River Valley Virtual Academy

Vision:

Every Child, Whatever It Takes

Values:

Mission:

The River Valley Virtual Academy will offer personalized learning for students, blending a virtual curriculum with service opportunities and real world experiences. Partnering with families and communities, the River Valley Virtual Academy will provide K-12 students flexible learning choices which offer support and acceleration to promote college, career, and citizenship readiness.

Goals:

- The River Valley Virtual Academy students will be ready or exceeding on the ACT Aspire mathematics summative assessment.

  Performance Measure(s)

Performance Indicator: River Valley Virtual Academy students will meet or exceed the State average number of students scoring proficient in math. The average state math score for students in grades 3-10 is 46%.	Baseline Year: 2018	Baseline: 42%
Data Source: ACT Aspire		
Target Date: 2022	Target: 46%	Actual:

- The River Valley Virtual Academy students will be ready or exceeding on the ACT Aspire reading summative assessment.

  Performance Measure(s)

Performance Indicator: River Valley Virtual Academy students will meet or exceed the State average number of students scoring proficient in reading. The average state reading score for students in grades 3-10 is 41%.		
Data Source: ACT Aspire	Baseline Year: 2018	Baseline: 58%
Target Date: 2022	Target: 41%	Actual:

Needs Assessments, Accreditation Reports, Similar Feedback:

The River Valley Virtual Academy experienced an increase in enrollment during the 2020-2021 school year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Approximately 1,200 students were processed through RVVA. Due to the rapid and substantial enrollment change, RVVA made adjustments to staffing and course monitoring throughout the school year.

Quarterly Connexus data reflects the need for early communication with parents and students in regards to course progress. Course completion rates are an important factor for student success.

No discipline records are available at this time due to the nature of the online setting.

Attendance data reflects the need to intervene with students who fall behind on lessons.

Based on the data collected, early communication with parents and students is essential to course completion. In addition, based on attendance data, early intervention is necessary to allow students to complete courses on time. We believe course completion will increase the ACT Aspire summative assessment scores.

Meal Status Summary as of March 12, 2021

49% Free and/or Reduced Lunch

Meal Status	Number of Students
01-Free	76
02- Reduced	38
03-Regular	228
04-Direct Certified	106

Enrollment by Race: As of March 12, 2021

Enrollment by Race

Enrollment by Race	Number of Students
Asian	5
Black	23
Hispanic or Latino	60
Native American/Alaskan Native	8
Two or More Races	41
White	311
Total Enrollment	448

Enrollment by Grade: As of March 12, 2021

Grade Level	Number of Students
K	25
1	24
2	22
3	22
4	30
5	15
6	32
7	48
8	45
9	39
10	35
11	59

12   52

Total Enrollment   448

K-5: 138

6-8: 1259-12: 185

Special Services: As of March 12, 2021

Special Service	Number of Students
IEP	70
504	40
ELL	26

Course Completion Rates:

Fall 2017: 88% Spring 2018: 99%

Fall 2018: 94% Spring 2019: 99%

Fall 2019: 95% Spring 2020: 98%

Fall 2020: 93% Spring 2021: TBD

Standards for Accreditation

2017-2018 Accredited

2018 - 2019 Accredited

2019-2020 Accredited

School Report Card

2017 - 2018 'A'

2018-2019 'A'

Science of Reading Implementation

All RVVA certified staff members have been trained in the Science of Reading.

Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Fluency, Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Writing

Reading will be a primary focus for the River Valley Virtual Academy. The school will implement research-based curriculum and strategies for students who are reading at, above, or below grade level. Students reading or writing below grade level will receive additional support through increased frequency of targeted LiveLesson sessions and Connections multitiered instructional support program. Teachers use formative assessment data to determine a student's greatest area of need. A variety of supplemental instructional support programs are available to support student learning in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and writing. Teachers regularly monitor student performance in these programs and make adjustments as needed based on Connections guidelines for implementing multitiered instruction.

River Valley Virtual Academy plans to focus on literacy in the early grades using Connexus' research-based curriculum. Connexus' elementary literacy program spans Kindergarten to Grade 5, and is carefully scaffolded with a combination of high-quality, engaging instruction and resources. Language arts courses, supported by McGraw Hill Wonders program (grades K–5) and Common Core Literature series (grades 6–8), explicitly support the five main components of literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Reading and writing instruction is prevalent throughout the language arts program, and is supported by core content area courses. All English language arts courses are fully aligned to the Arkansas Standards.

Phonemic awareness, the awareness of discrete sounds, or phonemes, is present at the earliest stages of literacy growth. As students master the recognition and production of individual sounds, the need for targeted phonemic awareness instruction declines. Phonics instruction capitalizes on phonemic awareness and focuses on the relationship between written letters, their names, and their sounds. Instruction progresses from letter sounds and small combinations to syllabic awareness. Fluency, the ability to read quickly and accurately, improves as the other components of literacy also improve. In the early years, vocabulary and text comprehension instruction is primarily listening-focused. As students improve in their ability to decode, vocabulary and comprehension instruction shifts to involve more reading. Direct instruction in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension continues throughout elementary school. In the earliest years, literacy instruction is largely a collaborative process as students interact regularly with their teachers and Learning Coaches to build the foundations for success in reading and writing. As students grow in their literacy skills and enter into upper elementary courses, they assume more independence.

Phonemic Awareness Instruction

Early literacy instruction in Connexus' language arts courses engages students in frequent phonemic awareness instruction and activities. Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words. Young students need to be actively engaged and stimulated. Teachers work with Learning Coaches as a team to support each student's education. Teachers also use real-time data from curricular tools to plan opportunities that may include reading to students, providing modeling and direct instruction, and helping students participate in interactive activities.

Kindergartners engage daily in phonemic awareness activities. This instruction is reinforced by Learning Coaches, who are provided with detailed instructions for guiding students in skills such as:

- Segmenting words into syllables

- Isolating individual sounds at the beginning, middle, and end of words
- Blending individual sounds to make words
- Obtaining and applying letter-sound relationships to words and word parts

Phonics Instruction

Phonemic awareness instruction builds in Grade 1 with continued practice of the aforementioned skills, as well as new focus on rhyme identification, syllabication, sound substitution, and long and short vowel sounds, among other skills. In Grade 1, avatars and multimedia presentations model how to pronounce and manipulate sounds and lead students through guided practice with Elkonin, or sound, boxes. Guided practice continues into Grade 2. At this level, most students no longer need explicit instruction in phonemic awareness. At this level, teachers provide individualized phonemic awareness intervention and support on an as-needs basis.

Phonics instruction differs from phonemic awareness in its focus on the systematic and predictable relationship between sounds and their letters in written language – the alphabetic principle. "Knowing these relationships will help students recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and 'decode' new words. In short, knowledge of the alphabetic principle contributes greatly to students' ability to read words both in isolation and in connected text."

Students learn how to operationalize the alphabetic principle when letters, sounds, and connected texts are used in conjunction, with clear relationships among them. As research has shown, programs of phonics instruction are most effective when they are systematic, explicit, and begin in Kindergarten. The Connexus program begins phonics instruction in Kindergarten with a carefully selected set of letter-sound relationships that are organized into a logical sequence. Through course material and teacher support, students are explicitly taught these relationships. Student learning is further supported by Learning Coaches who receive detailed and user-friendly directions to support explicit teaching and reinforcement. Guided by the curriculum, young students work with their teacher and their Learning Coach, to use aids such as letter tiles and engage in other hands-on activities to make connections between letters and their sounds.

Fluency Instruction

Fluency is defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and expression. To read with speed and accuracy, a student must have automaticity in word recognition, and to read expressively, a student must comprehend the text at some level." In a sense, reading fluency is the essential link between word recognition at one end of the spectrum and reading comprehension at the other." Through his decades of fluency research, Rasinski has found that "struggling readers…are not automatic in their word recognition, so they must use their cognitive resources for the more basic bottom-up of word recognition, thereby depleting what they will have available for more important top-down task – making meaning." (2014)

Kindergarten Reading Routine.

Reading Routine

Read Silently Student whisper reads

Model Fluent Reading Learning Coach reads the selection with appropriate pacing and expression as the student finger points along

Read Chorally Student finger points as she and the Learning Coach read together

Reread and Monitor Progress Learning Coach monitors progress and provides support as the student reads

Reread Student rereads

In Grade 1, students continue to work with decodable readers, but also extend fluency practice to authentic texts. This practice with authentic literature and informational text continues throughout the elementary years. Often, students read the same text more than once. Repeated readings build fluency and automaticity as familiarity with a text grows. As students engage in a daily fluency routine, teachers and Learning Coaches work together to track student progress toward mid-unit and end-of-year goals for words-correct-per-minute. Teachers and Learning Coaches provide feedback and assistance to help students build automaticity in their reading. An audio tool is built into the courses to allow students to record themselves reading for up to ten minutes. This tool provides opportunities for the teacher to listen to and evaluate the student's fluency progress as well as to provide additional interventions and extensions to support the student's growth. Learning Coaches support repeated practice and assist students in the submission of audio recordings.

Vocabulary Instruction

The development of vocabulary, the words one must know to communicate effectively, begins in infancy and continues through adulthood. "Vocabulary lies at the heart of content learning, as it serves as a proxy for students' understanding of concepts...it is a part of a complex network of knowledge that draws on students' understanding of the alphabetics, syntax, and semantics of the language." "Vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read. As beginning readers, children use the words they have heard to make sense of the words they see in print. Beginning readers have a much more difficult time reading words that are not already part of their oral vocabulary." The demand on students' vocabulary knowledge intensifies throughout the grades, and must be bolstered by contextual use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary in reading, word solving, and collaborative written and oral discussions. As such, all Connexus' Language Arts courses incorporate explicit vocabulary instruction and practice.

In Kindergarten, students are introduced to high-frequency words – words that most Kindergarteners already use or have been exposed to in their everyday conversations. Kindergartners learn to read, write, and spell high-frequency words. They are also introduced to "amazing words," which are words from course reading selections that expand and enhance their vocabulary and ultimately their comprehension of text and the world around them. Students interact with the words through literature and accompanying animations that have catchy and often familiar tunes.

In early grades, students create and maintain vocabulary resources such as a Word Wall and a Word Ring. Over the course of the year, students add new high-frequency and content-based vocabulary words to these resources to encourage regular practice and to assist with vocabulary acquisition. Learning Coaches are instructed to refer students to these resources frequently, so as to help students gain familiarity with word use and spelling. To ensure each student is successful in these key skills, the teacher will use the course data to build on what the student has learned by providing additional learning opportunities during a LiveLesson session.

All students are guided in discussions about words and topics related to each day's lesson, either in a LiveLesson session, on a Message Board, or with a teacher or Learning Coach. Lessons feature keywords (a mix of academic and domain-specific vocabulary) as well as strategies for decoding new words, such as using context clues and identifying word parts. Print resources, digital animations, and interactive tools also provide support for vocabulary expansion. To facilitate vocabulary acquisition, each course is accompanied by a glossary that can be sorted by lesson, unit, or full course, and viewed in either a list form or as flash cards. The acquisition and understanding of a diverse vocabulary pave the way for text comprehension. "Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading." To support students' vocabulary acquisition, Learning Coaches are guided to use academic and domain-specific vocabulary in conversation around the topics embedded in daily lessons.

Text Comprehension Instruction

Comprehension, the process of making meaning from text, begins with listening skills and eventually progresses to reading as students mature in literacy. Foundations for comprehension and higher-level thinking skills are built in Kindergarten through the use of read-alouds and shared reading. Teachers work with Learning Coaches to use a series of explicit and implicit questions to encourage students to consider story elements as they engage in the reading routine (Figure 8). Students receive reinforcement of basic concepts of print, such as the understanding that stories and books have titles and authors, that print runs from left to right and top to bottom, and that illustrations and text both convey meaning. As students grow in their ability to understand what has been read to them, comprehension tools such as concept webs, KWL charts, and other graphic organizers are introduced. A KWL Chart, tracks what a student knows (K), what a student wants to know (W), and what a student has learned (L) about a topic. These tools are introduced in various lessons, and extended upon during instructional LiveLesson sessions with the teacher.

Every unit of instruction in elementary language arts courses targets specific comprehension strategies and skills, such as identifying main idea, summarizing, and making predictions. Students read daily, practicing comprehension and fluency skills as they read. Skills and strategies for reading comprehension and vocabulary development are introduced in the context of brief reading selections. Students then have the opportunity to practice these skills while reading longer selections in a variety of fiction and nonfiction genres. The selections are organized according to theme. These themes invite the student to view reading as a tool for information gathering, and the themes help the student make connections between the texts. In addition to formal reading instruction, students establish a daily reading routine, and complete activities in response to self-selected books.

Prior to reading, students learn about the targeted strategy or skill, and engage in brief activities to access and/or build background knowledge. Students also establish a purpose for reading. During reading, students answer comprehension questions focused on the targeted skill. Teachers model thinking aloud and explain how to think while reading. After reading, students demonstrate comprehension in a variety of ways. They may be asked to draw a picture, write a paragraph or sentence, complete practice pages from provided course materials, retell the story, or complete a successful CBA with their teacher. Using the results of the CBA, as well as course grades and the percentage of mastery on course objectives, teachers instruct using differentiated comprehension activities by selecting resources and activities best suited to the learning style or preference of the student. Optional extension activities are also provided for students who may need additional support or added rigor.

In grades 6-8, students engage in multi-tiered approach for close reading. Students read selections three times: reading first to unlock meaning, second to analyze craft and structure, and a third time to integrate knowledge and ideas and make connections. Audio recordings are provided to help students develop listening comprehension, and to support them as they dig deeper into complex texts. Students read not only to make comparisons within texts, but across texts as well.

Beginning in grade 2, advanced students are encouraged to enroll in Gifted and Talented Literature Study courses, which supplement the core language arts courses. This program is designed for advanced students in grades 3 to 8. Students enrolled in this program are required to attend a one-hour LiveLesson session each week, which focuses on building a collaborative environment while students discuss text-dependent questions. Students are graded on an alternating basis upon their speaking skills and their presentation of a selected activity. The Gifted and Talented Literature Study program is built around the Junior Great Books™ program and Great Books Roundtable™ programs which employ the Shared Inquiry™ method. Guided by interpretive and purposeful questions, students engage in frequent discussions about the ideas and themes they encounter while reading.

Writing Instruction

Writing is an essential component of any strong literacy program. Reading and writing have a reciprocal relationship, meaning that instruction in one area supports the other. As Graham and Hebert stated in their 2010 study of the relationships between reading and writing, "...writing practices complement reading practices and should always be used in conjunction, with each type of practice supporting and strengthening the other." The nature of the relationship between reading and writing shifts as students gain a stronger grasp of language and communication, but it is overwhelmingly present in the elementary years.

Students are introduced to the concept of writing in Kindergarten language arts, where they develop handwriting skills and gain mastery writing uppercase and lowercase letters. As students learn to write the high-frequency words they work with on a daily basis, they build familiarity with conventions such as writing from left to right. Gradually, with the support and feedback of their teacher, students are introduced to basic sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation. To increase conceptual understanding, students engage in thematic writing activities that complement the reading selections in the course. Writing instruction is differentiated by introducing students to developmentally appropriate writing strategies supported by targeted practice with their teachers and guided practice with the Learning Coach. The teacher works with the Learning Coach to continue the development of these strategies. For example, when composing an invitation, a student might write, use a combination of writing and drawing, or draw and dictate the information he wishes to convey.

Although courses are delivered online, students engage in regular practice to improve their handwriting skills. Students concentrate on developing manuscript handwriting skills from Kindergarten to grade 3, at which point they are introduced to cursive handwriting. Students submit these assignments offline to their teacher for targeted feedback. Additional instruction is provided by the teacher as needed. Other graded assignments may be submitted in either handwritten or typed form.

Throughout the language arts program, students build a portfolio of writing assignments, each evaluated against a carefully structured rubric which is present in the course and the coaching guide. In the early years, students are guided through a drafting process to produce brief writing samples such as sentences and lists. In grade 3, students are formally introduced to the five stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) and the traits of good writing (focus and idea development, organization, voice, effective word choice and sentence use, and use of standard grammar and conventions). Print and interactive resources such as Teachlet Tutorials aid students in this process. At this point, students begin to produce longer writing samples in a variety of formats, including short stories, essays, and letters. These writing assignments, along with shorter, ungraded writing opportunities embedded in daily reading instruction, allow students to make new connections to the selections and genres they encounter. Teachers provide feedback to students on submitted assignments, using a rubric to guide their grading as they comment on students' writing, fill out the rubric, and/or leave comments next to the assignment in the online gradebook. In grade 6, students are introduced to the online writing tool WriteToLearn. WriteToLearn enables to students to practice different types of writing, each time receiving immediate and targeted feedback on the six traits of writing. This targeted practice allows students to hone their skills in the types of writing they submit later in the course as portfolio assignments.

Literacy in the Content Areas

While the elementary language arts courses guide students in learning to read and write, content area courses present bountiful opportunities for students to read and write in order to learn. Like language arts, all content area courses highlight both academic and domain-specific key words. Key words are reviewed and discussed during lessons, and interactive flash cards are built into every course to help students build their familiarity with these terms. This practice with academic and domain-specific vocabulary grows students' personal lexicons and improves their conceptual understanding in the content areas.

Math courses offer students the opportunity to grow their vocabularies, and use their reading and writing skills to understand and describe mathematical concepts. In Kindergarten, early acquisition of numeracy skills are tightly connected to literacy. For example, the ability to recognize "four" as the symbol 4, the word four, and a set of four objects requires elements of both literacy and numeracy. The connection between literacy and numeracy maintains its presence throughout the elementary math program, and is particularly evident when solving word problems. It has been widely documented that deficits in literacy, particularly in vocabulary and comprehension, cause students to struggle with word problems in math. With this in mind, a focus of deep vocabulary development, problem-solving, reasoning, and communication is integrated into each Connexus math course. Online textbooks, digital animations, and interactive tools feature stories and problem-solving strategies to help students apply comprehension skills to mathematics. Teachers continue these efforts by providing additional learning opportunities for students who are struggling, on-track, or advanced.

In addition to the hands-on inquiry activities in the science program, instruction in grades 1 to 5 is supported by a science textbook and a reading and writing skills workbook. The workbook exposes students to literature and informational texts related to science; texts are paired with reading and writing activities, such as identifying main ideas and details and creating KWL charts, to help students better understand the topics they read about. Students also build writing skills by maintaining a science journal in which they answer comprehension and skill questions, record experiments, communicate findings, and keep a glossary of scientific terms.

Social Studies provides perhaps the richest literacy experience for students outside of language arts. Daily, students engage in reading and interpreting authentic and historic texts to help them understand communities past and present, and the world around them. Students build reading and listening skills as they explore print literacies such as biographies, poetry, and historic documents, and visual literacies such as maps, photographs, and illustrations. Review questions accompany most textbook reading assignments, and support essential comprehension skills such as identifying main ideas, making predictions, and analyzing text. As students progress through the social studies program, they cultivate the ability to compare, sequence events, and interpret sources. Each unit of coursework in grades 1 to 5 features a portfolio project in which students demonstrate understanding of key Social Studies concepts and cultures as students synthesize their understanding and exhibit creativity through writing. Through targeted and meaningful feedback from the teacher, students are able to apply feedback and enhance their writing. Each unit also features recommended books to enrich the content and provide context for unit concepts. These optional reading assignments are embedded into lessons.

The impact of the full alignment of Connections language arts courses to the (State) Standards for English Language Arts is evident in the content area courses at each grade level. This rich cross-subject literacy practice in kindergarten through grade 5 lays the foundation for the development of literacy skills in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects in middle and high school.

Digital Literacy

All students in K-8 are enrolled in educational technology and online learning courses, which introduce them to the practices and resources necessary for becoming a responsible digital citizen. Educational technology and online learning courses allow students to explore and use features of digital tools to support reading, writing, and mathematics skills. From Kindergarten to grade 2, students receive additional practice with letters, phonemes, and high-frequency words as they learn to write, type, and compose meaningful sentences in a draw and paint program. In grade 1, students begin to explore elements of reading and writing, such as descriptive words, main ideas, and text features, while gaining familiarity with basic Microsoft® Word and PowerPoint techniques. Literacy instruction is interwoven in meaningful practice with both programs through grade 8 in fun and engaging ways, shown in Figure 11. For example, students in grade 4 demonstrate their ability to type, format, spell-check, and illustrate text when they use Word to complete graphic organizers and compose their own original folktales. In grades 6–8, students produce a final project for the course in which they call upon all of the digital literacy skills they have learned to research a topic, investigate design and software elements, and produce a multimedia project. Teachers evaluate and extend use of the resources introduced in educational technology and online learning classes in LiveLesson sessions and collaborative discussions on the class Message Board.

Student Outcome Data:

Students receive dyslexia services through the Barton Reading and Spelling System.

iStation Data (January 2021 Reading Data)

Level	K	1	2
1	8%	21%	13%
2	8%	33%	9%
3,4,5	83%	45%	78%

ACT 11th Grade Composite Score:

School Year	Average Score	Number of Students Tested
2018 – 2019	18	4
2019 – 2020	21	6
2020 – 2021	17.9	51

ACT Aspire Summative Data 2018-2019

Grade Level	Number Tested	English	Reading	Science	Math
3	4	100%	50%	50%	50%
4	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
5	1	100%	100%	100%	100%
6	3	100%	66%	67%	66%
7	2	100%	50%	50%	0%
8	2	100%	100%	100%	100%
9	5	100%	80%	100%	60%
10	7	100%	43%	57%	58%

Based on the student data, we believe close monitoring of student course completion rates will result in an increase in ACT Aspire summative assessment scores. In an addition to meet the needs of students, Title I money will be used to provide additional tutoring for students who are at risk of meeting grade-level expectations in math and literacy and who qualify for services.

Our Leadership Team's progress in fully implementing Indicators and meeting Objectives:

The River Valley Virtual Academy is implementing and developing systems to ensure all students stay engaged in online coursework. RVVA reaches out to caregivers and students to ensure coursework completion. Home visits are conducted throughout the year as needed for students not engaged in the learning process.

The River Valley Virtual Academy developed and implemented a method to provide two-way, school-home communication linked to learning. Caregivers were emailed River Valley Virtual Academy newsletters with upcoming dates and wellness information.

The River Valley Virtual Academy will continue with the objective of monitoring school-level learning data.

The River Valley Virtual Academy will closely monitor student course completion and attendance to ensure students complete courses on-time. We believe course completion will yield an increase in summative assessment scores. The status of course completion will be monitored each week. At-risk students will be monitored daily. RVVA will continue to provide two-way communication to support the caregiver and student.

Selected Indicators:

Assess student learning frequently with standards-based assessments

IID07   The Leadership Team monitors school-level student learning data.(105)

Provide a tiered system of instructional and behavioral supports and interventions

IIID04   The school implements a system-wide monitoring process that utilizes collaborative instructional teams who meet regularly to review student data from screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessment to identify next steps for instruction for students across all tiers.(5196)

Provide two-way, school-home communication linked to learning

FE05   The "ongoing conversation" between school personnel and parents (families) is candid, supportive, and flows in both directions.(5499)