# Frequently Asked Questions
## Media & Legislators

**Q. What is a virtual on-line school?**
A. Virtual schools are available through the Internet and provide students the flexibility of any time, anywhere access to rigorous, personalized education. In the virtual classroom, every student is in the front row, actively engaged with the teacher. Each student is directly accountable for every query, question or exercise.

**Q. What is a charter school?**
A. Charter schools are public schools that operate without many of the regulations that apply to traditional public schools. In exchange for this increased freedom, charter schools agree to greater accountability. The 'charter' that establishes each school is a performance contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure success. Charter schools are accountable to their sponsor, usually a state or local school board, to produce positive academic results and adhere to the charter contract.

**Q. Who Founded the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School in New Hampshire?**
A. The Exeter Region Cooperative School District (SAU 16) initiated the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School as an independent organization. The Academy has its own employees and teaching staff, Board of Trustees, and financial statement.

**Q. When was the Virtual Learning Academy established?**
A. The New Hampshire Board of Education approved the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School in May 2007.

**Q. Can credits earned through Virtual Learning Academy count towards my high school graduation requirements?**
A. Yes, students can earn credit through the Academy to accelerate their graduation date.

**Q. What credentials must Virtual Learning Academy teachers have?**
A. All Virtual Learning Academy teachers will be New Hampshire certified and deemed as highly qualified according to state standards. The Academy's administrators will conduct a specialized, comprehensive hiring process for potential teachers to ensure they are willing to accept and enjoy the unique and demanding challenges of on-line teaching.

**Q. Who will teach the classes?**
A. During the Academy's first year, adjunct teachers will be hired. The Academy's administrators anticipate that traditional classroom teachers will apply for available teaching jobs. After the Academy's first year, all teachers will be provided with a mentor who will provide professional coaching, support and advice.

**Q. Who is the Virtual Learning Academy approved by?**
A. The Academy is approved by the State of New Hampshire and the U.S. Department of Education. The Academy meets the federal requirements of a graduating, high school.

**Q. Why does NH need a virtual on-line high school?**
The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School is the first statewide, on-line high school that is available free of charge to all high school students who live in New Hampshire. Additionally, many NH high

school students cannot take advanced placement or specialized classes because their school district cannot afford the course or there is not enough student interest for a school district to justify funding a course.

Another benefit the Academy offers is the one-to-one communication between the teacher and student, which is vastly different from the teacher-student relationship in the traditional classroom environment. The virtual environment enables the teacher to get to know each student and challenge each person based upon his/her learning style, strengths and weaknesses.

From a broader perspective, the U.S. Department of Education encourages all states to establish and grow virtual schools through its National Educational Technology Plan. Nationwide, 24 states have state-sponsored, on-line education programs and there are more than 500,000 enrollments in online courses throughout the country.

The Academy provides all NH high school students with flexibility, choice, a personalized learning environment, and the opportunity to learn using the latest technology. Most importantly, the Academy provides every NH high school student an equal learning opportunity.

**Q. Who are the Academy's administrators?**
A. For the 2007 – 2008 school year, the Academy's administrators are:

> **Arthur (Skip) Hanson, Ed.D.**
> **Superintendent of Schools, SAU 16***
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> **Steve Kossakoski, Ph.D.**
> **Chief Executive Officer, Virtual Learning Academy**
>
> **Gary M. Tirone, CAGS**
> **Chief Learning Officer, Virtual Learning Academy**

By the beginning of the 2011 – 2012 school year, the Academy's administrative staff will include a director of curriculum, director of professional development, part-time director of student services, part-time CFO and two administrative assistants.

** For the school year 2007 – 2008, the SAU 16 superintendent will assist with the appointment of Trustees and the establishment of policies, budgets, curriculum and additional operational matters. By July 1, 2008, the Academy's CEO will assume the chief leadership role.*

**Q. How is the Virtual Learning Academy funded?**
A. The Virtual Learning Academy is funded through the New Hampshire's Education Trust Fund, which exists to benefit NH's public schools. State law gives the NH Legislature the authority and job to fund the state's charter schools. Current estimates calculate the Academy will receive $3,600 for each full-time student for the 2007 – 2008 school year. The Academy will prorate the tuition for part-time students based upon the full-time tuition rate. This tuition projection is based upon NH state law RSA 194-B:11.

**Q. Do NH students pay to attend the Virtual Learning Academy?**
A. High school students who reside in New Hampshire are eligible to apply and attend the Academy free of charge. The Academy has plans to accept out-of-state, New England high school students; these students will be charged tuition.

**Q. Does funding for the Academy take away from money that supports NH public schools?**
A. No. The state's Adequacy Education Fund and local property taxes fund New Hampshire's public education system. The state manages and distributes monies from these income sources to public school districts.

**Q. How do teachers engage students in the on-line environment?**
A. In the virtual classroom, every student is in the front row, actively engaged with the teacher. Each student is directly accountable for every query, question or exercise. Unlike the traditional classroom where teachers communicate with 25 students at one time, virtual teachers are in constant, one-to-one communication with each student. This environment enables the teacher to become familiar with the student's learning style and skills, and facilitate an effective, challenging learning opportunity for each student.

Technically, teachers communicate with students through the Academy's open source, Web-based course management system. The system enables teachers to upload and share materials, hold online discussions and chats, give quizzes and surveys, and gather and review assignments, and post grades. The system is password protected and meets stringent privacy and security standards to protect users.

**Q. Who can attend the Virtual Learning Academy?**
A. Any high school student who resides in New Hampshire may apply to the Academy. The Academy has plans to accept out-of-state high school students. However, out-of-state students will be charged 125% of the tuition cost.

Part-time students may enroll in the Academy for academic enrichment, accelerate their progress in a traditional high school program or finish uncompleted coursework. Students who intend to graduate from the Academy may pursue full time studies in the Fall 2008 semester.

**Q. Does the Academy have an admission process?**
A. Yes. Every applicant must apply and undergo an admission process because on-line learning is different from the traditional classroom experience. The Academy's students are expected to be self-motivated, possess good communication and writing skills, able to work independently, have good time management skills, and have access to a computer with an Internet connection.

**Q. How does a student apply to the Academy?**
A. Student applications can be accessed through the Academy's web site, www.vlacs.org, or by calling the Academy at **(603) 778-2500.**

**Q. When can I register for classes?**
A. Registration for the Winter 2008 semester begins October 1, 2007.

**Q. When do classes start?**
A. Classes begin January 2008 for part-time students only. Students may begin full-time coursework in September 2008.

**Q. Can students who dropped out of high school earn a high school diploma through the Academy?**
A. Yes, these students are encouraged to apply to the Virtual Learning Academy. The Academy is available 24-7, offers flexible scheduling to complete coursework, and provides one-to-one interaction between the student and teacher, and as such is a viable option for older high school students who wish to earn a high school diploma without returning to the traditional classroom environment.

**Q. How do students register for a class?**
A. Students can register through the Academy's website at www.vlacs.org.

**Q. How many classes can a student take through Virtual Learning Academy?**
A. Full time students take a full course load of 5 credits annually. Part-time students may take 0.5 to 4 credits annually. Most of the Academy's courses are 1-credit classes, however 0.5 credit classes will be offered.

**Q. How do online students socialize with other students?**
A. Online students typically take one or two courses, which blends their learning opportunities with traditional classroom instruction. Full time virtual school students often engage actively with their peers both online and in their communities. Many assignments are project based and require the student to interview community members and report about their observations.

In the on-line environment, the Academy uses a web-based course management system that enables students to easily communicate with each other and/or their teachers. All parties can upload and share materials (text, graphics, audio, or video), hold online discussions and chats, give quizzes and surveys, and gather and review assignments. This is an invaluable experience, which prepares students to adapt to a future academic or career environment in an expanding digital world.

**Q. What kind of courses can I take online?**
A. The Academy will offer college prep, honors and AP courses.
AP courses offerings are:

- AP Calculus AB
- AP Biology
- AP Macroeconomics
- AP Microeconomics

Other course offerings include:

- Computer Programming Basic I
- Spanish I
- Spanish II
- English I/English I Honors
- English II/English II Honors
- English III/English III Honors
- English IV/English IV Honors
- Algebra Ia
- Algebra Ib
- Algebra I/Algebra I Honors
- Geometry/Geometry Honors
- Pre-Calculus
- Personal Fitness
- Biology/Biology Honors
- Earth Science/Earth Science Honors
- Marine Science/Marine Science Honors
- Physics/Physics Honors
- American Government/American Government Honors
- American History/American History Honors
- Economics/Economics Honors
- World History/World History Honors
- SAT Prep

**Q. How does the Academy develop its curriculum?**
A. The Academy purchased most of its curriculum from the Florida Virtual School, a successful virtual school that has been operating since 1997. During the past 10 years, the FVS curriculum and coursework has been evaluated and revised to meet rigorous academic, national and state standards. In addition, FVS's teachers, administrators, students and parents continually evaluate the curriculum and coursework.

**Q. Have more questions?**
A. Students and/or parents who have questions about enrollment, registration, courses can visit the Academy's web site www.vlacs.org or they may call the Academy at **(603) 778-2500.**