

# DYS Partners with Virtual Arkansas to Improve Education

Virtual Arkansas offers online courses to more than 50,000 public school students using licensed teachers in 270 schools. It is a project through the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and Arkansas education service 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:**

- \* Instructors 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

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) when the school year starts Aug. 15 and will be supported by **DYS** educational coaches in the classroom, special education, GED and vocational teachers on site as well as **DYS** central office educational staff.



The benefits of Virtual Arkansas include:

- \* It is used by traditional public schools across the state, allowing youth to more easily transition back to school upon release.
- \* 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 earn joint credit for high school/college courses and can access advanced placement classes and coding classes on a limited basis. None of these are offered today.
- \* The cost of the Virtual Arkansas is comparable to current spending.

