



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY  
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

## **Public School Waiver Request**

<b>District:</b>	<b>North Little Rock Rock School District</b>
<b>LEA Number:</b>	6002000
<b>Superintendent:</b>	Gregory J. Pilewski, Ed.D.
<b>Email:</b>	pilewskig@nlrsd.org
<b>Contact for Waiver:</b>	Jacob Smith
<b>Contact Email:</b>	humanresources@nlrsd.org
<b>Contact Phone:</b>	501-771-8009
<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>	Arkansas Teacher Licensure
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arkansas Code Ann. 6-15-1004, Qualified Teachers in Every Public School Classroom</li> <li>Arkansas Code Ann. 6-17-309, Licensure—Waiver</li> <li>Arkansas Code Ann. 6-17-401, Teacher's License Requirement</li> <li>Arkansas Code Ann. 6-17-902, Definition (The Arkansas Teacher's Salary Law)</li> <li>Arkansas Code Ann. 6-17-919, Warrants Void Without Valid License and Contract</li> <li>Standard 4-D.1 of the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation, Licensure and Renewal</li> <li>ADE Rules Governing Educator Licensure, including Section 7, Licensure Exceptions</li> </ul>
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	5 years (1/1/25 to 12/31/30)
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	Arkansas Connections Academy
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To</b>	PK-12
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance Student Learning Opportunities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote Innovation <input checked="" 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 applicant requests a waiver from the listed statutes and rules, to the extent that it may be necessary to hire a diverse group of professionals who possess outstanding credentials and work history in the various areas of expertise in their field. This could mean the professional does not hold or possess a teaching license.

Any individual hired as a result of the waiver will meet all other requirements, such as Arkansas Qualified Teacher (AQT) status if applicable, the successful completion of criminal background and Child Maltreatment Central Registry checks, and other North Little Rock School District (NLRSD) Human Resources hiring qualifications and standards. While this could result in hiring a non-licensed teacher in a core or non-core content area the applicant understands we cannot waive Special Education certification due to federal law. The applicant seeks to employ and partner with the best-qualified teacher for any content area regardless of licensure and requests the ability to hire the most qualified person for the position.

The NLRSD has upheld the “grow your own” initiative and the ACT 1240 waiver would assist in this endeavor. With the help of the waiver, we have hired a number of paraprofessionals working in our district as capable and effective teachers. The waiver has removed roadblocks that would have otherwise caused the district to lose the employee to another educational entity that would allow them to be the teacher of record.

The NLRSD is also committed to the focus on minority recruitment and retention. Currently, the district has been able to hire very qualified minority teachers under the waiver which includes individuals who have degrees in STEM and ESL. The waiver has awarded the district with a recruitment tool that has allowed us to

continue to provide the quality of education students deserve as well as create a teaching staff that is indicative of our diverse student population.

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

Due to the national teacher shortage, the district has to rely on innovative measures to ensure a qualified teacher is available to every student for every subject matter. The district does not want to solely rely on substitutes in the classrooms in which a licensed teacher is not available. Our goals are not only to retain our current staff and grow them into qualified educators but to also afford students the opportunity to learn from individuals of different educational and cultural backgrounds. Although traditional educator preparation programs are ideal, there are times when exceptional educators are created from alternative pathways, such as the PPTL pathway. This particular pathway requires an educator to be in the classroom for three years. An emergency teaching waiver is only good for a maximum of two years. With the ACT 1240 waiver as a safeguard, the district is able to retain educators on this pathway and support them in the process. The waiver is a great talking point in recruiting new educators. We have seen the presence of the waiver provide confidence for individuals who want to enter the education field.

**3. Provide a detailed explanation of how the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver.**

The district will track individuals who are hired through the Act 1240 waiver. This will include monitoring the progress of each teacher in obtaining a full Arkansas Teaching License. The district will ensure professional development, plans of study, an assignment of mentors for novice teachers, and ensure compliance with State requirements through the process of attaining full Arkansas Teacher Licensure. Currently, the district has a formal process in place to track an unlicensed educator's progress in obtaining a standard teaching license. The district, at the time of hire, requires a signed plan of study, which provides a maximum of three years to obtain a standard license. Failure to do so will result in the employee not receiving a renewal of their employment contract. The district has partnered with higher educational institutions and businesses to promote our "grow your own" model.

The Act 1240 waiver has allowed the NLRSD to fill teaching positions with qualified individuals who otherwise would not be able to be filled with existing applicant pools. Fewer vacancies occur and positions have to be posted for a shorter length of time because the district can hire alternatively licensed individuals. The NLRSD currently has 145 alternatively licensed educators, and of those, 70 teachers are licensed under the current Act 1240 waiver.

## Waiver Request #2

<b>Topic:</b>	Flexible Scheduling
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arkansas Code Ann 6-16-102, School Day Hours</li> <li>• 1-A.5.2 ("Planned Instructional Day") of the ADE Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation</li> <li>• Standard 1-A.5 Each public school district shall comply with the laws of the State of Arkansas and the rules of the Division regarding class size and teaching load.</li> <li>• Standard 1-A.6 Each public school district shall adopt instructional material consistent with the public school district's curriculum and the Arkansas Academic Standards and educational goals established by the State Board of Education in accordance with the laws of the State of Arkansas and the rules of the Division</li> </ul>
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	5 years (1/1/25 to 12/31/30)
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	Arkansas Connections Academy
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To</b>	PK-12
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance Student Learning Opportunities <input checked="" 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.**

"Planned instructional time" means regularly scheduled class periods offering organized teaching of a Department of Education-sanctioned class curriculum. Due to the nature of the Student Focused Learning (personalized learning) as outlined in this application, the applicant is requesting a waiver of the Planned Instructional Day requirements. The district has programmatic offerings at all schools, while meeting all curriculum requirements, are capable of being provided in less than thirty (30) hours per week for some students. The applicant requests to allow students to access content coursework online and blended instruction through a self-paced model. Lead teachers and administration attend training in the summer and throughout the school year. Special needs students' IEPs will be followed.

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

With this waiver, the district will not be required to provide a school day that averages six hours a day or 30 hours per week to remote students. The district will also be able to provide adjustments to in-person student schedules to assist with their needs.

Students in a virtual setting have some opportunity to work asynchronously at their own time, place, and pace.

The waiver will assist in credit recovery to ensure students are able to get back on track by allowing the students the time they need to complete the needed assignments.

The waiver allows for all of the schools in the NLRSD to optimize time, space, staff, and facilities to assist in innovations in teaching strategies and curriculum for our diverse population of students.

**3. Provide a detailed explanation of how the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver.**

The district will be closely monitoring various metrics to assess its effectiveness. Monitoring enrollment, completion of assignments, and academic progress compared to students in traditional settings are all important aspects of evaluating the impact of this new approach. This data will likely provide valuable insights into how well the digital blended learning model is meeting the needs of students and whether adjustments are needed to optimize its effectiveness.

**Waiver Request #3**

<b>Topic:</b>	Class Size and Teaching Load for Kindergarten through 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Arkansas Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load Appendix Section 1-A.6 ("Class size and Teaching Load") of the ADE Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation.</li></ul>
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	5 years (1/1/25 to 12/31/30)
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	Arkansas Connections Academy
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To</b>	PK-12
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance Student Learning Opportunities <input checked="" 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.**

To meet the needs of the digital, blended learner, the applicant wishes to request a waiver of the Class Size and Teaching Load requirements for grades K-4. Student Focused Learning will help meet the needs of students at NLRSD. Teachers will be assigned to learning pods to support individual student academic needs. Special needs class sizes will not be waived. Teachers must meet the AQT rules and NLRSD Human Resources criteria. This means that there is not an assigned schedule per course period as in a traditional school setting. Teachers at one time could facilitate more students in a given content area, due to the alternative structured delivery model. The applicant will cap face-to-face teacher courses at 180. Teachers with over 150 students will be paid according to the number of students over the 150 limit.

The district stands to gain significant benefits by waiving class size limitations and alleviating teaching load constraints. This strategic move empowers students with greater flexibility and resources to immerse themselves fully in the learning process, fostering enriched educational experiences and facilitating individualized attention and support where needed.

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

All students receiving educational services in the NLRSD will have access to a qualified teacher. The delivery of instruction within this model may be synchronous or asynchronous and will provide students with access to courses that are offered in-person in the district and will also allow students access to courses that may not be immediately available due to a teacher shortage.

**3. Provide a detailed explanation of how the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver.**

K-12 interim and nine-week grades will be monitored to determine the academic achievement of all students. The district will also monitor enrollment, student engagement, and completion of assignments of all students receiving instruction through a digital or blended learning delivery model.



# ***North Little Rock School District***

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## **RESOLUTION OF THE NORTH LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**WHEREAS, the North Little Rock School District is a public school district located in Central Arkansas; and**

**WHEREAS, the North Little Rock School District desires to request a waiver from Ark. Code Ann. § 6- 10-106, concerning the date on which a school year can begin, to begin the school year on an earlier date to avoid: the creation of an unbalanced semester created by a late start to the school year; reduction in the preparation time for state standardized testing; and**

**WHEREAS, Act 1240 of 2015, codified at Ark. Code Ann. §6-15-103, allows a public school district to petition the Arkansas State Board of Education for all or some of the waivers granted to an open enrollment public charter school that draws students from the public school district; and**

**WHEREAS, Arkansas Virtual Academy is an open-enrollment public charter school that draws students from the North Little Rock School District; and**

**WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Board of Education granted Arkansas Virtual Academy a series of waivers, including a waiver Ark. Code Ann. §6-10-106.**

**NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED BY THE NORTH LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, THAT:**

- 1. Pursuant to Act 1240 of 2015, codified at Ark. Code Ann. §6-15-103, the North Little Rock School District Board of Directors hereby requests the following waiver from the Arkansas State Board of Education:**
  - a. Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-106.**
- 2. The North Little Rock School District wishes to petition the Arkansas State Board of Education to grant it the waiver listed in Section 1. of this Resolution including teacher licensure, flexible scheduling, and class size/teaching load.**



# North Little Rock School District

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3. The North Little Rock School District Board of Directors voted to approve this Resolution on May 2, 2024, during an open, regularly scheduled meeting and further authorized its Superintendent to take such actions necessary to submit a copy of this Resolution along with supporting documentation to the Arkansas State Board of Education.

By: Cindy Temple  
Board President

By: Angela Pezner  
Board Secretary