

Miami Dade Virtual School Student Survey 2007

As part of its Franchise Agreement with The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), Miami-Dade 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 Miami-Dade’s data was 46 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 867 teacher/course specific surveys completed for Miami-Dade County as of May 14, 2007. Information on Miami-Dade 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I am currently taking an online course and have never withdrawn from an online course in the past.	25	54.3%	54.3%	54.3%
I am currently taking an online course but have withdrawn from an online course in the past.	4	8.7%	8.7%	8.7%
I am not taking any online course currently, but I have taken and completed at least one online course in the past.	15	32.6%	32.6%	32.6%
I am not taking any online course currently, nor have I completed any online course in the past.	2	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%

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.	23	18	3	2	0	0
I can set a personal schedule and complete assigned work by the required dates.	15	22	6	2	1	0
My writing and communication skills are better than average.	14	26	2	2	2	0
I try to solve problems and work through difficulties independently.	20	22	2	1	1	0
I can read and follow detailed instructions on my own.	24	18	2	0	2	0

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	9	20.0%	19.6%	19.6%
To take a course not offered at my school	3	6.7%	6.5%	6.5%
To raise a course grade/ grade forgiveness	11	24.4%	23.9%	23.9%
To balance academic and extracurricular activities	7	15.6%	15.2%	15.2%
Hospital Homebound	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Personal preference	6	13.3%	13.0%	13.0%
To accelerate graduation/ get ahead	2	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%
Other	7	15.6%	15.2%	15.2%

I access my online course(s) primarily from:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Home only	28	60.9%	60.9%	60.9%
School only	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Combination of home and school, but mostly home	10	21.7%	21.7%	21.7%
Combination of home and school, but mostly school	5	10.9%	10.9%	10.9%
School and home equally	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
Community center or library	2	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%
Other	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

I am a:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
public school student	41	91.1%	89.1%	89.1%
private school student	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
home school student	2	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%
charter school student	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
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	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
A little experience	13	28.9%	28.3%	28.3%
A great deal of computer experience	18	40.0%	39.1%	39.1%
Extremely proficient	13	28.9%	28.3%	28.3%

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	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
A little experience	8	17.8%	17.4%	17.4%
A great deal of Internet experience	21	46.7%	45.7%	45.7%
Extremely proficient	15	33.3%	32.6%	32.6%

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.	20	44.4%	43.5%	43.5%
I sometimes have technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	23	51.1%	50.0%	50.0%
I often have technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
I have a great deal of technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%

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	19	42.2%	41.3%	41.3%
Within 2 to 3 days	8	17.8%	17.4%	17.4%
In a period greater than 3 days	2	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%
Not applicable - I never have technical problems	16	35.6%	34.8%	34.8%

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	6	13.6%	13.0%	13.0%
Calls to the tech help toll free number	2	4.5%	4.3%	4.3%
Contact with my teacher	23	52.3%	50.0%	50.0%
Other	13	29.5%	28.3%	28.3%

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	23	52.3%	50.0%	50.0%
Easy to use	19	43.2%	41.3%	41.3%
Difficult to use	1	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%
Very difficult to use	1	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%

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.	29	65.9%	63.0%	63.0%
Easy; I can almost always get into my course(s).	13	29.5%	28.3%	28.3%
Difficult; I often have trouble getting into my course(s).	2	4.5%	4.3%	4.3%
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	17	37.8%	37.0%	37.0%
Easy	25	55.6%	54.3%	54.3%
Difficult	2	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%
Very Difficult	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I do not register online	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%

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	31	68.9%	67.4%	67.4%
a friend	9	20.0%	19.6%	19.6%
an ad in my high school newspaper	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a newspaper article	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
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	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
an Internet search	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a family member	2	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%
a community even or meeting (festivals, Rotary, etc)	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%

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	16	35.6%	34.8%	34.8%
Any place	7	15.6%	15.2%	15.2%
Any path	3	6.7%	6.5%	6.5%
Any pace	19	42.2%	41.3%	41.3%

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	19	42.2%	41.3%	41.3%
Agree	19	42.2%	41.3%	41.3%
Disagree	5	11.1%	10.9%	10.9%
Strongly disagree	2	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%

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	3	6.7%	6.5%	6.5%
Modem connection 56K or less	6	13.3%	13.0%	13.0%
Cable modem	6	13.3%	13.0%	13.0%
DSL	28	62.2%	60.9%	60.9%
High speed access from my school	2	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%

What type of computer do you use?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Windows	44	97.8%	95.7%	95.7%
Macintosh	1	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
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	30	65.2%	65.2%
MP3 Player/ iPod	40	87.0%	87.0%
Music Downloads	32	69.6%	69.6%
Online Gaming	17	37.0%	37.0%
PDA	3	6.5%	6.5%
Blogs	12	26.1%	26.1%

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	51	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%
1-3 months	370	42.7%	42.7%	42.7%
4-6 months	311	35.9%	35.9%	35.9%
7-10 months	112	12.9%	12.9%	12.9%
>10 months	22	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

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	410	47.4%	47.3%	47.3%
Clear	428	49.5%	49.4%	49.4%
Vague	26	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Non existent	1	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%

Overall, the directions throughout this online course are:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very clear	338	39.2%	39.0%	39.0%
Clear	486	56.3%	56.1%	56.1%
Vague	37	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%
Non existent	2	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%

This online course captures/captured my attention.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Strongly agree	185	21.4%	21.3%	21.3%
Agree	566	65.6%	65.3%	65.3%
Disagree	101	11.7%	11.6%	11.6%
Strongly disagree	11	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%

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	238	27.7%	27.5%	27.5%
Agree	512	59.6%	59.1%	59.1%
Disagree	23	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Strongly disagree	4	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Not applicable - No outside resources were provided to me for this course.	82	9.5%	9.5%	9.5%

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	400	46.6%	46.1%	46.1%
Good	329	38.3%	37.9%	37.9%
Fair	115	13.4%	13.3%	13.3%
Poor	15	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%

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	453	53.1%	52.2%	52.2%
Within 2 to 3 days	281	32.9%	32.4%	32.4%
In a period greater than 3 days	46	5.4%	5.3%	5.3%
Not applicable - I've never had such questions.	73	8.6%	8.4%	8.4%

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	616	71.9%	71.0%	71.0%
Once every two months	172	20.1%	19.8%	19.8%
Less than once every two months	59	6.9%	6.8%	6.8%
Never	10	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%

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	117	13.6%	13.5%	13.5%
Good	218	25.4%	25.1%	25.1%
Fair	220	25.6%	25.4%	25.4%
Poor	303	35.3%	34.9%	34.9%

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	17	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Often	52	6.1%	6.0%	6.0%
Sometimes	103	12.0%	11.9%	11.9%
Never	592	69.1%	68.3%	68.3%
Not available	93	10.9%	10.7%	10.7%

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	37	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%
Agree	111	13.0%	12.8%	12.8%
Disagree	40	4.7%	4.6%	4.6%
Strongly disagree	18	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%
Not applicable - I've never used the chat feature	598	69.8%	69.0%	69.0%
Not available	53	6.2%	6.1%	6.1%

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	24	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%
1-2 hours per week	111	12.9%	12.8%	12.8%
2-4 hours per week	389	45.3%	44.9%	44.9%
5-10 hours per week	278	32.4%	32.1%	32.1%
Over 10 hours per week	56	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%

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	42	4.9%	4.8%	4.8%
Harder	175	20.3%	20.2%	20.2%
The same level of difficulty	373	43.3%	43.0%	43.0%
Easier	171	19.9%	19.7%	19.7%
Much easier	50	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%
Not sure	50	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%

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	127	14.8%	14.6%	14.6%
Better	241	28.1%	27.8%	27.8%
The same quality	364	42.4%	42.0%	42.0%
Worse	66	7.7%	7.6%	7.6%
Much worse	8	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Not sure	53	6.2%	6.1%	6.1%

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	419	48.7%	48.3%	48.3%
Agree	409	47.6%	47.2%	47.2%
Disagree	29	3.4%	3.3%	3.3%
Strongly disagree	3	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%

Conclusion

The 2006-07 Virtual School Student Survey indicates that Miami-Dade Virtual School students were very pleased with their online experience. Miami-Dade Virtual School clearly appears to be filling a need for students who require an alternative to traditional school courses.

Overall, most students reported being satisfied with their virtual school experience. In fact, 84.4% of students “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they would recommend Miami-Dade Virtual School to other students. Compared to a traditional high school class, 85.3% of students felt that the quality of their online course was “equal to” or “better than” a traditional course.

Communication was also perceived as favorable amongst students:

- When asked to rate teacher/student communication overall, 46.6% said it was “great,” 38.3% said it was “good,” 13.4% said communication was “fair,” and 1.7% said it was “poor.” This data represents a slight improvement in communication over last year.
- Students also reported that most questions related to course content or assignments were resolved within 24 hours (53.1%) or within 2 to 3 days (32.9%). This finding indicates that teachers generally respond to students within a reasonable amount of time, with some room to improve the 24-hour response rate.

- Student feedback also shows that monthly communication has steadily and greatly improved over the last two years: 71.9% of students reported that they speak with the teacher of their course at least “once a month” (up from 65% in 2006, and 26% in 2005), 20.1% said “once every two months” (as compared to 20% in 2006 and 13% in 2005), 6.9% said “less than once every two months” (down from 13% in 2006 and 38% in 2005), and 1.2% reported that they never communicate with their teachers (down from 2% in 2006 and 24% in 2005).

Related to communication, an impressive 96.3% of students either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their online teacher(s) demonstrated an interest in their success as a student. Here is what some students had to say: *“She always asked me deep questions and didn't let go of the phone until she was sure I understood the material;” “She gives feedback for all assignments and shows leniency and is understanding in oral communications;” “They were always concerned and asking if everything was OK and if I understood everything. They were truly wonderful;” “She really wanted me to get on the ball and gave me a lot of chances even when i was five weeks behind;” “He commented on my work and that's good because it helps me to try harder next time.”*

Overall, Miami-Dade Virtual School has shown steady improvement in many key areas. Students seemed pleased with their online courses and the majority of students felt that teachers care about their success. The multitude of student comments compiled throughout this survey validate these positive conclusions. Below are just a few more student opinions:

- *“The best thing about virtual school is that you can take your classes at anytime with no restrictions and at any place. Besides that, the virtual school actually goes through the whole book or chapters thoroughly during the same amount of time you spend in one class course.”*
- *“I believed that everything this course had to teach was put in a way that you were never bored to learn something new.”*
- *“This online course captured my attention.”*
- *“I always have a clear understanding of what is being taught in each module and lesson because there are websites listed that embellish what the online course initially states. Also, there are many reviews and small quizzes to check if I comprehend the information that I have learned. “*
- *“It was easier to understand than in a classroom and you feel as if you learn more because it's more one-on-one with the teacher.”*
- *“An online class is less stressful then a course in which you sit in a class.”*
- *“Even though the teacher isn't with us in class, its ‘fun-factor’ balances out the boredom of a teacher in the classroom.”*