



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALACHUA COUNTY/GAINESVILLE, FL

### Florida School Choice Glossary

**Charter Schools** are public schools that are independently operated. They are authorized by local school districts but are free to select their curriculum and instructional model. Charter schools are governed by a nonprofit board that is free to subcontract any of its services to other for profit or not for profit entities. To date all Alachua County charters are run as not for profit schools but this is not true in many other parts of the state.

**Conversion Charter Schools** are traditional public schools that have been converted to charter schools. The school must have operated for at least two years as a traditional public school (including a school-within-a-school) in a school district before conversion. Application for a conversion may be made by a parent, teacher, principal, district school board or school advisory council, but must be approved by a majority of the teachers and a majority of the parents. A majority of the parents must participate in the vote.

**Florida Virtual School (FLVS)** In 1997 the legislature created FLVS as an additional school district with the exclusive responsibility of providing online education for all children in Florida. It is available to part time or full time students in public or private schools or who are home schooled.

**Virtual School** provides educational opportunities to take courses full time or par time in grades K-12 online. In Florida all teachers must hold Florida Teaching certificates and the curriculum must meet state standards. If students participate in a virtual school full time through their local public school they participate in state assessments and receive school grades.

**Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP)** is the program set up in 1973 which uses a formula to allocate funding to local school districts. <http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/offrfefp.asp>

**Full Time Equivalent (FTE)** A student who takes a full time course assignment is a one FTE student. If they enroll part time they receive a proportional FTE. An example is a half time student. This student would be 0.5 FTE.

**Weighted FTE** is used in the funding formula for calculating a district's funding allocation. It is calculated by multiplying the total District student FTE by a program cost factor.

**Program Cost Factor** assures that each program receives an equitable share of funds in relation to its relative cost per student. Some of these costs include: declining enrollment, virtual education, transportation, reading programs, exceptional education and English as a second language.

**Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship** is funded by private corporations that deposit tax money owed to the state directly to a nonprofit (Step Up For Children) that then distributes it to needy applicants to attend a private school.

**504 Plans** are developed by school teams and parents to support the educational needs of a K-12 student with a disability that "substantially limits one or more major life activity" such as: learning, speaking, listening, reading, writing, concentrating, caring for oneself, etc.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)** -Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#). Each IEP must be designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document.

**McKay Scholarship Program** is designed to offer parents of disabled children the opportunity to have their child attend a private school that meets their educational needs. Students with a learning disability must have a 504 plan. Children with physical disabilities must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Both groups must be enrolled the previous year in the public school. Students from military families may also be eligible but may be exempt from the local school enrollment requirement.  
<http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/mckay/>

**Title 1** is a federally funded program designed to help schools that serve low income families with reading and math skills. Schools must have more than 56% of the students eligible for free or reduced price meals. Funds are allocated on a per qualifying child basis. Federal law requires that a district not use Title 1 funds to offset expenses to a Title 1 school that would normally be paid by other sources if Title 1 funds were not available.

**Exceptional Student Education (ESE)** Is designed for children who have special learning needs. They are called exceptional students. Exceptional students include children who are gifted and children who have disabilities. Children who are considered gifted are those children with superior intellectual development and who are capable of high performance. The purpose of exceptional student education is to help each child with an exceptionality to progress in public school and prepare for life after school. ESE services include specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of the exceptional student. There is no charge for these special services.

**Education Management Organizations (EMOs)** are for-profit or non-profit organizations that manage public schools. In contrast to traditional vendors that are contracted to provide specific services (e.g., professional development, payroll, food services) to districts and schools, EMOs are contracted by districts to manage and run individual schools, both traditional as well as charter schools, or clusters of schools. EMOs that manage networks of charter schools are referred to as charter management organizations (CMOs). The parameters of an EMO's management responsibility are spelled out in a performance contract between the district and an EMO.

**Florida State Facilities Requirements** are a comprehensive set of guidelines related to the safety of state owned educational facilities. It includes such items as hurricane safety, asbestos removal etc. Charter schools, except conversion charters, are exempt from these requirements but must meet Florida building and minimum fire safety codes.