



**DISTRICT WAIVER ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

**District Name:** Bentonville Schools

**Superintendent:** Dr. Debbie Jones

**Email Address:** DJones@bentonvillek12.org

**Phone Number:** 479-254-5008                      **Date Waivers Granted:** 8/2015 & 12/2017

**School Year Waivers Implemented:** 8/2015

**Name of Charter School(s) Attended by District Students**

Arkansas Arts Academy, Haas Hall Academy Bentonville, and Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy.

**Waiver Topic:** 1- College Credit

**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the teachers, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any teacher feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - The District requested to reserve the right for certain abled eighth grade students to take and receive concurrent credit in future situations.

Teacher Impact -  
At this time there has been no teacher impact. The waiver has not been utilized.

**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the students, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any student feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - See above.

Student Impact -  
At this time there has been no student impact. The waiver has not been utilized.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted school growth including the graduation rate. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Graduation Rate -  
Our graduation rate has increased in the time period since this waiver was approved. Over a five year period the rate has improved from 88% to 93%.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted student achievement. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Student Achievement -

Our student achievement has improved in the time period since this waiver was approved. We have improved from 13 schools rated "A" and 6 schools rated "B" in 2016/17 to 16 rated "A" and 5 rated "B" in 2017/18 to 17 rated "A" and 4 rated "B" in 2018/19.

**Waiver Topic: 2- Credit Hours**

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**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the teachers, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any teacher feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - To allow for the teaching of simultaneous, embedded, and/or online courses and to allow for the integration of graduation credit courses with courses as necessary, Bentonville Schools requests a waiver of the seat time requirement.

Bentonville Schools is not, by this request asking for a waiver of graduation requirements. The applicant is requesting only a waiver of the 120 clock hour requirement. In accordance with prior ADE comments on this type of waiver request, the applicant hereby affirms that it will adhere to full curriculum alignment with Arkansas Frameworks, and will be glad to submit to the ADE and/or Charter Authorizing Panel any additional information that may be desired.

Teacher Impact -

Teachers have adjusted curriculum to meet the standards of college and high school so that students can earn dual credit. Teachers work directly with the ADE-DESE directors and the college deans to align college classes that best fit the ADE-DESE courses. Teachers are creating a seamless transition from high school to college in the subject area.

**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the students, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any student feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - See above.

Student Impact -

Students are able to achieve college credit by enrolling in the courses. The impact of earning the college credits while in high school saves the student and family money. Our students are learning about a college/career pathway in a college level environment before there is an expensive investment in post-secondary education. Students can earn six hours of college credit in one year or twelve hours if a student is in the program for two years.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted school growth including the graduation rate. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Graduation Rate -

Students in the program are diverse in academic performance, socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicity. Our program has smaller numbers in the classroom and our teachers spend more time with their students than the typical school schedule allows for teachers. Therefore, our teachers are able to

work personally with the students. Our students that have struggled academically or emotionally have had success in the smaller environment which have kept them in school. Our program is making an impact for at-risk students. The connection with the teacher is making a difference. Our graduation rate has increased in the time period since this waiver was approved. Over a five year period the rate has improved from 88% to 93%.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted student achievement. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Student Achievement -

Many of our students are earning their first college credits on their college transcripts. We are teaching them the importance of earning good grades which affect their GPAs long-term. Having the support of high school teachers helps students manage and follow through with assignments. Having their first courses completed for college will help with their next experiences in college.

**Waiver Topic: 3- Facilities**

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**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the teachers, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any teacher feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - Bentonville Schools seeks exemption from this portion of the Education Code to the extent that it requires that the facilities leased by Bentonville Schools for Alternative Learning Environments in the future to conform to the school facility standards defined in the Arkansas School Facility Manual. Bentonville Schools ensures that any and all facilities that it leases for academic purposes shall meet the requirements of all state and local health and safety codes, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Teacher Impact -

The administration worked with the leased spaces to make sure all required codes were met. Most of the leased spaces were at other educational sites and met the standards expected for education. Other sites that were used were in places of business that also meet the ADA guidelines. Teachers enjoyed collaboration with industry professionals as guest speakers, teachers, experts, to provide student internships, and to facilitate professional networking.

**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the students, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any student feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - See above.

Student Impact -

All students that used leased facilities had access to the equipment needed to learn the standards in the course curriculum. All students were accommodated that were on special services contracts and no one was denied the opportunity to participate in the program. Students enjoyed networking with industry professionals in these environments. Students also enjoyed increased instance of guest speakers, expert instruction, and internships by virtue of these geographic placements in the field offices and facilities.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted school growth including the graduation rate. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Graduation Rate -

In the program, students were able to leave the larger high school environment and attend a much smaller class where teachers had time to engage with the students consistently five days a week, allowing students to connect with an adult that supported them to graduate and perform well in all their classes.

Our graduation rate has increased in the time period since this waiver was approved. Over a five year period the rate has improved from 88% to 93%.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted student achievement. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Student Achievement -

Students that were in the program and placed in alternative learning spaces were successful in passing high school, college classes and earning certifications.

Our student achievement has improved in the time period since this waiver was approved. We have improved from 13 schools rated "A" and 6 schools rated "B" in 2016/17 to 16 rated "A" and 5 rated "B" in 2017/18 to 17 rated "A" and 4 rated "B" in 2018/19.

**Waiver Topic: 4- Grading Scale**

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**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the teachers, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any teacher feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - Bentonville Schools would like to reserve the right to develop a standards based grading system based on the use of rubrics for Arkansas Frameworks. The method of rubric scoring planned will be more rigorous than the standard uniform Grading Scale. Students will be required to present evidence of work on a scaled score. A conversation chart will be used so that Bentonville Schools can put a letter grade on a student's transcript. Bentonville Schools would continue to use the ADE electronic transcript. The applicant hereby affirms that it will adhere to full curriculum alignment with Arkansas Frameworks, and will be glad to submit to the ADE and/or Charter Authorizing Panel any additional information that may be desired.

Teacher Impact -

Former Bentonville Schools Superintendent, Mr. Mike Poore, requested a waiver in 2015 for Bentonville Schools to consider the development of a standards-based grading system for our secondary schools. We utilize a standards-based grading system at the elementary level (K-4) and are planning to develop and implement a standards-based grading system for grades 5-6 over the next two years. We are pursuing the research and input of Dr. Thomas Guskey to impact grading in grades 5-12.

**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the students, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any student feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - See above.

Student Impact -

We have continued to utilize a standards-based grading system at the elementary level (K-4) and are

planning to develop and implement a standards-based grading system for grades 5-6 over the next two years. Students are experiencing more rubrics and increased conversation about learning instead of grading. As our elementary students move to higher grade levels their expectations rubrics and standards-based conversations will continue.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted school growth including the graduation rate. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Graduation Rate -

Our graduation rate has increased in the time period since this waiver was approved. Over a five year period the rate has improved from 88% to 93%.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted student achievement. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Student Achievement -

Our student achievement has improved in the time period since this waiver was approved. We have improved from 13 schools rated "A" and 6 schools rated "B" in 2016/17 to 16 rated "A" and 5 rated "B" in 2017/18 to 17 rated "A" and 4 rated "B" in 2018/19.

**Waiver Topic: 5- Teacher Licensure**

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Original Rationale - Bentonville Schools seeks exemption from this portion of the Education Code to the extent that it requires teachers to be certified. Content experts, (computer programmers, professional musicians, licensed health care professionals, etc.) may be allowed to teach non-core classes. Any individuals hired as a result of this waiver will meet all other requirements to teach non-core classes such as Highly Qualified status if applicable, and the successful completion of criminal background and Child Maltreatment Registry checks. We see this as an enhancement to the relationship which we seek to develop with the business community. Teachers in non-core subjects not in possession of state certification or verified HQT status will be closely monitored and replaced if student achievement fails to meet or exceed the high expectations of Bentonville Schools. Under the exemption from 6-17-309 certification to teach grade or subject matter- portion of the Education Code, the applicant would request that Parental Notification would not be required.

Teacher Impact -

Hiring non-licensed instructors allows individuals employed in the industry an opportunity to pursue other interests, such as teaching students the current, critical technical skills in their area of expertise. Teachers are encouraged to pursue alternative licensure, which the majority have pursued and earned.

**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the students, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any student feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - See above.

Student Impact -

Instruction from teachers from professional fields allows students another perspective of real, world application. Students value the work done by a respected and accomplished industry expert and benefit from the leadership of those who have been recently involved in the industry.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted school growth including the graduation rate. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Graduation Rate -

Teachers from industry can explain to students the value of that education and certifications play in getting the positions in the field the students desire. Students understand the relationship of completing their education with the skills and experiences future employers want in their employees.

Our graduation rate has increased in the time period since this waiver was approved. Over a five year period the rate has improved from 88% to 93%.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted student achievement. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Student Achievement -

Students are highly engaged in the courses because of their interest level in the subject matter. Teachers who hold a degree in the area of the course and are knowledgeable of the professional equipment needed, help students become successful.

Our student achievement has improved in the time period since this waiver was approved. We have improved from 13 schools rated "A" and 6 schools rated "B" in 2016/17 to 16 rated "A" and 5 rated "B" in 2017/18 to 17 rated "A" and 4 rated "B" in 2018/19.

**Waiver Topic: 6- Flexible Schedule for an early start date**

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**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the teachers, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any teacher feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale -

Teacher Impact -

Bentonville teachers continue to express support for the early start date. Evidence of this is the unanimous vote of our Personnel Policy Committee on March 10, 2020 to adopt a calendar (pending waiver approval) for the 2021 - 2022 school year which again incorporates the Flexible Schedule for an Early Start date. PPC votes, as we are sure you are aware, are rarely unanimous.

**Briefly explain the original rationale used when the waivers were requested and describe how the use of the waivers have impacted the district, specifically the students, by waiver topic. Consider including any unintended benefits or consequences that have developed from the district's utilization of its waivers and any student feedback that the district has received. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Original Rationale - See above.

Student Impact -

Our secondary students have found our early start dates advantageous for two reasons: Our semester changes occur naturally over the winter holiday. Students taking final exams occur before the break - improving retention and eliminating loss of instruction time for extended reviews. More of the school year occurs prior to high stakes testing (A.P. Exams, MAP testing, etc.). Our elementary students share similar feedback - with the exception of some who have expressed that "it's too hot to go back that early in August".

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted school growth including the graduation rate. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Graduation Rate -

Our graduation rate has increased in the time period since this waiver was approved. Over a five year period the rate has improved from 88% to 93%.

**Provide a description of how the waivers have impacted student achievement. Please attach any data collected that demonstrates changes in the district.**

Impact on Achievement -

Our student achievement has improved in the time period since this waiver was approved. We have improved from 13 schools rated "A" and 6 schools rated "B" in 2016/17 to 16 rated "A" and 5 rated "B" in 2017/18 to 17 rated "A" and 4 rated "B" in 2018/19.

Submit completed forms to Kelly McLaughlin by email at [kelly.mclaughlin@arkansas.gov](mailto:kelly.mclaughlin@arkansas.gov).

Questions should be directed to Kelly McLaughlin by email at [kelly.mclaughlin@arkansas.gov](mailto:kelly.mclaughlin@arkansas.gov) or by phone at (501) 682-2130.