



Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Drew Central School District
LEA Number:	2202 000
Superintendent:	Kimbraly Barnes
Email:	kimbraly.barnes@drewcentral.org
Contact for Waiver:	Kimbraly Barnes
Contact Email:	kimbraly.barnes@drewcentral.org
Contact Phone:	870-367-5369
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
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 Southeast 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.

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- **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.

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF Drew Central School District AUTHORIZING
THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER
DATE: January 25, 2024

WHEREAS, the Drew Central School District 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, The member school districts of the Southeast Education Service Cooperative with traditional or alternative calendars 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.

WHEREAS, 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 school district will create a calendar with an earlier start date which will remain the same length but 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.

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.

Additional Advantages:

- 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.
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- 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.

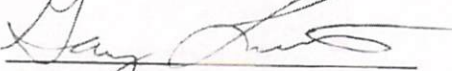
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of XXXX School District hereby authorizes the district administration to formally request a waiver from A.C.A. 6-10-106, which establishes the first allowable day of class as the Monday of the week that contains August 19 to allow the first day of school to be as early as August 12, 2024.

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.

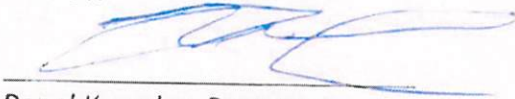
This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED this January 24, 2024 by the Board of Directors of Drew Central School District.



Gary Lucas, President
Drew Central District Board of Directors

ATTEST:



Rene' Knowles, Secretary
Drew Central Board of Directors



We are applying for a waiver to start school the week of August 12, 2024 due to the way our semesters end, testing season in the spring, and the extracurricular activities that start in the fall. We would like your input as well to see if we act on the waiver if approved.

If we stay with the traditional calendar and start in August, check which date you would prefer to start on in order to maintain the breaks and semester grading we have been accustomed to having in the past years.

For reference: 2023 -2024 School Year we started on August 14, 2023 and the school year will end May 23, 2024 because of the waiver we received for this year.

Check One:

136 Monday, August 12, 2024 (end school year on or about May 22, 2025
if no inclement weather days used)

27 Monday, August 19, 2024 (end school year on or about May 30, 2025
if no inclement weather days used)

Please indicate association with the school district using an X:

Parent 20/4

Employee 101/17

Student 15/6

Thank you for taking time to complete the survey.

Kimberly Barnes
Superintendent

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