



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY  
& SECONDARY EDUCATION

## Act 1240 Waiver Request

<b>District:</b>	Greenwood School District
<b>LEA Number:</b>	6602000
<b>Superintendent:</b>	John Ciesla
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:John.ciesla@greenwoodk12.com">John.ciesla@greenwoodk12.com</a>
<b>Contact for Waiver:</b>	John Ciesla
<b>Contact Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:John.ciesla@greenwoodk12.com">John.ciesla@greenwoodk12.com</a>
<b>Contact Phone:</b>	479-996-4142
<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 Wavier 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.

This waiver is being requested to allow the Greenwood School District to set the first day of school no earlier than the Monday of the week prior to the week that contains the August 19 start date established by A.C.A. 6-10-106. This waiver will allow the Greenwood School District to add additional instruction early in our school year to front load more instructional time for our students prior to inclement weather and high stakes AP and state assessments in April and May. 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 Greenwood School District will utilize an academic calendar that will exceed the 1,068 hours of required instruction and allow flexibility throughout the school year to ensure that instruction time is front loaded prior to high stakes assessments that are administered in April and May.**

**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.**

Greenwood School District  
420 N Main St.  
Greenwood, AR 72936  
February 8, 2024

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF Greenwood School District AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER

WHEREAS, the Greenwood 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 Guy Fenter 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.

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 districts 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 will be – 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 could be up to 10 days shorter than the spring semester. With the waiver, the fall and spring semesters could be more balanced, creating more equity in the length of semester courses.
- This waiver will give greater assurance of school ending in 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 prior to testing could 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 the National Honor Society, as well as many others.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Greenwood 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.

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.

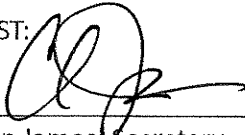
This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED this February 8, 2024 by the Board of Directors of the Greenwood School District.



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Dr. Brad Johnson, President  
Greenwood School District Board of Directors

ATTEST:

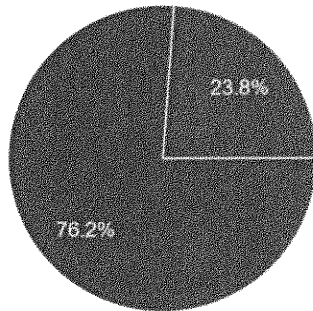


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Clifton James, Secretary  
Greenwood School Board of Directors

## Greenwood School District School Calendar Survey Early Start Date Staff and Community Survey Results

### Staff Survey Results

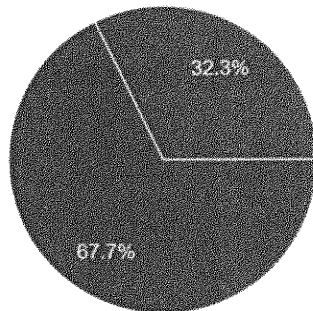
Our district has the ability to apply for a waiver to start prior to August 19th (the earliest start day under current law). If granted this waiver, our district would start school earlier than our school district was granted the waiver?  
449 responses



- Yes, I am in favor of starting sometime during the week before August 19th if granted the waiver.
- No, I do not want to start earlier than August 19th

### Community Survey Results

Our district has the ability to apply for a waiver to start prior to August 19th (the earliest start day under current law). If granted this waiver, our district would start school earlier than our school district was granted the waiver?  
1,161 responses



- Yes, I am in favor of starting sometime during the week before August 19th if granted the waiver.
- No, I do not want school to start earlier than August 19th

**Combined Staff and Community Responses = 1,610 Responses with 70% of participants supporting the proposed calendar adjustment.**