

# North Fort Myers Neighbor

## Online classes help Lee students make the grade

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The Florida Virtual School is helping Middle School and High School students in Lee County - and throughout the state and beyond - obtain class credit and still be able to pursue afterschool projects and other responsibilities by taking courses online.

The FLVS is structured as a public school and is free to Florida residents but national and international students can enroll in FLVS on a tuition basis.

FLVS reports that Lee County currently has 1199 active course enrollments

by 725 students. All together, the FLVS has served more than 31,000 students in 65,000 half-credit courses during the 2005-06 school year.

Caprice Woodburn has been teaching in a traditional classrooms in Lee County for 15 years before she became a part-time substitute teacher for FLVS two years ago. She became full-time teacher a year ago and is currently teaching 155 students in 6th grade World Cultures and

8th grade U.S. History.

"Being a substitute first was a great introduction for me," Woodburn. "I learned the system before I jumped into it full-time."

When she became full-time, Woodburn was provided a computer from the FLVS.

"The program is very student-centered," Woodburn said. "It is a great alternative and enhancement for students, they get a lot of personal attention."

A typical day for Woodburn begins with tracking students to make sure they are doing the assignments. She spends a lot of time helping students on the phone and by e-mail and grading.

"We offer students who wouldn't be able to do everything in a traditional school the opportunity to take a class online so that they will be able to fit something like art or music classes into their schedule," Woodburn said.

According to the FLVS web site, there are over 174 FLVS full-time and 106 adjunct teachers throughout Florida and beyond. All FLVS teachers possess a valid Florida teaching certificate and are certified specifically in the subject they teach. More than 64 percent of the staff hold advanced degrees, and 75 are national board certified.

Besides being able to free-up some time, the reasons for students taking online classes can vary. It is very helpful for those who have an illness that prevents them from

attending a class for a prolonged time; or if an unforeseen event disrupts their normal life, like a natural disaster; or for parents who want to add some variety to their home-schooled student's curriculum.

Brandon Velez, a senior at Lehigh Senior High School, is enrolled in Geometry and finishing up on a Personal Fitness class online through FLVS. He is the senior class president and head producer for the school's radio station. With this tight schedule, Velez welcomes the flexibility of online learning.

"I was curious about the program," Velez said. "I kept hearing good things about it so I tried it and it has been working for me ever since."

While some students like to go online at night, Velez usually logs onto the class site after doing his homework around 5:30 p.m. so he has a chance to relax for the rest of the night.

"[The FLVS program] challenges you," Velez said. "But if you don't understand something, you have the ability to talk to a teacher."

Woodburn's number one piece of advice to potential FLVS students is to communicate and do not be afraid to ask for help.

"Students need to be aware that this is a class and they need to put in the time," Woodburn explained. "It is not easier than a class in regular school." "Anybody can do it," Velez said. "You only need a minimal knowledge of the internet."

The program does not offer diplomas and serves only as an enhancement to a student's learning experience and the credits earned are fully transferable. The school's motto is "Any time, any place, any path, any pace," because of the layers of flexibility available to students. If a student has work and would like to extend their course work so that they are doing only one assignment a week, they can do that. A student can also accelerate their course work.

There is no enrollment deadline. To register, visit [www.flvs.net](http://www.flvs.net) or call (407) 317-3326 for more information.

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