



Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Viola School District
LEA Number:	2503000
Superintendent:	John May
Email:	john.may@violalonghorns.org
Contact for Waiver:	John May, Superintendent, Viola School District
Contact Email:	john.may@violalonghorns.org
Contact Phone:	870-458-4001
Date Received by DESE:	

The following documents must be submitted with the waiver request:

1. Board resolution approving the waiver request
 - a. Approved January 30, 2024 (separate attachment)
2. Evidence of stakeholder involvement, including teachers and student families
 - a. Staff responses – 78.9% were in favor of starting one week earlier
 - b. Parent responses – 73.5% were in favor of starting one week earlier

Waiver Request #1

Topic:	School Start Date
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	A.C.A. 6-10-106
Duration Requested:	5 years
Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver	Arkansas Virtual Academy Arkansas Connections Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To	K-12
PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance Student Learning Opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Promote Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Equitable Access to Effective Teachers

- 1. Provide a DETAILED RATIONALE explaining how the waiver will enhance student learning opportunities, promote innovation, or increase equitable access to effective teachers. Include information about the problem or obstacle, if any, the waiver will help the district overcome.**

The member school districts of the North Central Education Service Cooperative are collectively and separately requesting a waiver from A.C.A. 6-10-106, which establishes the first allowable day of class as the Monday of the week that contains August 19. For the 2023-2024 school year that date will be Monday, August 19.

The specific waiver being requested is to allow the applying school districts to set their individual district's first day of class to be "no earlier than the week that contains August 12".

The advantages of this waiver are several:

- The fall and spring semesters would be closer to the same length. Without this waiver, the fall semester in 2024 will be 68 days while the spring semester in 2025 will be 76 days, a difference of 8 days. (The Viola School District utilizes a 4 day calendar school week.) With the waiver the both semesters will be 72 days and each quarter will have 36 days most years. The more unbalanced the semesters are, the greater the issue for classes that are one semester in length.
- The alternative solution for unbalanced semesters is to not end fall semester until after Christmas break. This results in final exams shortly after two weeks out of school, and the possibility of exams being repeatedly postponed due to winter weather.
- This waiver will give greater assurance of school ending in late May rather than extending into June. Some research indicates a decrease in learning past the Memorial Day Holiday.
- Beginning school earlier automatically results in more days of instruction prior to spring testing. More days of instruction will result in higher test scores,
- Activities such as volleyball will begin next fall on the same relative date as they did this fall, with or without the waiver, Therefore a large number of students will already be on campus to practice and prepare for their activities, regardless of the opening date of school. In addition to students that play volleyball, this would include students that are participants in groups such as golf, cross country, and robotics, as well as others.

The granting of this waiver does not affect any other law, rule or procedure. The school year will remain the same length. It simply allows a district to continue with a school calendar that is structured as closely as possible to the current one, and avoids the dramatic change to the calendar which must result without the waiver.

- 2. Provide a detailed explanation of how the services being waived will be provided for students.**

There will not be a loss of services for students under this waiver.

- 3. Provide a detailed explanation of how the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver.**

The district will monitor student assessment results and student attendance data related to the earlier start of the school year by no more than five days. The movement of the start date should have a positive effect on state assessment scores and student attendance.

The advantage is having more student instruction days prior to the state assessment.

Viola School District
314 Longhorn Drive
PO Box 380
Viola, AR 72583

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE VIOLA SCHOOL DISTRICT AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER

WHEREAS, the Viola School District Board of Directors is committed to providing a high-quality education to all students within the district;

WHEREAS, certain circumstances or regulations may require the district to seek waivers to better address the unique needs or challenges faced by the district;

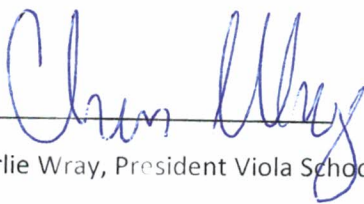
WHEREAS, weather is consistently a factor causing the Viola School District to miss days of instruction before state mandated testing, and an earlier start to school would help the District to attend more days before state mandated testing, and online charter schools which have drawn students from the Viola School District have been approved waivers to start school earlier than the ADE rules allow;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Viola School District hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request a waiver to start school one week earlier than currently permitted by ADE rules;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent or designee is authorized to take all necessary steps and actions to submit the waiver request, including providing any additional information or documentation required by the relevant authorities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Directors expresses its support for the waiver request and acknowledges the importance of flexibility in addressing the unique needs and circumstances of the district. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED this 30th day of Jan. '24 by the Board of Directors of the Viola School District.



Charlie Wray, President Viola School District Board of Directors

ATTEST: Faraa Parden

Secretary Viola School District Board of Directors