



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION

Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Charleston
LEA Number:	2402
Superintendent:	Melissa Moore
Email:	mmoore@tigersmail.org
Contact for Waiver:	Melissa Moore
Contact Email:	mmoore@tigersmail.org
Contact Phone:	479-965-7160
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.

**CHARLESTON SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION
AUTHORIZATION TO REQUEST WAIVER
SCHOOL START DATE**

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of the Charleston School District is steadfast in its commitment to delivering a high-quality education to every Charleston student;

WHEREAS, A.C.A. § 6-10-106 designates the first permissible day of classes as the Monday within the week containing August 19;

WHEREAS, for the school year 2024-2025, the aforementioned date aligns with Monday, August 19;

WHEREAS, the rules of the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education allow the district to request a waiver that will enhance student learning opportunities and/or increase equitable access to effective teachers;

WHEREAS, absent inclement weather, our school term would conclude on May 29. In the event of inclement weather, the end date extends significantly beyond Memorial Day; the district's stance is that students derive greater benefit from instruction prior to Memorial Day;

WHEREAS, a waiver for the School Start Date for the 2024-2025 School Year and the subsequent four years would enable the district to set the first day of the school year to be no earlier than Monday, August 12;

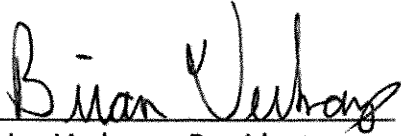
WHEREAS, the waiver offers benefits such as more balanced semesters, provides students with greater equitable access to effective teachers before testing, ultimately leading to earlier, and increased opportunities for student learning and success.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Charleston School Board of Directors hereby authorize the district superintendent or her designee to formally request a waiver from A.C.A. §6-10-106. This waiver is sought to establish the first allowable day of class as the Monday of the week that contains August 19 and to permit the commencement of the first day of school as early as August 12, 2024, for the 2024-2025 school year and the subsequent four years. This waiver will enhance student-learning opportunities by expanding equitable access to effective teachers before testing.

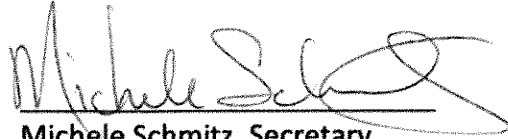
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent or her designee is hereby granted the authority to undertake all measures and actions for the submission of the waiver request. This includes furnishing any supplementary information or documentation as deemed necessary by the relevant authorities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Directors expresses its support for the waiver request and recognizes the significance of flexibility in addressing the distinctive needs and circumstances of the district.

The resolution becomes effective immediately upon adoption, duly adopted on January 22, 2024, by the Board of Directors of the Charleston School District.



Brian Verkamp, President
Charleston School District Board of Directors

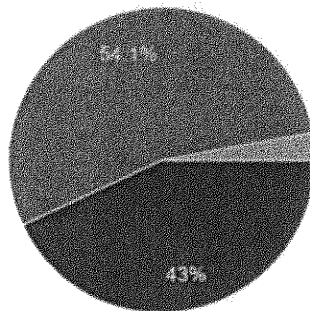


Michele Schmitz, Secretary
Charleston School District Board of Directors

Start Date Waiver Survey Feb 2024	Response	In Favor		Opposed	
	#	#	%	#	%
Community Members	5	5	100%	0	0%
Parents	93	88	95%	5	5%
Employees	74	71	96%	3	4%
Total	172	164	95%	8	5%

Role - please select the role that best describes you:

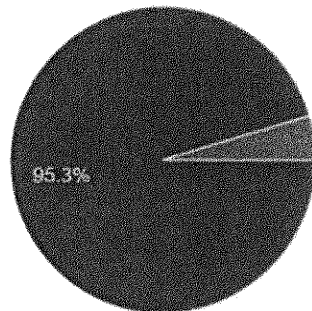
172 responses



- School District Employee
- Parent of a Current Student
- Community Member

Waiver to start school before Monday, August 19, 2024

172 responses



- YES, I am in SUPPORT of this proposed waiver for the start date
- NO, I am OPPOSED to the proposed waiver for the start date