

Participating School Handbook

2016 - 2017



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Welcome

The administrators and teachers of Virtual Arkansas are honored to welcome you to the 2016-2017 school year. Virtual Arkansas is committed to developing the full potential of Arkansas students by providing access to quality digital/online courses that incorporate blended, interactive teaching, to prepare students to be successful in their college and career educational pursuits and in the global economy. We will provide a rigorous, standards- based curriculum taught by highly qualified Arkansas teachers. Maintaining the academic integrity of the educational process through digital learning is a priority of the Virtual Arkansas team.

The Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus may have different policies for certain areas due to the requirements of the partnering universities.

Students will participate in at least two blended, interactive/live periods per week. Important information concerning academics, upcoming events, and general updates will be disseminated to you by the Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner's Memos, and electronic and personal communication from Virtual Arkansas.

We appreciate your school's participation and know that our partnership will be successful. These coordinated policies and assurances are designed to ensure each student's success in our course opportunities. We thank you in advance for partnering with Virtual Arkansas.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic Dishonesty in regard to student work is an ever-increasing problem in the age of technology. Institutions all over the globe, are implementing policies and strategies to ensure that students do their own work and give credit to the originator of the ideas, when using the thoughts or work of others. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, stealing academic property, and cheating. Students identified as being in violation of an Academic Dishonesty Policy may not receive credit for that work and may suffer additional penalties based on local school policy. Depending on the severity of the Academic Dishonesty, as determined by the campus director and teacher, a student may receive a zero (0) for the assignment.

The Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus may impose the following actions in situations involving cheating or plagiarism.

- 1. The student may receive a lower grade, with the possibility of revision,
- 2. The student may receive a grade of zero for the test or assignment,
- 3. The student may be awarded a failing grade for the course, or
- 4. The student may be withdrawn from the course.
- 5. In the online environment, students assume more responsibility for keeping up with the course requirements. It is critical that students access and interact with the online content on a daily basis and to participate in the scheduled blended, interactive periods. If a student is absent from a digital learning class, the student is responsible for making up the missed assignments.

Attendance

In the online environment, students assume more responsibility for keeping up with the course requirements. It is critical that students access and interact with the online content on a daily basis and participate in the scheduled blended, interactive sessions. Virtual Arkansas teachers will schedule the blended, interactive face-to-face days periods.

When students put-off accessing the course content, they soon discover that they are behind and then may not be able to satisfy the course requirements to pass a class. There will be times when students have to miss



class for locally scheduled activities. If a school has scheduled an event that will interfere with a Virtual Arkansas course, please reinforce with the students the need to access the course content so they do not fall behind. Students absent from Virtual Arkansas classes are responsible for making up the missed assignments. Facilitators will not be responsible for taking attendance and reporting it to the Virtual Arkansas teacher, but they may need to provide this information to the appropriate individual at their schools. Attendance or time spent in the class are automatically logged within the Learning Management System (LMS) and as teachers monitor student progress, if a student is not accessing the course content on a consistent basis, the school will be notified by the teacher.

Attendance for the Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus is specialized due to preparation for post-secondary involvement. Students are to communicate in advance with the teacher regarding absences and making up assignments/tests except in emergency situations. They must adhere to the specific guidelines given in each teacher's course syllabus.

Advanced Placement classes do not end until the Advanced Placement exam is given. In the event of absences due to extenuating circumstances (illness, medical emergency, etc.), the Virtual Arkansas campus will work on a case-by-case basis with the local administration to devise a plan for the student.

Blended Interactive Periods

These interactive periods are scheduled to permit the greatest number of students to participate in real-time interaction with the teacher. Virtual Arkansas teachers **will** conduct a minimum of two scheduled interactive days per week with their students. The scheduled interactive periods provide students the opportunity to receive clarification on instructions, content, and to connect with their teachers.

It is highly recommended that schools make the face-to-face days available to the students. The teachers will have Zoom meetings available on those non-scheduled days to permit students and facilitators to contact them, if needed. Students need a webcam and a headset with a microphone to participate.

Classroom Discipline

Classroom discipline will be in accordance with the policies of the local school district. Each teacher may establish his/her own class rules and procedures as long as they do not conflict with local school policy. In the event of serious student discipline issues, the name of the student and the specifics of the problem could be reported to the local principal. If action is merited, the procedure below may be followed.

- 1st offense Facilitator will complete a local school Discipline Report and turn this into the principal.
- 2nd offense Facilitator will complete a local school Discipline Report and turn this into the principal. The local school principal should contact the parent and inform the parent of the issue.
- 3rd offense Student will be disciplined according to local school policy.
- 4th offense Student may be officially dropped from the class. If this occurs, the student may not receive credit for the digital learning course.

*Please be aware that some actions may result in immediate removal from class, regardless of whether it is the first, second or third offense. If a student is removed from class, he/she may be issued a W, F, or not receive a grade.

Classroom Environment

Schools are responsible for ensuring the distance learning classroom is equipped based on the Virtual Arkansas technology specifications. The goal is to provide a classroom that supports a healthy and optimal learning experience for students enrolled in Virtual Arkansas courses. Facilitators will receive training on classroom environment during the state provided training. Local administration is encouraged to support the facilitator's efforts to design a safe, clean classroom that is conducive to learning.



Students must have the following to participate in Virtual Arkansas classes.

- A district assigned email address. If a student does not have a district assigned email address, the email address of the Super User or Registrar will be used for the student.
- A computer capable of supporting Java and Flash applications. Chromebooks will not work for the Teacher-Led, Teacher-Facilitated, or Flex-Paced courses.
- A webcam
- A headset with a microphone
- Access to whitelisted web 2.0 tools and sites

Classroom Facilitation

An effective facilitator is the key to a successful digital learning classroom. According to the Arkansas Department of Education's Rules Governing Digital Learning (Section 4.05), "All digital learning courses shall have an adult facilitator to supervise any instructional activity where students meet as a group. Each participating school must provide an adult supervisor in the digital learning classroom at all times when students are present." Research shows that training and access to effective communication tools are keys to a successful digital learning experience for all stakeholders. The school should ensure that the facilitator completes training provided by Virtual Arkansas. Upon completion of the required training, facilitators will be issued a certificate for documentation. If your facilitator has six periods to facilitate a day, it is also recommended that a planning period be provided to prepare documents, print instructional materials, and access lesson plans. Facilitators should have a personal computer in the digital learning classroom for instant communication with the teacher and to monitor student progress in classes.

Communication

Communication between local school personnel and the Virtual Arkansas administrators/ teacher is important to the overall success of the digital learning program. Each participating school should designate a Super User and Registrar who will be responsible for transmitting student records, handling communication issues, student enrollment, update the school administrator contact information, etc. This should be done prior to the first day of class.

Computer Usage

The school district's computer usage policy will be enforced in the Virtual Arkansas classroom. In regard to digital learning applications, unacceptable usage includes, but is not limited to, using inappropriate language, cyber bullying, logging in using another student's username and password, and trespassing in the files of others. These actions may result in the loss of access to these applications and websites. Any communication or content is subject to access and review by local school and Virtual Arkansas personnel at any time.

Concurrent Credit – Institutional Conflict

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) Coordinating Board policy regarding off campus instruction provides a process by which ADHE will resolve any conflict between institutions related to the service area. Please contact the Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit program supervisor for details regarding this policy.

Drop/Add Procedures - Virtual Arkansas Core and CTE Students

All drops/adds in Virtual Arkansas classes are done using the registration system.

As a courtesy to other schools, if you know a student will not be in a course at the beginning of the semester, please drop the student so that a student on the Waiting List may be enrolled in the course.

For course requests submitted after June 1st, Virtual Arkansas cannot guarantee the enrollment of the students in the requested courses. If a student is not enrolled in a requested class by the tenth (10th) day of instruction,



the school should place the student in another course locally or contact Virtual Arkansas to determine if there are openings in other courses that the student may be enrolled in for the semester.

General Drop Policy - Virtual Arkansas teachers will do everything possible to help students succeed in coursework, but there may be situations when a school should consider dropping students who are enrolled in Virtual Arkansas Core and CTE classes. These situations are usually failure to complete work, discipline, or an academic dishonesty violation. To be successful, students should not procrastinate in completing coursework, but do it on a timely basis. These policies are intended to minimize the adverse effects on students when they are not progressing in the course.

- Schools may drop a student through the Virtual Arkansas registration system.
- Schools should consider dropping students who have not logged in to begin working within the first 10 school days after enrollment, or the instructional start date.

Drop/Add Procedure - Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit Students

Please contact the Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit office for information on the <u>university deadlines to add/drop students to a concurrent credit classes</u>. Participating school principals and counselors will be contacted by a Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit administrator when a student is at risk of failing a class prior to the drop deadline established by the partnering universities. The drop dates for each university will posted on the Virtual Arkansas website in the Concurrent Credit section.

Students should be prepared for the academic rigor of concurrent credit courses. Local school personnel should counsel any student with a C, D or F, prior to the official "drop date" of the participating post-secondary partner.

- The partnering universities have different deadlines to drop a course.
- Before withdrawing/dropping a course, a student should consider the impact on future financial aid.
- College hours attempted in high school under pre-freshman status count toward the maximum number of hours a student is allowed to attempt under federal and state grant programs.
- Students should use good judgment and consult the post-secondary institution they currently attend, as well as the post-secondary institution they plan to attend after high school graduation, for advice before withdrawing.
- If it is determined that withdrawal is the best option, the student must be dropped from the course in the Virtual Arkansas registration system. The school administrator must also follow the university's procedure for withdrawing. Students are responsible for the partnering university course drop fees and withdrawal from the institution, if applicable. Failure to pay these fees may prevent a student from receiving an official college transcript.

Educational Materials

Participating schools should ensure each student has the <u>required text and ancillary materials</u> (calculators, dictionaries, etc.) necessary for the Virtual Arkansas classes by the first day of class. Schools may have the option to lease/purchase the electronic version of a textbook. If an e-book is used, please ensure that students have access outside the academic day to the resource. If after-hours access is not possible, schools may elect to provide students with paper textbooks. For those students who do not have internet connectivity at home, facilitators may be able to print the current text material for those students. As always, please be aware of the copyright restrictions imposed by the publisher of the e-book. In addition to the required text and ancillary materials, schools will need to ensure that access to course **Whitelist** of online resources has been opened in the school's network filter.

Enrollment

Unlike planning and scheduling for one school, the Virtual Arkansas is faced with the task of coordinating the



scheduling and delivery of instruction to over 200 Arkansas high schools. If issues arise enrolling students in classes, please be patient with us as we work to serve our students in the most efficient and effective manner possible. To schedule teachers efficiently, we ask schools to be diligent in registering and maintaining their student enrollments in the Virtual Arkansas registration system. **As your needs change**, please update the information in the Virtual Arkansas registration system as soon as possible so that students on the Waiting List may be enrolled.

Enrollment Status

Student enrollment is not guaranteed until the district confirms acceptance of the electronic Memorandum of Understanding and provides the required student information (IEP, 504 Modifications) to complete the enrollment.

Each participating district must also assure Virtual Arkansas that each student enrolled in a Virtual Arkansas course has an Audio Visual Release/Memorandum of Understanding form, with a parent or guardian signature, on file with the district.

Extensions

There will be situations when a student, school, or parent requests an extension. Virtual Arkansas instructors are to follow the following procedures if this form of request arises:

- 1. VA instructor will inform student and facilitator that he/she must receive, via email, approval for any extension requests from a local administrator (the email shall include the student's name, a statement of approval, and the approved extension final date or window.)
- 2. Upon receipt of the approval, instructor will email student and facilitator confirming the approval and the approved extension deadline. The Director of Academics or designee will be copied on this email.

Fee Structure

Arkansas public school districts will pay a \$2,500 yearly membership fee. This provides districts the option to select from the Services offered through Virtual Arkansas. The Services included Teacher-Led (TL), Teacher-Facilitated (TF), Flex-Paced (FP), Content-Only (CO), and Home-Grown (HG). In the CO environment, the district provides the teacher and Virtual Arkansas provides the content, LMS, training, and support for the local teachers and students.

The additional cost for the Teacher-Led, Teacher-Facilitated, and Flex-Paced courses is \$25 per student, per course, per semester. The additional cost for a Content-Only course is \$15 per student, per course, per semester. The additional costs associated with the Home-Grown service will vary based on the complexity of the development and implementation. For more information on the Home-Grown service, please contact at Ms. Cathi Swan.

Districts may also partner with Virtual Arkansas to house local teacher content on our LMS. In addition to the \$2,500 district membership fee, the additional cost is \$15 per student, per course, per semester.

Districts that elect not to pay the \$2,500 yearly membership fee to access the full benefits of membership, will be assessed a cost per student of \$300 per student, per course, per semester for the enrollments in any Service.

Districts will be invoiced the membership fee and the individual student fee for students enrolled on October 1 for the fall semester. Spring semester enrollments will be recorded at the conclusion of the fourth (4th) week of instruction and districts will be invoiced for these active enrollments.



Grade Challenge Procedures

Challenges to an earned grade for an assignment or assessment need to be submitted to the teacher within the semester the grade is being challenged. If the challenge is for the grade received on the semester exam, students have ten (10) days from the end of the semester to submit a challenge for a grade received for the semester exam or the course.

Grade Reporting

Virtual Arkansas teachers will provide numerical grades based on a range from zero to one hundred in four nine week periods based on the Virtual Arkansas academic calendar. Semester averages will be calculated using the 40 - 40 - 20 formula.

Grade Reporting - Concurrent Credit Students

The Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus operates on semester calendars. College grades earned through the Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus are part of a student's permanent college transcript. The grade can affect grade point averages. The effect of pre-freshman status grades varies from one post-secondary institution to another. If a student is concerned about his/her grade assignment, the student is encouraged to check with the post-secondary institution he/she plans to attend after high school graduation for advice.

Grievance Procedure

Most issues or questions can and should be resolved at the lowest level. Your first point of contact for classroom issues is the teacher.

There may be a time when you or someone from your school will need assistance beyond the teacher. Below you will find the steps to take when you need further assistance beyond the teacher:

Contact the Virtual Arkansas instructor to seek a resolution

If you need further assistance, contact the applicable Virtual Arkansas campus supervisor to seek a resolution

CTE Campus: Contact James Malcom, CTE Campus Supervisor

Phone: 870-260-6046

Email: james.malcom@virtualarkansas.org

Core Campus: Contact John Ashworth

Phone: 501-477-2781

Email: john.ashworth@virtualarkansas.org

Concurrent Credit Campus: Contact Ellora Hicks, Concurrent Credit Campus Supervisor

Phone: 870-224-3299

Email: ellora.hicks@virtualarkansas.org

If a resolution cannot be found, contact the Virtual Arkansas Director of Academics for a resolution

Virtual Arkansas Director of Academics: John Ashworth

Phone: 501-477-2781

Email: john.ashworth@virtualarkansas.org

Inclement Weather

Due to the number of districts served, if a district is closed due to inclement weather, it may not be possible for Virtual Arkansas teachers to be present during all make-up days for a district. Virtual Arkansas will respect each local school district policy regarding inclement weather and make lesson plans and content available to



the students and facilitators as needed. If the Virtual Arkansas teachers are not online due to connectivity issues, students and facilitators should, if possible, access the course content within the LMS, and complete the required assignments.

Maintaining Records

Section 7.05.1 of the Arkansas Department of Education Rules and Regulations Governing Digital Learning requires that "Documentation of student achievement assessments shall be maintained and shall be available for review at the receiving school for a minimum of five (5) years after the final grade for the student has been issued. Documentation shall include the assessment questions, student responses, and the grade for each student assessment and grading period. Schools should work with the individual Virtual Arkansas teachers to ensure the required documents are received by the school. We recommend that schools store the data electronically on a local server. This is important to assist with inquiries from the NCAA and other agencies.

Virtual Arkansas will archive course grade information, but due to the randomization of assessment questions, we cannot provide the actual assessment a student may have taken that accurately reflects the student responses. If the course was housed on the Blackboard LMS, the process to access past assessment and grade data may be impossible, without considerable expense to the requesting school.

Make-up Policy

For Virtual Arkansas Core and CTE classes, if a student has an excused absence, the student should complete all graded assignments as allowed by his/her local school's make-up policy. It is the student's responsibility to check with the facilitator/ teacher for the materials needed to complete missed assignments. In cases of an extended excused absence, the Virtual Arkansas campus supervisor will consult with the local principal to develop a plan for a student to complete the coursework.

Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit courses must follow the guidelines set by the partnering institutions of higher education in regards to make-up policies. These guidelines are listed in each course syllabus.

Parental Involvement

Virtual Arkansas administrators and teachers have frequent contact with parents regarding student performance and achievement. Virtual Arkansas teachers may participate in the Parent-Teacher conferences, as requested, by the participating schools. Participation in Parent-Teacher conferences is an excellent method to provide parents an opportunity to experience the digital learning environment and to see how technology is being integrated into their child's education. It is helpful for local personnel to be involved in advocating these opportunities with parents and stakeholders whenever possible. The classroom facilitator, Super User, or Registrar should be present during these conferences. During Parent-Teacher conferences, due to the nature of the environment, student grades and behavior will not be discussed. Parents may request that the Virtual Arkansas teacher contact the parent by telephone or email to discuss the grades or behavior of their child.

Virtual Arkansas concurrent credit teachers must abide by federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. FERPA is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The regulations may be found at Ed.gov.

Prerequisites

Many courses adhere to a set of prerequisites to increase student success. School administrators should ensure that students have met all prerequisites and are academically prepared for the intended course.

Scheduling Courses

Academic Calendar – Virtual Arkansas will comply with Act 65 of the 88th General Assembly Regular Session of 2011 concerning the academic calendar requirements. Virtual Arkansas will begin classes on the earliest date possible permitted under Act 65.



Bell Schedule – In the asynchronous environment, strict adherence to a bell schedule is not as critical as in the synchronous environment. However, it is important that a district's bell schedule permit students enrolled in Virtual Arkansas classes to join the blended/interactive class periods in a timely manner to minimize disrupting the scheduled interactive instruction that is occurring.

School Dismissal

In rare cases, a school may not meet its responsibilities outlined in these policies. Communication between the Virtual Arkansas Director of Academics and local school administration should take place to address concerns. When warranted, failure to abide by Virtual Arkansas policies and the Rules Governing Digital Learning may result in a school being removed from receiving services.

Student Communication

Students will need a district assigned email account to ensure communication between the teacher and student. If students do not have a district assigned email account, all emails to the students will go to the Super User or Registrar for that district/school. Students will also have the ability to reset their passwords. If a student resets his/her password, but does not have a district email account, the new password will be sent to the Super User or the Registrar.

Virtual Arkansas does upload student data into a third party SIS. The third party does protect student data and Virtual Arkansas does not provide student information to outside parties for marketing purposes.

Students with Special Needs

It is the policy of Virtual Arkansas to accommodate individuals with disabilities pursuant to federal law in regard to equal educational opportunities. It is the responsibility of school administrators to inform the teacher of any necessary accommodations at the start of the course in any semester. Disability notifications must be made within the first (10) ten days of class. As the teacher of record for administering a course to your district, Virtual Arkansas teachers are legally bound to provide modifications to students. Student IEP and/or 504 MODIFICATIONS ONLY should be received by the Virtual Arkansas teacher within ten (10) days of the beginning of the semester or when a student is enrolled in a course.

For Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit classes, the partnering universities have specific statements in their course syllabi concerning accommodations for students with special needs. Please refer to the course syllabus the specific guidelines.

Technical Difficulties

Technical issues may occur during the academic year. For assistance in resolving student username or password issues, hardware, or software issues, please complete the <u>contact form</u> at the Virtual Arkansas website. If a school site is experiencing connection issues, in addition to submitting the information using the website <u>contact form</u>, the facilitator should notify the Virtual Arkansas teacher as soon as possible. Students are responsible for completing all course work that may have been missed due to not being able to connect to the local network or the Virtual Arkansas LMS.

Technology Requirements

<u>Hardware</u> – Participating schools are responsible for maintaining local equipment for their students enrolled in Virtual Arkansas courses. In order to support a 21st Century blended-learning experience, it is required that each student have daily access to a computer connected to the internet, a headset with a microphone, and webcam. We recommend computers be hard-wired to the network in the digital learning classroom. Schools may use a wireless configuration, but performance may be negatively impacted as the number of students increase in a wireless setting. Districts should ensure that the technology requirements are satisfied prior to classes beginning. A computer specification sheet is available at the Virtual Arkansas website. Students may



need access to certain technology: audio cassette/cd player, digital camera, video camera, and fax machine/printer/scanner.

<u>Chromebooks ARE NOT compatible with Virtual Arkansas Teacher-Led, Teacher-Facilitated, or Flex-Paced</u> courses.

<u>Software</u> – Some courses require specialized software that should be installed on the local digital learning room computers. All measures have been taken to reduce the burden on districts, i.e., installing the software on every other computer. Please check the Textbook List to see if the courses your students are enrolled in require specific software.

Testing Policy

All students enrolled in a Virtual Arkansas Core and CTE courses are required to take all nine-weeks and cumulative/semester exams as detailed by the teacher.

There are no exemptions for Virtual Arkansas Core or CTE cumulative/semester exams. If a student misses a major exam and does not make it up during the time frame allowed by district policy, the student will receive a zero for the exam. A school administrator must request that the student be provided the opportunity to make up the missed exam.

Students enrolled in Advanced Placement Courses must take the AP exam for each AP course the student is enrolled in to receive weighted credit at the district level.

Semester final dates for Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit classes are established by the partnering universities and are listed in the course syllabus.

Transcript Requests

To request a transcript for students enrolled in Concurrent Credit courses, go to the post-secondary institution website, then to the registrar page. Each institution has specific instructions for requesting a transcript with your college grades.

Transfers

If a student transfers out of your district, please notify the Virtual Arkansas Central Office as soon as possible. This will enable the student to be quickly affiliated with new district and minimize lost access to the course content.

If a student transfers into your district and was enrolled in a course at the prior district that your district only receives from Virtual Arkansas, you may submit a course request to enroll the student. A transfer grade will be required and this should be provided to the teacher.

Tuition Refund

Virtual Arkansas will invoice districts for the membership and the per student, per course, per semester fees based on a district's student enrollment in Virtual Arkansas classes on October 1 for the fall semester and at the conclusion of the fourth (4th) week of instruction during the spring semester. Students that have been officially dropped prior to these times will not be included in a district's student count. If a student drops after the conclusion of districts being invoiced, Virtual Arkansas will not refund the per student, per course, per semester fee to the district.



Virtual Arkansas

Contact Information

State Office of K-12 Digital learning, Arkansas Department of Education

Cathi Swan, Superintendent Arch Ford Education Service Cooperative 101 Bulldog Drive, Plumerville, AR 72127

Phone: 501-339.8056 Fax: 501-208.5438 http://virtualarkansas.org

Virtual Arkansas Central Office

John Ashworth – Director of Academics – <u>john.ashworth@virtualarkansas.org</u>
Michael Lar – Director of Operations – <u>mike.lar@virtualarkansas.org</u>
Junior Stormes – Director of Technology – <u>junior.stormes@virtualarkansas.org</u>
Phone: 501.477.2781

Virtual Arkansas CTE Campus

James Malcom, Supervisor
Dawson Education Service Cooperative
711 Clinton Street
Arkadelphia, AR 71923

jamesm@dawsonesc.com http://virtualarkansas.org

Phone: 870-246-2813 Fax: 870-403-0662

Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit Campus

Ellora Hicks, Supervisor Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative 1022 Scogin Drive Monticello, AR 71655

ellora.hicks@se2.k12.ar.us http://virtualarkansas.org

Phone: 870-367-4848 Fax: 870-367-8179