

# Southern University Laboratory Virtual School

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Southern University operates a full-time online school serving kindergarten through 12th grade students across the state of Louisiana using Stride Learning Solutions curriculum, teachers, and mentors

As part of the three-campus Southern University System in Louisiana, the Southern University Laboratory Virtual School (SULVS) is a full-time online public school serving kindergarten through twelfth-grade students throughout Louisiana. Families have the unique opportunity to enroll in a virtual school rooted in the rich history of Southern University, with the potential of entering a postsecondary education experience in the university after graduation. The sole requirement for students to attend SULVS is to be a Louisiana resident and have a 2.0 grade point average. Students complete all their learning online, while working closely with their teachers via video conferencing, telephone calls, emails, and texts.

Upon enrollment, SULVS staff meet with families to share the SULVS vision and to discuss student expectations and ensure that students and their families understand what it takes to be successful at SULVS. Nadia Seals, SULVS Director, emphasized, "We have found through experience that it is very important to share our vision, policies, and procedures with our students and families so that everyone is on the same page from the start."

## Staffing and Strong Support Enhance Learning



Single year  
improvement  
in Louisiana  
LEAP 2025  
scores in  
7 of 10  
subject  
areas

SULVS is led by two full-time educators, the Director, and the Academic Advisor/Guidance Counselor. The teaching and mentoring staffs are provided by Stride as part of Stride Learning Solutions' full-time online school program. Stride's core subject teachers are certified in Louisiana.

At the start of each year, Stride teachers set up courses and send introductory communication via emails and phone calls to families and students. Throughout the year they maintain regular contact with students and families to help ensure student success. Teachers update announcements and add resources as necessary to help further student

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## Virtual School

Type of school:

Statewide full-time  
online public school

Grades:

K-12

Program opened:

2012

Students served:

79 high school students

96 middle school students

170 elementary school students

Ethnicity:

55% White

39% Black

3% Hispanic

1% Asian

2% American Indian

Free/Reduced-price lunch:

25%

Staff:

1 SULVS Director

1 SULVS Academic advisor

1 Stride-employed K-5

Teacher Supervisor

1 Stride-employed 6-12

Teacher Supervisor

13 Stride-employed Teachers

2 Stride-employed Mentors  
(6th-12th grade)

Instructional model:

Full-time online  
virtual instruction

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SULVS is a full-time online public school serving K–12 students across the state of Louisiana.

Stride Learning Solutions online course catalog is the basis of the online curriculum. Students and parents can access digital learning 24 hours a day, seven days a week from any place an internet connection is available.

Online courses are taught by Louisiana-certified Stride-employed teachers.

Graduates of SULVS receive their diploma from the Southern University Laboratory School.

Students can enroll in dual enrollment classes at any university in the state of Louisiana.

SULVS values the strong academic reputation of Southern University, and students and their parents are proud to be a part of its community.

SULVS received Stride Learning Solutions' 2019 Transformation Award based on growth and transformation

learning. Teachers grade all course assignments and discussions, providing personalized, targeted feedback and resources to help students master content. After reviewing student data, teachers set up one-on-one and small group sessions to communicate with students to keep them engaged, motivated, and moving forward. When students are not on pace, teachers create a plan to get students back on track. As an added source of support, teachers provide students with drop-in, real-time online sessions where students can ask questions.

In addition to Stride teachers, Stride academic mentors provide an additional layer of support specifically for SULVS 6th through 12th grade students. Stride academic mentors are responsible for contacting students and/or families on a weekly basis, coaching students to be active and responsible learners, acting as liaison between students and teachers, and documenting students' needs and communicating them to all stakeholders. Stride academic mentors also provide an additional tier of accountability for students, who can easily get lost, especially in an online learning environment.

At the elementary level, students do not have mentors. Instead, Stride teachers stay closely connected with students to keep track of their learning. To help coordinate teaching and support activities at SULVS, there are two Stride-employed Supervisor Teachers, one for the grades K–5 teachers and another for the grades 6–12 teachers.

To ensure regular staff communication, biweekly instructional meetings are held between the Stride instructional team and SULVS staff to discuss concerns teachers and academic mentors may have about students who need additional support and how to best address those issues. This meeting also addresses updates to the school's calendar, and any system, policy, or procedural changes. A second biweekly meeting is also held focused on planning for state testing as well as providing an opportunity for the SULVS team to offer feedback and requests to Stride for future changes and enhancements. Seals shared, "We enjoy a constant conversation with Stride, which is so helpful as we continue to grow."

## Self-Paced Online Curriculum is the Backbone of Student Learning

SULVS online students are located throughout Louisiana and access courses using their own devices. Students usually engage in each of their courses daily and can access their lessons in any order at any time. There is no requirement to attend a physical school building, but students must take high-stakes state tests at pre-determined, proctored testing sites.

State certified teachers employed by Stride are the facilitating teachers for all online courses. SULVS uses Stride Learning Solutions individualized curriculum aligned to state standards. Students and teachers meet daily on a pre-determined schedule for live virtual video sessions for each of

their classes using Stride's Class Connect. Class Connect sessions are also used to help prepare students for Louisiana state tests, providing an additional layer of focused support for students and their families.

A Stride Gap Assessment provides regular feedback showing where students are academically, including valuable data for teachers to help understand student needs throughout the school year. Data from the Louisiana state tests are used to examine growth from year to year.

SULVS offers dual enrollment courses at any university in Louisiana. Seals expressed, "We've had students attend Delgado Community College in New Orleans, University of Louisiana in Monroe, the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, and more. Our students are spread all across the state, so we work with them to find dual enrollment opportunities close to home." SULVS strives to expose all of its students to postsecondary education in as many ways as possible. To that end, SULVS schedules state testing sites on college campuses whenever possible which helps students feel more comfortable in postsecondary environments.

SULVS has recently added Advanced Placement courses to its offerings. Next year, the school plans to add honors courses. Seals emphasized that she and her team try to add at least one new offering each year for students. These additional options add rigor to the program and help students excel.

## Success is Measured in Multiple Ways

Seals shared that she receives frequent positive feedback from families. One parent, for example, talked about how grateful she was for SULVS and how the school's flexibility met her family's needs:

My daughter enrolled at Southern University Lab Virtual School in the fall of 2018 because the school she previously attended was no longer willing to partner with the performing arts school she was also attending. Enrolling in SULVS was easy, seamless, and smooth. I especially appreciated the pacing schedule for each course which provided an aerial view of the material that would be covered each semester and a timeline for completion. The pacing schedule made it easy for my daughter to work at her own speed. Because of the schedule flexibility SULVS provided, she was able to practice her instrument, travel, and attend rehearsals and performances, all while being a full-time SULVS student. Teachers are accommodating, knowledgeable, and helpful. The administration and faculty are easily accessible. Anytime my daughter has questions or needs clarity, she emails her teachers, and they promptly respond. Southern University Lab Virtual School was the perfect fit for our family.

From school year 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 SULVS students improved their scores on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program 2025 (LEAP 2025) assessment in seven out of ten subject areas. LEAP 2025 math and science scores, ACT scores, and graduation rates have all consistently seen year-to-year increases in recent years.

Nadia Seals' vision for SULVS is to continuously expand offerings to meet the needs of as many children as possible in Louisiana as well as provide social, emotional, and mental support. SULVS strives to create opportunities for students to engage in new experiences and broaden their horizons. As Seals shared, "I think we're a hidden gem here in Louisiana. In everything we do we make sure we keep our students in mind and work to help them progress in every way possible."

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– Nadia Seals,  
SULVS Director