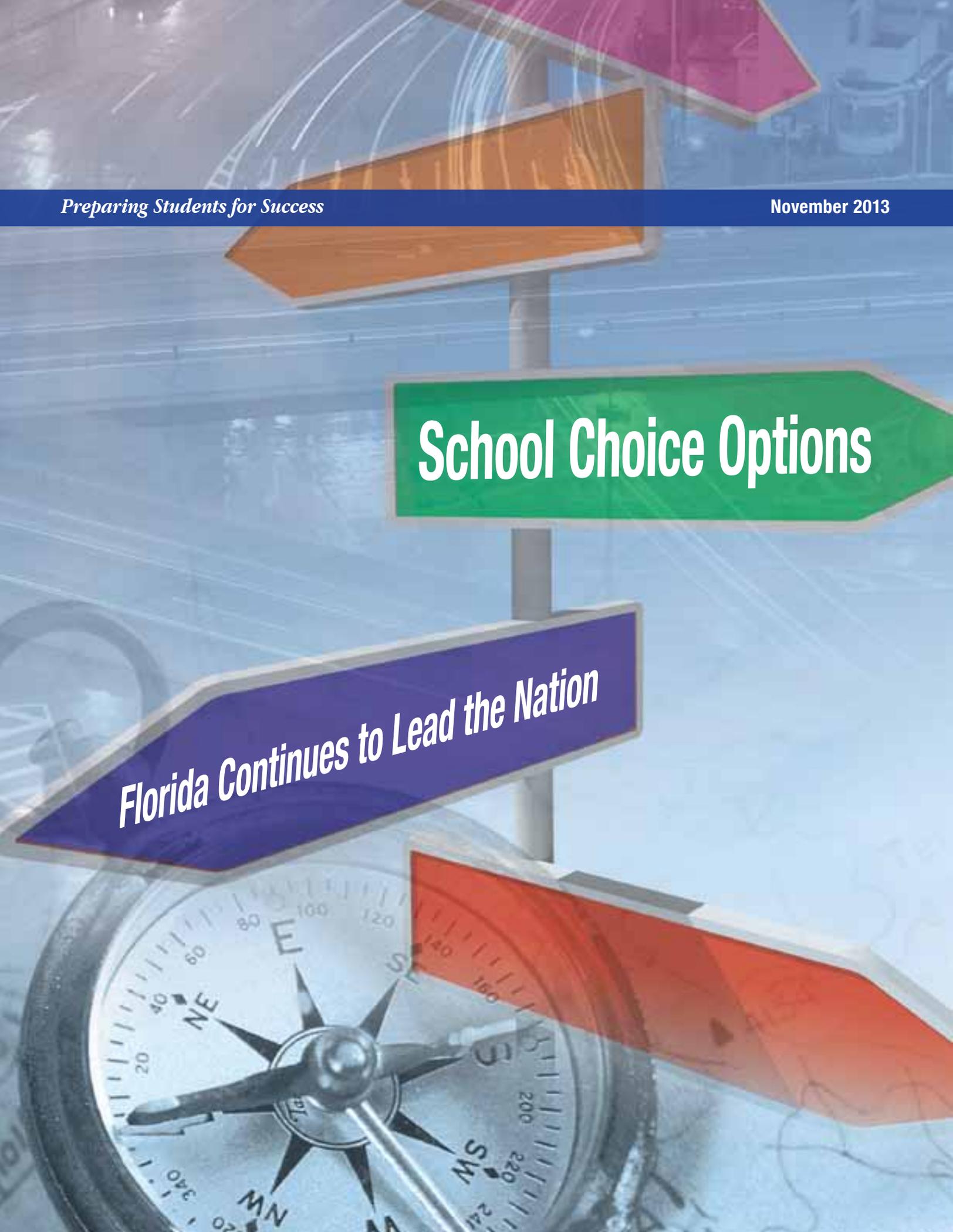


# School Choice Options

*Florida Continues to Lead the Nation*



This publication was cooperatively developed by  
the Florida Department of Education:

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice (IEPC)  
<http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/>

The Bureau of Education Information & Accountability Services (EIAS)  
<http://www.fldoe.org/eias/>

The Bureau of Federal Educational Programs  
<http://www.fldoe.org/bsa/>

Virtual Education, K12 Chancellor's Office  
<http://www.fldoe.org/Schools/virtual-schools/>

Division of Career and Adult Education  
<http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/>

Office of Early Learning  
<http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/>

For additional information about school choice options,  
call the toll-free School Choice Hotline at:  
**(800) 447-1636**





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# FLORIDA: EMPOWERING PARENTS AND STUDENTS WITH HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS

Educational research has repeatedly suggested that a key indicator of a child’s academic success is the presence and involvement of parents. Positive outcomes can be enhanced when families have choices in education for their children. Access to varied school environments and programs empowers parents to become managers of their children’s education. Providing high-quality school choice options allows parents to compare and select the most appropriate learning environment for their students.

Florida continues to lead the nation in school choice options, and the number of families and students taking advantage of these opportunities continues to increase each year. Tens of thousands of families and students benefit from school choices. The latest data provided by school districts indicate that, to date, thirty percent (30%) of Florida’s K-12 public school students attend a school other than the one to which they were assigned. Additionally, thousands more participate in other options including virtual education, private schools, and home education.



**K-12 Student Participation in Florida’s School Choice Options**

Year	Total K 12 Public School Student Membership	Number of Students Attending Schools Based on Parental School Choice Options	Percent of Students Attending Schools Based on Parental School Choice Options
2012-13	2,717,142	810,145	30%
2011-12	2,691,360	780,881	29%
2010-11	2,664,628	714,836	27%
2009-10	2,634,382	682,283	26%
2008-09	2,650,451	650,451	25%
2007-08	2,652,684	645,184	24%
2006-07	2,946,463	667,115	23%
2005-06	2,901,455	656,988	23%
2004-05	2,912,326	645,442	22%

While providing a diverse set of academic options is a significant accomplishment, Florida continues to focus on improving the quality of options available to parents. All students have a right to a first-class, challenging education that prepares them for working in a rapidly changing global economy. During the past few years, Florida has passed legislation that strengthens accountability in a number of choice programs and expands proven programs, which allows more students to benefit from high-quality choices.

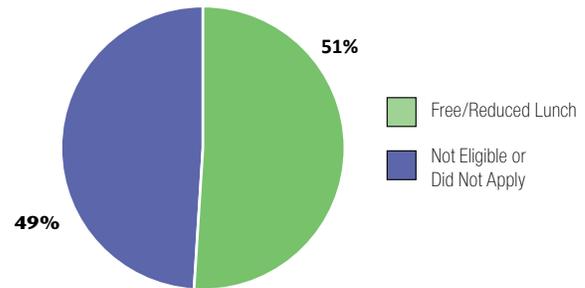
Parents understand the personality, the needs and interests of their children, and what type of education will help them excel. As new choices are implemented and current choices expanded, it is imperative that parents are well-informed of their options in order to make the best decisions for their children.





Approximately fifty-one percent (51%) of students that attended charter schools were eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program during the 2012-13 school year.

**Charter School Student Eligibility for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch**



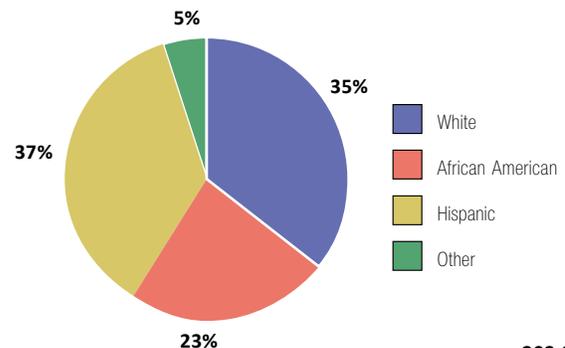
## CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools operated by an independent non-profit governing board. Since 1996, charter schools have played a key role in increasing parental options in public education and providing innovative learning opportunities for students in Florida. With 578 charter schools operating during the 2012-13 school year, Florida has the third highest number of charter schools in the nation. From schools specializing in the performing arts to those that focus on vocational and technical training, Florida's charter schools cover the spectrum of educational needs.

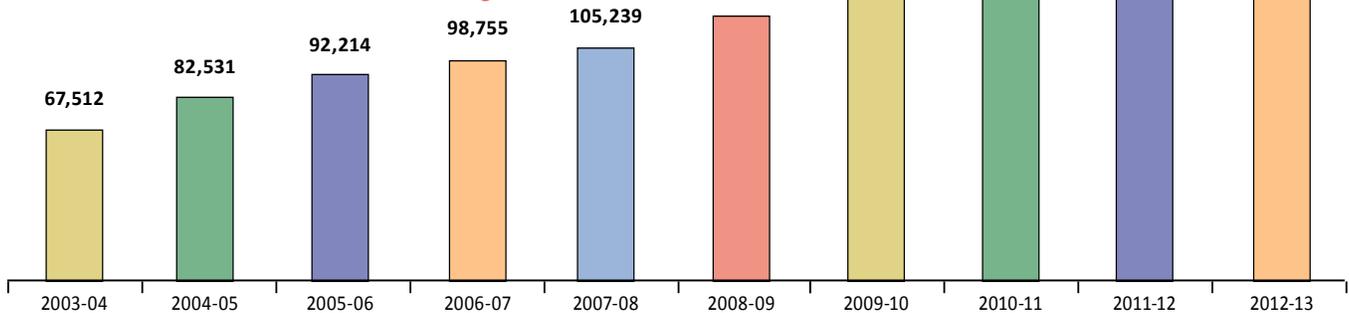
Florida's charter schools strive to provide students with a variety of effective instructional delivery methods, rigorous and challenging curriculum, and more opportunities for parental involvement. Charter schools provide an array of educational choices within local school districts and are largely free to select curriculum and instructional models that can best meet the needs of underserved student populations. More than 203,000 students attended charter schools in Florida during 2012-13.

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of students enrolled in charter schools during the 2012-13 school year were Hispanic. White students represented the next largest population with 35% participation, followed by African Americans with 23% participation.

**Race/Ethnicity of Charter School Students, 2012-13**



**Florida Charter School PK-12 Enrollment is Increasing**



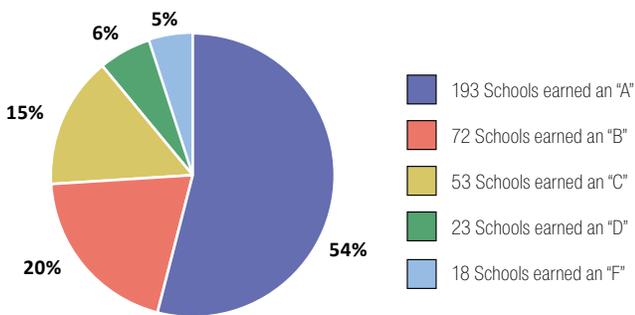
[2]



## Charter Schools Measuring Up to the Challenge

In 2011-12, seventy-four percent (74%) of graded charter schools earned a school performance grade of “A” or “B”. As reported in the 2011-12 Student Achievement Report, charter schools performed better than the state average in 156 out of 177 comparisons of student proficiency, student learning gains, and achievement gap. The full report can be found at: [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/pdf/Charter\\_Student\\_Achievement\\_2012.pdf](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/pdf/Charter_Student_Achievement_2012.pdf).

2012 Charter School Performance Grades



## CHARTER TECHNICAL CAREER CENTERS

The State of Florida had three charter technical career centers with a total enrollment of 5,749 students for the 2011-12 school year.\* These centers and their sponsors are:

- Advanced Technology College (ATC) – Daytona State College
- First Coast Technical College (FCTC) – St. Johns County School Board
- Lake Technical Center (LTC) – Lake County School Board

The charter technical career centers provide comprehensive and innovative technical education programs, services, and customized training to meet the needs of citizens, business, and industry.

Charter technical career centers aim to develop a competitive workforce that supports local business, industry, and economic development; and creates a training and education model reflective of marketplace realities. The career centers offer an array of career educational opportunities using school-to-work, technical, academy, and/or magnet school models to provide pathways for lifelong learning, career mobility and to enhance career and technical training.

A charter technical career center may be formed by creating a new school or converting an existing school district or Florida College System institution program to charter technical status. The center operates under a charter granted by a district school board, a Florida College System Board of Trustees, or a consortium of one or more district school boards and Florida College System Boards of Trustees.

\* Data based on the most recent school year available.



# VIRTUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS/SCHOOLS

## State Virtual School:

- Florida Virtual School (FLVS)

## District-Level Online Programs:

- School District Virtual Instruction Programs (VIP)
- District Franchises of FLVS
- District Virtual Course Offerings
- Virtual Charter Schools

Florida students have more access to online learning courses than students in any other state. Florida has the largest and most successful state virtual school in the United States, Florida Virtual School (FLVS), and through the School District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP), all school districts in Florida offer full-time and part-time virtual instruction programs for students in grades K-12. Many districts also operate franchises of the Florida Virtual School. Additionally, school districts may offer individual online courses to students in and outside of traditional school settings.

All of Florida’s virtual schools and programs are designated by state law as school choice options. Teachers in these programs must hold Florida teaching certificates and the curriculum must align with state standards. Full-time public school students participate in state assessments, and full-time schools and programs receive school grades through Florida’s accountability system.

## Florida Virtual School (FLVS)

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) has led the way in making online education accessible to Florida students. The school was created in 1997 and had 77 semester enrollments the first year. FLVS currently offers a part-time middle school and high school with more than 120 online courses, including general education courses, as well as Advance Placement (AP) and Honors Program options. In 2012-13, more than 206,700 public, private, charter and home education students completed more than 410,900 semester courses. FLVS offers a limited part-time elementary school program. For more information on these part-time schools, please visit [www.flvs.com](http://www.flvs.com).

FLVS also operates two full-time schools for Florida’s students in grades K-12. FLVS partnered with Connections Academy to provide its full-time program. Over 2,500 full-time public school students enrolled in its inaugural 2011-12 school year and approximately 5,300 students completed the program in 2012-13. The full-time high school began issuing diplomas in 2012-13. For more information about the FLVS full-time schools, please visit [www.flvsft.com](http://www.flvsft.com).

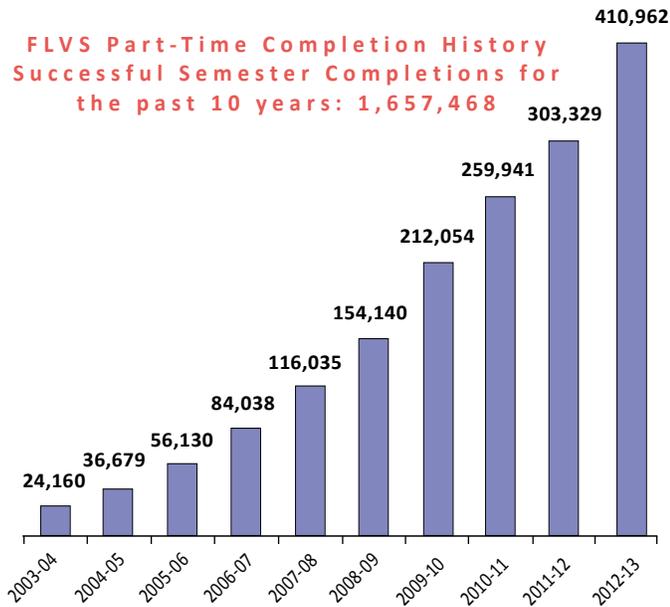
Florida’s Public K-12 Virtual Education Options, 2012-13

Virtual Program/School	School Numbers	Program Type	Grade Levels Served	Student Eligibility
<b>STATE LEVEL</b>				
Florida Virtual School (FLVS)	Grades K-5 (0700) Grades 6-8 (0500) Grades 9-12 (0600)	Part-Time	Grades K-1 and 6-12 Grades 2-5	All students Eligibility per s. 1002.455
Florida Virtual School Full-Time (FLVS FT)	Grades K-8 (0300) Grades 9-12 (0400)	Full-Time	Grades K-12	All Students
<b>DISTRICT LEVEL</b>				
District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP)	Provider Operated (7001) District Operated (7023)	Full-Time Limited Part-Time	Grades K-5 Grades 6-12 Grades K-1 Grades 2-12	All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455 All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455
District Franchise of FLVS	7004	Same as FLVS	Same as FLVS	Same as FLVS
District Virtual Course Offerings	7006	Part-Time Full-Time	Grades K-1 Grades 2-12 Grades K-5 Grades 6-12	All students Eligibility per s. 1002.455 All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455
Virtual Charter School	Individually Assigned on MSID	Full-Time	Grades K-5 Grades 6-12	All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455

- **All students** = Public, private and home education students
- **Eligibility per s. 1002.455** = Students must meet one of the following criteria: Prior-year in Florida public school, siblings of virtual students enrolled in current and end of previous year, military dependents who recently moved to Florida, students in grades K-1, students in grades 2-5 enrolling in full-time virtual programs.
- **Limited Part Time** = Grades K-12 courses measured by FCAT, End of Course (EOC) assessments and AP exams; Courses offered to students enrolled in dropout prevention, academic intervention and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) programs; core courses to meet class size requirements; or Florida college grades K-12 courses



**FLVS Part-Time Completion History  
Successful Semester Completions for  
the past 10 years: 1,657,468**



\*Completions are measured as half-credit completions, based on FLVS part-time students only.

### School District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP)

Since the 2009-10 school year, school districts in Florida have offered at least one full-time virtual instruction program (VIP) option for their students in grades K-12. School districts have a number of options for offering this virtual instruction for their students.

They are able to:

- contract with FLVS;
- establish a franchise of FLVS;
- contract with virtual learning providers approved by the Department of Education;
- enter into an agreement with another school district, virtual charter school or with a Florida college;
- enter into a multi-district agreement; or,
- operate their own program.

District VIPs are able to serve public school students, military dependents that recently moved to Florida, siblings of current VIP students who were also enrolled in the virtual program at the end of the previous year, and students eligible to enter grades K-1. In addition, students entering grades 2-5 enrolling in full-time virtual instruction do not have to meet one of the other eligibility criteria. Approximately 3,000 full-time students participated in the first year of full VIP implementation with almost 2,000 additional students exercising this option through district franchises of FLVS.

### District Franchises of FLVS

Fifty-four (54) school districts and two university lab schools currently operate franchises of FLVS. District franchises use district teachers to teach FLVS courses. FLVS also provides district franchises with teacher training and mentoring, leadership training, and many learning resources and tools. In 2012-13, franchises reported over 33,200 semester completions. District franchises serve public, charter, home education, and private school students in grades 6-12.

### District Virtual Course Offerings

School districts may offer individual online courses for students enrolled in the district. In addition, students from other districts may enroll in these courses. The district may offer K-12 courses for any grade level included in the Florida Course Code Directory.





## CONTROLLED OPEN ENROLLMENT

Controlled open enrollment is a system that allows school districts to make student school assignments using parents’ indicated preferential school choice as a significant factor. Each district school board may offer controlled open enrollment within their public school system. The controlled open enrollment program is offered in addition to the existing choice programs such as virtual instruction programs, magnet schools, alternative schools, special programs, advanced placement, and dual enrollment.

Controlled open enrollment emphasizes the rights of families to choose among existing public schools. Instead of being assigned to a public school by a school district based on attendance zones, parents may choose other schools in the district or, if not geographically feasible, from within established zones or boundaries within the district. These options are outlined in the district’s controlled open enrollment plan.

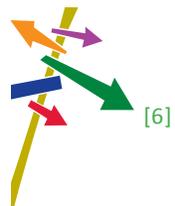
School districts report student data for educational choice each August via the state’s Automated Student Information Data Base. In the 2012-13 school year, over 309,400 students in 50 of the state’s 67 school districts, or about 11% of the total number of all students enrolled in the state, attended a Florida public school through a controlled open enrollment program.

## OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTIONS

Various choices are available across Florida to meet the unique learning needs of every school district’s students and families. The most common form of public school choice is offering a variety of courses and electives to meet graduation requirements for high school and allowing students to select the courses that will best meet their learning needs. Other choice options offered by districts include magnet schools, career and professional academies, and intensive nationally and internationally recognized instructional programs.

### Magnet Schools

Magnet schools and magnet programs offer a specialized curriculum to students outside the school’s normal attendance boundaries. These programs may include a particular theme or focus such as mathematics, science, technology, communications, international affairs, business or performing arts. A magnet school is defined as an elementary, middle, or high school that offers, to all students enrolled in that particular school, a special curriculum capable of attracting substantial numbers of students of different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Magnet programs differ slightly from a magnet school as the special curriculum is offered to a cohort of students, as opposed to the entire school. More than 548,441 students participated in over 494 magnet schools or magnet programs in 29 Florida school districts during the 2012-13 school year.



## Career and Professional Academies

Career and professional academies are small, personalized learning communities within a high school that select a subset of students and teachers for a two-, three-, or four-year span. Students enter a career and professional academy through a voluntary process. They must apply and be accepted with parental knowledge and support.

A career and professional academy includes the following essential elements:

- A small learning community
- A rigorous academic curriculum with a career theme
- Partnerships with employers, the community, and higher education

By design, these three essential elements of a career and professional academy are central to the design of academic programs that are rigorous, relevant, and relational. Academies draw on the students' interest in learning about some feature of the world of work, and integrate career-specific curriculum and instruction into core academic curriculum.

During 2012-13, over 1,729 career and professional academies operated in 68 Florida school districts (including Florida State University Charter Lab School) focused on areas including hospitality and tourism, health science, science and technology, information technology, architecture and construction. The total number of students enrolled in career and professional academies jumped from 162,820 in 2010-11 to 203,394 in 2011-12, an increase of over 24%.



## Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment allows eligible high school and home education students to enroll in postsecondary courses. Students can simultaneously earn credit toward high school graduation and a college degree or technical certificate. All 28 institutions in the Florida College System and some state universities in Florida participate in dual enrollment. Students are permitted to take dual enrollment courses on a part-time basis during school hours, after school, or during the summer term. Dual enrollment students do not have to pay registration, matriculation, or laboratory fees.

## Advanced Placement (AP) Program

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Program is a highly respected national curriculum consisting of more than 30 rigorous high school courses and standardized exams that allow students an opportunity to earn college credit. AP subjects range from art to statistics. Students who earn a qualifying score of 3 or above on an AP exam can earn college credit, depending on the college or university. Students in Florida's public secondary schools enrolled in AP courses do not have to pay to take the AP exams.



## Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Program

The Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Program is a widely recognized curriculum and examination program modeled on the British pre-college curriculum and “A-Level” exams. Florida’s public colleges and universities provide college credit to students who successfully passed AICE exams. Students can earn up to 30 postsecondary semester credits by participating in this program. Students in Florida’s public secondary schools enrolled in AICE courses do not have to pay to take the required examinations.

## International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program is a rigorous pre-university course of study leading to internationally standardized tests. The program’s comprehensive two-year curriculum allows its graduates to fulfill requirements of many different nations’ education systems. Students completing IB courses and exams may be eligible for college credit. The award of credit is based on scores achieved on IB exams. Students can earn up to 30 postsecondary semester credits by participating in this program at the high school level. Approximately 42 high schools in Florida participate in the IB program. Students in Florida’s public secondary schools enrolled in IB courses do not have to pay to take the exams.



## NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND SCHOOL CHOICE

On February 9, 2012, the Florida Department of Education’s (FDOE) Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver request was approved by the United States Department of Education. The waiver removed many of the requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Consistent with the ESEA waiver, school districts are no longer required to offer public school choice (PSC) to newly identified students. PSC provided the option for students in a low performing Title I school to transfer to a higher performing public school. However, the ESEA flexibility waiver requires school districts to allow students participating in PSC for the 2011-12 school year to remain in the choice school to the highest grade level.

Effective 2013-2014, school districts were afforded the flexibility to expend Title I Part A funds previously set aside for Supplemental Educational Services (SES) on general Title I activities, provided that such activities sufficiently support implementation of interventions in priority and other Title I schools. Districts that elect to fund SES will be required to implement the program per Section 1008.331, Florida Statutes (F.S.). Districts choosing not to fund SES may continue to provide tutoring through their locally procured providers using Title I funds.



**Public School Choice with Transportation and Supplemental Educational Services**

	Title I Schools	Public School Choice with Transportation	Supplemental Educational Services
2004-05	1,426	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 900 Title I schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33 Title I schools did not make AYP for three years and were required to offer SES.</li> </ul>
2005-06	1,386	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 300 Title I schools did not make AYP for two years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 700 Title I schools did not make AYP for three or more consecutive years and were required to offer SES.</li> </ul>
2006-07	1,382	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,001 Title I schools did not make AYP for two or more years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>872 Title I schools did not make AYP for three or more consecutive years and were required to offer SES.</li> <li>School districts reported that approximately 70,000 students participated in SES.</li> </ul>
2007-08	1,365	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 990 Title I schools did not make AYP for two years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>892 Title I schools did not make AYP for three or more consecutive years and were required to offer SES.</li> <li>School district reported that approximately 70,000 students participated in SES.</li> </ul>
2008-09	1,391	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 921 Title I schools did not make AYP for three years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1048 Title I schools did not make AYP for two or more consecutive years and were required to offer SES.</li> <li>School district reported that approximately 77,000 students participated in SES.</li> </ul>
2009-10	1,801	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 997 Title I schools did not make AYP for three years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1159 Title I schools did not make AYP for two or more consecutive years and were required to offer SES.</li> <li>School district reported that approximately 72,241 students participated in SES.</li> </ul>
2010-11	1,853	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 988 Title I schools did not make AYP for three years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,149 Title I schools did not make AYP for two or more consecutive years and were required to offer SES.</li> <li>School district reported that approximately 74,299 students participated in SES.</li> </ul>
2011-12	1,759	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 767 Title I schools did not make AYP for three years and were required to offer parents public school choice with transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,216 Title I schools did not make AYP for two or more consecutive years and were required to offer SES.</li> <li>School district reported that approximately 61,374 students participated in SES.</li> </ul>

Data based on the most recent school year available.

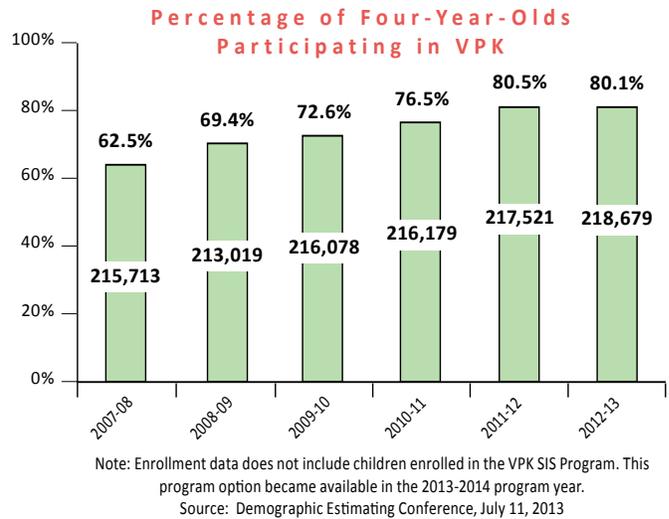


# VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM

Florida was one of the first states in the nation to offer free prekindergarten for all 4-year-olds regardless of family income. The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program prepares early learners for success in kindergarten and beyond. Children must live in Florida and be 4 years old on or before September 1 of the current year to be eligible. The program helps to build a strong foundation for young students using educational materials that are appropriate for various stages in a child’s development.

VPK is an essential component of Florida’s school choice programs. Parents can choose from different educational settings and various program options. Private child care centers, public schools and specialized instructional services providers offer VPK programs.

There are three VPK program options. The *school-year program* provides 540 hours of instruction with class sizes of no more than 20 children. A *summer program* includes 300 instructional hours and class sizes no larger than 12 students. Parents who have 4-year-old children with special needs may choose the *VPK Specialized Instructional Services* educational program, in which certified or licensed professionals provide instruction in individual or small group settings. This option requires the child to have a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) from a local school district.



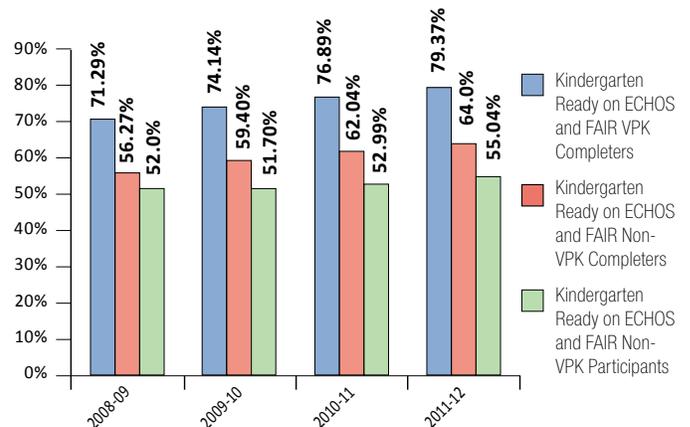
Since the program started about 10 years ago, VPK student participation has grown substantially. About 80 percent of all Florida 4-year-olds attend VPK.

More importantly, results from testing in kindergarten show that VPK works. In 2011-12, 79 percent of children who completed the VPK program were ready for kindergarten, while only 55 percent of children who did not attend VPK were kindergarten ready.

Early learning coalitions across the state have information to help parents choose a VPK program for their family. VPK Provider Profiles include provider readiness rates and licensing reports. Kindergarten Readiness Rates show how well all *school-year* and *summer providers* prepare students for kindergarten using results of the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS). FLKRS is based on 2011 Florida Early Learning and VPK Standards for Four-Year-Olds that describe what a 4-year-old should know and be able to do by the end of VPK.



Florida ECHOS® and FAIR Results 2008-2012



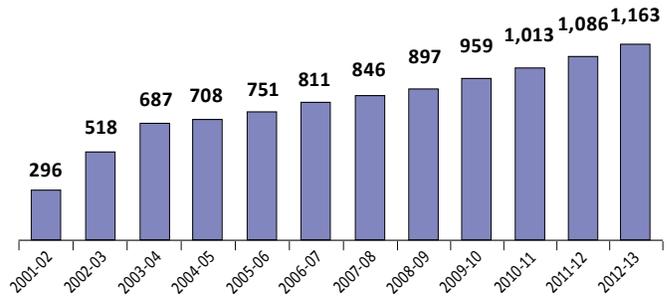
# SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

Florida provides a variety of school choice options, including three scholarship programs. The scholarship programs allow parents unprecedented choice among public and private schools. During the 2012-13 school year, more than 81,300 students participated in a scholarship program.

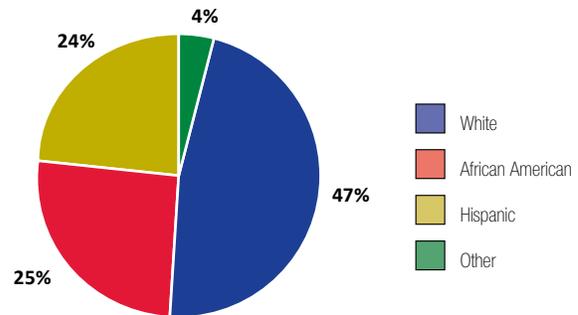
## John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program

The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, commonly known as the McKay Scholarship Program, offers parents of students with disabilities the opportunity to make informed choices about the best academic environment for their children. To be eligible for a McKay Scholarship, students with disabilities must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Accommodation Plan for more than six months, and must have been enrolled and reported for funding by a Florida school district the year prior to applying for a scholarship. Students in military families from other states or countries may also be eligible. Parents have the option of choosing another public school or applying for a scholarship for their child to attend an eligible private school.

Private School Participation in the McKay Scholarship Program

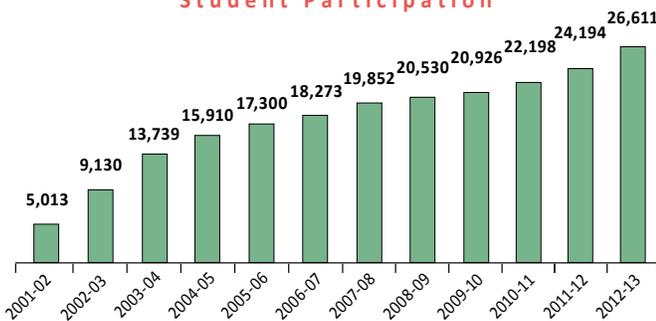


Race/Ethnicity of McKay Scholarship Students

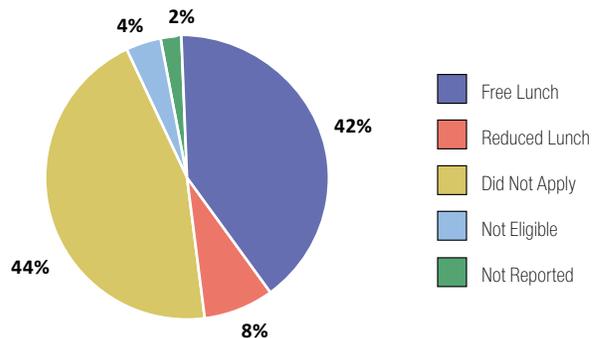


Forty-seven percent (47%) of all students who participated in the McKay Scholarship Program in 2012-13 were white. African-American students represented the second largest student group with 25% participation, followed by Hispanic students with 24% participation.

McKay Scholarship Program Student Participation



McKay Scholarship Student Eligibility for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch



**Grade Level Distribution of McKay Scholarship Students**

Grade	Students	Percent
K	709	2.7%
1st	1,012	3.8%
2nd	1,390	5.2%
3rd	1,690	6.4%
4th	2,259	8.5%
5th	2,332	8.8%
6th	3,058	11.5%
7th	3,017	11.3%
8th	2,810	10.6%
9th	2,409	9.1%
10th	2,132	8.0%
11th	1,901	7.1%
12th	1,892	7.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,611</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Of students receiving McKay Scholarships in 2012-13, 35% were enrolled in kindergarten through grade five, 34% in grades six through eight, and 31% in grades nine through twelve. Slightly over two-thirds (69%) of the McKay Scholarship students were male. Half of all McKay students (50%) were eligible for the federal Free and Reduced-price Lunch Program, an indicator that their families had limited financial resources.

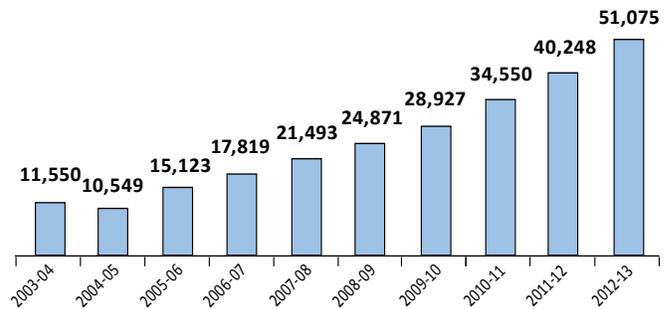
The McKay Scholarship Program offers parent-directed choices and student-directed funding. During the 2012-13 school year, \$168.9 million was paid to scholarship program participants. Scholarships for individual students enrolled during the 2012-13 school year ranged from \$4,395 to \$19,105, with an average scholarship amount of \$7,019. In 2012-13, 26,611 students from 1,163 private schools participated in the McKay Scholarship Program. Private schools participating in the program must document compliance with eligibility requirements specified in law.



## Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program

The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, formerly the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program, was established in 2001 to encourage private, voluntary contributions from corporate donors to non-profit scholarship funding organizations (SFO) that award scholarships to children from low-income families. In 2009, the program was expanded to include credits against the insurance premium tax for contributions to eligible non-profit SFOs, and has since been expanded to include credits against severance taxes on oil and gas production, self-accrued sales tax liabilities of direct pay permit holders, and alcoholic beverage taxes on beer, wine, and spirits. The maximum amount in tax credits the state could award for fiscal year 2012-13 was \$229 million. This program expands educational opportunities and school choice for children of families that have limited financial resources.

**Student Participation in Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program**



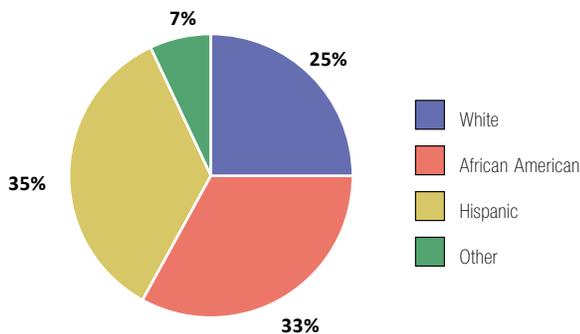
Scholarships of \$206.9 million were awarded to a total of 51,075 students enrolled in 1,338 participating Florida private schools during the 2012-13 school year. Participation in 2012-13 reflected an enrollment increase of almost twenty-seven percent (27%) from the 2011-12 school year.

In order to be eligible for a Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, a student must qualify for free or reduced-price lunches or be on the direct certification list, or be placed in foster care. In addition, a student must be entering kindergarten through fifth grade, have attended a public school the previous year if in grades 6-12, or have received a scholarship the previous year.



Approximately 35% of students who participated in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program in 2012-13 were Hispanic. African-American students comprise the next largest population with 33%, followed by white students at 25%.

Race/Ethnicity of Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Students



### Scholarship Funding Organizations and Private Partners

Scholarship funding organizations (SFOs) are responsible for the receipt and distribution of funds to eligible and participating private schools in Florida. In 2012-13, the scholarships to attend an eligible private school were worth \$4,335 for private school tuition and fees. Scholarships to attend a public school in an adjacent district were worth \$500 per student for transportation.

For the 2013-14 school year, one SFO is participating in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program.



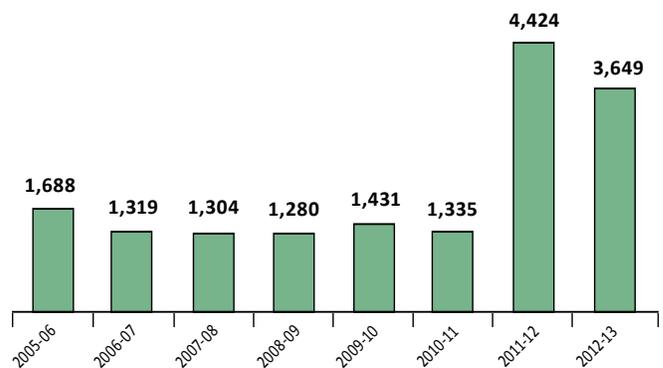
### Opportunity Scholarship Program – Public School Option

The Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) created under Florida’s A+ Education Plan reflects the state’s commitment to provide quality educational opportunities to students. The Opportunity Scholarship Program allows parents to choose a higher-performing public school if their children attend, or are assigned to attend, a failing Florida public school.

For the purpose of the Opportunity Scholarship Program, a school is considered to be failing in the year it received a grade of “F” or its third consecutive “D”.

Historically, the public school option of the Opportunity Scholarship Program has been administered at the school district level. Since the 2005-06 school year, school districts have reported the number of students in their districts participating in the Opportunity Scholarship Program. In the 2012-13 school year, 3,649 students participated in the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

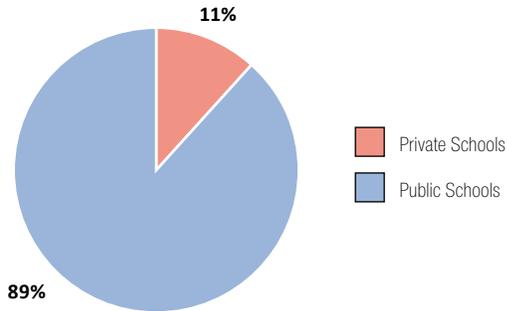
Opportunity Scholarship Program Public School Option Student Participation



## PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Private schools in Florida reported more than 320,400 students enrolled in 2,268 private schools during the 2012-13 school year. This represented approximately 11% of the state’s total student enrollment in Prekindergarten through grade 12.

PK-12 School Enrollment, 2012-13



Each private school has a stated purpose and philosophy unique to that school. Some private schools place an emphasis on college preparation, some are vocational-oriented, and others seek to meet the needs of children with particular learning styles. These schools operate with limited regulation by the state, but Florida law does require private schools to meet certain standards regarding health, safety, and sanitation.

In addition, each private school is required by Florida law to complete an annual survey that is maintained by the Department of Education as an information database for the public, governmental agencies, and other interested parties. The state is not required to verify the accuracy of the information submitted,

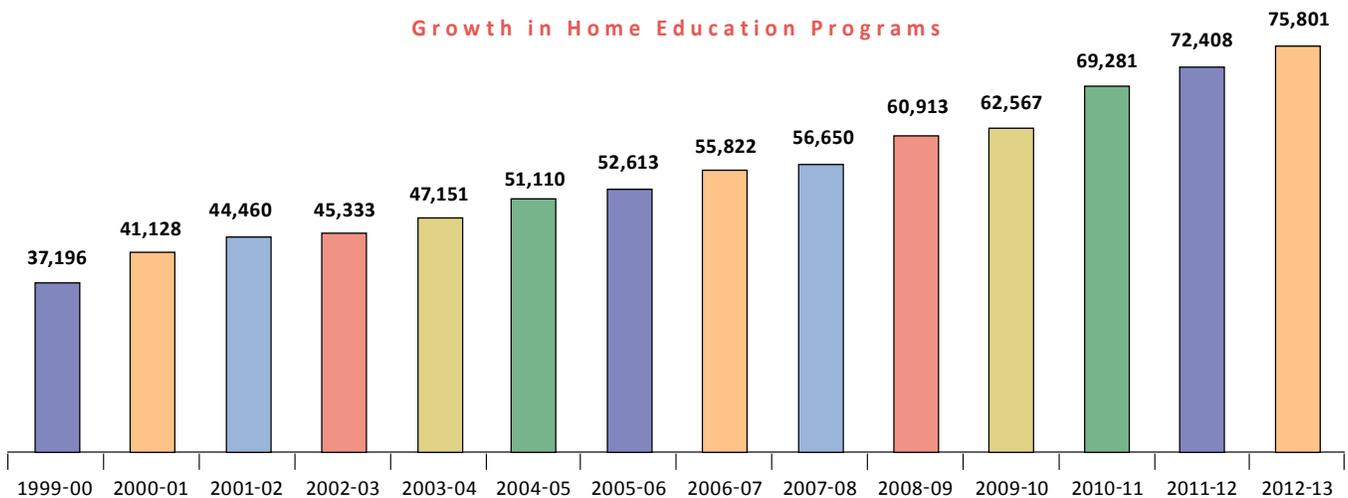
and inclusion in the database does not imply state accreditation or approval. The Department of Education and the state’s private school organizations work together in serving Florida’s diverse student population; the relationship is professional, rather than regulatory.

## HOME EDUCATION

Florida is a long-time supporter of home education, and the number of families choosing this education option shows steady growth. Established as an educational choice by the Florida Legislature in 1985, home education programs give parents the freedom to nurture their child’s individual learning style, creativity and intellect. This allows students the opportunity to learn and explore at their own pace, in any location or at any time of the day. More than 75,801 students from 54,212 Florida families, representing every school district, were registered in home education programs in the 2012-13 school year.

Florida law does not require a particular educational background for parents of home-educated students. Parents who home educate their children are able to customize the curriculum to the needs of each child. However, a portfolio of activities, records and materials showing student work must be maintained for two years and made available to the school district if requested in writing. There is no attendance requirement for home education students, as the learning environment is not restricted to a regular classroom setting. The law allows parents the flexibility to choose from five annual evaluation

Growth in Home Education Programs



methods, enabling them to select the best measure of learning for each student.

Parents register a home education program with their school district, providing the names, addresses and birthdates of all children who are enrolled in a home education program. Home education students may participate in dual enrollment and are eligible for Florida Bright Futures Scholarships. Children of all ages are home educated across the state, and some enter college straight from their courses of study at home.

## CONCLUSION

School choice is not about one type of school or system being better than another. It is about providing unique flexibility for parents and students, and giving families greater choice in their selection of educational opportunities. Diversity in school structure and instructional programs is crucial to Florida's goal of bringing all students to high levels of academic achievement. Competitive innovation and greater accountability provide incentives for all schools to improve for the long-term benefit of both students and their parents.

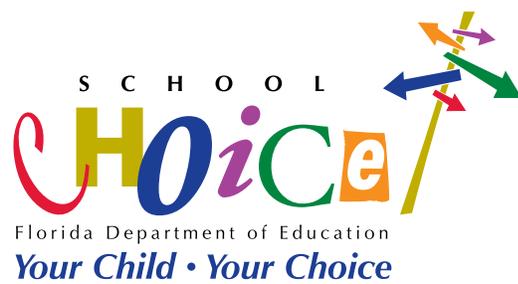
### School Choice Benefits for Families and Students

- Promotes increased student achievement
- Increases parental involvement
- Promotes school improvement through constructive competition
- Provides greater accountability within the school system
- Prepares students for postsecondary success





Florida Department of Education  
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