



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Public School Waiver Request

District:	De Queen School District
LEA Number:	6701000
Superintendent:	Jason Sanders
Email:	jsanders@dequeenleopards.org
Contact for Waiver:	Jason Sanders
Contact Email:	jsanders@dequeenleopards.org
Contact Phone:	870-584-4312
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	De Queen School District
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 De Queen Mena 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.

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 88 days and the spring semester 90 days, a difference of only 2 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, band, cheer, 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.

De Queen School District
101 N 9th St
De Queen, AR 71832

January 22, 2024

Resolution Number: 2024A

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF DE QUEEN AUTHORIZING
THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER

WHEREAS, the De Queen 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, Act 1240 Waiver request for modification of school start date. A.C.A. 6-10-106; This is a 5 year waiver to enhance student opportunities. The specific waiver being requested is to allow the District to set their individual first day of class to be "no earlier than Monday, August 12";


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of De Queen hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request a waiver for Act 1240, request for modification of school start date. A.C.A. 6-10-106; This is a 5 year waiver to enhance student opportunities. The specific waiver being requested is to allow the District to set their individual first day of class to be "no earlier than Monday, August 12";

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 January 22, 2024 by the Board of Directors of De Queen



Dr. Kenneth Martin, President
De Queen Board of Directors

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Reed', written over a horizontal line.

Barry Reed, Secretary
De Queen Board of Directors

Note: Please consult with your district's legal counsel and ensure that the resolution complies with local laws and regulations before adopting it.

De Queen School District
101 N. 9th Street
De Queen, AR 71832

1/19/2024

To whom it may concern:

Members of the De Queen School District Personnel Committee would like to request on behalf of our faculty 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 the start day will be Monday, August 19. After many conversations and concerns from teachers, faculty, parents and students we would appreciate the approval of an early start date. We are requesting the allowance of a start day to be set for no earlier than Monday, August 12.

The advantages of this waiver would allow for more balance in the fall and spring semesters. Without the waiver our fall semester would be 84 days and the springs semester would be 94 days. A difference of ten days creates an issue for courses that are one semester in length.

Beginning school earlier allows for more instructional days prior to spring testing which should result in higher test scores and increased learning opportunities.

This waiver should have a positive impact on attendance at the end of the spring semester. The waiver would give greater assurance of the school ending in late May rather than extending into June. Some research indicates a decrease in learning past the Memorial Day Holiday.

We would appreciate the same privilege and opportunity given to charter and private schools regarding the start day of the school year.

Sincerely,





De Queen Public Schools

PO Box 950
De Queen, Arkansas 71832



January 19th, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the De Queen School District I would like to request 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 19th. For the 2024-2025 school year the start day will be Monday, August 19th. We would like the opportunity to start school next year on Monday August 12th. Please consider this letter as proof of stakeholder engagement that I have had personally with our patrons. I have talked with numerous stakeholders at multiple school and after school events. There is not much interest in our community for extending the school year past the Memorial Day Holiday unless it is for an emergency reason only. We have included several reasons in our application of why we feel this waiver is beneficial to the education of our students. I truly appreciate your time and attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason N. Sanders', written over a horizontal line.

Jason N. Sanders
Superintendent



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives

REPRESENTATIVE

DeAnn Vaught

Assistant Speaker Pro Tempore

266 Dairy Road

Hotatio, Arkansas 71842

870-832-2638 Business

deann.vaught@arkansashouse.org

DISTRICT 87

Counties:

Part Howard

Little River

Sevier

COMMITTEES:

Education

Agriculture, Forestry and Economic

Development

Chairperson,

Rules

Arkansas Legislative Council

1st Alternate,

Legislative Joint Auditing Committee

January 22, 2024

Ms. Courtney Salas-Ford
Chief Legal Counsel
Arkansas Department of Education
Four Capitol Mall, Room 301-A
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Ms. Salas-Ford:

Please accept this letter as my full support for the De Queen School District, as a part of the De Queen Mena Educational Cooperative, and their application to receive an Act 1240 waiver to permit them a school year start date earlier than August 19th.

Should this waiver be granted, it would allow the school district the chance to improve learning opportunities for their students. An earlier start date provides for a more balanced schedule for the fall and spring semesters and additional days to prepare for the state assessments. This would serve the students well as the extra preparation time would inevitably lead to higher test scores. With this waiver, the district would have the ability to end the school year before Memorial Day, which is the time when students begin to suffer from fatigue.

I appreciate your sincere consideration of this waiver application. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DeAnn Vaught".

DeAnn Vaught
State Representative
District 87

DV/ss