



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Arkadelphia
LEA Number:	1002000
Superintendent:	Nikki Thomas
Email:	nikki.thomas@arkadelphiaschools.org
Contact for Waiver:	Nikki Thomas
Contact Email:	nikki.thomas@arkadelphiaschools.org
Contact Phone:	870-246-5564
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

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
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 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.

**ARKADELPHIA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

2024-2025 Regional Early Start Date

WHEREAS the Arkadelphia School District Board of Directors met in an open, and properly-convened, regular agenda-planning board meeting on February 6, 2024, in Arkadelphia, AR; and

Whereas 5 members were present, a quorum was declared by the chair; and

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

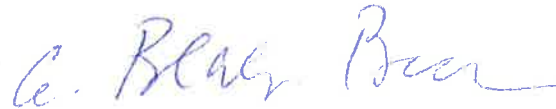
- (i) On or after the Monday of the week in which August 19 falls;
- (ii) Not earlier than August 14; and
- (iii) Not later than August 26.

(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 the 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 Arkadelphia School District approves of a school start date of August 12 for the 2024-2025 school year.

ADOPTED in regular agenda-planning session by the Board of Directors of the Arkadelphia School District on February 6, 2024.



PRESIDENT



Early Start Waiver - Need response by Monday at noon

Nikki Thomas <nikki.thomas@arkadelphiaschools.org>
To: All staff <all.staff@arkadelphiaschools.org>

Fri, Feb 2, 2024 at 11:19 AM

Good Morning and Happy Friday/Groundhog Day!

I don't know about you, but I hope Phil is right about Spring coming soon this year! :)

Please read the following information and respond to the attached survey no later than noon on Monday.

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."

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The advantages of this waiver:

- The fall and spring semesters would be closer to the same length. 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 May rather than extending into June.
- 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, JROTC, as well as others.

Having this waiver does not mean that we have to start earlier than August 19th, but it gives us the flexibility to do so if needed.

Let me or your PPC rep know if you have any questions prior to completing the survey. At this time, I do not believe any calendar options are suggested that would start earlier than the 14th or 19th, but the waiver is good for five years and may be needed in the future, if not this year.

Please complete the survey linked here.

Thank you,

Nikki Thomas, Superintendent

Once a Badger, Always a Badger!

"Love what you do, and love it in front of others." ~Fred Rogers

98 responses

Link to Sheets

Not accepting responses

Message for respondents

This form is no longer accepting responses

Summary

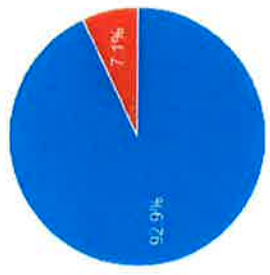
Question

Individual

Copy

I support a waiver to have the flexibility to start school as early as the week of August 12th rather than the week of August 19th as now required by law.

98 responses



Yes (91)
No (7)



School Early Start Waiver - Survey Link Included

Arkadelphia Public Schools <donotreply@arkadelphiaschools.org>
Reply-To: donotreply@arkadelphiaschools.org
To: nikki.thomas@arkadelphiaschools.org

Fri, Feb 2, 2024 at 11:39 AM

Dear APSD Parents/Guardians:

Please read the following information and respond to the attached survey no later than noon on Monday.

The member school districts of the Dawson Education Service Cooperative, which includes Arkadelphia, 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.

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Having this waiver does not mean that we have to start earlier than August 19th, but it gives us the flexibility to do so if needed.

Please complete the survey linked [here](#).

Thank you,

Nikki Thomas, Superintendent

172 responses

Not accepting responses

Message for respondents

This form is no longer accepting responses

Summary

Question Individual

I support a waiver to have the flexibility to start school as early as the week of August 12th, if needed, rather than the week of August 19th as now required by law.

172 responses

Copy

