



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION

Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Mansfield
LEA Number:	6600-000
Superintendent:	Joe Staton
Email:	Joe.staton@mansfieldtigers.org
Contact for Waiver:	Joe Staton
Contact Email:	Joe.staton@mansfieldtigers.org
Contact Phone:	479-928-4006
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 Guy Fenter 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.

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF Mansfield School District AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER

DATE: FEBRUARY 12th, 2024

WHEREAS, the Mansfield 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, The member school districts of the Guy Fenter 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.

WHEREAS, 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 school district will create a calendar with an earlier start date which will remain the same length but 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.

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.

Additional Advantages:

- 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.**
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- 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.

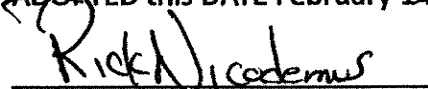
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of Mansfield School District hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request a waiver from A.C.A. 6-10-106, which establishes the first allowable day of class as the Monday of the week that contains August 19 to allow the first day of school to be as early as August 12, 2024.

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;

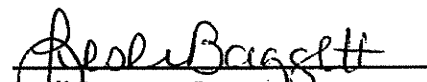
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Directors expresses its support for the waiver request and acknowledges the importance of flexibility in addressing the unique needs and circumstances of the district.

This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED this DATE February ^{12th} ~~14~~, 2024, by the Board of Directors of Mansfield School District.


 Rick Nicodemus, President
 Mansfield District Board of Directors

ATTEST:


 Lesli Baggett, Secretary
 Mansfield Board of Directors

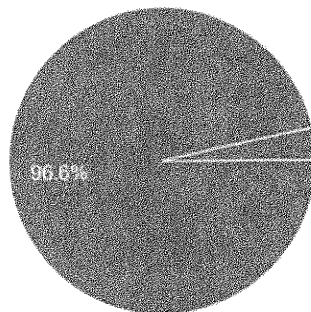
2. Evidence of stakeholder involvement, including teachers and student families.

A stakeholder survey was published for two weeks for staff, community members, parents and students. The breakdown of survey results follow.

Faculty Survey:

Are you for or against the Mansfield School District asking for the waiver that allows us to start school before the 19th of August. We would be able to start school as early as the 12th next year.

59 responses

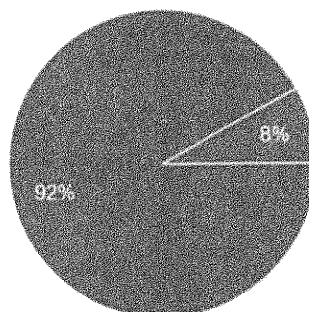


- Yes (I am for Mansfield submitting the waiver described above)
- No (I am against Mansfield submitting the waiver described above)

Community Survey:

Are you for or against the Mansfield School District asking for the waiver that allows us to start school before the 19th of August. We would be able to start school as early as the 12th next year.

125 responses



- Yes (I am for Mansfield submitting the waiver described above)
- No (I am against Mansfield submitting the waiver described above)