Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is an online school that provides online courses to students who may be attending a physical school, or may be full-time online students. The school was created, supported, and funded by the state and is organized as a special school district. While the headquarters are located in Orlando, Florida, FLVS serves students worldwide. FLVS was launched in 1997 and now serves more than 200,000 students per year.

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) was created in 1996 with the help of a Florida Department of Education “Break the Mold” grant awarded to Orange and Osceola Counties. FLVS was originally a pilot for a web-based school and featured five high school courses. With just seven staff members, FLVS launched officially in 1997. After seeing success, in 2000, FLVS was established as an independent educational entity by the Florida Legislature. Today, with more than 2,000 employees, FLVS not only serves students throughout the state of Florida and throughout the country, but the online school has a global reach as well, with a goal to put the “student at the center of every decision we make.”

In 2017–18, FLVS served 207,367 students. There were 420,604 Flex semester completions by 200,886 students. The average number of course completions by grade range were as follows:

- K-5–7.79 semester completions
- 6-8–3.35 semester completions
- 9-12–1.93 semester completions

FLVS Full Time had 71,903 completions by 6,481 students; these students take a full course load, which is six courses each semester.

During the 2017–18 school year, FLVS district enrollment included 72% Caucasian and 28% minority students. There were 57% female and 43% male represented in the population. They also served priority school students, including 9% rural, 1% low-performing, and 15% high-minority.

**Instructional model**

Within the overall FLVS instructional model, there are multiple ways in which students can take courses. Students can participate in one course or up to six courses, as either a Home Education or public/private school student. Students can also participate in an FLVS course as part of a lab within their school of record. Additionally, students can enroll full time and be designated as an FLVS student of record. The FLVS Full Time model has students taking all of their classes online, while meeting state public school requirements. Students in FLVS Full Time who meet state graduation requirements are eligible to earn their high school diploma from FLVS Full Time. Lastly, FLVS Global School allows students outside the state of Florida to access their courses for a fee.
A mastery-based instructional model is at the core of the FLVS instructional approach. This model allows students to resubmit their work to ensure they have reached a comprehensive understanding of the material presented in the course. The FLVS instructional model includes fully online content delivery, live instructional time with teachers, phone (text, call), computer or tablet-based (email and live webcam) opportunities for students and teachers to connect, and face-to-face opportunities in which students and parents can participate. Teachers are available to their students from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday. FLVS courses are free to students in the state of Florida, and the school receives funding from the state legislature for successful course completions only. There are currently 180 courses in the catalog.

FLVS develops and delivers the majority of their own content in addition to purchasing content from third-party providers, such as E-Dynamic and eDriving. FLVS also sells their courses to providers around the country to be used with online and blended programs. The FLVS Digital Publishing team works closely with third-party providers to align the third-party provider’s content with the FLVS model and Florida curriculum standards. FLVS courses are designed to provide the rigor necessary to ensure their students are college-ready and prepared for real-world success. Alongside academic skills, FLVS courses provide guidance on soft skills, such as time management and self-regulation.

FLVS courses do not have required face-to-face components, however, some courses have a requirement for students to attend live lessons or live class time in a web-based setting. Additionally, there are opportunities for students to collaborate virtually. Students can also participate in web-based collaborative opportunities in a more organic way as well. Beyond academic gatherings online, FLVS offers field trips, student clubs, activities, regional meetups, and FLVS Full Time graduation.

### College and Career Readiness

Students at FLVS have a variety of options to help prepare them for life after high school. Through 15 AP courses and 11 nationally-recognized Industry Certifications in the areas of CompTIA, Microsoft, and Oracle, students can earn college credit with a qualifying exam score. Additionally, FLVS Full Time has Dual Enrollment programs with Polk State College and the University of Florida.

For college students, FLVS currently has active partnerships with several universities and educator preparation programs to offer instructional practicum opportunities. Known as internships, these year-round, practice-based, apprenticeship-style learning opportunities are offered in more than 180 different courses, some of which help pre-service teachers focus on rare subject areas, such as Chinese, Latin, and AP Computer Science. The FLVS Flex model allows for instructional internship opportunities year-round. FLVS is currently expanding their non-instructional internships in areas including, but not limited to, finance, information technology, and talent management.

### Student support

Student success at FLVS is enabled by way of the extensive support structures in place. For FLVS Flex students, there are school counselors, college and career readiness resources, academic integrity guidance, and clubs and student activities (including a student newspaper, a literary magazine, as well as a yearbook, and at least 27 others). They also host two Facebook Groups for students in grades K–5 and grades 6–12. Parents and/or guardians are given accounts to follow their child’s progress. To accompany parental support, FLVS Flex offers course progression recommendations in order to help students complete their courses. FLVS also provides guidance to students focused on internet safety and digital citizenship. In addition to everything offered to FLVS Flex, for students enrolled in FLVS Full Time, there is also a Family Resource
Center, dual enrollment opportunities, and an opportunity to graduate with a diploma from FLVS. There is a Facebook group specifically for FLVS Full Time students.

In 2017, FLVS served students from all 67 school districts in the state in some capacity. FLVS worked with 55 District Virtual Schools and powered more than 280 Digital Learning Labs across the state. Through district virtual schools, districts have access to FLVS middle and high school courses and technology systems, and receive student support and teacher training while still using their own teachers to teach the courses. Digital Learning Labs are taught by FLVS teachers, run by the schools or districts who offer dedicated facilitators to help and monitor students, provide two-way phone access to support teacher-student communication, provide access to school counselors, give computer access so students can take courses while at school, and more. FLVS provides training for the school/district facilitators, counselor(s), and administrators, a streamlined registration process, ongoing support from state-certified instructors, blended learning specialists, and FLVS support staff. Labs are currently available at the middle and high school level, and this year, FLVS will expand by offering labs at the elementary level.

**Instructional support and training**

New instructors are provided with an employee orientation that includes a multi-phased training approach, with both an on-site session at the Orlando headquarters in Florida as well as virtual online-hosted training sessions. The on-site training lasts 10 days and includes an introduction to FLVS culture, an overview of programs, as well as technical and system training. Included in this training is also department and position-specific training. After new employee orientation, FLVS offers their instructors continued professional development that is relevant and research-based and consists of industry best practices and organizational goals and strategies.

FLVS also incorporates Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for their instructors in order to build collaborative culture based in instructional innovation and sustained learning. Beyond PLCs, FLVS integrates webinars on growth mindset and leadership skills by way of books studies, conferences, and seminars. Learning specialists also offer instructors one-on-one coaching sessions to support professional growth and development. Managers meet with their instructors once a month to touch base on progress toward individual goals and comprehensive professional development aims.

**Measures of success**

In 2017, FLVS students exceeded the state of Florida in overall averages by 9.4% when comparing all 15 AP courses FLVS offers (calculated by taking all 15 AP exams and getting an average score for FLVS and then non-FLVS students). When focusing on the national overall average, FLVS students performed 3.3% better when comparing all 15 AP courses. FLVS surpassed the national qualifying AP averages in nine of the 15 courses.

FLVS is consulted for their content licensing; custom development for schools, districts, states, and agencies; FLVS Global School; County/District Virtual Schools; digital learning labs; and professional development. As one of the first online programs, the FLVS administrative, instructional, and support faculty and staff provide expertise not only across the nation but around the world. FLVS has received numerous awards and recognitions over the years, including being named one of the Coolest Schools in America by Parents and Children magazine and has multiple Elearning! 100 Awards for being one of the top 100 learning organizations in the world for its learning culture, innovation, and high performance.
During the 2017 Florida Legislative session, the legislature removed the remaining barriers that restricted some students at the elementary level from being able to take FLVS courses. In the 2018 Florida legislative session, access to temporarily out-of-state students of military families with Florida residency was made possible. Now, all Florida resident students have access to FLVS. Based on this development, FLVS launched 48 new elementary courses in 2018–19 and is opening Digital Learning Labs to support their younger student population.

The continued focus for FLVS is to build their school and programs on the belief that “every student is unique, so learning should be dynamic, flexible, and engaging; students should be integrated rather than isolated; students, parents, community members, and schools share responsibility for learning; students should have choices in how they learn and how they present what they know; students should be provided with guidance with school and career planning; and assessments should provide insights not only of student progress but also of instruction and curriculum.”