

March 2016



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# the Virtual View

## Happy Trails to You!

I bid a fond farewell to all my friends and colleagues in the virtual education world. After more than 45 years in the field of education, I am retiring at the end of this month. The last twelve years in the virtual education arena have truly been an adventure. Although at times I have felt I was riding on a runaway roller coaster, it has been an amazing journey. I have been fortunate to have shared this journey with so many dedicated and caring professionals who were undaunted by the challenges and who embraced the opportunities that are part of virtual education. You have innovated and created wonderful learning experiences for many students in Florida and beyond and I will always be grateful for what you have done.

I am excited and happy to announce that Sandy Eggers will be the new Director of the Virtual Education Office. Sandy has worked with me for over three years now and is one of the most knowledgeable, energetic and determined women I know. Florida’s virtual education community is in good hands with her. She will be a strong leader and is a steadfast supporter and advocate for virtual students and schools everywhere.

Best wishes to Florida’s virtual students and to all who strive to provide quality learning and life experiences for them!

Sally

## Honored to Serve

Sally has been a great mentor; I was quite the deer in headlights when I started working with her. Virtual education was as foreign to me as learning a new language. Sally was patient; giving me the time I needed to understand and at times pushing me beyond my comfort zone. Sally is known as the guru of virtual and highly respected within and outside the state of Florida for her expertise. As she retires a part of the history of virtual education will go too.

That being said, I am honored and grateful to continue on with the department as the Director in the Virtual Education Office. I look forward to working with each of you as virtual education continues to expand in Florida. Together let’s make a difference; one student at a time!

Sandy

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*“All I want is an education, and I am afraid of no one.”*

**Malala Yousafzai**

# 2016 FLDVIPN Symposium

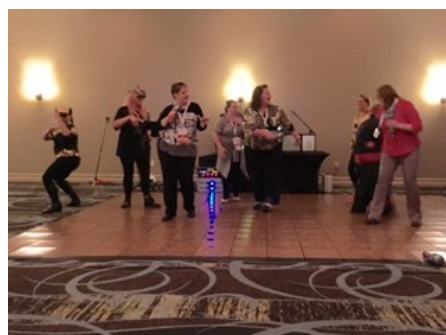
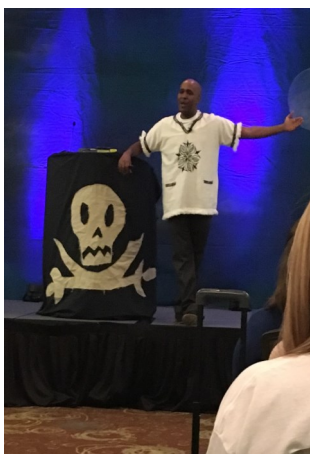
This year, more than 450 attendees gathered in Altamonte Springs, FL to discover and appreciate Florida's Hidden Treasures - our District Virtual Instruction Programs!



Over the course of the conference, more than 50 presentations and PLC meetings took place to showcase all of the talent and innovation driving the success of the virtual schools around the state of Florida. Through the generosity of our sponsors, the administrators, teachers, and staff who have helped to create a robust system of online courses, we were able to network and learn from one another.

This year's conference also marked the start of another new tradition: The Virtual Trendsetter Awards, recognizing our "gems" in each district, and several categories of teacher and administrator leadership and innovation. There were so many nominees, it was honestly hard to choose the winners!

Finally, we had the chance to say goodbye to our #1 fan and cheerleader, Sally Roberts. Her advocacy and advice will be missed as she retires, but we were so glad to have the opportunity to thank her for her leadership over the years!



A special thank you to our valued partners and sponsors, whose support and expertise power the growth and continued success of this event.

# How Would You Describe the Symposium?



“Rewarding” “Informative” “I loved the trendsetter awards!” “Empowering” “Enriching”



“Best practice stealing!” “Like Minds” “Innovative” “Refreshing” “Collaborative Learning”

“Brings the term “Network” to a whole new level!” “Shared Best Practices”

**Save the date for next year's conference: February 15-17, 2017**

We're still scouting sites-- so stay tuned to the Google Group list or on our social media feeds:

flvdipn@googlegroups.com (email [jglemn@pasco.k12.fl.us](mailto:jglemn@pasco.k12.fl.us) to be added)

Twitter: @FLDVIPN Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FLDVIPN/>

## Pinellas Students Get Hands-On

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Pinellas Virtual School's (PVS) elementary students had the opportunity to interact with other PVS students face-to-face on their field trip to Great Explorations. Students visited different areas of the hands-on museum and performed challenging tasks by working together. It was great seeing students interact with other students across grade levels to accomplish the different tasks.

Submitted by Mandy Perry



## Bird Watching in Broward

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On October 10th, middle school students from Broward Virtual School (BVS) competed in the Audubon Society's Race 4 Birds; an annual event which encourages students to get out into nature and explore the fascinating world of birding. The event is held throughout the United States by various chapters of The Audubon Society. Teams spent the day observing and identifying the various species of birds they encountered. The event teaches students to work together as teams and gain an appreciation for the outdoors. A great time was had by all and Team BVS won 4th place! We look forward to participating in this event again and we encourage other schools to join us.

Submitted by Christopher McGuire

## FLVS Teachers Share Science Love at Share Fair

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FLVS teachers Linda Childs, Ashley McElligott, Chell Rinehart, and Christine Davis hosted a challenge at Share Fair Nation's STEMosphere in Orlando on Jan. 23. The challenge was to build a tower 12 inches off the table that could hold a textbook, using only six pieces of paper and three inches of tape. Childs said, "It was an awesome day for science—so many kids played with the circuits and participated in the challenge. The structures were unbelievable!"



## Digital Learning Day at the Capitol



On Feb. 17, a team of 35 from Florida Virtual School, which included staff, students, parents, and Board of Trustees members Dame Dhyana Ziegler and Linda Pellegrini, met with 31 legislators to thank them for supporting virtual education. The House of Representatives approved removing the last of the restrictions on virtual education and passed HB 7029. (No changes to eligibility when session ended) Students who attended and supported FLVS were Mark Demayo, Maddie Gannaway, Grady Shafer, and Madison Toonder.

## ‘News In A Click’ Provides Opportunities for FLVS

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) students are provided with a unique chance to try their hand at journalism. *News In A Click* (NIAC) members meet online weekly to share ideas, discuss different aspects of journalism and participate in writing activities. Students have even won awards for joining the newspaper!

Editor-in-Chief Lauren Mackey describes her experience with NIAC:

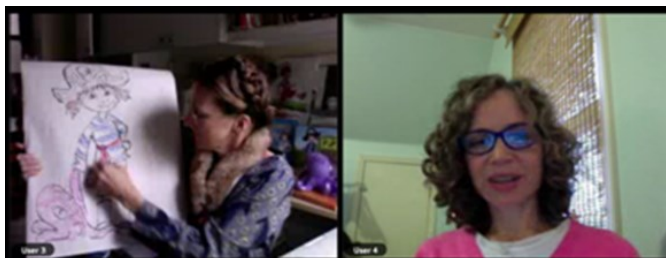
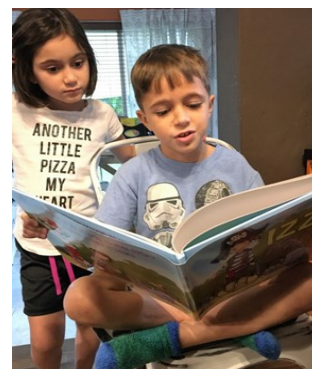
“Since joining News In A Click in 2011, I have evolved from a staff member, to Student Life Editor, News Editor and now as the Editor-in-Chief. NIAC has not only helped shape my college and career path, but has also given me numerous opportunities including attending the University of Florida’s Summer Journalism Institute for two consecutive years, writing for the Orlando Sentinel’s blogging platform HypeOrlando and winning a national journalism award from Quill and Scroll. As the Editor-in-Chief of one of the nation’s only exclusive online high school newspapers, I have gained a unique experience that I will benefit from and cherish for years to come.”

Submitted by Suzan Kurdak



## Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!

During the week of January 25-29, students at FLVS Full Time K-8 participated in a week full of engaging literacy activities for Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! This included several guest author and illustrator “virtual” visits, as well as book giveaways! The authors and illustrators showcased their books, gave drawing tutorials, answered student questions and gave encouragement to students! The special guests included Allison Estes and Tracy Dockray, author and illustrator of *Izzy and Oscar*, Nancy J. Cavanaugh, author of *This Journal Belongs to Ratchet*, Jen Calonita, author of *Flunked*, Bill Cotter, author and illustrator of *Don’t Push the Button*, Jess Keating, author of *How to Outrun a Crocodile When Your Shoes are Untied*, and Eric Pierpoint, author of *The Secret Mission of William Tuck*. It was an enriching week that will have a lasting positive impact on their students!



Submitted by Sally Fernandez

## OCVS Students Receive Top Honors



OCVS (Orange County Virtual School) 7th grader Elysia Moak was among the winners of the Writes of Spring contest this year. Writes of Spring is a writing contest designed to support literacy and promote creative expression. Each year, they accept submissions from Kindergarten through 12th grade students and the top entries are compiled to create an original play using the students' words and ideas. The resulting script is produced by The Orlando Repertory Theatre (REP) and UCF graduate students, and presented in a stage

production at The REP on January 29th. The winning writers are honored and recognized at the performance and post-show celebration! In its 13th year, the participants were invited to explore the topic of freedom. They were asked to choose one of two contrasting prompts and creatively explain their reasoning in a one-page short story, essay, or poem. Freedom is free because- , or, Freedom is not free because-

11th Grader Abigail Hockenberry is a nominee of the 2016 Sunshine State Scholar Award. Abigail was invited to be recognized at the OCPS School Board Meeting on February 9. The Sunshine State Scholar Award recognizes top 11th grade students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) based on an established criteria. Great job, Abigail!



## OCVS Visits Sea World

Orange County Virtual School students took an exciting and education trip to Sea World. Students spent their morning learning with a hands-on interactive lesson on marine biology, the sea and the wildlife housed at the park. After their morning of learning, students, along with their parents got the opportunity to enjoy the rest of the park. What a fabulous day!



Submitted by Lacey Anderson

## Congrats Volusia Online Learning!

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Volusia Online Learning attended the FLDVIPN symposium held in Altamonte Springs, FL in February. The team presented three sessions and had three members of our team recognized at the awards ceremony. Wendy Ferranti was awarded the District Gem Award for our program and she is certainly a gem to all of us! Valencia Robinson was awarded the Survivor Award for her outstanding work as a teacher in her first 3 years with online learning. Finally, Mariana Bianco was awarded the Virtual Trendsetter Award for Best Practices for her incredible leadership in online learning teaching practices. We are so proud of our team, and we can't wait for next year's symposium! Submitted by Amy Blowers



## K<sup>12</sup> Annual Art Contest

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This year, K<sup>12</sup> hosted their 10th annual Nationwide Art Contest and it was quite a success! They received many wonderful pieces of artwork from students enrolled in K<sup>12</sup> schools and district partner programs. The contest was open to all students in grades K–12. The goal of the contest was to give students an opportunity to show off their artistic abilities, a fun way to explore their creative side and to be recognized for their talents.

This year the theme was “Decades.” Students sent in portraits, still life, action scenes and more to show off their talents! Liam K., from Polk County Virtual School, won 2nd place for his entry into the 6th grade nationwide competition! Way to go Liam!



## K<sup>12</sup> Celebrates National School Choice Week

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Our K<sup>12</sup> families did not let the rain stop them from coming to the Jacksonville Zoo to celebrate National School Choice Week! One of the students stated that the scavenger hunt was more fun because they learned what each animal did when it rained. Families were given water bottles and National School Choice Scarves to help celebrate.

Way to go K<sup>12</sup> families! We had a great time!

Submitted by Traci Hill



# Outstanding Math Students Recognized in Bay



Thirteen Bay Virtual School students were recognized February 11th by Mrs. Kathy Jones, member of the Council of Presidential Awardees in Mathematics and BVS teacher, for their outstanding achievements in their math classes ranging from Pre-Algebra to Calculus. Parents, family members, teachers and GetFueled representatives attended this academic awards and honor roll recognition in which 75 students achieved all A's and B's in their classes.

The ceremony was followed by an Open House in which students, parents, and teachers had the opportunity to meet many of their virtual teachers face-to-face for the first time. Bay Virtual School congratulates all these students and their families for their hard work!

## Bay Serves Community Breakfast

Under the direction of their sponsor, Mrs. Belinda McLane, Bay Virtual's National Honor Society (NHS) is continuing its tradition of service by volunteering at the First United Methodist Church (FUMC) in Panama City. They assist in serving breakfast to the homeless along with other groups who provide shower facilities, provide haircuts and assist with job applications. This is an on-going project for FUMC and for Bay Virtual. As a result of a student vote, BVS's NHS has participated in this worthwhile community-wide effort for the past two years.



Submitted by Carra Summers

## The Chat Room– Lee Virtual Connects



This year the Middle School team at Lee Virtual School has created a new way for students to participate in fun and educational activities, make friends and be a part of our school culture - "The Chat Room". Every Wednesday, Middle School students are invited to attend Academic Day from 9:00 - 11:00. During Academic Day, students can work with teachers one on one, collaborate with other students and attend mini lessons in the core subject areas. From 11:00 - 12:00, students who want to participate move to the Chat Room. They can eat lunch with friends; participate in clubs such as Spanish Club, Art Club, News Team, Craft Corner and the Music Club; or learn new and exciting things. Some Chat Room educational events have included a demonstration by a K-9 officer (who happens to also be an LVS parent) and Sabr, his canine; a presentation by "the Bug

Man", Brian Murphy, from the Department of Environmental Education; and a fire department demonstration. A visit from the Department of Forestry and Wildlife is planned for April, as well as Mosquito Control and Page Field Airport field trips. The Chat Room - it's an opportunity to visit with friends, learn something new, and connect with the school.

Submitted by Ann Taylor





# News From the Tower

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## Legislation

Tallahassee is buzzing, but it's not from the bees buzzing among the spring flowers. It is from folks spreading the word about what is happening as the 2016 legislative session draws to a close.

Here is what we know: Not much! Virtual is quiet for another year with a few minor changes. We will send a final legislative update soon!



We also want to hear from you. Please send your questions and ideas about how the new legislation may impact virtual students to [virtualeducation@fldoe.org](mailto:virtualeducation@fldoe.org). The virtual Q&As will be updated using your input.

## VIP and Course Providers

The approval processes are complete; congratulations to the VIP providers: Edgenuity, Florida Connections Academy and K<sup>12</sup> LLC., who were reappraised for the next three school years. Approved Course Providers, Edmentum and new this year, Odysseyware were approved too. We are now in the process of editing/revising the 2016-17 applications to make them more concise and efficient for both the applicants and reviewers.

## Updates to Model VIP Contract

Updates to the model contract will begin soon to include some of the audits findings that districts have been cited on. Districts will be notified once it is posted on the virtual education website.

## Florida Online Course Catalog

The catalog continues to be a valuable tool for parents and students and we are striving to make it better! We encourage you to take the time to log in to the catalog and locate the feedback codes for the specific courses being taught in your district. They can be found at the bottom of the page for the course you select. Please provide them to your teachers to send to their students to rate their online course experience!

## Did You Know?

Virtual Education in South Carolina, (VirtualSC) ran a small pilot study within rural schools using a “telepresence robot” where students meet to take courses from a virtual teacher. The use of the Double Robot was introduced this fall to offer a new and engaging form of live interaction between the VirtualSC teacher and the students in the classroom. Currently, there are two schools participating in the robot pilot and they are using the Virtual Learning Labs with robots to provide keyboarding instruction to middle school students. What a great idea for rural students to have access to online learning!

More information can be found here: <https://virtualsc.org/blog/2014/11/19/virtualsc-pilots-the-use-of-robots-for-virtual-instruction/>