



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Springdale School District
LEA Number:	7207
Superintendent:	Jared Cleveland
Email:	jccleveland@sdaled.org
Contact for Waiver:	Jared Cleveland
Contact Email:	jccleveland@sdaled.org
Contact Phone:	479-750-8800
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

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
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 Northwest Arkansas 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.

Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-106(a)(2) allows DESE to grant a waiver to a school district to begin on an earlier date if there exists a material and substantial reason due to very exceptional or emergency circumstances such as inclement weather. Northwest Arkansas consistently loses multiple student instruction days due to inclement weather. Allowing an earlier start date would allow additional student instruction days in August to offset the inevitable lost student instruction days in winter.

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 semester-length classes.
- The alternative solution for unbalanced semesters is to end the fall semester after Christmas break. This results in students taking final exams after two weeks of being 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 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 in fall 2024 on the same relative date as they did in fall 2023, 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 be shared with students and families. This timeframe will provide more flexibility throughout the school year and will more equitably align the semester days. Importantly, the length of the school year will remain unchanged. Additionally, this waiver allows a district to adhere to a school calendar structured as closely as possible to the current one, preventing the dramatic yearly changes that would occur 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.

Randy Hutchinson
Board President

Springdale Public Schools
804 West Johnson Ave
Springdale, AR 72765
2/8/2024

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SPRINGDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT
AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER**

WHEREAS, the Springdale 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, 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 reasons for seeking 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 semester-length classes.
- The alternative solution for unbalanced semesters is to end the fall semester after Christmas break. This results in students taking final exams after two weeks of being 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 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 in fall 2024 on the same relative date as they did in fall 2023, 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 participate in school activities, this would include students who participate in groups such as athletics, band, cheer, dance, Student Council, and National Honor Society, as well as many others.

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 be shared with students and families. This timeframe will provide more flexibility throughout the school year and will more equitably align the semester days. Importantly, the length of the school year will remain unchanged. Additionally, this waiver allows a district to adhere to a school calendar structured as closely as possible to the current one, preventing the dramatic yearly changes that would occur without the waiver.

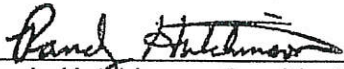
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of Springdale School District hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request a waiver for School Start Date A.C.A 6-10-106.

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 February 8, 2024, by the Board of Directors of Springdale Public Schools.



Randy Hutchinson, President
Springdale Public Schools Board of Directors

ATTEST:



Debbie Creek, Secretary

Springdale Board of Directors
Nick Emerson - Vice-President
Clinton Bell
Eddie Ramos
Michelle Cook
Kevin Ownbey

Note: Please consult with your district's legal counsel and ensure that the resolution complies with local laws and regulations before adopting it.

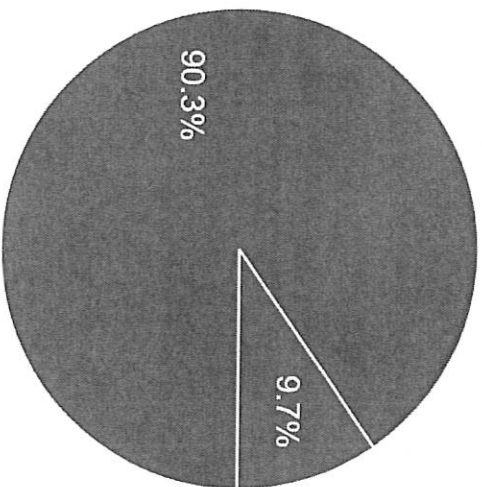
The Survey Results:

80% voted in favor of the waiver

20% votes against

Please indicate your preference

134 responses



- SSSD should apply for the waiver in order to have the flexibility to begin school the week of August 12.
- SSSD should NOT apply for the waiver and should begin school the week of August 19.