



VIRTUAL ARKANSAS

Equip. Engage. Empower.

Virtual Arkansas is a supplemental State Virtual School (SVS) that partners with the Arkansas Department of Education, the local Education Service Cooperatives, and local Arkansas schools to provide online courses, resources, and services to Arkansas schools, teachers, and students who might not otherwise have access to these resources and opportunities. Virtual Arkansas is not an online junior high or high school or a diploma-granting institution, but a resource for supplementing education for students through their local school.

Virtual Arkansas provides two primary services to schools and students throughout the state:

1. Content + Teacher: Local schools utilize the Virtual Arkansas teacher AND the content provided through Virtual Arkansas
2. Content: Local schools utilize the courses and content available through Virtual Arkansas but use their own local teacher

Major Goals of Virtual Arkansas

- Help alleviate the teacher shortage
- Provide wide range of courses for Arkansas students
- Ensure educational options for economically disadvantaged students
- Ensure educational options for smaller and rural schools
- Provide educational options for students with scheduling conflicts
- Increase the number of students completing career focus programs of study

The goals above assist in helping address equity concerns by providing affordable educational access and educational opportunity to schools and students who might not otherwise be presented with these opportunities.

Recognitions

Virtual Arkansas was recognized with two national awards during the 2020-2021 school year:

1. Quality Matters Outstanding Impact by a K-12 Organization or Individual
2. State Educational Technology Directors Association State Achievement Award for Digital Learning

The Pandemic

Virtual Arkansas is uniquely positioned to respond to local needs on short notice. One of our functions is to act as a rapid response team when emergencies arise throughout the state. For example, if a school loses a teacher due to resignation, illness, death, or by some other means and cannot find a local replacement, Virtual Arkansas can assist by placing students for the remainder of the term until a local teacher is hired.

Assisting Arkansas Schools During the Pandemic

1. Spring 2020: Provided access to Virtual Arkansas (VA) courses, content, and Learning Management System through the end of the semester at no fee (over 12,000 enrollments)
2. Spring 2020: Supported AMI efforts of the state by converting VA content to AMI lessons (over 85,000 views during that time)
3. Spring 2020: Opened up our course design and development training courses to teachers throughout



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Arkansas (trained over 300 teachers)

4. 2020-2021: Provided a new service to make available VA courses which allowed for more local control over the content and the Learning Management System (over 112,000 enrollments)
5. 2020-2021: Provided assistance and support to local schools utilizing blended learning and online learning methods
6. 2020-2021: Partnered with DCTE to design and develop 40 high needs CTE courses to be used by teachers across Arkansas. An additional 40 CTE blended learning courses will be developed this year

100% Virtual

The pandemic left local school leaders with a huge decision: how do we provide a 100% virtual learning option for our students? The answer to this question would have significant impacts on the path forward. Larger and more affluent districts had a better opportunity to stand up their own programs, while smaller, rural, and higher poverty districts lacked the capacity to have their own program. Virtual Arkansas was well positioned to provide the services and support needed for these schools.

- Virtual Arkansas currently has 967 100% virtual students in grades 7-12 from 120 districts
- Average number of students from each district: 8

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous

- Virtual Arkansas' instructional model includes both synchronous and asynchronous components
- Students engage in the online course throughout the week
- Courses include readings, videos, activities, assignments, and assessments
- The synchronous component includes two scheduled Zoom sessions per week
- Students can request to meet with their teachers 1 on 1 in Zoom
- Teachers can request to meet with students individually or in small groups as an intervention

Facilitator Support

- Each local school designates one or more facilitators to be the local eyes and ears
- Facilitators engage in required annual Virtual Arkansas training
- Virtual Arkansas employs a Facilitator Coordinator who serves as the facilitator point of contact
- The VA Facilitator Coordinator provides point-in-time training as needed and communicates updates and important information on a regular basis

Virtual Arkansas Teachers

- Virtual Arkansas teachers are Arkansas certified in their respective disciplines and meet all teaching requirements
- Average VA teacher experience = 13 years overall, 8 years online
- 77.6% of VA teachers have a masters degree or above
- Virtual Arkansas teachers are highly trained in effective online teaching and learning methods
- Average teacher load = 205

Technology Support



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- Virtual Arkansas maintains a technology help desk with a support ticketing system
- VA employs three technology support personnel
- The technology support team also monitors a daily Zoom digital help room that is open 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. to students, teachers, and local school personnel

Parent Support

- Parents have the ability to track student progress through the Canvas app
- Virtual Arkansas offers parent webinars - to date, 855 parents have signed up or attended
- VA has a dedicated parent liaison and provides quarterly parent newsletters
- Parents are provided the Virtual Arkansas *Parent Guide to Online Learning*
- Parents have access to the technology support desk
- Parents have access to their child's teacher via phone, email, and/or Zoom
- Teachers deliver weekly grade updates to parents via email

VIRTUAL ARKANSAS BY THE NUMBERS

2020-2021

