

DYS Partners with Virtual Arkansas to Improve Education

Virtual Arkansas is an Arkansas-based program offering digital courses to public school students using licensed teachers. It was created through a partnership between the Department of Education and Arkansas education services cooperatives.

Why the change to Virtual Arkansas?

When the Division of Youth Services (DYS) took over seven of the state's secure residential facilities in January 2017, it began reviewing all aspects of the facilities with the goal of identifying ways to provide consistency across facilities and improve core services, including education. DYS found:

- * Teachers teach several subjects & multiple grades at once,
- * Remediation education is not consistently used by all facilities,
- * It is difficult to hire teachers due to the rural or remote location of DYS facilities, and
- * As a result, DYS anticipates 15 teacher vacancies next school year across the seven facilities.

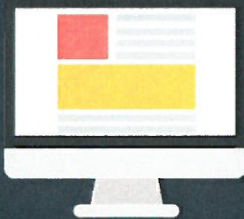


Benefits of Virtual Arkansas

The DYS school year will start Aug. 15. Licensed Arkansas teachers will provide digital coursework for teens at the seven DYS facilities (this does not include the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center) and will be supported by DYS educational coaches in the classroom, special education and vocational teachers on site as well as DYS central office educational staff.

The benefits of Virtual Arkansas include:

- * Consistent, high-quality educational curriculum that is standard across all seven facilities, so no matter where a teen goes, he or she can pick up with his or her education at the same place.
- * Students can access concurrent credit for high school and college courses, advance placement classes and coding classes on a limited basis. None of these are offered today.
- * The DYS school system will be integrated with traditional school systems for the first time, allowing youth to more easily transition back to school upon release.
- * The cost of the Virtual Arkansas is comparable to current spending.



Virtual Arkansas and Arkansas Division of Youth Services Frequently Asked Questions July 2017

What is on online learning?

According to the International Association of K-12 Blended and Online Learning, “online education is one of the fastest growing phenomena in K-12 education in the United States today. Over half of states currently have some form of state-run virtual school, with additional state programs in the planning stage.” Virtual Arkansas is nationally classified as a “state virtual school.” According to the *Keeping Pace with Online Learning Report* of 2015.

Why is Arkansas Division of Youth Services moving to an online blended learning model?

When the Division of Youth Services (DYS) took over seven of the State’s secure residential facilities in January 2017, it began reviewing all aspects of the facilities with the goal of identifying ways to provide consistency across facilities and improve core services, including education. DYS found:

- Teachers teach several subjects and multiple grades at once.
- It is difficult to hire teachers due to the rural or remote location of DYS facilities.
- DYS anticipate 15 teacher vacancies next school year across the seven facilities.
- A lack of high-quality educational curriculum consistent across all seven facilities.

Who is Virtual Arkansas?

Virtual Arkansas is a state virtual school that partners with public school districts to provide course opportunities to students that they are not able to offer with local resources. Virtual Arkansas provides highly-qualified Arkansas licensed instructors that deliver core, concurrent credit, career and technical, ACT Preparation, global languages, computer science, and elective courses to Arkansas public school students. The program is implemented through a partnership between the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Education Service Cooperatives.

How are the courses delivered?

Virtual Arkansas courses have two primary means of delivery. Course content is accessed by students online (asynchronous) and through online face to face interaction (synchronous) with an Arkansas certified and highly qualified instructor. This type of delivery which allows for online course content access and teacher/student face to face interaction is considered blended learning. Virtual Arkansas students access their course content online through a learning management system (LMS). Virtual Arkansas currently utilizes two learning management systems, Moodle and Blackboard. Students interact with each instructor in real-time through a videoconferencing program. The videoconferencing platform that Virtual Arkansas utilizes is called Zoom, which provides a safe and secure method for the students and teacher to communicate, interact, and enhance learning. Each week, students meet with their instructor and classmates in a live,

interactive learning session in the instructor's private Zoom Room. The other three days, students are working online in the learning management system with access to the instructor.

Who are the Virtual Arkansas instructors/teachers?

Virtual Arkansas had 72 Arkansas licensed and highly qualified teachers on October 2, 2015. Fifty, or 76 percent of the Virtual Arkansas teachers have earned a Master's degree and three have earned a doctorate. The mean years of experience teaching is 10 years. Twenty-seven (27) percent of our teachers have between 6 to 10 years of experience teaching, and twenty-three (23) percent have between 1 to 5 years of experience. This includes both traditional classroom and online teaching experience.

Virtual Arkansas instructors participate in the state-required professional development at the local Arkansas Education Service Cooperatives. They are also required to complete additional hours in the specialty area of online and blended learning course design and delivery. Every instructor completes Leading Edge Blended and Online Teacher Certification during their first year of teaching for Virtual Arkansas. This certification is followed up by other specialized professional development such as Online Course Design, Copyright and Accessibility, Strategies for Building Relationships from a Distance, and others.

How are students prepared for online learning?

Before students begin their academic coursework, all Virtual Arkansas students must complete two Gateway modules: Gateway I: Digital Learning, and Gateway II: Course Orientation. Gateway I: Digital Learning leads students through a series of lessons about the fundamentals of digital learning, internet safety, email etiquette and safety, and working with documents and images. While students are accustomed to using technology for entertainment, they must also learn to utilize it for academic purposes. The skills covered in Gateway I: Digital Learning are necessary not only to highlight the technology skills to help students be successful online learners, but to prepare students to be productive 21st century learners. Gateway II: Course Orientation gives them information specific to their actual course. Each course has a customized Gateway II: Course Orientation, which includes LMS specific navigation information (getting around in Moodle or in Blackboard). This section also includes information from the teacher about web conferencing and any special requirements for the course that are unique to that course. This is also the section where the student begins building a relationship with the instructor and meets them via ZOOM.

How will the DYS\VA education system work in the facilities?

The class size in the classrooms in each facility will be limited to 10 students. There will be eight Virtual Arkansas teachers hired to teach in the four core areas for seventh through twelfth grade and these teachers will be assigned to teach only the DYS students. Due to the caseload for VA teachers, the teachers will be able to provide more assistance as needed for the students. There will be onsite facilitators (coaches) in the local classroom with the students to coach, assist, communicate, and proctor testing.

The Virtual Arkansas teachers will visit the facilities throughout the state which will provide an opportunity for teachers to interact with students and further develop positive relationships with the students and local school personnel. Virtual Arkansas administration and/or teachers also

utilize site visits to problem solve, address concerns, and coordinate online learning to provide a better learning experience for students.

Each facility will have a special education teacher and vocational teacher. The students will take the four core classes and a vocational class. In addition the students will have an opportunity take a class for credit recovery and/or a remediation class as needed.

What are the opportunities of the current DYS education staff?

There will be two opportunities for the current education staff to continue working within the education system. Teachers will have an opportunity to apply as an online teacher or become an educational coach. These opportunities will be available immediately to maintain as many staff as possible.

When will this program start?

August 15, 2017

If you have any questions or would like more information/demonstration, please contact:

<http://virtualarkansas.org/>

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Virtual Arkansas

Your State Virtual School

According to the International Association of K-12 Blended and Online Learning, “online education is one of the fastest growing phenomena in K-12 education in the United States today. Over half of states currently have some form of state-run virtual school, with additional state programs in the planning stage.” Virtual Arkansas is nationally classified as a “state virtual school.” According to the Keeping Pace with Online Learning Report of 2015,

a state virtual school is defined as an intermediate supplier organization that delivers online courses, instruction, and other online learning services to schools and districts across the state in which they operate. State virtual schools are usually created by legislation or by a state-level agency, employs staff, and receives state appropriation of grant funding for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities to students across the state. They may also charge course fees to help cover costs.

Who Are We? Virtual Arkansas is a state virtual school that partners with public school districts to provide course opportunities to students that cannot be offered with local resources. We are not an online high school or a diploma-granting institution, but are a resource for supplementing education for public school students. The program is implemented through a partnership between the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Education Service Cooperatives.

Why Are we Here? According to Act 2325 of 2005, distance learning opportunities were employed

- To help alleviate the teacher shortage
- To provide additional course-scheduling opportunities for students
- To provide an opportunity to access an enriched curriculum
- To develop and make available online professional development

How Are Our Courses Delivered? Virtual Arkansas courses have two primary means of delivery. Course content is accessed by students online (asynchronous) and through online face to face interaction (synchronous) with an Arkansas certified teacher. This type of delivery allows for online course content access and teacher/student face-to-face interaction and is referred to as blended learning. Virtual Arkansas students access their online course content through a learning management system (LMS), either *Moodle* or *Blackboard*. Students interact with each teacher in real-time through the Zoom a videoconferencing platform and provides a safe and secure method for the students and teacher to communicate, interact, and enhance learning.

What Courses Do We Offer? Virtual Arkansas specializes in core courses to assist with teacher shortage, college and career courses to assist with enriched curriculum needs, and any course schools or the State needs. The table below contains the Core courses DYS students may be enrolled in through the partnership.

Core Courses



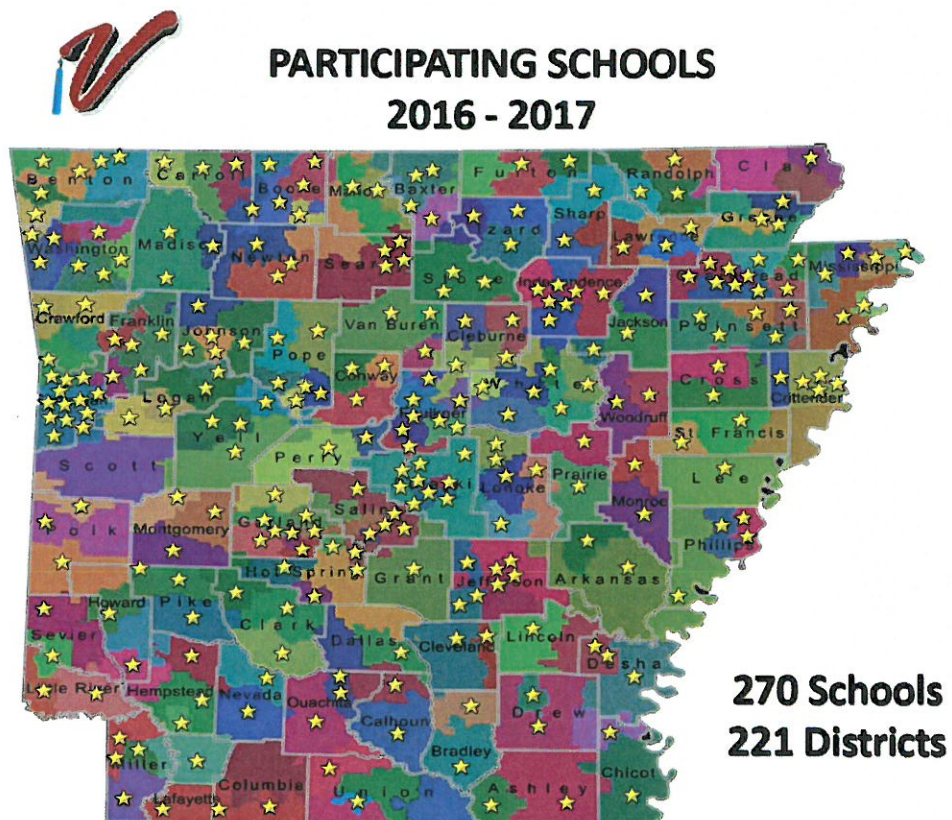
ACT Preparation	CS Information Security Level I and II
ADE Enhanced AP U.S. Government and Politics	Economics
Advanced Topics and Modeling in Mathematics	English 7 - 12
Algebra I and II	Environmental Science
American Sign Language I and II	French I and II
Anatomy/Physiology	Geometry
AP Calculus AB	Geography Grade 7
AP Computer Science A	German I and II
AP Computer Science Principles	Health and Wellness
AP English Language and Composition	History Grade 8
AP English Literature and Composition	Journalism I
AP Enhanced US Government and Politics	Mathematics Grade 7 and 8
AP Environmental Science	Oral Communication
AP United States History	Physical Science
AP World History	Physics
Arkansas History 7-8	Psychology
Art Appreciation and American Identity	Science Grade 7 and 8
Art I	Sociology
Art + Process: Creating a Body of Work	Spanish I, II, and III
Biology	U. S. History since 1890
Chemistry	Visual Art K-8
Civics	Visual Arts Appreciation
CS Coding Level I and II	World Geography
	World History since 1450

How do we personalize time with students? Virtual Arkansas periodically conducts site visits to local schools throughout Arkansas. Site visits provide an additional opportunity for teachers to interact with students and further develop positive relationships with these students and local school personnel. Virtual Arkansas administration and/or teachers also utilize site visits to problem solve, address concerns, and coordinate online learning with local schools to provide a better learning experience for students. Teachers also attend school events like ball games, plays, assemblies, and award ceremonies.

Who Are Our Partner Schools and How Do We Assist Them? School districts "Power Up with Virtual Arkansas" for a variety of reasons. A district may face a teacher shortage, want to provide additional course scheduling opportunities to their students, offer their students access to a digitally enriched curriculum, reach special populations,

or to broaden their course offerings beyond those mandated by the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools. Finally, districts that partner with Virtual Arkansas will be satisfying the requirements of Act 1280, the Digital Learning Act.

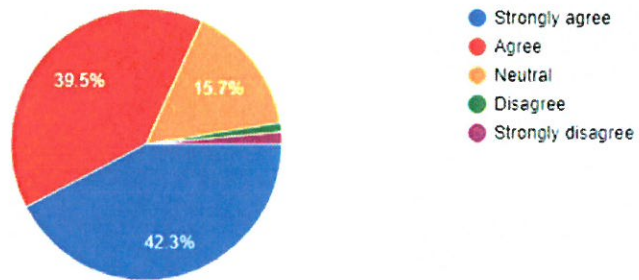
The map below reflects schools with students enrolled in courses for the 2016 - 2017 school year.



What feedback do we have to show end-user perceptions of digital learning?

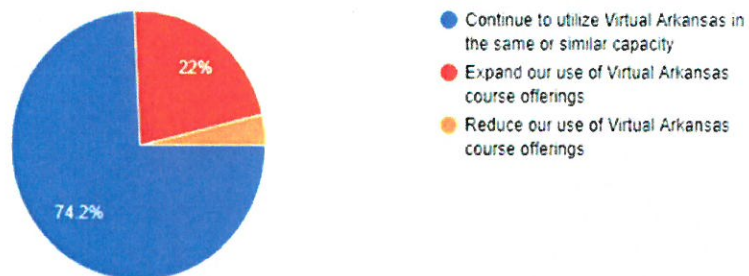
My teacher expects me to do my best.

9,069 responses



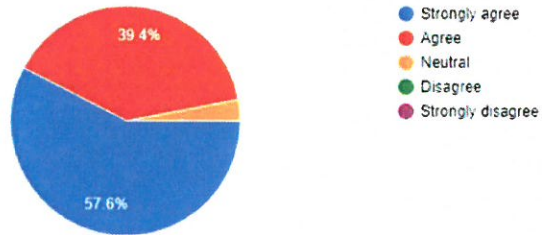
We plan to:

132 responses



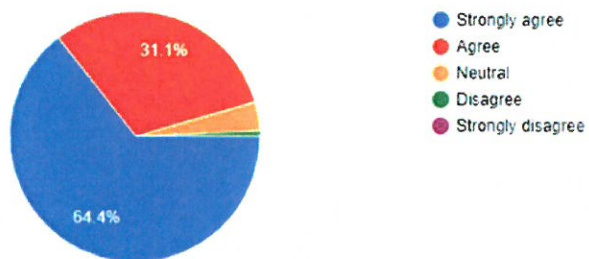
Virtual Arkansas responds to my questions or concerns in a timely manner

132 responses



Virtual Arkansas helps our school provide flexibility in scheduling

132 responses



I believe the Virtual Arkansas courses are challenging to my students

132 responses

