



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY  
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

## **Act 1240 Waiver Request**

<b>District:</b>	<b>Horatio School District</b>
<b>LEA Number:</b>	<b>6703000</b>
<b>Superintendent:</b>	<b>Gayla Youngblood</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<b>gyoungblood@horatioschools.org</b>
<b>Contact for Waiver:</b>	<b>Gayla Youngblood, Horatio School District</b>
<b>Contact Email:</b>	<b>gyoungblood@horatioschools.org</b>
<b>Contact Phone:</b>	<b>870-832-1940 (office); 870-582-4408 (cell)</b>
<b>Date Received by DESE:</b>	

**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

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>School Start Date</b>
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	<b>A.C.A. 6-10-106</b>
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	<b>5 years</b>
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	<b>Arkansas Virtual Academy</b>
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To</b>	<b>K-12</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<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 Horatio School District is 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, 2024.

The specific waiver being requested is to allow our school district to set the 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 include, but are not limited to:

- A. Horatio School District is currently on a traditional (178) day calendar. With this waiver, the number of instructional days for the fall and spring semesters would be more closely aligned. 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 87 days and the spring semester 91 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. An alternative solution for unbalanced semesters is to not finish 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 or learning loss from an extended holiday break.**
- B. There would be an increase in the number of days of instruction prior to spring testing rather than days of instruction after spring testing.**
- C. 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.**
- D. Student engagement is much higher at the beginning of the school year versus the ending of the year. Engaged students equate to more learning at any level.**

**2. Provide a detailed explanation of how the services being waived will be provided for students.**

**There will not be a loss of services for students under this waiver. Students' learning will be enhanced due to the number of days prior to spring testing and students who are much more ready for learning in the the beginning of a school year versus after Memorial Day.**

**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.**

# HORATIO SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gayla Youngblood, Superintendent  
870-832-1940

**Horatio School Board:**  
Elizabeth Walker, President  
Joe Jones, Secretary  
Pollyanna Smith  
Terri Irvan  
Gwen Devaiser  
Greg Litchford  
Josh Butler

January 22, 2024  
Resolution Number: 6703-2024-1

## **A Resolution of the Board of Directors of Horatio School District Authorizing the District to Request a Waiver**

WHEREAS, the Horatio 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 District seeks to obtain a waiver for A.C.A. 6-10-106 which requires the start of school for FY25 to be on or after August 19, 2024. The Early Start Waiver for Horatio School District is for the week prior to August 19, 2024. Reasoning for this request are as follows but not limited to: 1. The number of days for instruction—the first semester would more closely align to the number of days for the second semester. 2. There would be an increase in the number of days of instruction prior to spring testing rather than days after spring testing. 3. The ending of the school term would align to community needs for the last day of school before Memorial Day. 4. It would allow the district to keep needed professional development days embedded within the school year for continuous professional learning rather than before the school term. 5. For inclement weather situations, it would allow a few days of makeup before June should inclement weather or other disaster prohibit instruction during the school term.

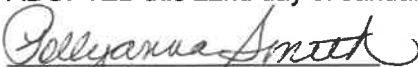
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of Horatio School District hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request a waiver for The Early Start Waiver from reasoning previously stated.

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 22nd day of January 2024, by the Board of Directors of Horatio School District.



Pollyanna Smith, Vice-President  
Horatio School District Board of Directors



Joe Jones, Secretary  
Horatio School District Board of Directors

**Every Learner, Every Dream, Every Day**  
204 Lawson Lane, Horatio, AR 71842  
Phone: (870) 832-1940 Fax: (870) 832-4465  
[www.horatioschools.org](http://www.horatioschools.org)

# ***Horatio School District***

**Stakeholder Data**

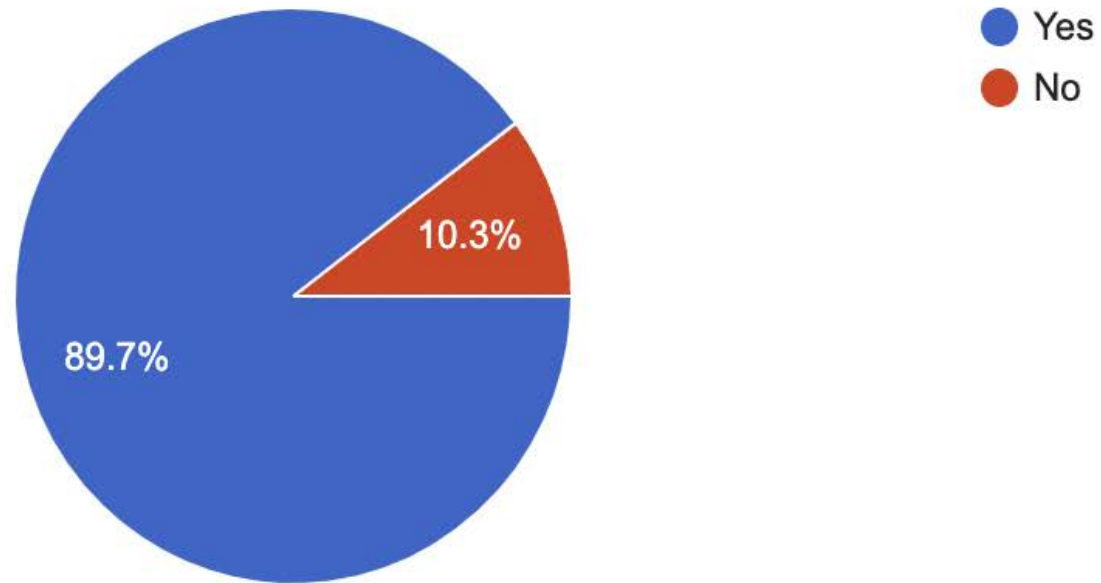
**Request for ACT 1240 Waiver  
for Early Start**

*January 2024*



# Horatio School District should apply for the ACT 1240 Start of School Wavier?

78 responses



## SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK FROM SURVEY:

Why or why not?

23 responses

Starting a week early allows us to get out earlier in May

To ensure more instructional time for students.

We should get the waiver so we can have more student preparation days before state testing.

More flexibility with how the calendar days fall to even out the semester weeks and days.

Getting out in May is better than June.

Flexibility- opens the possibility for a continuous learning calendar, provides room for inclement weather days as well.

This flexibility not only will allow for more preparation for testing but also will help with days missed due to inclement weather or other natural disasters.

Starting school earlier would be better.



I believe it's better for students, their families, the school district and their employees.

I don't feel we need to start any sooner than what we already do. We are always out of school before June anyway.

to help school on 9 weeks

Help us get out by the end of May.

For the reasons stated, even out the semester dates.

Arkansas Weather

Help with missing AMI days lost!

It would be nice to finish the first semester before Christmas.





I believe having a more flexible window for the first day of school would allow the administration to comprise a schedule that would be innovative and could possibly draw students to our district.

It allows the district more flexibility to meet the needs of our students, and it also balances out the number of days in each semester.

I agree with the above listed.

It should remain up to each individual school. They know the community.

I am for it. Sounds like it will benefit everyone involved

The suggested waiver provides more flexibility and benefits for students and staff.

It will make it easier on the teachers and students to adjust to unexpected days out.

