online course in 2006-07. The feedback from these students is shown in Section One of this report.

The second survey is a teacher/course specific survey in which students are asked several questions about their virtual school course and teacher. This survey is automatically built into the students’ courses and works in the following manner. Once a student reaches 65% completion in his or her course, he is congratulated, told to complete the survey, and redirected to the survey URL. Thus, students may complete several of these surveys annually depending upon the number of virtual courses in which he/she participates. There were 768 teacher/course specific surveys completed for Marion County as of May 14, 2007. Information on Marion County’s virtual courses and teachers is shared in the second section of this document.

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 students’ responses to all of the survey items.

Section One: General Feedback & Student Information

Please check the statement that best reflects your experience with your virtual school:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
I am currently taking an online course and have never withdrawn from an online course in the past.	26	63.4%	63.4%	63.4%
I am currently taking an online course but have withdrawn from an online course in the past.	8	19.5%	19.5%	19.5%
I am not taking any online course currently, but I have taken and completed at least one online course in the past.	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
I am not taking any online course currently, nor have I completed any online course in the past.	5	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%

Please rate yourself on the following statements:

Topic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Answered	Not Asked
I am highly motivated and self-disciplined.	8	27	3	0	1	2
I can set a personal schedule and complete assigned work by the required dates.	7	24	6	1	1	2
My writing and communication skills are better than average.	12	23	4	0	0	2
I try to solve problems and work through difficulties independently.	16	22	1	0	0	2
I can read and follow detailed instructions on my own.	19	19	1	0	0	2

The main reason I enrolled in the virtual school :

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
To take an extra course	6	14.6%	14.6%	14.6%
To take a course not offered at my school	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
To raise a course grade/ grade forgiveness	8	19.5%	19.5%	19.5%
To balance academic and extracurricular activities	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
Hospital Homebound	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
Personal preference	7	17.1%	17.1%	17.1%
To accelerate graduation/ get ahead	8	19.5%	19.5%	19.5%
Other	8	19.5%	19.5%	19.5%

I access my online course(s) primarily from:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Home only	21	51.2%	51.2%	51.2%
School only	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
Combination of home and school, but mostly home	9	22.0%	22.0%	22.0%
Combination of home and school, but mostly school	3	7.3%	7.3%	7.3%
School and home equally	5	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
Community center or library	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%

I am a:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
public school student	35	85.4%	85.4%	85.4%
private school student	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
home school student	6	14.6%	14.6%	14.6%
charter school student	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
other	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

My general computer experience prior to my participation with this virtual school:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
No previous background	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
A little experience	10	24.4%	24.4%	24.4%
A great deal of computer experience	19	46.3%	46.3%	46.3%
Extremely proficient	10	24.4%	24.4%	24.4%

My general Internet experience prior to my participation with this virtual school:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
No previous background	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
A little experience	7	17.1%	17.1%	17.1%
A great deal of Internet experience	23	56.1%	56.1%	56.1%
Extremely proficient	9	22.0%	22.0%	22.0%

My experience with this virtual school:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
I never have technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	21	52.5%	51.2%	51.2%
I sometimes have technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	17	42.5%	41.5%	41.5%
I often have technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	1	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%
I have a great deal of technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	1	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%

Most questions related to technical problems are resolved:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Within 24 hours	17	41.5%	41.5%	41.5%
Within 2 to 3 days	5	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
In a period greater than 3 days	3	7.3%	7.3%	7.3%
Not applicable - I never have technical problems	16	39.0%	39.0%	39.0%

Most of my technical problems are resolved by:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Emails to help@flvs.net	5	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
Calls to the tech help toll free number	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
Contact with my teacher	24	58.5%	58.5%	58.5%
Other	10	24.4%	24.4%	24.4%

The learning management system (where the course content is accessed, where I turn in assignments, participate in discussion, and take exam) is:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very easy to use	13	31.7%	31.7%	31.7%
Easy to use	24	58.5%	58.5%	58.5%
Difficult to use	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
Very difficult to use	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%

Accessing my virtual school course(s) is:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very easy; I can get into my course(s) whenever I want.	25	61.0%	61.0%	61.0%
Easy; I can almost always get into my course(s).	14	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%
Difficult; I often have trouble getting into my course(s).	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
Very difficult; I very often have trouble getting into my course(s).	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

The online registration process was:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very easy	16	39.0%	39.0%	39.0%
Easy	21	51.2%	51.2%	51.2%
Difficult	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%
Very Difficult	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
I do not register online	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%

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	23	56.1%	56.1%	56.1%
a friend	10	24.4%	24.4%	24.4%
an ad in my high school newspaper	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
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	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
a home school meeting or convention	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
an Internet search	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
a family member	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
a community even or meeting (festivals, Rotary, etc)	1	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
Other	2	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%

What part of this statement, "Any time, any place, any path, any pace," is most important to you in relation to your online course(s)?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Any time	12	31.6%	30.8%	29.3%
Any place	1	2.6%	2.6%	2.4%
Any path	3	7.9%	7.7%	7.3%
Any pace	22	57.9%	56.4%	53.7%

I would recommend this virtual school to other students.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Strongly agree	17	43.6%	43.6%	41.5%
Agree	21	53.8%	53.8%	51.2%
Disagree	1	2.6%	2.6%	2.4%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

What type of Internet connection do you primarily use while working on your online course(s)?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Modem connection 28K or less	1	2.6%	2.6%	2.4%
Modem connection 56K or less	3	7.7%	7.7%	7.3%
Cable modem	8	20.5%	20.5%	19.5%
DSL	20	51.3%	51.3%	48.8%
High speed access from my school	7	17.9%	17.9%	17.1%

What type of computer do you use?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Windows	36	97.3%	92.3%	87.8%
Macintosh	1	2.7%	2.6%	2.4%
Unix/Linux	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Which of the following technologies do you use regularly? (Choose all that apply.)

Choice	Count	Percent of Sample Asked	Percent of Total Sample
Cell Phone with Web Access or Smart Phone	24	61.5%	58.5%
MP3 Player/ iPod	26	66.7%	63.4%
Music Downloads	26	66.7%	63.4%
Online Gaming	12	30.8%	29.3%
PDA	4	10.3%	9.8%
Blogs	6	15.4%	14.6%

Section Two: Course/Teacher Items

Approximately, how long have/had you been active in this course?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
<1 month	22	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%
1-3 months	322	42.1%	41.9%	41.9%
4-6 months	306	40.1%	39.8%	39.8%
7-10 months	90	11.8%	11.7%	11.7%
>10 months	24	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%

The goals and objectives of this online course are:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very clear	289	37.7%	37.6%	37.6%
Clear	422	55.1%	54.9%	54.9%
Vague	53	6.9%	6.9%	6.9%
Non existent	2	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%

Overall, the directions throughout this online course are:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very clear	218	28.7%	28.4%	28.4%
Clear	468	61.6%	60.9%	60.9%
Vague	70	9.2%	9.1%	9.1%
Non existent	4	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%

This online course captures/captured my attention.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Strongly agree	122	16.0%	15.9%	15.9%
Agree	504	66.0%	65.6%	65.6%
Disagree	110	14.4%	14.3%	14.3%
Strongly disagree	28	3.7%	3.6%	3.6%

The course materials provided to me assist/assisted me in being successful in this course.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Strongly agree	139	18.2%	18.1%	18.1%
Agree	509	66.8%	66.3%	66.3%
Disagree	36	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%
Strongly disagree	4	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Not applicable - No outside resources were provided to me for this course.	74	9.7%	9.6%	9.6%

Communication with the teacher(s) of this course is/was:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Great	338	44.2%	44.0%	44.0%
Good	295	38.6%	38.4%	38.4%
Fair	112	14.7%	14.6%	14.6%
Poor	19	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

Most questions related to course content or assignments are/were resolved:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Within 24 hours	429	56.4%	55.9%	55.9%
Within 2 to 3 days	240	31.6%	31.3%	31.3%
In a period greater than 3 days	39	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%
Not applicable - I've never had such questions.	52	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%

I spoke/speak with the teacher of this course:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
At least once a month	556	73.2%	72.4%	72.4%
Once every two months	112	14.7%	14.6%	14.6%
Less than once every two months	77	10.1%	10.0%	10.0%
Never	15	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%

Communication with other students enrolled in this course is/was:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Great	92	12.1%	12.0%	12.0%
Good	227	29.9%	29.6%	29.6%
Fair	206	27.1%	26.8%	26.8%
Poor	235	30.9%	30.6%	30.6%

In this course, I use/used the synchronous chat functionality: (The synchronous chat function could be used for group tutorials held by teacher, student-to-student cooperative work, and/or one-on-one teacher-student interaction.)

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very often	18	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%
Often	53	7.0%	6.9%	6.9%
Sometimes	108	14.2%	14.1%	14.1%
Never	503	66.1%	65.5%	65.5%
Not available	79	10.4%	10.3%	10.3%

The chat functionality helps/helped me be successful in this course.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Strongly agree	23	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Agree	123	16.2%	16.0%	16.0%
Disagree	50	6.6%	6.5%	6.5%
Strongly disagree	17	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
Not applicable - I've never used the chat feature	489	64.5%	63.7%	63.7%
Not available	56	7.4%	7.3%	7.3%

The hours per week I spend/spent completing this online course are about:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
0-1 hour per week	21	2.8%	2.7%	2.7%
1-2 hours per week	102	13.5%	13.3%	13.3%
2-4 hours per week	307	40.5%	40.0%	40.0%
5-10 hours per week	275	36.3%	35.8%	35.8%
Over 10 hours per week	53	7.0%	6.9%	6.9%

Compared to a traditional high school class, the difficulty level of this online course is:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Much harder	59	7.8%	7.7%	7.7%
Harder	152	20.1%	19.8%	19.8%
The same level of difficulty	310	41.0%	40.4%	40.4%
Easier	142	18.8%	18.5%	18.5%
Much easier	51	6.7%	6.6%	6.6%
Not sure	43	5.7%	5.6%	5.6%

Compared to a traditional high school class, the quality of this online course is:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Much better	135	17.8%	17.6%	17.6%
Better	223	29.3%	29.0%	29.0%
The same quality	296	38.9%	38.5%	38.5%
Worse	58	7.6%	7.6%	7.6%
Much worse	12	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%
Not sure	36	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%

My online teacher(s) demonstrated an interest in my success as a student.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Strongly agree	345	45.5%	44.9%	44.9%
Agree	367	48.4%	47.8%	47.8%
Disagree	44	5.8%	5.7%	5.7%
Strongly disagree	3	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%

Conclusion

Marion County Students participating in Marion Virtual School online courses indicated that they were satisfied with their online experience overall, even moreso than last year. Whereas in 2006, 82% of students either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they would recommend FLVS to other students, in 2007 that number climbed to a striking 97.4%.

However, as impressive as this overall indicator was, it was not a reflection of students’ feedback in the specific area of student-teacher communication. In fact, rather than improving since last year, some communication figures this year showed a decrease in desired levels: In 2006, 87% felt communication by their teacher(s) was either “great” or “good,” while 14% said it was either “fair” or “poor.” In 2007, these figures were less favorable: 82.8% felt communication was either “great” or “good,” and 17.2% said that teacher-student communication was either “fair” or “poor.”

Other communication figures:

- This year, only 56.4% of students said that most questions related to course content or assignments were resolved within 24 hours, whereas last year, 64% stated problems were resolved within 24 hours.
- This year, 12.1% stated they communicated with their teacher less than once every two months or never. Last year, this figure was at a comparable 12%.

These figures, whether dipped or comparable, still indicate as last year the need for improvement in the area of communication. Here are some various student comments:

- ✓ *“Communication was great.”*
- ✓ *“My teacher is there no matter what I need her for. She great.”*
- ✓ *“It takes a long time for this teacher to grade things...the responses and comments I receive are minimal.”*
- ✓ *“Every time I needed assistance I could call my teacher. She always helped me.”*
- ✓ *“The communication with the teachers was okay. I was able to get a hold of them when I needed to.”*
- ✓ *“My teacher did contact me a couple times.”*
- ✓ *“I was able to talk to my teacher when I needed, but not as often as I would have liked.”*
- ✓ *“It was hard to get a hold of each other, it was more my fault since I’m always busy with my job.”*
- ✓ *“Whenever I called Ms. McNair, she told me that she would return my call and she never did. I have tried very hard to get a hold of her, and rarely is she available during her ‘available hours.’*
- ✓ *“He has kept a check on my grades and made sure that I have been doing well in the course. He keeps an eye on my assignments and on my pace.”*
- ✓ *“My teacher actually cared and had an interest in my course.*
- ✓ *“I didn’t really talk to her much, I barely even call, that’s why.”*
- ✓ *“We talked almost everyday.”*
- ✓ *“I haven’t talked to her yet.”*
- ✓ *“Not enough feedback on assignments that were detailed enough to make any meaningful adjustments to the assignment.”*
- ✓ *“I fully understand that she has her own classes as well, and accept the day or two window of not getting a hold of her.”*
- ✓ *“I talk to my teachers all the time, just to see how i am doing.”*

Regarding their courses specifically, some figures again lacked compared to last year’s and compared to the overall satisfaction indicator mentioned above. For example, in 2006, the majority of students who responded (57%) felt the quality of their online courses was “much better” or “better” than traditional high school classes, whereas in 2007, less than half (47.7%) felt that the quality of their online courses was “much better” or “better” than traditional high school classes.

Back to an up note in an important area, though: An impressive 93.9% of students surveyed said their online course teachers demonstrated an interest in their success as students, this comparable with last year’s figure of 94%.

Based on the statistics and student comments included in this report, we can conclude that Marion Virtual School had a successful second year overall, with some room for improvement. By and large, students seemed satisfied with their online courses and teachers, and felt they received a quality educational experience.