

Board of Education

ACTION

TITLE: Consider Adoption of a Resolution Endorsing the Superintendent's Waiver Request to the State Board of Education Concerning the Allowable First Day of School

DATE: October 19, 2017

RESPONSIBLE ADMINISTRATOR: Dr. Gordon Floyd
Deputy Superintendent

BACKGROUND/CONSIDERATIONS:

Arkansas law (A.C.A. 6-10-106) provides that the first day of the school must be "on or after the Monday of the week in which August 19 falls." Most years this means that school will start around the middle of August. (This year, for example, we could have started school on Monday, August 14, although we chose to begin on Tuesday, August 15.) However, August 19 falls on a Sunday in 2018, so the earliest we can begin school under the law is Monday, August 20. This later start date creates a number of disadvantages for us. It creates a fall semester that is considerably shorter than the spring semester. It reduces the number of teaching days before the state testing period. It pushes the end of the school year later into the spring thereby increasing the chance of extending the year into June if we have to make up days due to inclement weather.

For these reasons we have joined other school districts in our cooperative area in petitioning the State Board of Education for a waiver allowing us flexibility in scheduling the first day of school. It is important to note that the waiver would not require us to begin earlier, but would offer the flexibility to choose the starting date that best fits the needs of our district and our students. The waiver would allow us to begin classes as early as August 13. But after preliminary discussions with CTA and informal visits with parents, we will probably propose a starting date of August 15, the same date as this year.

A resolution from the School Board would strengthen the petition as it would demonstrate support from our governing body. We have already secured a letter of support from the Fort Smith Classroom Teachers Association.

RECOMMENDATION: The administration recommends the Board adopt the attached resolution.

If the Board agrees, the motion would be in two parts:

(1) Move to waive the reading of the resolution.

(2) Move to adopt the resolution as presented.