

# Online classes part of diploma

## York already leading virtual way

By Susan Robertson

A new “virtual course” requirement for graduation could lead to changes for local school divisions.

Details are sketchy about the change to state graduation requirements and how WJC and York school divisions will handle it.

“The governor signed it into law on Thursday, April 5, but that’s all we know at this point,” said Reginald Fox, coordinator of online learning at York Schools.

Starting with freshmen in the fall of 2013, students will have to complete one virtual course to earn a standard or advanced studies diploma. It doesn’t have to be for credit.

Dianna Lindsay, assistant superintendent for Academic Services at WJC Schools, called the reform a “re-examination of content delivery.”

WJC uses Virtual Virginia, a statewide online program for middle and high school students that’s intended to offer flexibility. Lindsay explained that a better understanding of the new expectation will help determine staffing, placement of students and deployment of new initiatives.

York also participates in Virtual Virginia and runs its own “Virtual High School,” serving students here and

across the state. About 480 students are enrolled in both programs.

Fox explained that York students are assigned virtual courses within their class schedule and report to a licensed staff member at a computer lab or classroom to take the course. Some take classes from home.

He’s unsure how the change to graduation requirements will play out. “While we expect growth with online learning, we don’t know those numbers. It really depends on whether that growth

exceeds the capacity of the labs.”

It could also boost the number of out-of-district students York enrolls in Virtual High School, which has 60 classes. They are primarily core classes like English or math, but electives are offered, including a course on game design that Fox said is very popular.

In addition to the virtual course requirement, students starting high school in 2013 will also have to complete a career and technical certification, such as a state licensure examination, a Virginia workplace skills assessment, or an industry certification to earn a standard or advanced diploma. Current requirements only mandate that students take one career and technical course.

