

## End of virtual K-8 schools (at least until next year) has upset some parents

posted by LesliePostal on Aug 12, 2008 4:56:59 PM

Five years ago, Florida started two, online K-8 schools for students whose parents wanted them to study at home. The pilot project was touted as a way to reduce crowding in the state's traditional, brick-and-mortar schools.

This past school year, each of the two schools served about 940 students (the maximum allowed) and had long waiting lists, according to state officials. Students using the program studied at home under the supervision of their parents but had access to the private school's curriculum and certified teachers.

But this spring, state lawmakers decided to end funding for the Florida Virtual Academy and the Florida Connections Academy, both run by private companies. They created a new option -- but it likely won't start for another year.

That has upset some parents (who say they'll be arguing their point at today's Orange County School Board meeting).

The new state law requires local school districts to offer online classes to students --- by setting up their own programs or by contracting with those two private schools, other approved private groups or the public Florida Virtual School.

But districts don't need to do that until the 09-10 school year. So children who had been using the two private schools to study at home could be out of luck this coming school year. An email we received today said as many as 200 Orange students want to use the program this school year and are upset Orange administrators won't have it in place.

The state, however, gave districts a year to get the new programs underway. Not surprising that local administrators are taking that time.

Upset by the changes? Happy (or not) with the private, online schools? Please post a comment.