

Miami Dade Virtual School Parent Survey 2007

As part of its Franchise Agreement with The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), Miami Dade 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 757 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 757 emails sent to parents, 66 surveys were completed for section one or nine percent (9%) and 59 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	50	76.9%	75.8%	75.8%
Private education student	3	4.6%	4.5%	4.5%
Charter school student	1	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Home-school student	7	10.8%	10.6%	10.6%
Other	4	6.2%	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	10	15.6%	15.2%	15.2%
Both school and home, but mostly from school	1	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%
Equally from school and home	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Only at home	51	79.7%	77.3%	77.3%
Only at school	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	2	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%

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	12	18.8%	18.2%	18.2%
To take a course not offered at his/her school	6	9.4%	9.1%	9.1%
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	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Personal preference	13	20.3%	19.7%	19.7%
To accelerate graduation/ get ahead	5	7.8%	7.6%	7.6%
Other	12	18.8%	18.2%	18.2%
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	30	46.2%	45.5%	45.5%
No	35	53.8%	53.0%	53.0%

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	30	50.0%	45.5%	45.5%
No	3	5.0%	4.5%	4.5%
Not applicable	27	45.0%	40.9%	40.9%

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	28	42.4%	42.4%	42.4%
He/she sometimes has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	25	37.9%	37.9%	37.9%
He/she often has technical problems that interfere with getting work done	3	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%
He/she has a great deal of technical problems that interfere with getting work done	2	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Don't know	8	12.1%	12.1%	12.1%

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	14	21.9%	21.2%	21.2%
Within 2 to 3 days	10	15.6%	15.2%	15.2%
In a period greater than 3 days	7	10.9%	10.6%	10.6%
This question is not applicable because my child never has technical problems.	22	34.4%	33.3%	33.3%
Don't know	11	17.2%	16.7%	16.7%

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	39	59.1%	59.1%	59.1%
Good	19	28.8%	28.8%	28.8%
Fair	6	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%
Poor	2	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%

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	86.4%	86.4%	86.4%
No	9	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%

Would you recommend this virtual school to other parents?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Yes	61	92.4%	92.4%	92.4%
No	5	7.6%	7.6%	7.6%

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	55.4%	54.5%	54.5%
Any Place	6	9.2%	9.1%	9.1%
Any Path	2	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%
Any Pace	21	32.3%	31.8%	31.8%

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	3	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%
No	63	95.5%	95.5%	95.5%

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	6	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%
Associate's Degree	9	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%
Bachelor's Degree	24	36.4%	36.4%	36.4%
Master's Degree	18	27.3%	27.3%	27.3%
Doctoral Degree	9	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%
Other	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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	23	34.8%	34.8%	34.8%
a friend	16	24.2%	24.2%	24.2%
an ad in the high school newspaper	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
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	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a home school meeting or convention	4	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%
my child	12	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%
an Internet search	1	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
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	9	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%

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	50	76.9%	75.8%	75.8%
no	15	23.1%	22.7%	22.7%

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	1	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%
1 - 2 hours	5	8.8%	8.5%	8.5%
2 - 4 hours	23	40.4%	39.0%	39.0%
5 - 10 hours	27	47.4%	45.8%	45.8%
Over 10 hours	1	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%

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	36	62.1%	61.0%	61.0%
Good	14	24.1%	23.7%	23.7%
Fair	5	8.6%	8.5%	8.5%
Poor	2	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%
Don't know	1	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%

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	30	51.7%	50.8%	50.8%
Telephone	26	44.8%	44.1%	44.1%
Instant Message	1	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
Other	1	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%

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	2	3.5%	3.4%	3.4%
Good	11	19.3%	18.6%	18.6%
Fair	9	15.8%	15.3%	15.3%
Poor	8	14.0%	13.6%	13.6%
Don't know	27	47.4%	45.8%	45.8%

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	40	69.0%	67.8%	67.8%
Within 2 to 3 days	11	19.0%	18.6%	18.6%
In a period greater than 3 days	2	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%
This question is not applicable because my child never has questions about the course content or assignments.	2	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%
Don't know	3	5.2%	5.1%	5.1%

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.	21	35.6%	35.6%	35.6%
My child learned the same in this online course as most of his/her traditional courses.	22	37.3%	37.3%	37.3%
My child learned less in this online course than in most of his/her traditional courses.	1	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
Don't know	15	25.4%	25.4%	25.4%

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	48	85.7%	81.4%	81.4%
no	8	14.3%	13.6%	13.6%

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	49	84.5%	83.1%	83.1%
no	9	15.5%	15.3%	15.3%

Conclusion

Parents responding to the 2006-2007 Miami-Dade Virtual School Survey had very favorable responses about the virtual school, including the quality of the student experience, communication, and learning results. For many items, there were considerable increases in the findings over last year.

For example, when asked about the quality of their child's experience with his/her virtual school, 59.1% rated it as "excellent" (an improvement over the 41% rating of last year), 28.8% said it was "good," 9.1% said "fair," and only 3% said it was poor. 86.4% of parents responding said they would encourage their child to participate in other online courses (over the 77% rating of last year), and an outstanding 92.4% of parents said they would recommend Miami-Dade Virtual School to other parents.

Communication also received increased ratings over last year. 62.1% of parents who responded deemed student-teacher communication as "great" (compared with only 37% last year); 24.1% said it was "good" (compared with 33% last year); 8.6% said it was "fair" (compared with 19% last year); and only 3.4% said "poor" (compared to 7% last year).

Another apparent improvement in the area of communication: 85.7% of respondents said that online teachers spoke to their students and parents once per month, as required. This is an increase over last year's response of only 78%. Also, according to parents, teachers were generally responsive to students concerns. Most questions relating to course content or assignments were resolved within 24 hours, according to 69% of respondents, and within 2 to 3 days according to 19% of respondents. In addition, parents seemed pleased with the level of interest shown by teachers for their students, with 84.5% saying that their child's teacher has shown a special interest.

Ultimately most parents seemed satisfied with the results offered by the virtual school. That is, a majority of respondents (72.9%) who compared their child's online learning experience with most traditional courses felt that their child learned either more or the same amount in the online course than in most traditional courses. Some of their comments provide reasons for this finding:

- *He is able to go at his own pace and not repeat work he already understands.*
- *The teachers are more personally concerned with their students...they work harder than in "real" school to make sure the lessons are getting through and the student is on track. I wish regular school was this organized and personable.*
- *It is very hard to get Harrison involved in school and he actually enjoyed logging on and doing the assignments. I think he was less intimidated and worried about his performance and therefore did much better.*
- *(The teacher) was great at finding positive ways to encourage my son and this had a great effect on his work.*
- *This teacher was always trying to help my son understand the lesson and encouraging him to do better.*