



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY  
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

## **Act 1240 Waiver Request**

<b>District:</b>	<b>Gentry School District</b>
<b>LEA Number:</b>	0403000
<b>Superintendent:</b>	Terrie DePaola
<b>Email:</b>	tdepaola@gentrypioneers.com
<b>Contact for Waiver:</b>	Terrie DePaola
<b>Contact Email:</b>	tdepaola@gentrypioneers.com
<b>Contact Phone:</b>	479-736-2253
<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>	School Start Date
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	A.C.A. 6-10-106
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	5 years
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	Arkansas Virtual Academy
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Waiver Will Apply To</b>	K-12
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<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.

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.

## Waiver Request #2

<b>Topic:</b>	
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To</b>	
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<input 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.

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

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

## Waiver Request #3

<b>Topic:</b>	
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Waiver Will Apply To</b>	
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<input 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.

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

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

## Waiver Request #4

<b>Topic:</b>	
<b>Standards/Statutes/Rules:</b>	
<b>Duration Requested:</b>	
<b>Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver</b>	
<b>Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To</b>	
<b>PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)</b>	<input 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.

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

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



# Gentry Public Schools

Terrie DePaola, Superintendent

201 South Giles Avenue, Gentry, Arkansas 72734

Telephone: 479-736-2253 Fax: 479-736-2245 e-Mail: [tdepaola@gentrypioneers.com](mailto:tdepaola@gentrypioneers.com)

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Gentry Public Schools  
201 S. Giles  
Gentry, AR, 72734

January 29, 2024

## A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF GENTRY SCHOOL DISTRICT AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER

**WHEREAS** the Gentry 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**, Early Start Waiver, this would allow our district to start school on August 12 rather than August 19, 2024. By allowing the early start date we could embed snow days into our calendar as we traditionally miss about a week of school due to inclement weather. By doing this we can still provide quality instruction before state testing to ensure and give our students every opportunity to perform on the assessments.

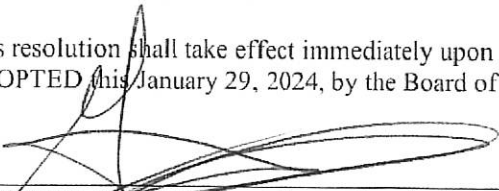
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Directors of Gentry School District hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request a waiver for Early Start Waiver, this would allow our district to start school on August 12 rather than August 19, 2024. By allowing the early start date we could embed snow days into our calendar as we traditionally miss about a week of school due to inclement weather. By doing this we can still provide quality instruction before state assessments to ensure and give our students every opportunity to perform on the assessments.

**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.

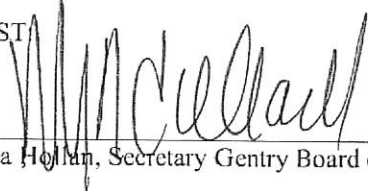
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board of Directors expresses its support for the waiver request and acknowledges the importance of flexibility in addressing the unique needs and circumstances of the district.

This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED this January 29, 2024, by the Board of Directors of Gentry Public School District.

  
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David Williamson, President Gentry Board of Directors

ATTEST

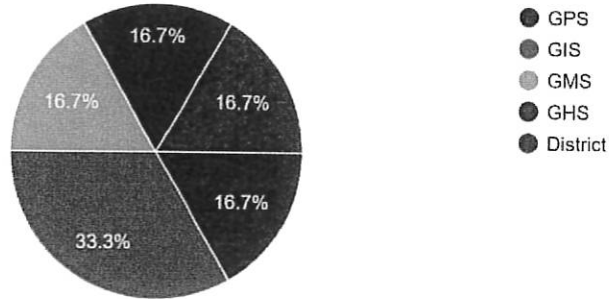
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Melissa Hoffman, Secretary Gentry Board of Directors

*The mission of the Gentry School District is ensuring all students connect, learn, and succeed.*

## FY25 Admin Calendar Survey Results

Current building/location:

6 responses



How many flex days would you like to see in the calendar?

6 responses

