



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Hope School District
LEA Number:	2903000
Superintendent:	Dr. Jonathan Crossley
Email:	jonathan.crossley@hpsdistrict.org
Contact for Waiver:	Dr. Jonathan Crossley
Contact Email:	jonathan.crossley@hpsdistract.org
Contact Phone:	870-722-2700
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 Southwest Arkansas 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 Thursday, August 1."

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.

**CERTIFIED COPY OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF HOPE SCHOOL
DISTRICT AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER FOR START DATE OF THE
2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR**

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of Hope School District (hereafter "HSD" and "Board") met in special session on February 29, 2024 at 1:00 at the HSD Administration Building in Hope, Arkansas; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is committed to providing a high-quality education to all students within the district; and,

WHEREAS, certain circumstances or regulations may require the district to seek waivers to better address the unique needs or challenges faced by the district; and,

WHEREAS, Arkansas law provides for the school year to begin no earlier than the Monday of the week containing August 19th; and,

WHEREAS, under this law the start of school varies from year to year, beginning some years as early as August 14th or as late as August 20th; and,

WHEREAS, a late start to the school year creates unbalanced semesters, reduces the preparation time for state testing, and limits flexibility in scheduling embedded professional development and inclement weather makeup days; and,

WHEREAS, Arkansas law allows school districts to request from the Arkansas State Board of Education a waiver from complying with certain state laws, including the statute governing school start dates; and,

WHEREAS, HSD Superintendent Jonathan Crossley desires to request that the Arkansas State Board of Education grant HSD a waiver that would allow HSD to begin the 2024-2025 school year no earlier than August 1, 2024; and,

WHEREAS, the Hope School District will utilize this waiver for the start time of the 2024-2025 school year to better plan and implement student instruction, and this waiver will give greater assurance of school ending in late May rather than extending into June; and,
WHEREAS, without this waiver, the fall semester will be 84 days while the spring semester will be 94 days, a difference of 10 days, and with the waiver, the fall semester will be 91 days and the spring semester 87 days, a difference of only 4 days.

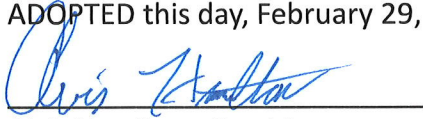
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of Hope School District hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request that the Arkansas State Board of Education grant HSD a waiver allowing HSD to begin the 2024-2025 school year no earlier than August 12, 2024, and recommends its approval by the State Board of Education; and,

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; and,

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 day, February 29, 2024, by the Board of Directors of the Hope School District.



Alvis Hamilton, President
Hope School District Board of Directors

ATTEST:



Kathryn Dickinson, Secretary
Hope School District Board of Directors

Section 1 of 2

Hope Public Schools Calendar Survey

Please help provide input as the Hope School Board determines the calendar for the 2024/2025 school year.

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. [Change settings](#)

After section 1 Continue to next section

Section 2 of 2

Calendar Options

HPS Certified PPC has drafted three potential calendars for the 2024/2025 school year. All options have 178 student days, open house, two parent teacher conferences, teacher workdays at the start of each grading period and six professional development days. Students and staff are present for the same amount of time, it is just broken up differently.

Option 1 is a traditional calendar. The earliest we can start with this option is August 19th per Arkansas Department of Education. We preserved the traditional breaks and have a finish day of June 4.

Option 2 is a hybrid calendar with a late July start and early June finish. This allows for unit planning with 4 or 5 weeks of school split up with week breaks. April and May have 4 day weekends included to allow for testing window requirements.

Option 3 is a hybrid calendar with a mid-July start and a late May finish. The breaks during the year are the same as option 2, the only difference is starting a week earlier to finish a week earlier.

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Hope Public Schools 2024/2025 Calendar Survey

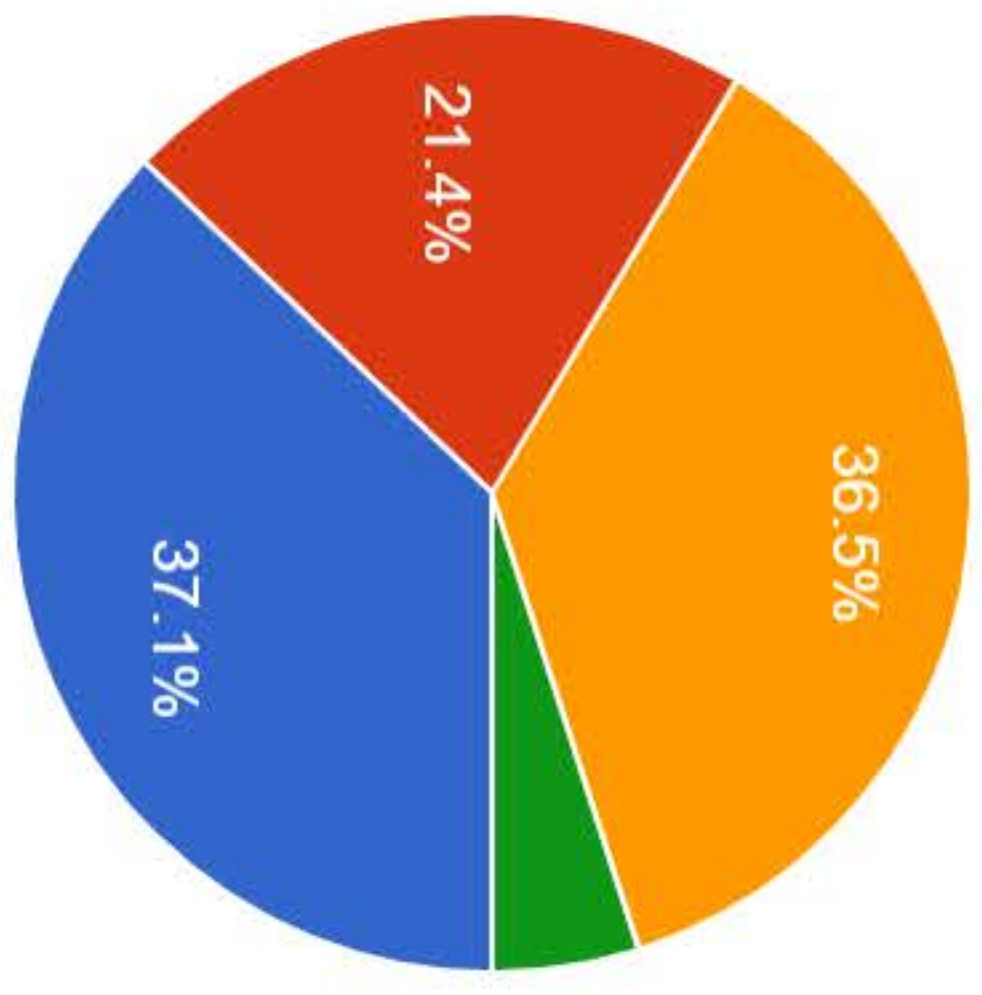
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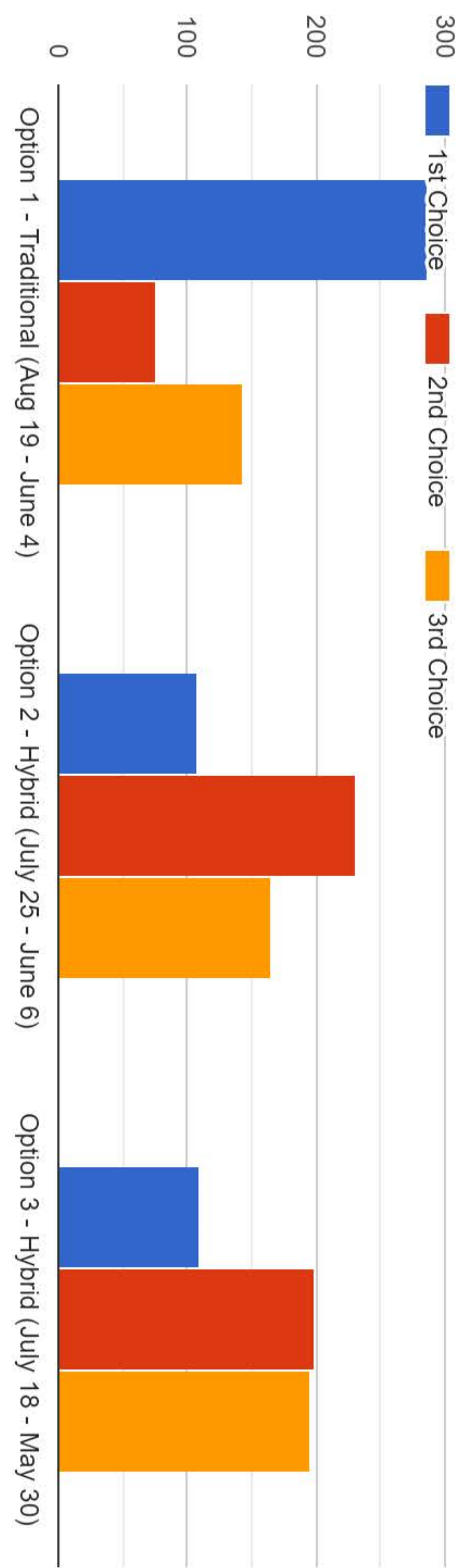


- Hope Public School Staff
- Hope Public School Parent/Guardian
- Hope Public School Student
- Hope Community Member

Calendar Options

Please rank the calendar options with 1 being your top choice and 3 being your last choice

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SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS EDUCATION COOPERATIVE

870-777-3076

 www.swaec.org

 phoebe.bailey@swaec.org

To: Legal Department
Arkansas Department of Education

From: Phoebe Bailey, Director

Date: February 29, 2024

RE: Request for Waiver from School Start Date

One member school district of the Southwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative is 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. We are requesting to be placed on the agenda for the March meeting of the state board of education to consider our waiver.

Please consider granting our request for a waiver as we feel that this would allow for a more balanced semester and allow for more days of instruction before the state assessment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Phoebe Bailey

Phoebe Bailey, Director