

Polk Virtual School Student Survey 2007

As part of its Franchise Agreement with The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), Polk 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 Polk’s data was 20 surveys or 8% 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 294 teacher/course specific surveys completed for Polk County as of May 14, 2007. Information on Polk 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I am currently taking an online course and have never withdrawn from an online course in the past.	12	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%
I am currently taking an online course but have withdrawn from an online course in the past.	3	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%
I am not taking any online course currently, but I have taken and completed at least one online course in the past.	3	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%
I am not taking any online course currently, nor have I completed any online course in the past.	2	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%

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.	6	12	1	0	1	0
I can set a personal schedule and complete assigned work by the required dates.	7	10	2	0	1	0
My writing and communication skills are better than average.	9	8	2	0	1	0
I try to solve problems and work through difficulties independently.	8	11	0	0	1	0
I can read and follow detailed instructions on my own.	10	9	0	0	1	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	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
To take a course not offered at my school	4	21.1%	20.0%	20.0%
To raise a course grade/ grade forgiveness	2	10.5%	10.0%	10.0%
To balance academic and extracurricular activities	2	10.5%	10.0%	10.0%
Hospital Homebound	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
Personal preference	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
To accelerate graduation/ get ahead	4	21.1%	20.0%	20.0%
Other	4	21.1%	20.0%	20.0%

I access my online course(s) primarily from:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Home only	11	57.9%	55.0%	55.0%
School only	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
Combination of home and school, but mostly home	3	15.8%	15.0%	15.0%
Combination of home and school, but mostly school	3	15.8%	15.0%	15.0%
School and home equally	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Community center or library	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%

I am a:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
public school student	6	31.6%	30.0%	30.0%
private school student	4	21.1%	20.0%	20.0%
home school student	3	15.8%	15.0%	15.0%
charter school student	4	21.1%	20.0%	20.0%
other	2	10.5%	10.0%	10.0%

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	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
A little experience	5	26.3%	25.0%	25.0%
A great deal of computer experience	9	47.4%	45.0%	45.0%
Extremely proficient	5	26.3%	25.0%	25.0%

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	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
A little experience	3	15.8%	15.0%	15.0%
A great deal of Internet experience	9	47.4%	45.0%	45.0%
I am essentially an Extremely proficient	7	36.8%	35.0%	35.0%

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.	9	47.4%	45.0%	45.0%
I sometimes have technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	9	47.4%	45.0%	45.0%
I often have technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I have a great deal of technical problems that interfere with getting work done.	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%

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	6	31.6%	30.0%	30.0%
Within 2 to 3 days	5	26.3%	25.0%	25.0%
In a period greater than 3 days	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
Not applicable - I never have technical problems	7	36.8%	35.0%	35.0%

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	3	15.8%	15.0%	15.0%
Calls to the tech help toll free number	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Contact with my teacher	7	36.8%	35.0%	35.0%
Other	9	47.4%	45.0%	45.0%

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	8	42.1%	40.0%	40.0%
Easy to use	10	52.6%	50.0%	50.0%
Difficult to use	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
Very difficult to use	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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.	11	57.9%	55.0%	55.0%
Easy; I can almost always get into my course(s).	7	36.8%	35.0%	35.0%
Difficult; I often have trouble getting into my course(s).	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
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	6	31.6%	30.0%	30.0%
Easy	9	47.4%	45.0%	45.0%
Difficult	2	10.5%	10.0%	10.0%
Very Difficult	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
I do not register online	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%

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	11	57.9%	55.0%	55.0%
a friend	4	21.1%	20.0%	20.0%
an ad in my 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	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a home school meeting or convention	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
an Internet search	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
a family member	2	10.5%	10.0%	10.0%
a community even or meeting (festivals, Rotary, etc)	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%

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	8	44.4%	40.0%	40.0%
Any place	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Any path	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Any pace	10	55.6%	50.0%	50.0%

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	6	31.6%	30.0%	30.0%
Agree	11	57.9%	55.0%	55.0%
Disagree	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
Strongly disagree	1	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%

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	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Modem connection 56K or less	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cable modem	6	31.6%	30.0%	30.0%
DSL	11	57.9%	55.0%	55.0%
High speed access from my school	2	10.5%	10.0%	10.0%

What type of computer do you use?

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Windows	19	100.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Macintosh	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
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	8	40.0%	40.0%
MP3 Player/ iPod	13	65.0%	65.0%
Music Downloads	8	40.0%	40.0%
Online Gaming	5	25.0%	25.0%
PDA	0	0.0%	0.0%
Blogs	4	20.0%	20.0%

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	7	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
1-3 months	132	45.5%	44.9%	44.9%
4-6 months	102	35.2%	34.7%	34.7%
7-10 months	43	14.8%	14.6%	14.6%
>10 months	6	2.1%	2.0%	2.0%

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	121	41.6%	41.2%	41.2%
Clear	158	54.3%	53.7%	53.7%
Vague	12	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
Non existent	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Overall, the directions throughout this online course are:

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Very clear	105	36.5%	35.7%	35.7%
Clear	165	57.3%	56.1%	56.1%
Vague	18	6.3%	6.1%	6.1%
Non existent	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

This online course captures/captured my attention.

Choice	Count	Percentage of Sample Answering	Percentage of Sample Asked	Percentage of Total Sample
Strongly agree	68	23.6%	23.1%	23.1%
Agree	184	63.9%	62.6%	62.6%
Disagree	30	10.4%	10.2%	10.2%
Strongly disagree	6	2.1%	2.0%	2.0%

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	71	24.7%	24.1%	24.1%
Agree	167	58.0%	56.8%	56.8%
Disagree	19	6.6%	6.5%	6.5%
Strongly disagree	1	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Not applicable - No outside resources were provided to me for this course.	30	10.4%	10.2%	10.2%

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	120	41.4%	40.8%	40.8%
Good	120	41.4%	40.8%	40.8%
Fair	40	13.8%	13.6%	13.6%
Poor	10	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%

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	166	57.2%	56.5%	56.5%
Within 2 to 3 days	77	26.6%	26.2%	26.2%
In a period greater than 3 days	17	5.9%	5.8%	5.8%
Not applicable - I've never had such questions.	30	10.3%	10.2%	10.2%

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	217	75.9%	73.8%	73.8%
Once every two months	46	16.1%	15.6%	15.6%
Less than once every two months	18	6.3%	6.1%	6.1%
Never	5	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%

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	48	16.7%	16.3%	16.3%
Good	110	38.2%	37.4%	37.4%
Fair	67	23.3%	22.8%	22.8%
Poor	63	21.9%	21.4%	21.4%

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	5.9%	5.8%	5.8%
Often	13	4.5%	4.4%	4.4%
Sometimes	31	10.7%	10.5%	10.5%
Never	199	68.9%	67.7%	67.7%
Not available	29	10.0%	9.9%	9.9%

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	18	6.2%	6.1%	6.1%
Agree	35	12.1%	11.9%	11.9%
Disagree	9	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%
Strongly disagree	2	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
Not applicable - I've never used the chat feature	203	70.0%	69.0%	69.0%
Not available	23	7.9%	7.8%	7.8%

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	10	3.5%	3.4%	3.4%
1-2 hours per week	51	17.6%	17.3%	17.3%
2-4 hours per week	133	46.0%	45.2%	45.2%
5-10 hours per week	84	29.1%	28.6%	28.6%
Over 10 hours per week	11	3.8%	3.7%	3.7%

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	24	8.3%	8.2%	8.2%
Harder	56	19.3%	19.0%	19.0%
The same level of difficulty	107	36.9%	36.4%	36.4%
Easier	31	10.7%	10.5%	10.5%
Much easier	7	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
Not sure	65	22.4%	22.1%	22.1%

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	61	21.1%	20.7%	20.7%
Better	62	21.5%	21.1%	21.1%
The same quality	91	31.5%	31.0%	31.0%
Worse	9	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%
Much worse	10	3.5%	3.4%	3.4%
Not sure	56	19.4%	19.0%	19.0%

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	112	38.6%	38.1%	38.1%
Agree	161	55.5%	54.8%	54.8%
Disagree	14	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%
Strongly disagree	3	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%

Conclusion

Overall, it seems Polk County Virtual School students were generally satisfied with their online school experience. In fact, 89.5% of students responding said they would recommend online courses to other students—a good indicator of satisfaction. This figure was up from last year, wherein 76% of students said they’d recommend online courses to other students.

Feedback in the areas of communication and teachers was mixed this year. Generally the picture was favorable, with room for improvement in some areas:

- Down slightly from last year’s figure of 85%, this year 82.8% of students rated overall teacher-student communication as “great” or “good.”
- Improved slightly was frequency of communication: 75.9% of students reported that communication with their teachers took place at least once a month (compared to 73% last year), 16.1% said they spoke with teachers once every two months (compared with 15% last year), 6.3% stated it took place less than once every two months (compared with 9% last year), and 1.7% of students indicated they never spoke with their teachers (compared with 3% last year).
- Responsiveness of communication showed some room for improvement: 57.2% of students said that most questions related to course content or assignments were

resolved within 24 hours, 26.6% of students said that questions were resolved within 2 to 3 days, and 5.9% said that it took a period greater than 3 days to resolve questions. There were 10.3% of students who said that they never had questions, so this survey question did not apply to them.

- Most students felt that their teachers cared about their online experience, as indicated by 94.1% of students who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the “online teachers demonstrated an interest in (their) success as a student.”

About the courses themselves, 74.1% of students who responded said they felt that the *quality* of their online course was “much better,” “better,” or “the same as” traditional school courses. This is down slightly from last year, wherein 80% of students reported the online course quality to be “much better,” “better,” or “the same as” traditional school courses. With regard to *difficulty*, 27.6% of students said that the *difficulty* level of their online course compared to a traditional high school class was “harder” or “much harder;” 36.9% said that it was the “same” level of difficulty; and 13.1% said that the online course was “easier” or “much easier” than a traditional class.

Overall, the majority of students who chose Polk Virtual School for the 2006-2007 school year were happy with their choice and had positive comments regarding their educational experience this year including:

- *“The best thing about this virtual school is you pick where you're going to do the assignments, what class you're going to take, when you will complete the assignments, and how motivated you will be while doing it.”*
- *“I like talking to my teacher because she doesn't make me feel nervous like my other teachers do.”*
- *“Whenever I need to call her or she needs to call me, then she always gets a hold of me or emails. She replies back...really fastly.”*
- *“It has broadened my view in several areas.”*
- *“I feel I am learning much more doing my school online, and if I were not doing online schooling, I probably would not be in school at all.”*
- *“I recommend this for everyone. The students who just hate sitting in class all day can utilize this program. The students that have a hard time comprehending can return back to the lessons and review until they feel comfortable with their lessons.”*
- *“There are not any students sitting around me creating disturbances while I am trying to learn, I can do the class in the comfortable environment of my home, the material is great, the lessons are clear, and the whole class is just organized.”*
- *“I learned more than I did at public school and I could actually see how I earned my grade in the course. “*