



Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	White County Central School District,
LEA Number:	7304000
Superintendent:	Mr. Pharis Smith
Email:	psmith@wccbears.org
Contact for Waiver:	Mr. Pharis Smith
Contact Email:	psmith@wccbears.org
Contact Phone:	501-729-3992
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:	2024-2025 School Early Start Date
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	Arkansas Annotated Code 6-10-106; Uniform dates for beginning and end of school year
Duration Requested:	5 Years
Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver	Arkansas Virtual Academy and Arkansas Connections Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To	All grades: White County Central School District
PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)	<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.

The member school districts of the Wilbur D. Mills 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.

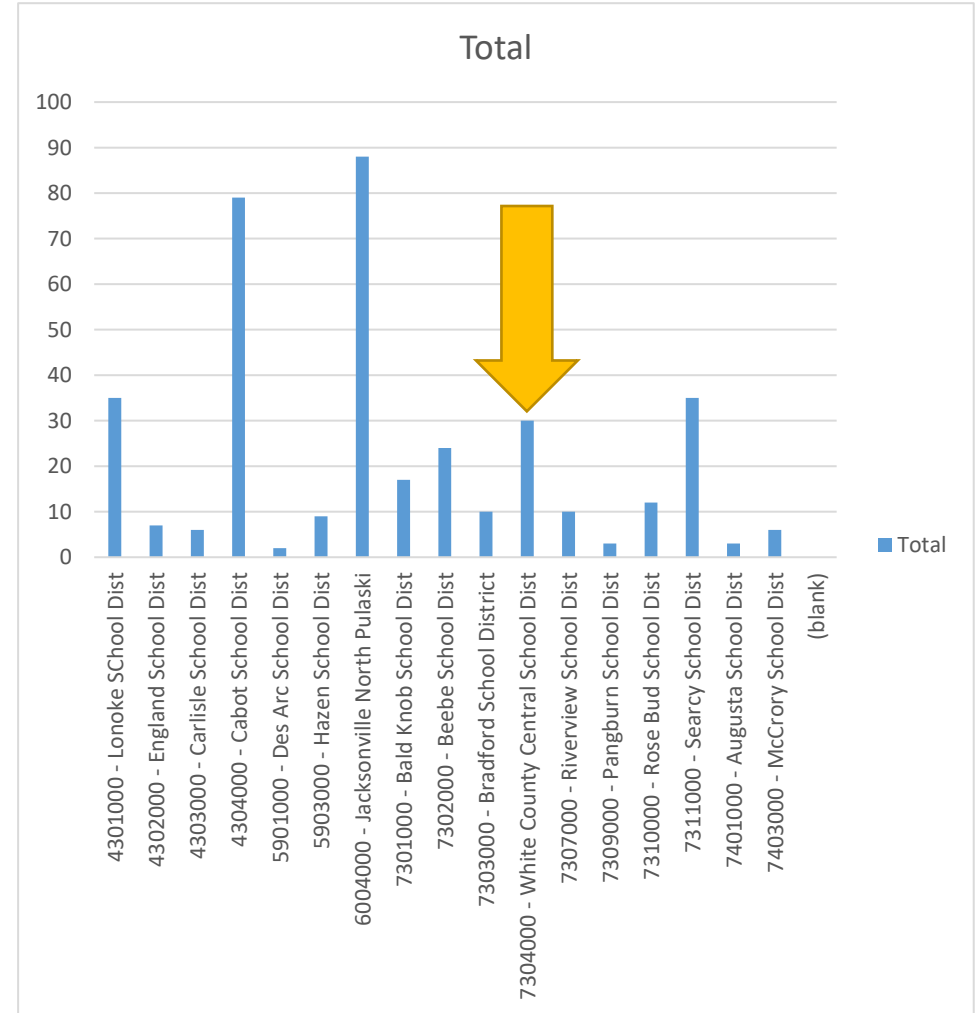
The school districts will create a calendar with an earlier start date which will provide them with more flexibility throughout the school year. The school year will remain the same length. It simply allows a district to continue with a school calendar structured as closely as possible to the current 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.

Number of Students From WDMESC Districts Enrolled in Arkansas Virtual Academy

Row Labels	Count of Grade
4301000 - Lonoke School Dist	35
4302000 - England School Dist	7
4303000 - Carlisle School Dist	6
4304000 - Cabot School Dist	79
5901000 - Des Arc School Dist	2
5903000 - Hazen School Dist	9
6004000 - Jacksonville North Pulaski	88
7301000 - Bald Knob School Dist	17
7302000 - Beebe School Dist	24
7303000 - Bradford School District	10
7304000 - White County Central School Dist	30
7307000 - Riverview School Dist	10
7309000 - Pangburn School Dist	3
7310000 - Rose Bud School Dist	12
7311000 - Searcy School Dist	35
7401000 - Augusta School Dist	3
7403000 - McCrory School Dist	6
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Grand Total	376



Number of Students From WDMESC Districts Enrolled in Arkansas Connections Academy

Wilbur D. Mills Education Service Cooperative	
School District	AR Connections Academy Enrollment By District
<i>Augusta</i>	3
<i>Bald Knob</i>	9
<i>Beebe</i>	24
<i>Bradford</i>	0
<i>Cabot</i>	90
<i>Carlisle</i>	8
<i>Des Arc</i>	1
<i>England</i>	18
<i>Hazen</i>	11
<i>Jacksonville North Pulaski</i>	14
<i>Lonoke</i>	12
<i>McCrary</i>	17
<i>Pangburn</i>	8
<i>Riverview</i>	15
<i>RoseBud</i>	8
<i>Searcy</i>	29
<i>White County Central</i>	7

Board Resolution

Documentation of Staff and Student Parent Feedback