

Virtual School 101

The following is a collection of actual questions from students, parents, and community members. The answers provided are meant for informational and clarification purposes. If you have additional questions or to request enrollment information, please contact our office at 239-337-8178.

What is virtual school?

By definition, virtual education is teaching and learning in which students and teachers are separated by space and/or time. In its purest form, teachers and students have no physical contact during the instruction process. Historically, virtual education took the form of “distance learning,” or “correspondence classes.” With the advent of computers, the internet, smart phones, tablets, etc., virtual education has become the fastest growing form of education in North America.

Who takes virtual courses?

Students and families seeking quality education through a flexible format are potential Lee Virtual School (LVS) students. LVS students are students who benefit from individualized instruction. Typically, these include athletes, performers, and students with commitments outside of the educational environment to their faith, family or personal goals that preclude them from learning according to a traditional daily school schedule. LVS enrolls highly motivated students who prefer to accelerate, students who travel, students with medical issues, and home schooled students.

How does it work?

The Lee Virtual School (LVS) has elementary, full time and part time options. Although all are administered the same and focus on students independently achieving their fullest potential, the operation of elementary, full and part time are different. LVS Elementary is a full time only, K-5 learning option that utilizes indirect instruction and a combination of book based and on-line resources. LVS full time 6-12 is completely online and, like elementary, is the student’s school of enrollment. Full time students do not attend a brick and mortar school at all. Students typically work at home, under the supervision of a learning coach. A learning coach is an adult (usually a parent) that is responsible for making sure that the student stays on pace and in regular contact with teachers. At the elementary level, this learning coach is the actual facilitator of learning. That is, the learning coach is responsible for preparing each day’s learning activities, and providing most of the face to face instruction for the student. As students progress through grade levels, they become more independent and require less instructional assistance. By the time students are in grade 6, they work in an autonomous, direct instruction online environment. They receive all instruction from their teacher and online courseware. Aside from some novels for Language Arts/English courses and AP Course materials, curriculum for grades 6-10 is entirely online. It is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days/week, 365 days per year. This creates universal access in which an independent learning will thrive and achieve at a rate that is difficult to do in a traditional classroom setting.

Does it cost anything?

Lee Virtual School is a public school within the School District of Lee County and is free.

How do I know if virtual school will be good for me or my child?

Virtual education, as it exists today, is not for all students. Virtual curriculum is written for students at or above grade level in reading and math skills. By its nature, virtual learning is approximately 97%

reading. Students who struggle with reading or are not reading and comprehending at the same level as other students in their grade level/age, will have a difficult time and are likely to be unsuccessful in a virtual program. In addition, there is a certain level of technical ability required for parents of virtual students. The communication and learning coach responsibilities require some basic knowledge of electronic communication by parents and students alike. Students need to be able to communicate with teachers frequently. Students that have difficulty staying on task for a prolonged period of time, will face challenges with virtual learning. In addition, students and families that have difficulty with time management, keeping appointments, or committing to responsible lifelong learning will likely not be successful with virtual school.

Is online learning safe?

All virtual classes are conducted in a secure online learning system that features strictly protected communication protocols that essentially eliminate external threats and interference to the educational process. That being said, it is important to note, that there is no oversight provided into your home from our school. A student still has the ability to “surf the net” and be potentially exposed to images and information available regardless of whether or not the student is enrolled in virtual learning. School issued computers feature regularly updated monitoring and filtering software.

What classes are offered?

The Lee Virtual School offers all the basic/core subject areas (Math, English, Science, Social Studies) for grades K-12 available at any other public school. In addition, for grades 6-12, LVS offers a diverse array of elective courses including Spanish, Personal and Family Finance, Keyboarding, Digital Media & Web Design, plus many many more. Please refer to our course catalog for a complete listing for each school year!

Who can I talk to for more information?

Our administrative, guidance, support and instructional staff are all prepared to answer any questions or help you find the answers you seek. You can call the LVS office at 239-337-8178 between 8-4:30 Monday through Friday (excluding holidays).

Does LVS follow the same calendar as the school district?

As another quality school within the Lee County School District family, we follow the same school year calendar as all other public schools.

When are classes offered?

Full time enrollment courses are offered beginning on the first day of the school year and ending on the last. Enrollment and orientation must occur prior to a student starting as a full time LVS student. LVS offers two enrollment application periods. Application for the upcoming school year begins around the beginning of February and closes no later than 30 days prior to the first day of school (usually by July 1st). There is also a mid year Full time enrollment offered. Students enrolling at mid year, start on the first day of the second semester. The application period for mid year enrollment typically runs from the week of Thanksgiving to the week before school dismissed for winter break. STUDENTS CAN NOT BE ENROLLED AS FULL TIME LEE VIRTUAL STUDENTS UNLESS THEY HAVE COMPLETED THE APPLICATION AND ORIENTATION PROCESS. Part time classes for students in grades 6-12 are offered from August through February. Limited courses are offered through our summer school program.

What do students do if they have questions or problems while taking a course?

Just as in a traditional classroom, our teachers are here to assist students and help them learn, so a student's first stop should be their teacher. A student may email, text, instant message or call a teacher any time for assistance. Teachers are available from 8AM-8PM Mon-Fri on all days school is scheduled. Teachers will respond to students in 24 hours or less (usually much less). Technical help is available in most courses 24 hours/day via the help center hotline.

How do parents know the status of a student in virtual courses?

Parents have complete access to both part time and full time student's work. They can create a "guardian account" or use their student's account to see what work the student has submitted, what grade has been received and read the feedback provided by teachers.

Do I need to physically sit in a school building to take a class?

No, but you can! Full time virtual students do not typically work from a school. However, students at district schools can request and be placed in a virtual course(s) and then complete work at school, home or both.

Are students allowed to accelerate through courses?

Yes. Students can advance as rapidly as they can learn as long as the assignments, assessments and other course work is done properly and in order.

Are students able to meet in person with their teachers?

The Lee Virtual School prides itself on student contact. All LVS teachers are available for face to face assistance as needed. All teachers have regular office hours both in person and online.

What are the face to face requirements for full time LVS students?

Full time LVS students are required to attend mandatory events at the school office approximately 5-10 times year. This number is higher for K-5 students who are required to have a minimum number of "contact hours" with their teacher each quarter. **All full time LVS students MUST attend the following events: First day(s) of school, class meetings, student conferences, portfolio reviews, ALL district & state required testing, and mandatory proctored assessments.**

What happens if a student does not attend mandatory events?

LVS publishes and maintains an online calendar that includes all events for a school year. Testing dates are published well in advance. Specific times for testing is published well in advance as well. As a result, it is an expectation that students and parents will make individual arrangements to attend these required events. In the event that a student does not attend or participate in a required event, the student will be submitted for withdrawal. Obviously, situations are handled on a case by case basis. It should be clearly understood that committing to enrollment with the Lee Virtual School is committing to diligently attending these events which represent less than 5% of the days of school. Mandatory events apply ONLY to full time students enrolled with the Lee Virtual School.

Can LVS students participate in extracurricular activities?

Lee Virtual School adds offers various enrichment activities including academic days, field trips and clubs. Students are encouraged to partake in our activities and socialize with other students. In addition, students in grades 6-12 may participate in intramural, extracurricular and FHSAA sports and activities. Students are assigned to a school within the assignment zone where they reside. This process is handled entirely by the office of student assignment. Students enrolled with the Lee Virtual

are not typically able to participate in elective courses (music, art, shop, etc.) at other schools. However, there is limited availability at certain schools and in certain classes. These vary from year to year based upon enrollment at the school. Please contact LVS Guidance or Administration for assistance on this process.

Do Lee Virtual Students have to participate in State or District testing?

All full time LVS students must participate in all state and district testing. Part time students whose school of enrollment is NOT LVS, test at the school or location determined by their school of enrollment.

How do I register for virtual classes?

Individual courses can be requested by visiting the LVS website and clicking on the 'ENROLLMENT' link under PART TIME STUDENTS at <http://lvip.leeschools.net>. Full time LVS students work with their assigned counselor and/or administrator to select required and elective courses.

How do I know what courses to register for?

Students can request any course that they are interested in as long as they meet the prerequisite(s) for the course. Students may request a course for grade forgiveness but they have to have received a grade of D or lower initially. Students may not retake a course in which a grade of C or higher was issued in order to receive a higher grade. In addition, students may NOT enroll in the same course(s) they are currently enrolled in. Additional information on course selection is available from school counselors.

Are LVS classes recognized/accredited? Will they transfer to other schools and be accepted by college?

LVS is an SACS/CASI accredited public school. In addition, our course and diploma are recognized and accepted by NCAA Division 1 colleges and universities, all branches of the United States Military, Merchant Marines, as well as all public schools in the state of Florida.

Where did Lee Virtual School come from?

The Lee Virtual School was started in 2009 when the state of Florida passed statute 1002.45 which, in short, requires each school district to offer full time virtual instruction as an educational choice for all students in grades K-12. From our humble beginnings in the 2009-2010 school year in which we had 1 graduate and less than 50 students in grades K-12, we have grown to having nearly 300 full time students, the largest district led elementary virtual program in the state of Florida, and consistently ranked as not only Florida's top 3 virtual programs, LVS is also ranked in the top 10% of ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS in the state and the top 1/3rd in the nation according to US News and World Report.

Does Lee Virtual School receive a grade like other district schools? What is it?

Lee Virtual School is graded the same way all Florida public schools are. We are proud to say we consistently rank as an "A" school. LVS consistently scores as one of the top public schools in all of SW Florida. We are one of the highest academically rated full time virtual programs in North America.

How do students complete tests and assignments in virtual classes?

In Middle School and High School, students complete all tests and assignments online within their virtual classes. Most assignments are submitted electronically as a document. There are also numerous oral assessments that are accomplished via phone, internet conference or in person.

How do students receive grades?

Students receive grades based on their performance on assignments, projects, discussion based assessments, quizzes, tests and exams. Students can see their gradebook when they log into their virtual class. Parents can independently monitor student performance using their own login or personal “guardian account.”

What textbooks are used?

Elementary student curriculum is book based and mirrors the standards and progression that is taught in traditional brick and mortar public schools. Students in Middle School and High School utilize virtual, interactive curriculum 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Aside from novels and literature selection and AP courses, all 6-12 curriculum is computer based. Anywhere students have an internet connection and either a computer, tablet or cell phone, students will be able to access their course materials!

Are honors courses available?

Yes! Students are able to take Honors and/or Advanced classes.

Are AP (advanced placement) courses available?

Yes! Students can choose to take a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Can virtual students enroll in dual enrollment courses at a college or university?

Yes! Students can choose to enroll in dual enrollment course at a college or university. They must first meet the college or university’s admission requirements. There is no charge for the courses.

How are ESE students with an IEP handled?

Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students each have a written Individual Education Plan (IEP) that documents goals, accommodations and strategies used to create an accomodation learning environment that is least restrictive to a student in order to create a method for the student to achieve. LVS teachers of both fulltime and part time students are aware of student's unique needs and accommodations set forth in their IEP. ESE Students applying for full time enrollment with LVS are essentially changing the delivery method of their instruction. As a result, an IEP review has to be conducted before a student can be permanently enrolled with LVS. It is important to note, that through this process, it may be determined that virtual instruction is NOT the best fit for a student with certain special needs. LVS is a “school of choice” and therefore does not offer all of the services that may be available at other schools. LVS complies with all district, state and federal laws regarding ESE and IDEA.

Does LVS follow the same grading scale as other district schools?

LVS follows the same grading scale as all other Lee County Schools:

90-100	A
80-90	B
70-80	C
60-70	D
0-59.99	F

Is LVS approved by the NCAA?

LVS is SACS/CASI accredited and nearly all courses are NCAA Division 1 approved.

Are virtual teachers as good as traditional classroom teachers? Are they highly qualified?

Absolutely! Virtual teachers have the same qualifications as every other traditional classroom teacher. All LVS teachers must be highly qualified in their respective subject area. In addition, many LVS teachers and administrators bring an array of professional experience outside of education to their teaching.

What are the differences between virtual school and Home School?

Home education is parent-directed education. Homeschool parents can choose an individualized curriculum that reflects their own beliefs and ideas as they see fit to their child's learning style. Parents are the teachers in home education. Home education might not necessarily reflect the same grade levels in place at formal school settings. Parents monitor attendance and progress and obtain and direct all curriculum and activities. Curriculum, materials and activities are all organized and paid for by the home school parent. The parent is solely responsible for the instruction progress and record keeping. These can come from a variety of places including faith based resources and curricula.

In contrast, a virtual public school is essentially a structured public school within the home of each participant. Virtual public school provides a complete and comprehensive curriculum that is on par with equal courses in a traditional school environment. This curriculum contains the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values their child must acquire. All materials are provided by the school. Virtual school students move at a minimum predetermined pace and meet specific chronological benchmarks and performance assessments. A certified teacher provides instruction and oversees the curriculum and progress of the student, and faith-based curriculum cannot be provided by the district. Full time virtual students have access to additional activities including field trips, clubs, academic days, award and graduation ceremonies, that are not available to home education students. Full time virtual students have an assigned school counselor educational and curriculum guidance and assist with placement in courses and college.

We just moved to Florida. What are the eligibility requirements for Full Time enrollment?

Our enrollment requirements are the same as any other Lee County Public School. Information on immunization, residence, required documents and verification methods are available from the office of student assignment at <http://www.leeschools.net/student-assignment>.

What is the difference between Lee Virtual School and Florida Virtual School?

Lee Virtual School (LVS) is a Lee County public school. Our teachers and staff are part of our community. Our work schedule, pay scales and events align with those of the district. The funding generated from public tax revenue is put into our students and teachers right here in Lee County. Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is a statewide provider of public virtual education for students in grades 6-12. LVS is a franchise of FLVS. That is, we use FLVS curriculum, systems and follow their guidelines. However, the way we manage our teachers, teach our students and incorporate unique learning activities is completely designed and implemented locally. When students complete a class with FLVS, the revenue generated is diverted to FLVS, which is located in Orange County. That revenue is deducted from the money earmarked for Lee County students. Over the past 5 years, LVS has reduced the amount of FTE (Full Time Equivalent: the amount of tax dollars returned to Lee County for public education) that is deducted for students taking virtual courses with FLVS. Keeping student learning, teachers and tax dollars here in Lee County is a critical difference between LVS and FLVS.

Students enrolled in FLVS are limited to 3 courses at a time. LVS has no limit on enrollments or class load. FLVS accepts all 6-12 students in all courses year round. LVS has set aside specific windows of enrollment to best serve our students and coincide with the needs of all district schools. LVS offers courses not available through FLVS. We also offer the ability for students to meet face to face with teachers, guidance and administration which is a key component of a truly student centered learning environment.

Can students receive a diploma through LVS?

Yes. Students who meet all the requirements of graduation as set forth by the Florida Department of Education will receive a High School diploma. We have a graduation ceremony that is essentially the same as any other school in Lee County. The majority of LVS graduates have gone on to colleges and Universities in Florida as well as out of state public and private universities, the armed forces and career and technical schools.

What is the difference between a diploma from LVS and other public high schools?

There is no difference.

Why do I need to get a diploma anyway? Can't I just get my credits and a GED?

The acronym GED stands for General Educational Development, not general equivalency diploma, for which it is often mistaken. Beyond the name, there is no mistaking the lack of equivalency between holders of the GED and holders of a high school diploma. Many indicators soundly show that holders of the GED fall behind their diploma-holding counterparts. The following are a few examples concerning future outcome differences:

- High school graduates earn, on average, about \$1,600 a month more than those with a GED (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).
- Less than 5% of those with a GED receive a bachelor's degree, compared to the 33% of those with diplomas that do (U.S. Census Bureau), which is supported by several studies showing that high school graduates are more prepared for college and score higher on placement tests than holders of the GED (National Bureau of Economic Research).
- 77% of GED holders do not continue past the first semester of college (American Council of Education study).
- The military limits the number of accepted and requires higher scores on aptitude test for GED holders, because the military service dropout rates for GED holders is 45% compared to 24% for high school graduates.

The stigma connected with GED holders is not present for diploma holders, and that is the stigma of being a dropout, of lacking persistence, or of taking short cuts. This accounts partly for the large difference in wages between the two groups. Plus, many institutions view the robust education gained by years spent full-time in school cannot be garnered by the taking of a day-long test, nor indicated by it. "Whatever differences are found among exam-certified equivalents, high school dropouts and high school graduates are accounted for by their years of schooling completed. There is no cheap substitute for schooling." (Cameron & Heckman, National Bureau of Economic Research Paper No.3804, "The Nonequivalence of High School Equivalents").

Many studies for the National Bureau of Economic Research lamented the fact that the number of students choosing to leave school and get a GED was rising because the students weren't aware of how devastating that decision could be. As of 2008, 12% (500,000 dropouts) of high school credentials issued that year were for those passing the GED (Heckman, Humphries, & Mader, NBER Working Paper No. 16064, "The GED"). The same study stated that while it had been demonstrated through much research that GED holders and graduates had equivalent abilities to learn—scholastic aptitude—those with the GED were found to be deficient in noncognitive skills, such as persistence, motivation, and reliability. Employers are afraid that whatever traits lead them to drop out of high school will lead them to other irresponsible behaviors in the workplace.

However, for all the wage, labor market, and higher education differences there are between GED holders and diploma holders, there are just as stark differences in all areas between GED holders and high school dropouts who did not attain a GED. Hence, the difference between a high school graduate and a non-credentialed high school dropout is enormous.

What happens if a student decides that LVS isn't for them after enrolling?

During the first 21 days of each semester, students are in what is called a "grace period." During that period, students may opt to drop a class or withdraw from LVS and enroll elsewhere with no consequence. If a student stops working or is not successful beyond the 21 day period, the following may be imposed:

- Withdrawal and referral to school assignment
- Placement in intensive assistance and success program requiring daily in person attendance at school office to work in a supervised environment
- Withdrawal to homeschool with reduced course load

Is there any type of orientation for students prior to enrolling in virtual school?

Part time students can request individual or multiple courses and promptly begin working in the course with simple guidance from the assigned teacher during the "welcome call." Full time LVS grade K-12 students are required to attend a face to face orientation session accompanied by at least one parent or guardian. Students will not be enrolled as a full time virtual student without attending this orientation. Students and parents are presented with information and discussion to prepare them for virtual learning as their primary means of learning.

What is the difference between fulltime and part time virtual school?

Full Time Virtual students are enrolled with the Lee Virtual School recorded as their "school of enrollment." A student may only be enrolled at one school at a time. Students are sometimes enrolled at one school and receive additional instruction from another. In this situation, the second school is referred to as the "school of instruction" for the courses served from that school. Part time virtual school is when a public, private or home education enrolled student takes one or more courses but retains another school as their "school of enrollment."

What is a "hybrid" enrollment?

Hybrid enrollment is when a student participates in half of their classes virtually and half of them on a traditional campus.

What is blended instruction/learning?

Blended instruction is an environment in which a student learns at least in part through online-learning, and in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. These are typically virtual courses offered in a classroom environment in a traditional school setting.

What are the options for elementary students to take virtual classes?

Students in grades K-5 may enroll as full time LVS students during either the annual or mid year enrollment application window. In addition, students in grades 4-5 who achieve a level four or higher equivalent on a standardized state test, are able to enroll in middle school elective or core courses and receive middle school credit.

How many courses can a student take at one time?

Full time students must be enrolled in 6 courses at the beginning of each term in order to remain in good standing. Part time students may take 1-3 courses. In some cases, in the best interest of a student, more courses may be scheduled.

Will virtual school/courses replace traditional classrooms and schools?

Virtual teaching and learning is one of, if not THE fastest learning environments in North America. However, there are many learning experiences that are not best served by an “all virtual” learning system. Blended, hybrid and similar dynamic teaching models which incorporate opportunities for students to work independently to achieve their potential represent the changing face of education. The Lee Virtual School is proud to be a leader and innovator in this uncharted territory.

**Lee Virtual School
Facts and Achievements (updated 6/2016)**

Facts:

Approximately 275 Full Time students, Approximately 1,500 part time students throughout the year.

Average teacher ratio 130 students/teacher

College bound **65% (Class of 2015)**

65 % of courses offered are accelerated (IB, AP, Pre-IB, Honors, Dual Enrollment)

Over 20 % students are involved in a club activity

5% of FT students participate in athletics (*per DQ284I report dated 5/13/16*). An additional 18 % of students participate in private athletic and competitive activities.

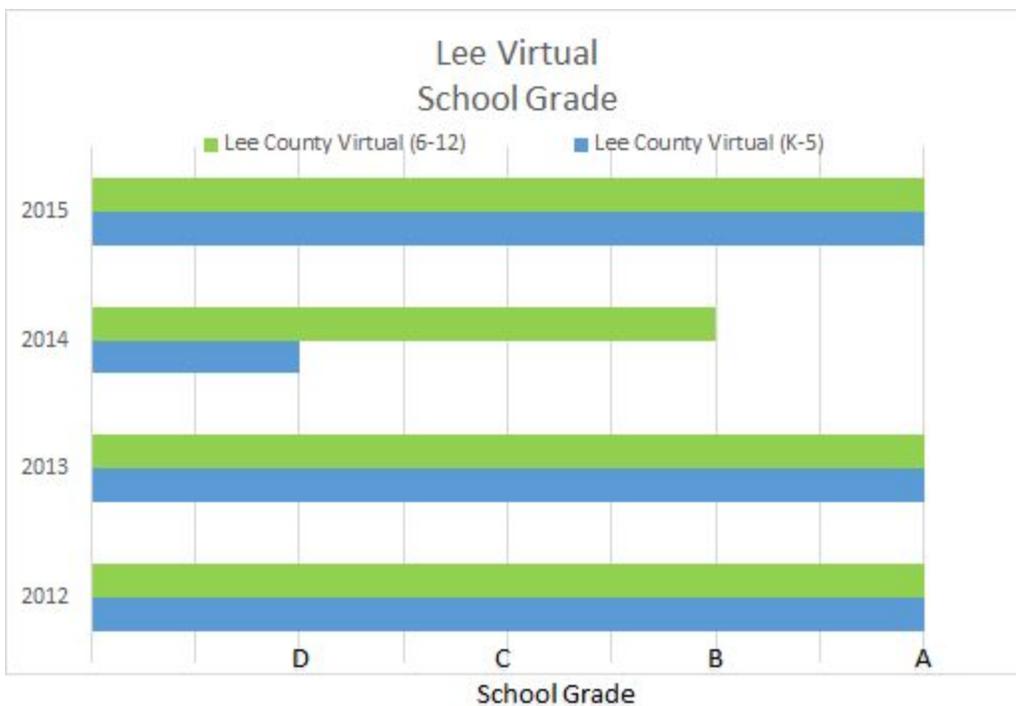
Achievements:

Over **\$890,000** in scholarships in the past **three** years

Ranked in the top 10% of **ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS** in Florida

Largest and best ranked district led elementary program in Florida

Consistently Ranked as one the top 3 FT Virtual Schools in Florida



Personnel:

Teaching staff: 26 FT, 33%+ have advanced degrees (masters or higher)

Administration and Support: Principal, Assistant Principal, Guidance (2), Social Worker and office support (3)

