

Form - Application/Cover Sheet

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Waiver of Administrative Rule

UAC R277-121 allows an LEA to request a waiver from a Board rule. This cover sheet should be used as a checklist in preparation of necessary materials and supporting documents.

LEA: Spectrum Academy

SCHOOL(S): Spectrum Academy - North Salt Lake, Spectrum Academy - Pleasant Grove

RULE REQUESTING TO BE WAIVED: R277-419-4

REASONING/JUSTIFICATION FOR REQUESTED WAIVER:

Rationale for the Waiver Extension

Spectrum Academy serves a uniquely high-needs student population, with approximately 85–90% of our students requiring Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The flexibility provided by the waiver has been instrumental in addressing key challenges and ensuring that students receive the highest quality education. Based on comprehensive data analysis and stakeholder feedback, we respectfully request an extension of this waiver for the next three years.

Key Justifications for the Waiver Extension

1. Teacher Planning and Preparation

Teachers require dedicated planning time to effectively implement specially designed instruction, differentiation strategies, and accessible instructional materials. Additionally, they must:

- Develop and write IEPs.
- Assess students to inform and update IEPs.
- Collect and review data to meet legal and instructional requirements.

Without adequate time for these tasks, the ability to provide individualized instruction that meets both state and federal requirements is significantly compromised.

2. Professional Development for Staff

The waiver has provided additional time for targeted professional development, which is critical for ensuring the fidelity of IEP implementation, including:

- Specially designed instruction.
- Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).
- Progress monitoring and assessment.
- Assistive technology training and implementation.

This professional development ensures that educators have the skills and knowledge necessary to support student success while maintaining legal compliance.

3. Staff Retention and Well-being

Special education teachers and paraprofessionals face heightened workloads and administrative burdens. The waiver has helped mitigate burnout by allowing for additional planning and collaboration time, contributing to improved work-life balance. Given that staff retention is a national challenge, particularly in special education, preserving this waiver is essential for maintaining an experienced and qualified workforce dedicated to serving our students.

Impact of the Waiver on the North Salt Lake Campus

Since its implementation, the waiver has allowed the North Salt Lake (NSL) campus to operate under an alternative instructional model with the following key components:

- **Student attendance:** Required Monday through Thursday, with optional Directed Learning Fridays.
- **Total instructional hours:** 993.5 hours.
- **Minimum instructional days:** 152.
- **Additional professional development:** Four extra teacher workdays added to the academic calendar.

Stakeholder Feedback and Data Analysis

To assess the impact of this schedule, Spectrum Academy conducted a comprehensive review of both qualitative and quantitative data, including surveys and retention metrics.

Parent/Guardian Survey Results (NSL Campus)

- **Response Rate:** 61% (559 responses from 907 families).
- **Support for the Alternative Schedule:** 85–93% expressed a strong preference for maintaining the four-day instructional week with optional Directed Learning Fridays.
- **Key Benefits Identified:**
 - Greater flexibility for medical appointments.
 - Reduced commuting burden.
 - Improved overall student well-being and engagement.

Teacher Survey Results (NSL Campus)

- **Participation:** High response rate among faculty.
- **Support for the Alternative Schedule:** 93% in favor, citing better work-life balance and reduced burnout.
- **Effectiveness of Directed Learning Fridays:**
 - 58% found Directed Learning Fridays beneficial.
 - Engagement levels within the STARS program ranged from 50% to 72%.

Implementation at the Pleasant Grove Campus

While implementation at the Pleasant Grove campus varied slightly, the model has demonstrated key benefits:

- **Additional Professional Development:** Four extra teacher workdays were incorporated.
- **Academic Progress:** Student achievement has remained stable while allowing educators to better manage workload demands.
- **Teacher Retention and Student Outcomes:** Both qualitative and quantitative data indicate a positive impact on teacher satisfaction and student engagement.

Ongoing Monitoring and Future Considerations

To ensure continued effectiveness, Spectrum Academy is committed to a data-driven approach in evaluating the impact of this schedule through:

- **Student Achievement Data** – Tracking academic progress and alignment with charter goals.
- **Survey Data** – Continuing to collect feedback from parents, students, and staff.
- **Enrollment Trends** – Assessing retention rates and student demand.
- **Title I Considerations** – Ensuring compliance and effectiveness for Title I students.
- **Campus-Specific Adjustments** – Refining the schedule as needed to enhance outcomes.

Request for Waiver Extension

Given the significant benefits observed in student outcomes, educator retention, and stakeholder satisfaction, we respectfully request an extension of this waiver for the next three years. However, we are committed to ongoing evaluation. If at any point data suggests that the waiver no longer serves the best interests of our students, we will take appropriate steps to reassess and adjust accordingly.

Additionally, as Spectrum Academy undergoes a leadership transition, extending this waiver will:

- Maintain **stability and continuity** in our instructional model.
- Allow for **further data collection** on long-term impacts.
- Support **evidence-based decision-making** for future instructional planning.
- Ensure the ongoing success of our students, families, and educators.

We appreciate the Utah State Board of Education's consideration of this request and welcome any additional questions or information needed to facilitate this decision.

☐ THIS IS A NEW WAIVER

☒ THIS IS A REQUEST TO RENEW AN EXISTING WAIVER

DATE WAIVER WAS FIRST GRANTED March 3rd, 2022

ATTACH DATA TO SUPPORT THE REQUEST WHICH MAY INCLUDE:

X STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

X COMMUNITY, STAFF, OR STUDENT SURVEY DATA

X STUDENT ENROLLMENT DATA

X FOR RENEWALS: DOCUMENTATION THAT OUTLINES HOW THE WAIVER WAS UTILIZED

ATTACH VERIFICATION OF THE FOLLOWING (AS APPLICABLE TO THE TYPE OF LEA)

X LEA GOVERNING BOARD VOTE APPROVING REQUEST FOR WAIVER IN OPEN MEETING

X RECOMMENDATION FROM THE BOARD OF THE SCHOOL'S AUTHORIZER (IF APPLICABLE)

ATTACH THE FOLLOWING

X WRITTEN AGREEMENT TO BE PROPOSED TO THE BOARD INCLUDING:

- ✓ EFFECTIVE DATE OF WAIVER (*or of the renewal*)
- ✓ HOW LEA OR SCHOOL WILL PROVIDE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY (*such as parent/student/staff survey*)
- ✓ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE BOARD'S ABILITY TO REQUIRE ANNUAL UPDATES
- ✓ A SUNSET DATE FOR THE WAIVER (*three years or less*)