



Public School Waiver Request

District:	Van Buren School District
LEA Number:	1705
Superintendent:	Dr. Harold Jeffcoat
Email:	harold.jeffcoat@vbsd.us
Contact for Waiver:	Dr. Harold Jeffcoat
Contact Email:	harold.jeffcoat@vbsd.us
Contact Phone:	479-474-7942
Date Received by DESE:	

The following documents must be submitted with the waiver request:

1. Board resolution approving the waiver request

Van Buren School Board is scheduled to meet on March 12, 2024 at the regularly scheduled meeting. At that time, the board will consider an action item to approve the waiver request.

2. Evidence of stakeholder involvement, including teachers and student families

A stakeholder survey was made available for parents, staff, students, and community members. There was a total of 724 respondents.

Stakeholder	Number of Responses	% in Support	% Not in Support
Parents	402	57%	43%
Staff	167	62%	38%
Students	100	25%	75%
Community Members	55	42%	58%

Waiver Request #1

Topic:	School Start Date
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	A.C.A. 6-10-106

Duration Requested:	1 year
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 Van Buren School District (VBSD) is requesting a one-year 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.

As presently constructed, law allows for a considerable range of possible start dates. At the earliest, the first day of school can be August 14 which was the case for the 2023-2024 school year. At the latest, the first day of school would be August 20, which under the current law will occur in 2029.

Specifically, VBSD is requesting approval to allow the first day of school to be Wednesday, August 14, 2024. We believe this early start to the school year will enhance student learning opportunities in the following ways.

- Allow a balance in the number of days for each semester and, as a result, in each quarter. Without an early start waiver there are significantly fewer days in the first semester. This type of imbalance can only be corrected by extending the first semester until after the winter break which results in issues for semester exams, grading, etc.
- Increase the potential of the school year ending in May rather than extending into June when student attendance will be a challenge. Additional days missed due to inclement weather further exacerbates this issue.
- Allows more days for instruction prior to the spring testing window giving students a greater advantage for higher achievement.
- Students involved in activities and athletics will keep a similar practice calendar regardless of the school start date, therefore, they will already be on campus for practices and events.

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

With approval, the Van Buren School District will create a school calendar with a start date of August 14, 2024. The proposed calendar will continue to provide the required 1068 hours of instruction for all students K-12 as well as all required services.

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

The Van Buren School 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.