



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION

Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Harrison School District
LEA Number:	050300
Superintendent:	Dr. Stewart Pratt
Email:	spratt@hps.k12.ar.us
Contact for Waiver:	Susan Gilley
Contact Email:	sgilley@hps.k12.ar.us
Contact Phone:	870-741-7600
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 or Arkansas Connections Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Waiver 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 Ozarks Unlimited Resources 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.
- Beginning school earlier automatically results in more days of instruction before spring assessments. More days of instruction will result in greater performance gains.

• 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.

Evidence / Data Collection to Support the Waiver

Stakeholder evidence:

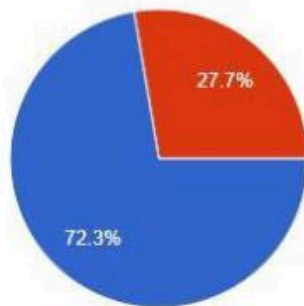
Survey data of staff, parents, and community. Survey was opened to the community through social media.

- a) **Parents and Community** - 72.3% of responses are in favor of the Harrison School District seeking a five (5) year waiver to move the start of school to the week August 12th falls.

Question 2) 2024-2025 Calendar - Under Arkansas Law the earliest start date for 2024-2025 is Monday, August 19, 2024. The district wishes to submit an early start date request to Arkansas DESE. If approved, the waiver would allow the district to begin school no earlier than the Monday of the week August 12th falls. This application would be for a 5 year waiver (2024-2028). The waiver (if approved) provides more flexibility for school breaks and inclement weather issues. Choose which option you prefer regarding the start of school for the 2024-2025 school year.

 Copy

791 responses



- Option A) I am in favor of seeking the waiver to start school on the week August 12th falls, and providing our district greater flexibility in creating a calendar that best fits our community.
- Option B) I am not in favor of seeking a waiver. I wish school to start on the week August 19th falls. I understand that this may potentially affect some of the "breaks" currently built into the school calendar.

b) Staff Support - Classified Staff PPC

- Classified PPC Meeting February 5, 2024
- Classified PPC Meeting Recording approving of the district applying for a waiver to begin school the years of 2024-2028 on the week August 12 falls
- Meeting [Recording of Approval](#)

c) Staff Support - Licensed Staff PPC

- Licensed PPC Meeting February 6, 2024
- Licensed PPC Meeting Recording approving of the district applying for a waiver to begin school for the years of 2024-2028 on the week August 12 falls.
- Meeting [Recording of Approval](#)

d) Harrison Board of Education Approval

- Harrison Board of Education Resolution and Unofficial Feb 5, 2024 Board Minutes supporting the district to apply for an Act 1240 Waiver of Early School Start Date Waiver

- A Meeting of the Board of Education Harrison School District No. 1

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- **MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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<u>1</u>	<u>Special</u>	<u>PD Center, Room 1</u>	<u>5:30</u>	<u>February 5</u>	<u>2024</u>
NO.	KIND OF MEETING	MEETING PLACE	TIME	MO/DAY	YEAR

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- **MEMBERS**

- **PRESENT**

- **ABSENT**

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- Mitch Magness

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- **Presiding Officer**

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- Mindy Both

- Nate Wilson

- Mark Martin

- Jon Burnside

- Kelly McLaughlin

- Marisa Keylon

- Dr. Stewart Pratt

- Linda Alford

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- **OTHERS PRESENT:** Jacob Mills, Fred Wilson, Lewis Villines, Christine Reading.

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- The Harrison Board of Education met in a special session in Room 1 of the Professional Development Center at 5:30 p.m., February 5, 2024.

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- Mitch Magness called the meeting to order.

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- **CONSIDER 2023-2024 CALENDAR WAIVER**

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- With many Arkansas schools being affected by weather in the month of January, Arkansas DESE provided guidance with Commissioner's memo COM-24-066 on 1/25/2024. Additionally, Arkansas Education Secretary Jacob Oliva

and Deputy Commissioner Stacy Smith addressed Superintendents to communicate options for the district calendar for the 2023-2024 school year.

- The Inclement Weather Calendar Waiver, if approved, would allow the Harrison School District to convert from a 178-day calendar to an alternate calendar (hours). With proper support documentation and approval, Harrison Schools may convert to the alternate calendar and be able to adjust for inclement weather make up days.

Administration recommends that the Board review and approve the attached waiver request allowing the Harrison School District to apply for the Inclement Weather Calendar Waiver.

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- 024-085:5:33 Mark Martin moved, with a second by Kelley McLaughlin, to approve the waiver requesting that the Harrison School District apply for the Inclement Weather Calendar Waiver. Motion carried.
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● **CONSIDER 2024-2025 CALENDAR START DATE WAIVER RESOLUTION**

- The member school districts of the Ozark Unlimited Resource 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 would be Monday, August 19, 2024. 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, 2024, and on or after the Monday of the week August 12 falls in subsequent years.

- Harrison Public Schools has joined with other O.U.R. Cooperative school districts are applying for a waiver from Ark 6-10-106. A Board Resolution would strengthen our petition to the State Board of Education.

- Administration recommends that the Board review and approve, by written resolution, the attached waiver request affecting the allowable first day of school.

- Mark Martin, the Boards legislative liaison, added that he has been getting feedback from the State pertaining to districts going from a day's calendar to an hour's calendar. Mr. Martin said that the State of Arkansas will most likely see a major flip in calendars moving from days to hours.

- Additionally, Dr. Pratt said the best thing about an hour's calendar is that it provides flexibility, face to face instruction with students still going as close to 178 days as possible.

- 024-086:5:40 Jon Burnside moved, with a second by Marisa Keylon, to approve by written resolution the waiver request affecting the allowable first day of school. Motion carried.

- The Board of Education meeting was called out of regular session at 5:40 and into special session for the student hearing at 5:42.

● **ADJOURNMENT**

● **Approved:** _____
● **Date**

● _____
● **President or Chairman** **Secretary**

● **Link to Board Minutes for February 5, 2024 - [Link Here](#)**

**HARRISON SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

2024-2028 Regional Early Start Date

WHEREAS the Harrison School District Board of Directors met in a special, open, and properly-convened board meeting on February 5, 2024, in the Professional Development Center Room 1; and

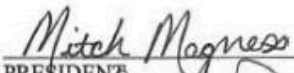
Whereas 6 members were present, a quorum was declared by the chair; and

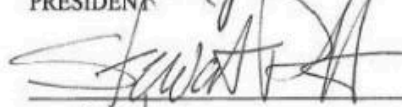
WHEREAS A.C.A. § 6-10-106 requires the first day of the school year for student attendance in the public elementary and secondary schools of the State of Arkansas shall be:

- (i) On or after the Monday of the week in which August 19 falls;
 - (ii) Not earlier than August 14; and
 - (iii) Not later than August 26.
- (B) The date for beginning the school year shall be determined by the board of directors of the school district.
- (C) Labor Day shall be celebrated as a school holiday in all the school districts of the state, and school shall not be held on that date.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Harrison School District approves of a school start date of no earlier than Monday, August 12th for the 2024-2025 school year, and on or after the Monday of the week August 12 falls in subsequent years.

ADOPTED in special session by the Board of Directors of the Harrison School district February 5, 2024.



PRESIDENT


Sept.

- Board Resolution supporting application of Act 1240 Early Start Date Waiver.
- Link to Board Resolution for Act 1240 Waiver of Early School Start Date - [Link Here](#)