



## **FLORIDA VIRTUAL SCHOOL CLASSES GAIN IN POPULARITY WITH FLEXIBILITY OF LOGGING ON ANYTIME, AVAILABILITY OF TEACHERS**

By Matthew Puchferran Home school  
13 May 2005

Online learning is an academic phenomenon available to students throughout the world.

Many advantages exist when learning through the online environment. The motto for the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is "Any time, any place, any path, any pace," which really defines the biggest advantages of online classes.

FLVS students can access their courses from any computer at any time. For many students, this allows them to work nights and weekends in addition to their regular classes.

Robin Politowicz, a high school economics and government teacher for FLVS, said the strength of online classes comes from that greater flexibility. "Our classes accommodate all sorts of school and work schedules," she said.

Whitney Mack, 18, of Boca Raton, a home-educated senior enrolled in English IV and world history through FLVS, agreed. "The biggest advantage to taking an FLVS course is not having to leave my house and being able to do all of my work online and at any time."

Florida's public school system has offered free online classes to students since 1997, and FLVS is now the largest state-run online school in America, offering more than 80 courses and 11 AP courses. Through FLVS, students can take classes ranging from middle school math to high school AP microeconomics and physical education.

With a budget of more than \$9 million, FLVS employs more than 150 teachers and reaches more than 67 school districts in Florida. More than 20,000 teens are enrolled in FLVS classes.

I have taken many classes at FLVS, including Spanish, Algebra 2, AP microeconomics and AP Government.

I have found Web-based technology an effective way to learn, but the one element that makes this system work so well is the availability of the teachers. Through instant messaging, online chats and discussion forums, a student can virtually "raise their hand" and ask a question. At FLVS, students are also encouraged to phone teachers for help.

Many other online schools and distance learning programs are available for high school students, and their popularity is growing.

Politowicz said FLVS is a good indication of that trend. "We can hardly keep up with the demand for our classes, and our organization has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years," she said.

Copyright 2005