



## Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Heber Springs
LEA Number:	1202
Superintendent:	Scott Jennings
Email:	scott.jennings@heberschools.org
Contact for Waiver:	Scott Jennings
Contact Email:	scott.jennings@heberschools.org
Contact Phone:	501-362-6712
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 Arch Ford 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 School.

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.



SCOTT JENNINGS  
Superintendent

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Heber Springs School District

Resolution

In Support of a Waiver Request Affecting the Allowable First Day of School

A.C.A 6-10-106

Whereas Arkansas law, A.C.A 6-10-106, provides for the school year to begin no earlier than the Monday of the week containing August 19; and

Whereas under this law, A.C.A 6-10-106, the start of school varies from year to year, beginning some years as early as August 14, or as late as August 20; and

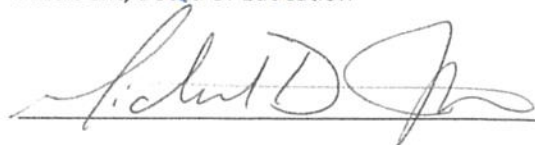
Whereas under this law, A.C.A 6-10-106, the earliest school can begin is August 19; and

Whereas a late start to the school year creates unbalanced semesters, reduces the preparation for state testing, and limits flexibility in scheduling inclement weather make-up days;

Therefore be it resolved that the Heber Springs Board of Education endorses the Superintendent's waiver request affecting the allowable first day of school on August 14 and recommends its approval by the Arkansas State Board of Education.

Adopted this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of February 2024

  
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President, Board of Education

  
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Secretary, Board of Education



**SCOTT JENNINGS**  
Superintendent

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January 29, 2024

The Heber Springs School District conducted a survey with both our staff and our parents regarding the preferred start date of the 24-25 school year. The results are as follows:

#### Staff Poll

61.1% favored the August 14 start date  
38.9% favored the August 19 start date

#### Parents Poll

70.5% favored the August 14 start date  
29.5% favored the August 19 start date