



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY  
& SECONDARY EDUCATION

## Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Fountain Lake School District 2602
LEA Number:	2602
Superintendent:	Michael D Murphy
Email:	mmurphy@flcobras.com
Contact for Waiver:	Stephen Campbell
Contact Email:	scampbell@flcobras.com
Contact Phone:	501-701-1700
Date Received by DESE:	

The following documents must be submitted with the waiver request:

1. Board resolution approving the waiver request
2. Evidence of stakeholder involvement, including teachers and student families

## Waiver Request #1

<b>Topic:</b>	School Start Date
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	A.C.A. 6-10-106
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	5 years
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	Arkansas Virtual Academy
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To</b>	K-12
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<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 Dawson 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 2024-2025 school year that date will be Monday, August 19. We would appreciate approval for the early start date for the listed schools in our region giving public schools the equity afforded to Charter Schools.

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 Monday, August 12."

The law as presently constructed results in a wide swing in the allowable opening date of school. At the earliest, it can be August 14, which was the case this year— fall of 2023. The latest possible first day is August 20 which, under the law will be — the fall of 2029. This waiver would allow the school to open next year and years to follow on the same relative date as this year.

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 will be 84 days while the spring semester will be 94 days, a difference of 10 days. With the waiver the fall semester will be 91 days and the spring semester 87 days, a difference of only 4 days. 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 the 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 before spring testing. More days of instruction will result in higher test scores,

• Activities such as football 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 who play football, this would include students who participate in groups such as golf, tennis, cross country, volleyball, band, cheer, dance, ROTC, Student Council, and National Honor Society, as well as others.

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

The school districts will create a calendar with an earlier start date which will provide them with more flexibility throughout the school year. The school year will remain the same length. It simply allows a district to continue with a school calendar structured as closely as possible to the current one and avoids the dramatic change to the calendar which must result without the 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 date to determine the effectiveness of the early start date.

# FOUNTAIN LAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## 2024-2025 REGIONAL EARLY START DAY

**WHEREAS** the Fountain Lake School District Board of Directors met in a regular , open, and properly-convened board meeting on Monday, February 12, 2024 in Hot Springs, Arkansas; and

**WHEREAS** five members were present, a quorum was declared by the chair; and

**WHEREAS** A.C.A. § 6-10-106 requires that the first day of the school year for student attendance in the public elementary and secondary schools of the State of Arkansas shall be:


- (i) On or after the Monday of the week in which August 19 fall;
- (ii) Not earlier than August 14; and
- (iii) Not later than August 26.

(B) The date for beginning the school year shall be determined by the board of directors of the school district.

(C) Labor Day shall be celebrated as a school holiday in all school districts of the state, and school shall not be held on that date.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED** that the Board of Directors of the Fountain Lake School District approves of a school state date of Monday, August 12, 2024 for the 2024-2025 school year.

**ADOPTED** in the regular session by the Board of Directors of the Fountain Lake School District February 12, 2024.

  
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Dana Greeson, President

  
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Brian Lambert, Secretary

## Fountain Lake School District Early Start Waiver Stake Holder Involvement

### Community Survey

Arkansas state law pertaining to the start of school each year:

A.C.A. § 6-10-106 requires that the first day of the school year for student attendance in the public elementary and secondary schools of the State of Arkansas shall be:

- (i) On or after the Monday of the week in which August 19 fall;
- (ii) Not earlier than August 14; and
- (iii) Not later than August 26.

(B) The date for beginning the school year shall be determined by the board of directors of the school district.

(C) Labor Day shall be celebrated as a school holiday in all school districts of the state, and school shall not be held on that date.

Schools may request a waiver to the start date law.

To keep both semesters close to the same length and end the first semester before the Christmas break, the Fountain Lake School District is planning to request an "Early Start Waiver" that would allow us to begin a week earlier. For the 2024-2025 school year, this will allow us to start school on Monday, August 12, 2024.

The 2023-2024 school year started on Monday, August 14, 2024.

Please answer the survey question below. Email addresses are not being collected.

307 responses

[Link to Sheets](#)

Not accepting responses

Message for respondents

This form is no longer accepting responses

Summary

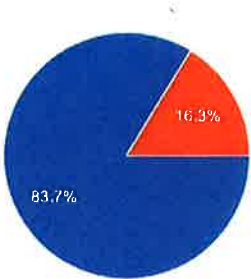
Question

Individual

I agree with the district's plan to request an early start waiver.

[Copy](#)

307 responses



- Yes. I agree with the district's plan to request an early start waiver.
- No. I disagree with the district's plan to request an early start waiver.

# Staff Survey Results

## 89 responses

[Link to Sheets](#)

Not accepting responses

### Message for respondents

This form is no longer accepting responses

Summary

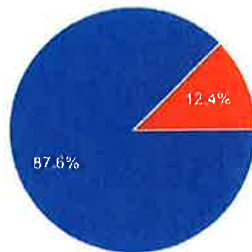
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89 responses



- Yes. I agree with the district's plan to request an early start waiver.
- No. I disagree with the district's plan to request an early start waiver.