

# Okeechobee News

## **On-line classes offered to students**

*By Chauna Aguilar*

September 2007

Kiwanis members learned Thursday, Aug. 21, of a new technological way for students in middle school and high school to obtain their education or enhance their current education.

Bethany Alvanos from Florida Virtual School (FLVS) spoke of all the options they offer students as an online source of education.

The FLVS motto is “any time, any place, any path, any pace.” This basically sums up their educational philosophy where they allow students to take the more than 80 available courses at their own pace, and at any location where they have internet access.

FLVS is an online middle school/high school that serves students around the world in public, charter and private schools. They also serve home-schooled students.

Classes include most graduation requirements, electives, test prep, honors and advanced placement courses.

According to their website in 2000, the Florida Legislature established FLVS as an independent educational entity with a gubernatorial-appointed board. FLVS is the only public school where funding is tied directly to student performance.

The Florida Legislature initially funded the FLVS as a pilot project in 1997, at \$1.3 million to begin course development with a limited student enrollment. The 2000 Florida Legislature, by Florida statute, established FLVS as an independent education entity with a separate governing board that was appointed by the governor of Florida.

FLVS is funded through the Florida Department of Education and is available free of charge to students who live in Florida.

As stipulated by the Florida K-20 Education Code, parents have the right to choose educational options such as FLVS for their children. A student’s full-time school may not deny access to courses offered by FLVS -- assuming that the desired online course is an appropriate course placement based on the student’s academic history, grade level and age.

FLVS currently has over 65,000 students who take online courses. Their basic theory is that no matter what happens in your life every student has the right to receive an education.

Ms. Alvanos spoke of different ways that students can become involved with FLVS. A

student can be a full-time student with them or attend their own 'brick and mortar' school and FLVS, which is the most common avenue. Most FLVS students are either taking courses to add to the curriculum of their current school or to catch up to where they should be in their current school at a more accelerated rate.

Students can take honors or advanced placement courses when their school does not offer them. An example of this was demonstrated by Ms. Alvanos. In Pahokee High School they currently have a lab set up where students are scheduled to attend class in that lab during an hour of their school day where they can take courses online through FLVS.

This provides those students with access to higher level classes that are not currently offered at their school and it also provides them with computers with internet access where the majority would not have outside access at home.

Most of the curriculum is viewed on a completely online basis, no text books are required to be purchased.

FLVS has a team of guidance counselors who work with the 67 school districts in the state of Florida. Parental consent and the recommendation from the school counselor are needed for the student to attend FLVS. Parents also have to sign off on some course areas, which attempts at ensuring that students are not cheating.

All papers are also turned in online to a website that checks their work for plagiarism, which is also used by most colleges.

FLVS gives students a chance to be responsible for their own education. While this program is not for everyone, it allows students who are either experiencing issues or have some extraordinary conditions to continue to receive an education.

All teachers are certified in the subject area that they teach and have a minimum of three years of experience. They are available to the students by phone from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. and have a 24-hour turn around on getting back to the students.

Okeechobee currently has students who participate in the FLVS.

For information about FLVS, visit [www.flvs.net](http://www.flvs.net) or call (407) 317-3326.

Copyright ©2008 Topix LLC