



District to expand online Sarasota virtual school to grades 9–12

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SARASOTA – The Sarasota County School District has selected Florida Virtual School as its partner in offering eligible students in grades 9–12 the option of participating in its online instruction program, known as Sarasota Virtual School (SVS). The choice of Florida Virtual School as the vendor for the portion of SVS serving grades 9–12, as recommended by district staff, is subject to approval by the School Board of Sarasota County at its next regular meeting, to be held at 3 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 15, at School Board chambers, 1980 Landings Blvd., Sarasota.

Previously, the district announced that it will contract with a company known as K–12 to provide an online instruction option for eligible students in grades K through eight, in accordance with the new state requirement to offer "virtual" instruction. The School Board already has approved this provider; the Sarasota Virtual School (SVS) began for students in those grades on Aug. 24, the first day of the 2009–10 school year. Students in all grades who are eligible for the SVI program and are not yet registered must do so by 4 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 29, through the district's School Choice office.

Sarasota Virtual School is an interactive learning environment created through technology, in which the student and teacher are separated by time, space or both. It will use a state–approved curriculum with instructional materials that include a computer, Internet access and printed materials. Computers and Internet access may be provided at no charge to eligible students who meet family income requirements. Instructors will be highly qualified and/or certified teachers, as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law.

Eligible students for the 2009–10 school year are those who will be in grades K–12 (pending School Board approval of the program for students in grades 9–12) and were enrolled in a Florida public school (traditional, charter or alternative school) since Oct. 1, 2008, are dependents of a member of the U.S. military transferred to the state within the last year, or were enrolled in 2008–09 in a school district virtual instruction or an approved K–8 virtual school program. According to Florida Statute, students who were home–schooling

during the 2008–09 school year are not eligible. Students who already have begun the year in another district school or program and who meet all the requirements for eligibility may apply for the virtual school option for the remainder of the current school year.

The virtual program will be graded, just as all schools in Florida receive a grade each year. Teachers will monitor student progress and give assignments online and through physical materials shipped to and from students. Students, parents, and teachers will communicate via e-mail and telephone. Student attendance will be monitored, based on online activity. Textbooks and traditional instructional materials will be used, but much of the content will be delivered via the providers' Web sites, www.k12.com/flvp (grades K–8) and www.flvs.net (grades 9–12, subject to School Board approval).

More information is available at the district's Web site by clicking on the Sarasota Virtual School link under SarasotaCountySchools.net Essentials in the middle of the home page. The school district contact is Deborah Metheny, who supervises the School Choice programs for Sarasota County Schools. The Sarasota Virtual School office may be reached at 941–927–9000, ext. 32171, or via e-mail at SVS@sarasota.k12.fl.us. The department can provide information so parents may directly contact the contracted companies for information about their services, including academic counseling.