

Beware of 'Reaching Out' Efforts

The promotion has begun from Duval County regarding their Virtual program as stated in an article on Jacksonville.com (article link - <http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2010-06-06/story/duval-schools-stand-lose-800-students>). People have already received an automated call listing all the 'wonderful and free benefits' of this program. As you well know the words **free and county** or **free and state** do not go together (EVER!). In this economy, free curriculum is a very enticing offer and many parents may take that offer without having all the information. We need to work together to make sure everyone is informed and therefore making the best decision for their family.

I know for a fact that Duval County assumes that we will all just shift over to their virtual program at the beginning of this school year (I heard those words from a school board employee, while at the home school office in May). They also see no reason why we wouldn't participate. In their minds it is a great program.

The bottom line is money. The county loses money for every student that is registered as a home schooled student, but not with this new virtual program. The main reason is because students in the new virtual program are not considered homeschoolers, but are classified as public school students. When I discussed this difference with one mom earlier in the year her response was, "That is just semantics. I mean we are at home, doing school, there is no difference." Unfortunately, it is not just semantics.....there is a big difference. A huge difference to be exact and one concern is that legislators (and those making the rules) will not see a difference and begin to group us all together.

Brenda and many others have worked very hard to make sure our rights are protected and our resources are plentiful and expanding. We are not bound by curriculum, hours or testing options. We are able to map out a plan for each child, choose the curriculum that best fits each child and work at a pace that is suitable for each child. These freedoms are priceless.....and completely absent from the virtual program.

Please take the time to inform your members of the difference between FLVS and the School District Virtual Programs that are cropping up all over Florida. If you or your members are unsure about the difference then please click on the following link that outlines each program (<http://www.flhef.org/pdf/09virtualschool.pdf>). Brenda Dickinson warned us about this last year at the H.E.R.I. Leadership Conference and she created this chart so that we could sort things out.

Let's work together to educate everyone so that our own freedoms are not at risk. See you at the convention!!

Hillary Berry, H.E.R.I. Chairman