

WISCONSIN STATE  
LEGISLATURE  
COMMITTEE HEARING  
RECORDS

**2005-06**

(session year)

**Senate**

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on  
Education  
(SC-Ed)**

File Naming Example:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hr\_AC-Ed\_RCP\_pt01a
- 05hr\_AC-Ed\_RCP\_pt01b
- 05hr\_AC-Ed\_RCP\_pt02

*Published Documents*

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH (Public Hearing Announcements)

➤ \*\*

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ \*\*

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ \*\*

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ \*\*

*Information Collected For Or  
Against Proposal*

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ \*\*

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

\*\*

➤ Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)

➤ **05hr\_sb0628\_SC-Ed\_pt01**

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ \*\*



# Wisconsin State Legislature

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
FR: Senator Dave Hansen, Senate Committee on Education  
DT: March 2, 2006  
RE: Paper Ballot for SB 628, SB 604, AB 273

---

Please consider the following items and vote on the motion below. Return this ballot to Senator Luther Olsen, Room 5 South, no later than 3:30pm, March 2, 2006. Committee members' ballots not received by the deadline will be marked as not voting.

**Senate Bill 628:**

Relating to: virtual charter schools

Introduced by Senators Olsen and Fitzgerald; cosponsored by Representatives Davis, Towns, Montgomery, Underheim, and Musser

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE SUB AMENDMENT 1 be recommended for ADOPTION:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No           X          

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 628 be recommended for PASSAGE as amended:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No           X

# Wisconsin State Senate

## Senate Bill 604:

Relating to: statutory requirements for private schools

Introduced by Senators Harsdorf, Plale, and Grothman; cosponsored by Representatives Honadel, Musser, F. Lasee, Albers, Jeskewitz and Townsend

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 604 be recommended for PASSAGE:

Aye   X   No           

## Assembly Bill 273:

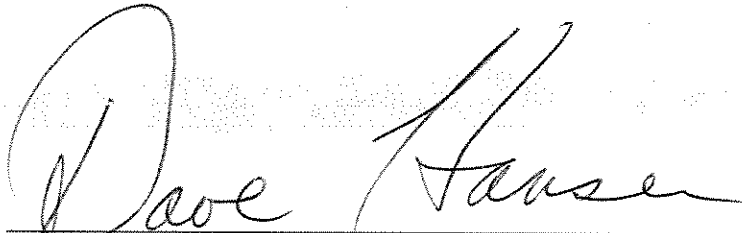
Relating to: chaperoning pupils on school-sponsored trips

Introduced by Representatives Berceau, Gunderson, Jensen, Albers, Jeskewitz, Lehman, Gronemus, Cullen, Sheridan, Musser, Black, Molepske, Travis and Seidel

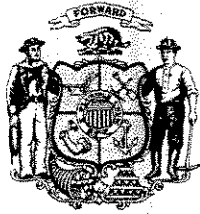
- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 273 be recommended for CONCURRENCE:

Aye   X   No           

Signature



Senator Dave Hansen



# Wisconsin State Legislature

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
FR: Senator Jon Erpenbach, Senate Committee on Education  
DT: March 2, 2006  
RE: Paper Ballot for SB 628, SB 604, AB 273

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- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE SUB AMENDMENT 1 be recommended for ADOPTION:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No   X  

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 628 be recommended for PASSAGE as amended:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No   X

# Wisconsin State Senate

## Senate Bill 604:

Relating to: statutory requirements for private schools

Introduced by Senators Harsdorf, Plale, and Grothman; cosponsored by Representatives Honadel, Musser, F. Lasee, Albers, Jeskewitz and Townsend

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 604 be recommended for PASSAGE:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_

No X

## Assembly Bill 273:

Relating to: chaperoning pupils on school-sponsored trips

Introduced by Representatives Berceau, Gunderson, Jensen, Albers, Jeskewitz, Lehman, Gronemus, Cullen, Sheridan, Musser, Black, Molepske, Travis and Seidel

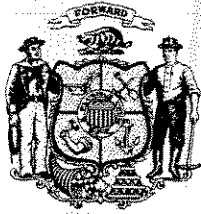
- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 273 be recommended for CONCURRENCE:

Aye X

No \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Senator Jon Erpenbach



# Wisconsin State Legislature

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
FR: Senator Bob Jauch, Senate Committee on Education  
DT: March 2, 2006  
RE: Paper Ballot for SB 628, SB 604, AB 273

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- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE SUB AMENDMENT 1 be recommended for ADOPTION:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No   X  

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 628 be recommended for PASSAGE as amended:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No   X

# Wisconsin State Senate

## Senate Bill 604:

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Aye   *R*   No   .  

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Relating to: chaperoning pupils on school-sponsored trips

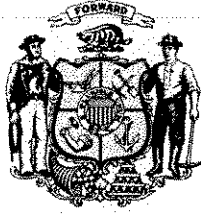
Introduced by Representatives Berceau, Gunderson, Jensen, Albers, Jeskewitz, Lehman, Gronemus, Cullen, Sheridan, Musser, Black, Molepske, Travis and Seidel

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 273 be recommended for CONCURRENCE:

Aye   *X*   No           

Signature

  *Bob Jauch*    
Senator Bob Jauch



## Wisconsin State Legislature

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
FR: Senator Glenn Grothman, Senate Committee on Education  
DT: March 2, 2006  
RE: Paper Ballot for SB 628, SB 604, AB 273

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Introduced by Senators Olsen and Fitzgerald; cosponsored by Representatives Davis, Towns, Montgomery, Underheim, and Musser

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE SUB AMENDMENT 1 be recommended for ADOPTION:

Aye  No

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 628 be recommended for PASSAGE as amended:

Aye  No

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882



# Wisconsin State Senate

## Senate Bill 604:

Relating to: statutory requirements for private schools

Introduced by Senators Harsdorf, Plale, and Grothman; cosponsored by Representatives Honadel, Musser, F. Lasee, Albers, Jeskewitz and Townsend

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 604 be recommended for **PASSAGE**:

Aye ✓ No \_\_\_\_\_

## Assembly Bill 273:

Relating to: chaperoning pupils on school-sponsored trips

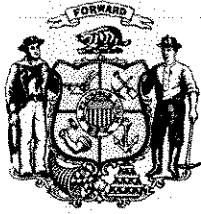
Introduced by Representatives Berceau, Gunderson, Jensen, Albers, Jeskewitz, Lehman, Gronemus, Cullen, Sheridan, Musser, Black, Molepske, Travis and Seidel

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 273 be recommended for **CONCURRENCE**:

Aye ✓ No ✗

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Senator Glenn Grothman



# Wisconsin State Legislature

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
FR: Senator Sheila Harsdorf, Senate Committee on Education  
DT: March 2, 2006  
RE: Paper Ballot for SB 628, SB 604, AB 273

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- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE SUB AMENDMENT 1 be recommended for ADOPTION:

Aye  \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 628 be recommended for PASSAGE as amended:

Aye  \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

# Wisconsin State Senate

## Senate Bill 604:

Relating to: statutory requirements for private schools

Introduced by Senators Harsdorf, Plale, and Grothman; cosponsored by Representatives Honadel, Musser, F. Lasee, Albers, Jeskewitz and Townsend

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 604 be recommended for PASSAGE:

Aye  \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## Assembly Bill 273:

Relating to: chaperoning pupils on school-sponsored trips

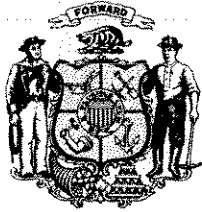
Introduced by Representatives Berceau, Gunderson, Jensen, Albers, Jeskewitz, Lehman, Gronemus, Cullen, Sheridan, Musser, Black, Molepske, Travis and Seidel

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 273 be recommended for CONCURRENCE:

Aye  \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Sheila Harsdorf  
Senator Sheila Harsdorf



# Wisconsin State Legislature

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
FR: Senator Alberta Darling, Senate Committee on Education  
DT: March 2, 2006  
RE: Paper Ballot for SB 628, SB 604, AB 273

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Relating to: virtual charter schools

Introduced by Senators Olsen and Fitzgerald; cosponsored by Representatives Davis, Towns, Montgomery, Underheim, and Musser

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE SUB AMENDMENT 1 be recommended for ADOPTION:

Aye   X   No           

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 628 be recommended for PASSAGE as amended:

Aye   X   No           

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

# Wisconsin State Senate

## Senate Bill 604:

Relating to: statutory requirements for private schools

Introduced by Senators Harsdorf, Plale, and Grothman; cosponsored by Representatives Honadel, Musser, F. Lasee, Albers, Jeskewitz and Townsend

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 604 be recommended for PASSAGE:

Aye   X   No           

## Assembly Bill 273:

Relating to: chaperoning pupils on school-sponsored trips

Introduced by Representatives Berceau, Gunderson, Jensen, Albers, Jeskewitz, Lehman, Gronemus, Cullen, Sheridan, Musser, Black, Molepske, Travis and Seidel

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 273 be recommended for CONCURRENCE:

Aye   X   No           

Signature

Alberta Darling  
Senator Alberta Darling



## Wisconsin State Legislature

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
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Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 628 be recommended for PASSAGE as amended:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

# Wisconsin State Senate

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- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE BILL 604 be recommended for PASSAGE:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## Assembly Bill 273:

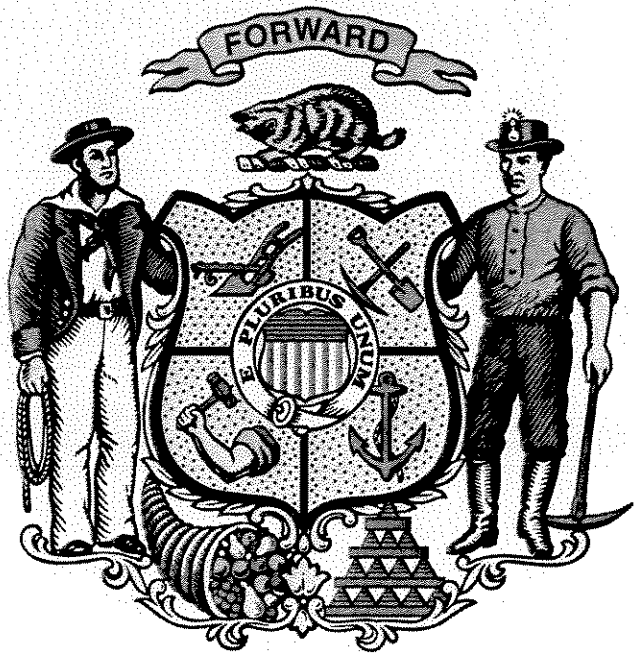
Relating to: chaperoning pupils on school-sponsored trips

Introduced by Representatives Berceau, Gunderson, Jensen, Albers, Jeskewitz, Lehman, Gronemus, Cullen, Sheridan, Musser, Black, Molepske, Travis and Seidel

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 273 be recommended for CONCURRENCE:

Aye \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Luther Olsen





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# WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

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Affiliated with the National Education Association

*Every kid  
deserves a  
Great School!*

**Written Testimony Submitted by  
Wisconsin Education Association Council  
Public Hearing of the Assembly Committee on Education Reform and  
the Senate Committee on Education  
March 1, 2006**

## **WEAC's Position on Charter Schools**

The Wisconsin Education Association Council has always supported innovation in education to create great schools. WEAC believes that district-sponsored charter schools give school districts an opportunity to create classrooms that work through innovative programs. However, research to date has not shown that charter schools have significantly improved student learning or are any more innovative than traditional public schools.

WEAC believes:

- Charter schools should be public schools and school employees should be full partners in the design, implementation, and governance of charter schools.
- Only local school boards should have the power to create charter schools. Other municipalities, colleges or universities, private or for-profit entities should not.
- Charter school funding, including funding for virtual charter schools, should not disproportionately divert resources from traditional public schools.
- Charter school programs must be qualitatively different from what is available in mainstream public schools.
- Charter schools should not be used to select easy-to-educate students or to eliminate or reduce the number of special education students in the charter school.
- Wisconsin's charter school law should not be expanded.

## **Oppose AB 1060 / SB 628**

AB 1060/SB 628 changes state law to specify that in a virtual charter school "teaching" means simply assigning grades or credits for pupils. The bill changes state law that requires a charter school established by a school board be located in the school district. The bill also changes state law to eliminate the requirement that a charter school be located within the chartering school district.

Stan Johnson, President  
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director

WEAC opposes AB 1060/ SB 628 because of these concerns and questions:

1. AB 1060/SB 628 seems to lower the bar for the teaching profession defining teaching as "assigning grades or credits for the pupils." How can this be in compliance with the so-called No Child Left Behind requirement of highly-qualified teachers?
2. AB 1060/SB 628 opens the door to allowing non-certified teachers to teach. If the virtual school teacher now is only required to assign grades and credit for the pupils, is there any requirement that they actually teach pupils? Could this change in the law allow non-teachers or parents to "teach" and be loosely supervised by a certified teacher? The change in the bill could encourage even more home schooling helped by a virtual charter school.
3. Because AB 1060/SB 628 allows for more home schooling helped by a virtual charter, why should the state pay nearly \$6000 to home school students? The open enrollment amount was originally meant to pay for students to open enroll in a traditional brick and mortar school. Many virtual schools do not offer many of the services and opportunities of a brick and mortar school, yet the sending district is paying full price. Many virtual schools do not offer or have nursing, counseling, extra-curricular activities, physical education opportunities; many have no school buildings to maintain, no janitorial services to clean up after the kids. Many have a one-to-fifty or -sixty teacher-student ratio. Thus, students in a virtual school are getting many fewer services and much less contact and teaching from a certified teacher. Does it make sense for taxpayers to pay a virtual charter school for educational opportunities that it does not provide? Will the economy of scale for virtual charters turn taxpayer dollars into profits for private companies?
4. In tight fiscal times school districts seek to increase revenues to avoid cutting program and staff. AB 1060/SB 628 would give more incentive for school district to start virtual charter schools to attract new students and increase revenues at the expense of other districts throughout the state. Does it make sense to encourage districts to compete for students to the detriment of the whole of public education in Wisconsin?
5. AB 1060/SB 628 allows the creation of virtual charter schools located outside the district in which they are chartered. Does that allow a local school district to charter a virtual school in another part of the state, another part of the country or another part of the world? It seems this bill would allow a local school district to charter a virtual school with a private company in a foreign country to provide instruction to Wisconsin students.
6. Because AB 1060/SB 628 allows virtual charter schools located outside the school district, will a Wisconsin teaching license be required of out-of-state or foreign teachers? How will a teaching license be verified if the teacher is located in another state or another country?

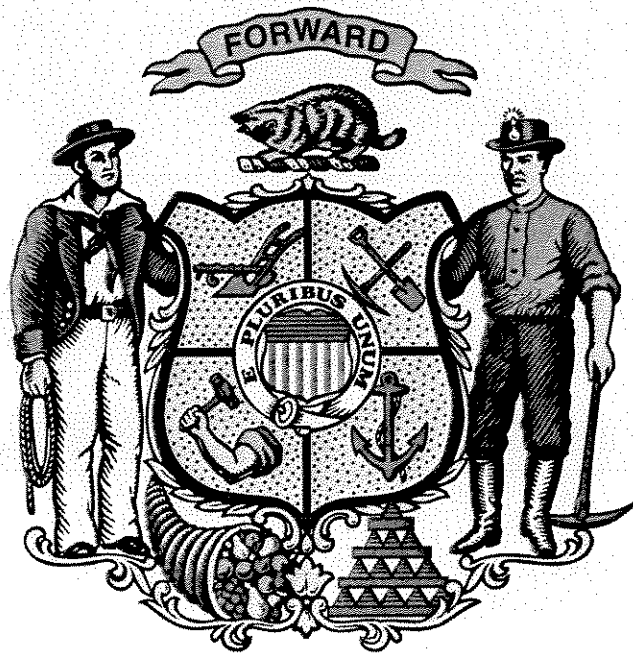
*Every kid  
deserves a  
Great School!*

7. AB 1060/SB 628 allows pupils to attend a virtual charter school regardless of the pupil's district of residence. Is the intent to allow students to enroll in a virtual charter without applying for open enrollment?
8. Does AB 1060/SB 628 allow pupils to attend a 2r independent virtual charter school in Milwaukee? If so, would the pupils be funded through open enrollment or Milwaukee-Racine (2r) independent charter school funds? An enrollment increase in the Milwaukee-Racine charter school program would result in a statewide property tax increase.
9. Virtual charter schools seem to discriminate against working parents. If parents are unable to stay at home to teach their child using the on-line curriculum, the virtual charter is not an option.
10. Many of the virtual schools now operating in Wisconsin use a private, for-profit company to provide the curriculum, infrastructure and support network for the school. These for-profit companies are usually paid on the basis of how many students enroll in school, so the more students mean more money for the company. There is no bidding, and no costing based on how much the services are worth. At the Northern Ozaukee virtual charter WIVA, the district pays for a curriculum for each student (an amount that was over \$1,000 last year;) thus if the district has 100 first graders, it will pay \$100,000 to deliver first-grade curriculum over the Internet; if it has only 25 first graders, it will pay only \$25,000 for the same curriculum. This amount does not include books, computers and other consumable materials, only the sending out of the same computer file.
11. The virtual charter for-profit companies and school districts often sign exclusivity agreements in which the company agrees that it will not offer its services and products to another school in Wisconsin. This goes against the grain of everything that Wisconsin public schools have stood for, and in particular the charter schools' purpose of innovation and dissemination of innovative practices.

**For More Information:**

If you have any comments or questions regarding this statement, please contact Michael Walsh, WEAC Government Relations Specialist, by phone at 800-362-8034 or by e-mail at [walshm@weac.org](mailto:walshm@weac.org).

*Every kid  
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Great School!*



A QUALITY  
EDUCATION  
FOR  
EVERY  
CHILD



## State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

Senate Committee on Education  
March 1, 2006

### Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Testimony on SB 628

Good morning, my name is Rick Grobschmidt. I am the Assistant Superintendent at the Department of Public Instruction for the Division for Libraries, Technology and Community Learning. On behalf of the state superintendent I thank you Chairperson Olsen, and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify before you today in opposition to Senate Bill 628.

The department has many concerns with SB 628, but the most troublesome proposal in the bill is to redefine and diminish the role of licensed teachers and the practice of teaching in a virtual charter school to only mean the assignment of grades or credits. Wisconsin has a long history of requiring licensed teachers in our public schools. We have had a teacher certification requirement in the statute books since 1849. We require our public school teachers to be licensed to ensure that the people assigned to teach our children are qualified to do so. Our state, and more recently the federal government in the No Child Left Behind Act, or NCLB, both recognize the strong link between qualified teachers and student achievement. Specifically, NCLB requires that students receive instruction from highly qualified teachers in the core subject areas. This bill would permit unlicensed individuals to provide the vast majority of instruction to public school children enrolled in virtual charter schools. This would place Wisconsin out of compliance with NCLB.

The department has concerns that the definition of "assigning grades and credits to pupils" does not include enough of the core teaching functions to ensure a quality experience for all students. DPI believes that core teacher functions include planning instruction, diagnosing learning needs, prescribing content delivery, assessing student learning, reporting outcomes to parents and administrators, and evaluating the effects of instruction. Further, there must be sufficient contact between the teacher and the student to permit these core teaching functions to occur. According to the 2002 California Virtual School Report: A National Survey of Virtual Education Practice and Policy, two of the main challenges that can impede the success of online learning programs are 1) courses designed with limited contact with instructors and other students, and 2) the instructor does not know how to teach in a way that aligns curricula, standards and assessments. Because we are committed to ensuring that all our children receive instruction from highly qualified licensed teachers, we must strongly oppose this provision of the bill.

The bill, as drafted, would also appear to provide that a student may attend a virtual charter school regardless of the pupil's school district of residence, in effect creating statewide charter schools. Since a student may already attend school in a virtual charter school under the open enrollment program, it is assumed that this provision would either replace or add to inter-district

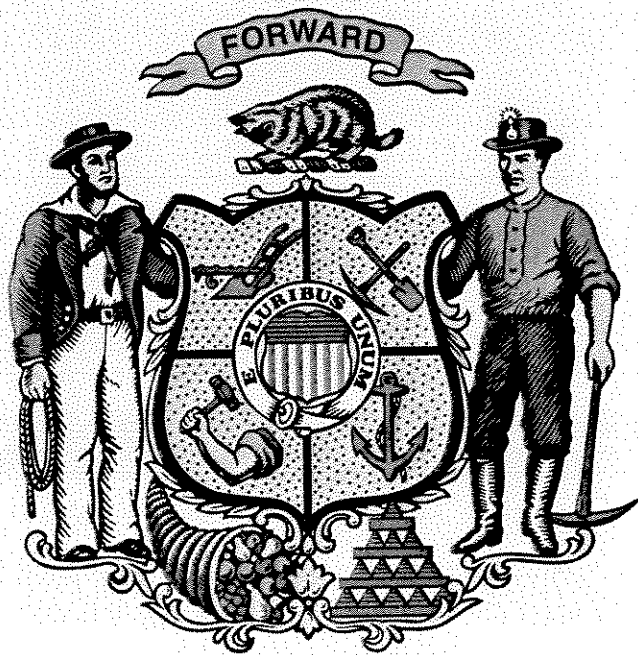
transfers under the open enrollment program. We assume that, in most cases, parents would enroll directly in virtual charter schools, rather than apply through the open enrollment program.

The open enrollment statute specifies that for each open enrolled student, the student's resident school district counts an open enrolled student in membership, and a flat state-set amount follows the student from the resident to the nonresident school district. Current statute also provides that a school district may count students enrolled in a charter school (other than a (2r) charter school). Thus, under this bill, students who attend a virtual charter school could be counted in membership by the school district of attendance, not the school district of residence.

As a result, there may be significant local fiscal effects to this bill, including:

1. An increase in membership in districts operating virtual charter schools could increase the total allowable revenue in those school districts. In addition, by increasing the school district's aid membership, the addition of those students could reduce the school district's equalized value/member and the school district cost/member.
2. The bill may decrease membership in school districts losing students to virtual charter schools and, thus, could decrease the total revenue in those school districts. In addition, by decreasing the school district's aid membership, the reduction of these students could increase the district's equalized value/member and the district's cost/member.
3. These first two effects would have a re-distributional effect on general state school aids.
4. The bill could also increase property taxes in districts operating virtual charter schools due to the transfer of full revenue limit authority from the resident districts, the value of which exceeds the current open enrollment transfer payment of \$5,745.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be glad to answer any questions.





## **Testimony of Rose Fernandez, WCVSF**

**Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006**

My name is Rose Fernandez and I am the mother of 4 children who are excelling with Internet-based learning through a public school in Wisconsin. I am also an officer with the Wisconsin Coalition of Virtual School Families.

Together with our fellow parents, families and friends, we strive to educate policy makers and others on why we chose a virtual public school for our children; how those schools work; about the close, working relationship we have with our teachers and administrators; and much, much more.

I am pleased to have an opportunity to share our perspective with this committee.

I have with me dozens of testimonials from parents, teachers and students who are embracing the opportunity to participate in what is commonly referred to as 'virtual education,' I ask you to pay particular attention to the testimonials submitted by Jacqueline Anderson, Michael Osell, and Michelle Diaz. Each of them has a personal story that really shows how virtual schools have helped their families. In the interest of time and out of respect for the committee, I will submit these to the committee at the conclusion of my remarks.

The public virtual school community is incredibly appreciative of the choice and flexibility provided by existing Wisconsin statutes. Wisconsin's Charter Schools and open enrollment laws combine to allow - indeed encourage - the creation of a range of public school opportunities for Wisconsin's parents and children. Because of the foresight of the Legislature and Governor in adopting both the Charter and Open enrollment laws, once again, Wisconsin leads the way in public school innovation.

I am here today to express our Coalition's support for Representative Davis' Bill, AB1060 and its Senate companion, Senator Olsen's SB628. While public virtual schools do not require additional legislation in order to continue to operate, we appreciate the Legislature reaffirming its intent to keep virtual public education as an option before the parents of Wisconsin.

After promising to do so in her last campaign, we were extremely pleased that State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster invited a group of virtual public education advisers to examine virtual public schools and online learning in public PK-12 schools in Wisconsin. Included on that panel were many Principals and Administrators of various virtual public schools around Wisconsin, and Senator Luther Olsen and Representative John Lehman. These bills include many of the recommendations of the advisory panel.

One thing that became clear to the advisory panel is that Public Education at a virtual school is NOT home schooling.

Home-schooled students do not take and are under no requirement to take any standardized tests. Our schools meet the requirements for public schools and test their students at multiple sites around the state under the required proctorship of their state-certified faculty. My children's school is accountable to the state to meet required participation levels for these standardized tests just like all other state public schools. The same laws that govern all public schools are met by the students of public virtual schools; mandatory attendance, mandatory calendar, mandatory subjects, a specified curriculum approved by the school district that meets state



educational standards, from which we are not free to omit any content, and mandatory promotional requirements. All of these things are the same for a traditional public school as well as for public virtual schools. Home-schooling does not have this level of accountability or requirement from the state.

Another important distinction is the important role of teachers. My children are assigned to highly-qualified, Wisconsin-certified public school teachers who deliver instruction, guidance and support. In public virtual schools, parents can be involved in their child's education and develop a valuable partnership with teachers who are committed to each child's academic success.

Public virtual charter schools encourage innovation and are a solution for parents who know that their kids are better served outside the traditional classroom.

There are currently 12 such schools in Wisconsin serving thousands of children and the demand for this option increases every year. The demand comes from not only the public, but also from educational leaders and school districts.

Public virtual schools serve the needs of the wide diversity of Wisconsin's kids (including kids with special needs, medical conditions, gifted/talented, and children in remote/rural areas). Individualized instruction is a daily reality for each child in these schools.

DPI has been awarding grant money for districts who are developing public virtual school programs, and rightly so.

School districts, school administrators, teachers, parents and kids agree public virtual schools are working and are a positive education program in WI.

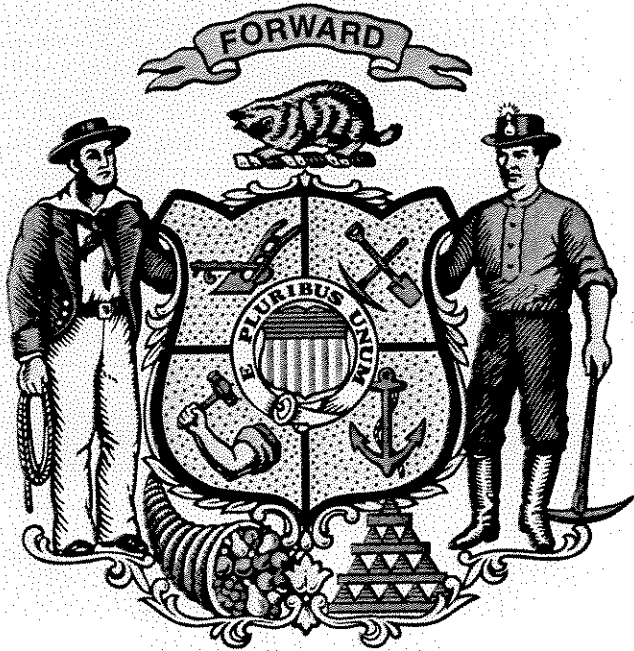
Some opponents of this option have tried to muddy the waters, to create confusion and uncertainty. This legislation reaffirms long-standing legislative intent and ends whatever uncertainty existed. It acknowledges and supports the success of public virtual school programs to serve the educational needs of kids in WI.

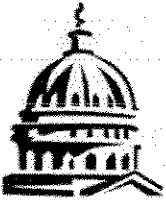
The proposed legislation clarifies and reaffirms legislative intent regarding open enrollment and reaffirms the state's commitment to local control.

It supports parents' educational options outside their school district while recognizing school districts' long-standing precedent of control in designing education programs and defining roles and responsibilities of teachers.

In summary, passing this is the right thing to do, and it will demonstrate your continued support to the teachers, parents and children of public virtual schools.

I again thank the committee for considering this measure and thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.





# BRETT H. DAVIS

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

80<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony on SSA to SB 628

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Committee members. I appreciate you having a public hearing today on Senate Substitute Amendment to SB 628.

This legislation is before you today to ensure Virtual Schools in the state of Wisconsin remain a viable, quality education option for students throughout the state. The main component of the bill includes language that was agreed upon by the DPI task force on Virtual Schools. Specifically, this language defines teaching in a virtual charter school as assigning grades or credits to pupils.

The substitute amendment also:

- 1) Takes out references to 2r charters, which as you know, refers to charter schools not governed by a school district. This amendment means there is no state fiscal effect according to the LFB.
- 2) Clarifies state law to ensure school districts can charge tuition for out of state students.
- 3) Allows out of state instructors to be involved in instruction in the virtual school as long as they are licensed by the state they live in and Wisconsin DPI licensed teachers are involved in issuing the grade or credit.

According to the Department of Public Instruction, in the 2004-05 school year, there were 9 virtual schools serving 2,653 students in the state. I mentioned at least 12 in my cosponsorship memo, but I included a few virtual schools that offer classes and don't necessarily offer a degree.

One of the greatest benefits virtual schools offer is the increased opportunity for students in small, rural districts that cannot offer the full range of courses provided by larger and wealthier districts. Virtual schools also provide a means for reaching students who cannot be in school, don't learn well in a traditional bricks and mortar school, are gifted and want to learn at a faster pace, or go back to school to finish the high school degree.

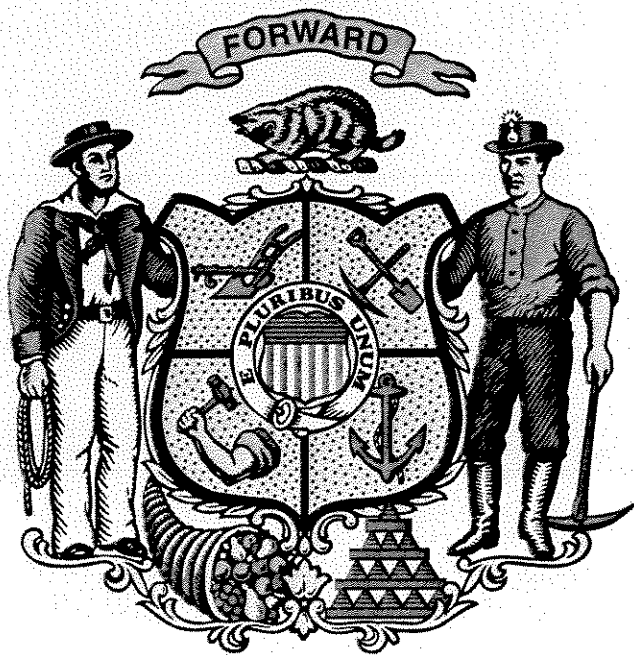
In short, Virtual Schools offer a tremendous opportunity for a variety of students of all skill levels and age and they need to remain a viable option for students in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Post Office Box 8952 • Madison, WI 53708-8952

(608) 266-1192 • Toll-Free: (888) 534-0080 • Fax: (608) 282-3680 • Rep.Davis@legis.state.wi.us

80<sup>th</sup> Assembly District: 1420 Ravenoaks Trail, Oregon, Wisconsin 53575 • Phone: 608-835-0939



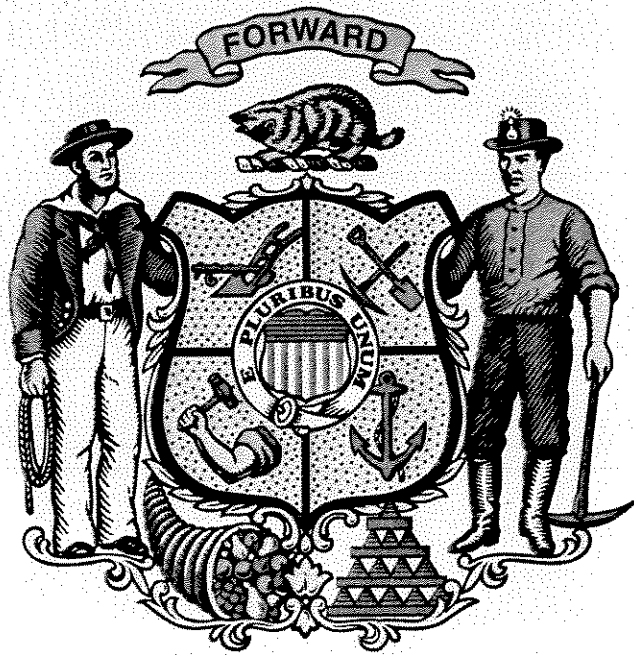
## 2004-05 Enrollment for Virtual Schools in Wisconsin

<u>School</u>	<u>School District 2004-05</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade Levels</u>	<u>Opened</u>
Wisconsin Connections Academy	Appleton	468	K-8	Fall 2002
Appleton eSchool	Appleton	9	9-12	Fall 2002
Grantsburg Virtual School	Grantsburg	0	K-12	Fall 2004
iQ Academies	Waukesha	211	9-12	Fall 2004
Kiel's Integrated Electronic Learning Charter School	Kiel	2	9-12	Fall 2002
Monroe Independent Education Charter School	Monroe	63	9-12	Fall 2002
Wisconsin Virtual Academy	Northern Ozaukee	684	K-8	Fall 2003

Total 2004-05 Virtual School Enrollment: 1,437

\*Please also note that the following 2 CESAs offer virtual courses to students, but the students remain enrolled in their home districts:

<u>School</u>	<u>School District 2004-05</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade Levels</u>	<u>Opened</u>
Wisconsin Virtual School	CESA #9	1,203	6-12	Fall 1999
CESA 7 On-line Learning	CESA #7	13	K-12	Fall 2004



**SENATE SUBSTITUTE AMENDMENT ,  
TO 2005 SENATE BILL 628**

1 **AN ACT** *to amend* 118.19 (1), 118.40 (4) (b) 1. and 121.02 (1) (a) 2.; and *to create*  
2 115.001 (16) and 118.40 (8) of the statutes; **relating to:** virtual charter schools.

*The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:*

3 **SECTION 1.** 115.001 (16) of the statutes is created to read:

4 115.001 (16) VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL. "Virtual charter school" means a charter  
5 school in which instruction is provided primarily through means of the Internet, and  
6 the pupils enrolled in and instructional staff of the charter school are geographically  
7 remote from each other.

8 **SECTION 2.** 118.19 (1) of the statutes is amended to read:

9 118.19 (1) Any person seeking to teach in a public school, including a charter  
10 school, or in a school or institution operated by a county or the state shall first procure  
11 a license or permit from the department, except that in a virtual charter school, an

1 instructional staff member may hold only a license or permit to teach issued by the  
2 state educational agency of the state in which he or she resides if the individual  
3 supervising the staff member holds a license or permit issued by the department.

4 For the purposes of this subsection, in a virtual charter school "teaching" means  
5 assigning grades or credits to pupils.

6 SECTION 3. 118.40 (4) (b) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

7 118.40 (4) (b) 1. Charge tuition except for pupils who are not residents of this  
8 state, as provided under s. 121.77 (1) (b).

9 SECTION 4. 118.40 (8) of the statutes is created to read:

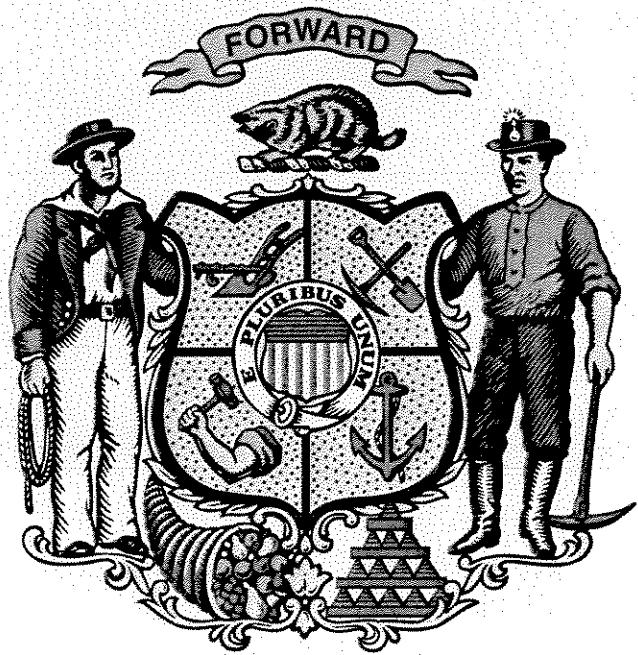
10 118.40 (8) LOCATION OF VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS. For the purposes of subs. (3)  
11 (c) and (7) (a), (am) 1., and (ar), if a school board establishes or contracts with a person  
12 to establish a virtual charter school, the virtual charter school is considered to be  
13 located in the school district governed by that school board.

14 SECTION 5. 121.02 (1) (a) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

15 121.02 (1) (a) 2. Ensure that all instructional staff of charter schools located  
16 in the school district hold a license or permit to teach issued by the department. The  
17 state superintendent shall promulgate rules defining "instructional staff" for  
18 purposes of this subdivision, except that in a virtual charter school "instructional  
19 staff" means the persons who assign grades or credits to pupils.

20 (END)





**Wisconsin Coalition of  
Virtual School Families**

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M I L W A U K E E  
**JOURNAL SENTINEL**

## **Picture this: A school in a virtual world**

*Software lets students chat, work in groups at Northern Ozaukee district's academy*

By Katharine Goodloe

Last Updated: Dec. 17, 2005

Original URL: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/ozwash/dec05/377987.asp>

As an eighth-grader at the Wisconsin Virtual Academy, Roberto Fernandez can do something this year he's never experienced before: talk with other students before class.

The school, based out of the Northern Ozaukee School District, adopted a program this year that turns online gatherings of 10 students and a teacher into virtual classrooms where kids use Webcams to see each other, click a button to raise a "hand" icon, and separate into small groups using virtual "breakout" rooms.

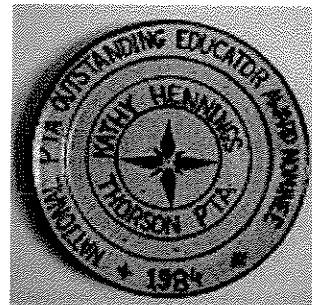
The lessons, held in a program called Elluminate, serve as a twice-monthly supplement to the school's online curriculum. Teachers also use the software to tutor students one-on-one, update parents and attend online staff meetings with teachers throughout the state.

But teachers, administrators and students say it's particularly suited for one thing: helping kids accustomed to learning alone adapt to large-group activities.



Photo/[Mark Hoffman](#)

Kathy Hennings teaches her second-grade language arts class from her home office in Cedarburg. Hennings works for the Northern Ozaukee School District. This virtual class has students in cities throughout Wisconsin, including Burlington, De Pere, West Allis and Fond du Lac. Hennings and the students communicate online in real time with audio, instant messaging and Webcams.



Photo/[Mark Hoffman](#)

Before becoming a teacher for a virtual school district, Hennings was honored for her work at a traditional school.

"What I like is that you can talk and you can see," said Roberto, 13, who was home-schooled until his family enrolled in the school when it started three years ago.

The K-8 virtual academy launched in 2003, a year after the state's first virtual school debuted. Students and staff at the Wisconsin Virtual Academy are spread throughout the state, logging on from home to attend or teach classes, or review the day's assignments.

Students can instant-message as they log on before Elluminate lessons, he said, and catch up on one another's holiday plans or upcoming school outings. It's the equivalent of kids in brick-and-mortar schools gossiping in hallways before class, but it's also something Roberto and many of the school's other students aren't accustomed to.

"It's really cool because it's a huge class experience," he said. "And you can do stuff in a big class that you wouldn't be able to do on your own."

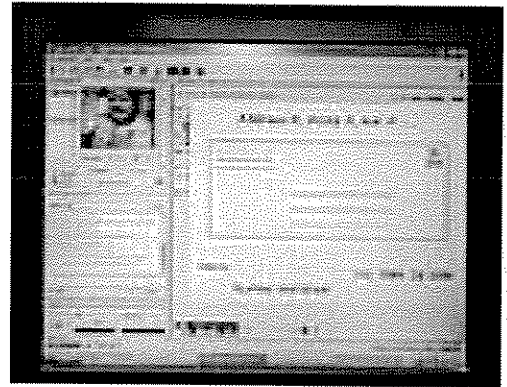
Until this year, students saw each other only at monthly school-sponsored outings, and teachers held conferences with parents and students over the phone. Now, kids can see a list of other students on their computer screen during Elluminate lessons. When one speaks, his or her picture shows up on the screen, from their Webcam. They can see the teacher, too.

The program was purchased by K12, the company that provides content to the virtual academy, said principal Daniel Hanrahan. It's the same program used by IQ Academies, a virtual public high school operated by the Waukesha School District.

The program also comes with a "virtual whiteboard." Teacher Kathy Hennings, who works from her Cedarburg home, said that allows her to post different questions and handouts for each of her 60 students, tailored to their learning levels. She can also separate kids into virtual "breakout rooms" to work in groups, then click in and out of each room to monitor the group's progress.

Hennings has even used the program's accompanying Webcam to show a student where she hung the paper snowflakes the girl sent to her.

"I think it really opens a world of community for students," she said. "They get excited to see one another's pictures on the Webcam, and when they see each other on outings now they say 'Oh, I remember you. You're in my math class.' "



Photo/Mark Hoffman  
 Student Emma Bird, pictured at upper left on this computer screen, communicates via Webcam from her West Bend home with teacher Hennings. The lesson of the day was on letter writing.

**Helps kids focus**

Other teachers say the lessons are well-suited to kids who have learning disabilities, or might be easily distracted. The students don't have to worry about other kids rummaging through desks or getting up to sharpen pencils - and although they can talk to one another online, there's no way to sit and gossip at the back of the class without the teacher seeing.

"It allows the kids to focus on what they need to focus on," said Jennifer Trattner, a teacher at the virtual school.

Trattner has used the program to take kids on "Web tours" where she imports a Web page and adapts it to their lesson. Right now, her math students are keeping track of when and where they see roadkill, so they can create a graph of the information next month.

She has used several Web sites to show students how to chart the information, which they'll turn into pie, line and bar charts. The roadkill assignment, she said, was chosen because "it's right up middle school kids' alley."

The lessons, administrators say, are akin to those in brick-and-mortar schools.

"To me, the interesting thing is how similar it is to a traditional school, and not how different it is," said Mike Skurek, associate principal.

That's some of the attraction for Rose Fernandez, Roberto's mom. The Mukwonago family has four children, including Roberto, enrolled in the virtual academy. The school provides a computer for each family and began providing a Webcam and digital pen and other equipment since using Elluminate. Families do not pay to be part of the academy.

"You know how kids are, they really like to use the microphone, the camera, they like to see their teachers and they like to talk back and forth," she said. "Since this way of learning isn't the traditional classroom, it's an opportunity to learn in a group - and that wasn't possible before."

Kids also say the new lessons give them a sense of community. Roberto, who spends 30 or 40 minutes at the computer for each Elluminate lesson, said the new format is "a lot better" - giving him all the benefits of group learning, without many of the distractions.

"It's just cool," he said. "You can see yourself in a classroom and not in a classroom, all at the same time."



Photo/Mark Hoffman  
 Kathy Hennings teaches online

**Quotable:**

*I think it really opens a world of community for students. They get p excited to see one another's pictures on the Webcam.*

- Kathy Hennings, on the use of a Webcam in her virtual classroom



## Online schools offer parents alternatives

February 13, 2006

By DAN SIMMONS / La Crosse Tribune

<http://www.lacrossetribune.com/articles/2006/02/13/news/01school.txt>

The Millington sisters, ages 6 months to 9, don't get on a school bus every morning; they go to the basement of their La Crosse home.

Computers sit among other more traditional school supplies — paint sets, flash cards and alphabet wallpaper. Their mother, Michelle Diaz, and father, Jeff Millington, work with them. But this isn't home school.

"It's more school at home than home school," Diaz said. "We work with at least four teachers every day."

The girls are open enrollment students at Wisconsin Virtual Academy. The online charter school out of the Northern Ozaukee School District in Fredonia, Wis., opened in 2003-04, offering the same curriculum and testing standards as other public schools. With a different approach.

The school's 15 full-time teachers, all of whom have teaching certificates and experience in the public schools, provide classes and instruction online.

The school's 615 students register attendance by logging on to the school's Web site. They participate in class discussions by posting messages on a message board or speaking through a school-provided microphone. But a lot of their learning happens offline.

As Katie and Stephanie Millington focused on their lessons Friday morning, Chelly Millington focused on hers — numbers. There was no computer involved.

Instead, her mom, Michelle Diaz, pointed to flash cards, 1 to 100, spread across the carpet. Chelly, a second-grader in a white Hello Kitty shirt, made a sweeping gesture with her arms, then said the numbers.

When they got to 100, Diaz rejoiced and gave Chelly a high five.

"I never dreamed she'd be able to add and subtract," Diaz said of her daughter, who was diagnosed with autism at 22 months. "Her progression's been amazing."

Diaz credits a lot of her daughter's progress to the individualized approach at the school. She receives one-on-one instruction from Jeff Nylander. He's a special education teacher who had previously worked in bricks-and-mortar public schools and now provides special needs educational support, online, over the phone and in person, to students in the northern third of the state.

He said the individualized approach allows him to cater lessons to the mastery level of each student, instead of giving an entire class of students the same lesson. And, he said, it eliminates a lot of the environmental factors — lighting, sounds, other students — that often distract special education students in traditional schools.

"Here they're in a comfortable environment — their home — with comfortable people — their parents," he said. "It makes it easier for them to focus on learning."

Eric Sesvold, a second-grader in West Salem, also enrolled at the school. On Friday, one of his lessons happened online, with teacher Nancy Peerenboom instructing from her base in Poynette, Wis.



"Today we're going to talk about pizza," she said through the Toshiba laptop screen in Eric's bedroom, introducing a language arts lesson. "What's everyone's favorite flavor of pizza?"

Adam of Oregon, Wis., said he likes extra cheesy. Bevan of Mineral Point, Wis., said he likes pepperoni. Sesvold said he likes cheese. Sally of Sun Prairie, Wis., said she likes cheese and bacon and sausage and pepperoni. Eric's never seen his classmates or his teacher, but class progresses about the same as anywhere else.

Peerenboom continued with her lesson, displaying sentences on the screen and having students identify the subject and verb by underlining them with an e-pen. Sesvold's mother, Sandy, said she appreciates the dual role parents and teachers play in Eric's education.

"Think of me like a teacher's assistant," she said. "He has to meet standards and take tests, and the teachers are the ones who make sure he's on track."

### **Open houses**

A schedule of open houses by online schools this week:

Wisconsin Virtual Academy (grades K-8) will be at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites, 200 Pearl St., La Crosse, today from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, visit <http://wivcs.org> or call Principal Dan Hanrahan at (262) 707-4715.

iQ Academies at Wisconsin (grades 9-12) will be at the Radisson Hotel, 200 Harborview Plaza, La Crosse, Wednesday and Thursday from 3 to 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit [www.gotoiq.com/info](http://www.gotoiq.com/info) or call (866) 468-6472.

Wisconsin Connections Academy (grades K-8) will be at Country Inn & Suites, 737 Avon Road, Sparta, Wis., Wednesday from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, visit [www.connectionsacademy.com](http://www.connectionsacademy.com) or call (920) 993-7076, ext. 2218.

### **Online school Q&A**

*Q. Who pays for the equipment required?*

A. The school pays for a computer, microphone and web camera. It also reimburses families for dial-up Internet access.

*Q. Does it affect socialization of kids?*

A. Local families with students enrolled said their kids get plenty of social opportunities with peers through outside activities such as karate, scouts and sports. Most online schools offer periodic field trips, as well.

*Q. Do students ever miss school?*

A. No. Eric Sesvold talked about a snow day for all his friends. He still had school. Another time there was a tornado warning. He moved his computer downstairs and continued his science lesson about friction.

*Q. Is a parent/guardian required to be with students during the day?*

A. Yes. Because students attend school at home, a parent or guardian must be present at all times. Some families team up and share supervisory duties, said Dan Hanrahan, principal of Wisconsin Virtual Academy.

*Q. How do school districts feel about online charter schools?*

A. Kathy Tyser, associate superintendent of the La Crosse School District, said the district is watching the schools closely. Very preliminary conversations are taking place, she said, about offering selected classes or even an entire school online. "We need to get answers to some questions," she said. "What do people want? Why are people signing up for online learning? What's the advantage of it?"

## Learning online and at home

*By Rebekah Danaher*  
*Daily News staff writer*

*Virtual school offers families alternatives*

<http://www.beloitdailynews.com/articles/2006/02/13/news/news04.txt>

“A-E-I-O-U.”

Six-year-old Nathan Walker rapidly blurted out his vowels.

As a kindergartner, Nathan should be learning phonics. But, Nathan already knows how to read.

Joanne Walker smiles. Though proud, she is reluctant to brag about her son's smarts. But, she said, she and her husband, Jerod, did notice their eldest son - when in preschool - was learning rapidly for his age.

“We knew he was progressing pretty early,” she said. “We wanted to be able to go at his pace.”

That's when they started considering alternative school options for Nathan. They looked into private school and homeschooling, but found something that offered the flexibility to keep up with Nathan's voracious learning yet structured enough so Joanne didn't feel the teaching burden was entirely on her.

They found the Wisconsin Virtual Academy.

Chartered through the Northern Ozaukee School District, the instruction is conveyed in a number of ways. There are 15 full-time certified teachers connected to the virtual classroom from all over the state. Parents direct much of the scheduling of the school day but the instructors dictate assignments, check homework, and even conduct online classes.

Illuminate software, designed for virtual schools, allows direct messaging, an electronic white board for writing notes and even a sharable document that lets students work collectively on writing projects.

School Principal Dan Hanrahan said a common misunderstanding about virtual schools - which haven't been popular with teacher union leadership - is that students are always in front of a computer.

That isn't the case, Hanrahan says. The students also have text books and work books and reading assignments. Work is submitted through the computer but young students spend only about 10 percent of their school day online and older students about 50 percent.

Hanrahan said the school caters to gifted and challenged students alike, allowing them to progress at their own speed.

“I think the individualness of it is the greatest strength,” he said.



Nathan is expected to complete first grade math by the end of the school year, according to Joanne.

"I already know how to count by 10s," Nathan says, rattling them off up to 100.

Students are assessed at the end of every lesson or unit to determine whether they've captured the essential understandings. They are also tested like all public school students through the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam. The school has only been in existence for three years, so it's still early to tell how its students will rank on the standardized testing over time, according to Hanrahan.

Parental involvement is key to the school's success. Joanne says she enjoys keeping up with the curriculum and appreciates the freedom it allots. Because Jerod is the pastor of children's ministry at Central Christian Church, he works on Sundays and so takes his weekend on Friday and Saturday. Nathan, then, does school Sunday through Thursday. As long as he completes 180 days of school, Joanne said they are free to arrange their days as they please.

The Walkers admit some concern about social opportunities for their son as he gets older. But for now he's involved in a hockey league and church activities and seems to be adjusting just fine to his virtual classroom.

Nathan isn't phased by the fact that he does his work through virtual correspondence. Aside from preschool, it's the only school he's known.

"I know my teacher but I've just never seen her," he explains.

The course work for a kindergartner involves language arts, phonics, history, science, music and math.

Nathan also gave himself his own assignment after seeing an advertisement on a PBS program about a writing contest. With the help of his mom's penmanship, Nathan has written a short story that he hopes to turn into a book to submit to the competition.

Nathan's twin sisters Janessa and Janaya, 4, and 20-month-old Nolan aren't quite ready for school yet but Jerod and Joanne will have to decide whether to enroll them in the virtual school as well. The twins are showing similar abilities in preschool and Jerod thinks perhaps they too would benefit from the flexibility.

"It's not an anti-Beloit schools thing," said Jerod, speaking highly of the district. "We love the local teachers. It was what was best for Nathan."

Parents pay a \$30 student fee like most public schools. Hanrahan said the cost to operate the virtual school is actually less per student than brick and mortar schools at \$6,000 per year as opposed to \$8,000-\$12,000 per student.

The primary expense is the technology. Parents are provided with the computers and are reimbursed for their Internet expenses.

There are about 600 students around the state participating in the virtual classes but Hanrahan said there's plenty of room for more, with a maximum enrollment of 2,000.

The open enrollment window for entrance into the virtual school ends Feb. 24. There will be a parent information session in Beloit at 7:00 p.m. on Feb. 22 at the Ramada Inn of Greater Beloit.



### **Testimony of Kathy Hennings, WCVSF**

**Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006**

My name is Kathy Hennings. I am a 1st and 2nd grade teacher with the Wisconsin Virtual Academy, one of Wisconsin's most successful public virtual schools. Prior to working at WIVA, I spent 33 years employed in traditional brick and mortar public schools. In addition, I am also a dues-paying member of the Wisconsin Education Association Council.

I am here as a volunteer member of the Wisconsin Coalition of Virtual School Families. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my viewpoints with you today.

I am here today to express my support for Representative Davis' Bill, AB 1060, and SB 628 authored by Senator Luther Olsen. As a certified-teacher in a public virtual school in Wisconsin, I appreciate the legislature re-expressing its intent to provide this educational opportunity to my students and the thousands of their peers whose parents have chosen online public education. While my school can and will remain open regardless of the outcome of this hearing, I am here to encourage you to support this bill because public virtual school faculty like me deserve to know the state remains committed to our chosen method of public instruction.

Public virtual schools offer students a unique opportunity within the public school realm. A rigorous and rich curriculum, which meets the Wisconsin State standards, is provided for each child enrolled. In my school, licensed, experienced teachers instruct students and partner with parents (who strongly value their child's education) to ensure the curriculum is carried out to the mastery level. On-line scripted lessons, written by professionals in the field, are presented to the students at their own pace. Because a student does not need to move along with the masses in a classroom of 25-30, individualized attention can be poured into each one. This tailor-made education meets the learning needs and styles that range from the struggling to the gifted learner. Individual goal-setting, evaluation of objectives learned, enrichment of lessons, appropriate pacing, and remediation strategies - are only some of the topics dealt with through this partnership of teacher and responsible adult.

Beyond the biweekly conferences, I have many contacts with the students through field trips or outings, email exchanges, newsletters, postal letters, student workshops, tutoring sessions, on-line literature discussions, small group meetings, camp jamborees, and more. Students submit assignments required by their teachers on a regular basis. WIVA teachers administer the state standardized tests, and we are extremely proud of the results that our students continually show.

This year in my school, teachers began using additional technology tools to deliver instruction to students in a "virtual classroom" through a program called Elluminate LIVE. In these classrooms, I am able to teach lessons directly to students as a group, tutor students individually, and separate my students into individual work groups while monitoring their learning activities together. Through this technology I am able to communicate through a Webcam and microphone, and teach lessons using a digital pen on a "virtual whiteboard", which appears on the student's individual computer screens -- in the exact same way as a teacher uses chalk on a blackboard in a traditional classroom.

This is just another exciting example of how virtual school programs allow teachers, like me, to use our talents and professional abilities to educate kids in innovative ways.

## HENNINGS TESTIMONY PAGE 2

Students in Wisconsin's public virtual schools are receiving an exceptional education from licensed teachers. It's important that public virtual schools remain an option for parents in Wisconsin. This bill is good news for teachers in virtual schools all around Wisconsin. It shows that Wisconsin is continuing its commitment to public virtual education and wants to provide our children with the best education possible.

As a teacher in a public virtual school, I not only have the full support of other virtual school teachers, but also of many of my colleagues who teach in a traditional classroom. I am so proud to be a public school teacher and so pleased to be a part of these innovative efforts. Each one of my colleagues and I are grateful to the State of Wisconsin and for being able to provide this option, this choice, this fantastic opportunity to thousands of students across Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time and your continued support



## WCVSF Testimonial

"Look what Mrs. G. put on the computer for me today', is a common exclamation from our 6 year old daughter. She believes that Mrs. G., her teacher at the Wisconsin Virtual Academy is the one that places all the lessons that she needs to review on the computer. We smile at our daughter, confirm her belief and know we made the right decision to enroll her in WIVA. When our daughter came to us when she turned a year old, we knew there would be struggles ahead. By the time she turned 3 we had completed a long and arduous adoption process and celebrated her being our daughter. We knew there would be struggles ahead, after all, she was diagnosed during this process with Severe Reactive Attachment Disorder and having learning impairments. Yet, by the time she was 3 1/2 our perseverance and patience was paying off. She was beginning to read and was mastering simple addition and subtraction. Things we never anticipated at such a young age. Her emotional problems were waning and we were faced with another dilemma. Where do you put a child that is excelling into school?

"We researched schools in our area and were beginning to realize there wasn't a school that could challenge a (now) 4 year old child that was reading and solving math problems in her head. We weren't excited about the proposition of 'home schooling' for a number of reasons. First, how do we know which curriculum to use? Will it be challenging for her? Will it catch all the loose ends, so that nothing falls through the cracks? Secondly, how do we keep a child being accountable to us for her schooling. We have the role of being her parents and that carries a lot of weight, but that doesn't mean she will want to stay responsible to us in the role of being her teacher.

"We came across some materials on WIVA and were interested. Upon researching it further we found exactly what would fit our needs...a curriculum that would challenge our daughter on every level and a person besides us that she's accountable to. It appeared to be a perfect fit and has been. Our daughter does much of her school work independent of us, usually only asking us if she doesn't understand something, and she's accountable to Mrs. G. for her work. Not a day goes by that she doesn't mention Mrs. G. or wants to send her work over to Mrs. G. to demonstrate what's she's learning. She's excited to see

Mrs. G. on field trips and looks forward to the conversations they have on the phone and over the computer. She does her school work for Mrs. G., not for us, which has allowed us to be a part of her education without having to be both her parent and her teacher.

“This public school has been wonderful in meeting the unique needs of our child and has enhanced our relationship with our child by allowing us to participate in her education while being her parents. We don't have to force her to do her work, which as parents teaching we would have to, instead she does it willingly for Mrs. G. Thanks Mrs. G and WIVA.”

Bob, Lisa and Maria Reber  
242 E 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Fond du Lac, WI  
920-924-0802



## WCVSF Testimonial

“A mother visiting the public library where I work told me about her child attending a virtual school. She explained it was public schooling that happened online and at home, with a homeroom teacher, a special education department, outings for socialization with many other children, parent workshops.

“We researched and found out it was a public charter school in Wisconsin, so the Department of Public Instruction recognized its benefits, which was reassuring. We researched the two schools for which we found information, and chose WIVA, Wisconsin Virtual Academy, a public virtual charter school, based out of the Northern Ozaukee School District.

“Our children are having their education facilitated, encouraged and made easier, by myself and my husband. Who has a more invested interest in their future?

“The dedication it takes to facilitate such a demanding and challenging program to our children is not something for the faint at heart. The teachers are emailing and phoning to make sure the work is getting done, to make sure their students understand what is expected and are accomplishing all that needs to be done.

“Once homework is handed in, the teachers assess it and we talk about the lessons accomplished and the lessons that need improvement during our next teacher's conference or via email.

“Both our children's homeroom teachers have helped us adapt lessons to our son's needs, given us advice on how his developmental disability effects his understanding, and have been an invaluable source of encouragement and consistency while undertaking our new roles as teacher's assistants or educational facilitators.

“The accountability was the something that made us resist the idea of public virtual education at first. As a home-schooling family, we focused mostly on Biblical stories for history, or the children's Oneida heritage and history, not that that is a bad thing. This

year, they have learned about Egyptian pharaohs, the Code of Hammurabi, Grecian warfare and mythology, and Emperor Darius and the Behistun Rock (which we never even learned about in high school, and this is only part of the curriculum in first grade.) We do not pick the curriculum, we do not choose when our children are promoted to the next grade level, we do not get to decide for science that we can go outside and build a snowman, or picnic on a blanket and watch the clouds go by and pick out cumulus ones (this year in the first grade curriculum, we learned about stratus, cumulus, cumulonimbus, and cirrus clouds).

“Our children do not fall between educational tracks for special needs; our children are not bullied because of their differing abilities, or in the case of our daughter, smaller size; our children get to learn when it is the most conducive time for them to learn, whether that be in the evenings, on the weekends, or reading a book from language arts in the middle of the night to settle a child down after a bad dream, or doing a few math worksheets because they slept all day experiencing a 'flu and decided at three o'clock in the morning that they "feel fine now" and cannot sleep "another wink". Our children have the freedom to work at the pace they need, whether advanced or a little slower than most, to master the concepts they need to foster their personal growth and development.

“Virtual public education has proved to be so popular with us, another of our children, this year a freshman in high school, has open enrolled in the Waukesha School District's I.Q. Academy. He has chosen this for the educational opportunities provided, including the technology classes he enjoys, as well as to remove himself from the company of peers making poor life decisions, getting involved in drinking, drug use, premarital relations, and other behaviors he does not personally condone. He knows it will be a bigger challenge in being more personally responsible for his education, but he knows we support him, as we always have, in his educational pursuits.

“Virtual public education has been a proven benefit for many people around the country, for many different reasons, and will continue to do so. Wisconsin is known for being a forerunning state in education, and I am sure this will be no exception. Virtual public education needs to be a part of our state's future.”

Peter and Kymberley Pelky  
Seymour, WI  
920-869-2210



## WCVSF Testimonial

“I am one of those parents that know WIVA is instrumental in the well being of my daughter. I have 4 children. Three of them are enrolled in WIVA (the other isn't quite old enough yet). One of them has special needs. She has autism.

“My daughter, under a brick and mortar school, would be just a number. She would be yet another child in the spectrum, diagnosed and shuffled through the maze of special education in an already budget tight school district. Well meaning and caring teachers in brick and mortar schools simply cannot provide the constant care and interaction that my daughter needs. She would be denied the constant one on one attention that she desperately needs in order to achieve learning. For example, my daughter has mastered the concept of addition and subtraction. This sounds relatively simple to most parents, but not for my daughter. This concept was foreign. Today we rejoice that she has mastered this skill, and we look forward to more concepts being mastered with her God given potential.

“I now have an option in my daughter's education. My daughter has the option to have dedicated parents, along with a dedicated special education teacher, working side by side to achieve a common goal. I can get feedback from a teacher that has the experience, the expertise, the information and the compassion to work along with me as a partner in her education and *not* an adversary working against her. I also have a wonderful regular education teacher who may not know all that there is about autism, but is willing to learn and work in collaboration with us to achieve the common goal. I have access to a full IEP that functions to provide the services that she needs in order to succeed in this world.

“This is why I am thankful that our family as unique as it is has been given this option, to continue to be responsible for our children's education, and work in collaboration with caring and qualified teachers that improve the lives of our children everyday. These teachers are working for the same common goal, to provide a “Class A” education to not only my children, but to all of the children enrolled in WIVA.”

Michelle Diaz  
Mom of Katie 9, Chelly 7, Stephanie 5 and Danielle 7 months  
2625 South 15<sup>th</sup> Street La Crosse WI  
608 397 9622





## WCVSF Testimonial

“My name is Michael Osell. My wife, Sharilyn, and I are parents of an eleven year old boy with a disability. We are grateful beyond words, for the existence of the Wisconsin Virtual Academy and its excellent comprehensive educational program.

“Our son requires the testing of his blood at least 7 to 10 times a day, as well as injections of medication several times a day in some cases. His dietary requirements are critical as well, requiring that he receive food at specific times throughout the day. Often he needs to sleep later than the average student and, at times, naps during the day. There is not a school I know of, even one with a full time nurse that could accommodate his needs. Through the unique opportunity afforded by Wisconsin Virtual Academy, our son is provided with an excellent education without having to leave a classroom or go home for a sick day. Likewise, he has never missed lectures, coursework, or fallen behind for this reason. He likes his teacher and has established a good relationship with her. We are pleased that he is receiving a quality education without interruption, and is subject to the accountability of state standardized testing. We are also impressed with the opportunities he has had for field trips which we accompany him on.

“We wholeheartedly support the Wisconsin Virtual Academy and its accomplished goals of providing quality education to children with a variety of backgrounds.”

Michael and Sharilyn Osell  
5113 Edgewater Beach Road  
Green Bay, WI 54311  
(920) 866-9420



## WCVSF Testimonial

“Chloe, my 13 year old, was diagnosed expressive aphasia. It is a language disorder that results from damage to the language portions of the brain. Some causes of expressive aphasia are strokes, virus, infection and other conditions of the brain. Because of this, she has problems processing words that she hears, so she learns by reading and other means.

“Our home room teacher is very helpful in solving difficulties we may have and works with Chloe on the Elluninate classroom to get her more comfortable. Her English teacher and Math teacher have shown both Chloe and I how to present these subjects with a strong visual presentation, which is just what Chloe needs. I find the virtual school very helpful and adaptable to the students learning issues.

“Chloe is in music therapy and is reading music. Her instruments are piano, recorder, lap harp and Conga drum. She also is in swimming class. Chloe sees three different doctors so the flexibility of the virtual school is also an advantage for us.

“The virtual school has helped us keep Chloe close to her grade level and I truly am grateful for all the support from the teachers we work with. Virtual schools are assets for "other health impaired" students who need this type of support.

“Our family strongly supports this great new tool in educating our children!”

Jacqueline Skubal Anderson  
5801 West Trenton Place  
Milwaukee, WI 53213  
(414)-476-5163



## WCVSF Testimonial

“Enrolling our son in a virtual public school has proven to be the best thing we could do for his education and his future. The engaging curriculum is outstanding and he can learn at a pace which assures he has full comprehension of each subject. His advancement has been amazing. Where he was struggling in a brick and mortar school, he is now advancing beyond where he would be had he remained there. He takes pride in his work and learning. Both his self esteem and self discipline have soared. He absolutely adores his teacher and values the one on one support she gives him. I am thankful for the opportunity to utilize such a well rounded and individualized public education. I am excited to enroll my daughter in the virtual school this fall. She is very enthusiastic, too.”

Barbara Lee  
2561 S 96 ST  
West Allis, WI  
(414)543-4917



## WCVSF Testimonial

“After much research and serious consideration we chose the Wisconsin Virtual Academy (WIVA) for our Kindergarten-aged triplets. It is proving to be the right choice for our family at this time.

“The curriculum is advanced. WIVA allows us to pursue academic excellence with family focus. As a mastery-based program, it is customized to the needs of our children. Over the course of the last year, my children have completed Kindergarten Music, History, Art and Science, and First grade Math, Phonics and Language Arts. My children are reading at a second grade level. We can spend as much time as the children need to master the concepts. If they need more time for Math, we can accommodate that. If a subject is easy for them, we can cover it quickly and move ahead. Although WIVA is a lifestyle choice which doesn't fit every family, it is the perfect program for the academically gifted, the educationally challenged, and the middle of the road student.

“WIVA places the focus on academics while providing ample opportunity to explore social relationships in a parentally guided atmosphere. WIVA is a dynamic network of passionate parents, teachers and students. We have developed friendships, created puppet plays and poetry readings, visited a naturalist at Horicon Marsh, watched Ferdinand the Bull, Charlotte's Web and the Nutcracker. We have explored history at Ye Old School house and guided history discussions with our peers among many other opportunities.

“I like the accountability, guidance and involvement of a caring experienced licensed teacher. My children are excelling academically and socially under this system. With greatly reduced overhead, WIVA saves the state money and I like the accountability which ensures my children are receiving a quality education.

“We are thrilled to be a part of a Wisconsin Public School which strives to provide all students with ideal combination of family involvement and academic excellence.”

Mary Jo and Alan Pauls & Alana, Kira and Asa Pauls  
302 Crestview Drive  
Dane, WI  
608-846-6138



## WCVSF Testimonial

“There is no way to measure the incredible good that has come out of my girls’ confidence in learning through the Wisconsin Virtual Academy. They have caught up to and surpassed goals that seemed almost unachievable for them in the traditional classroom setting. Virtual public schooling has allowed them the ability to learn without the environments that were socially, emotionally and academically damaging to them when they could not keep pace in the classroom. In the traditional setting, too many conceptual seeds did not have a solid root, causing my daughters knowledge base to become weakened and wither. Because our virtual school’s curriculum is based on enriched core knowledge concepts and must be mastered before moving on, I can be confident that necessary skills are in place before advancing. The partnership we have with our state certified teachers ensures this as well.

“Virtual public schooling is one very important way through the use of innovative, cost-effective and technologically-advanced methods for Wisconsin to show itself to be a state which backs its promise of high quality educational standards for ALL children. I am grateful we took this courageous step to be pioneers in this process. It has proven to be the "right fit" for my daughters in learning success.”

Janice Hamilton  
2793 Ruffian Circle  
Cottage Grove, WI  
608-839-5151



## WCVSF Testimonial

“Two years ago, as our oldest daughter was approaching the age for Kindergarten, we struggled with where she should attend school. My husband was in favor of home-schooling. However, I was hesitant for a variety of reasons, including the facts that we had 3 younger children and that I had never undertaken such a task before. Rather than home-school, we decided to enroll our daughter in WIVA because we wanted the rigorous curriculum and wanted our daughter to be under the tutelage of an experienced, licensed teacher.

“Our experience with WIVA has been everything we have hoped it would be. They have the full expertise of teachers and staff that are found in a brick and mortar school. The curriculum is very thorough and challenging, but because they work at their own pace it is very doable. The teachers are a great resource for our kids when they encounter a difficulty or just need some reassurance. The school outings give us a sense of belonging to a school community and provide the opportunity for the children to meet other children who are doing the same type of schooling.

“We currently have two daughters enrolled in WIVA and hope that the rest of our children will be able to take advantage of this great form of education when they are old enough!”

Moira and Stephen McManus  
12025 W Cherry Street  
Wauwatosa, WI  
414-302-0807



## WCVSF Testimonial

“Here, in WIVA, I get my exact learning level. I’ve also tried traditional public schools, and not all of the students get a learning level that they work well in. For example only the highest of high readers get a special teacher, and only the lowest of low. We take all the tests required. For example, I took my WRCT test this year, just like 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in traditional schools. Our school has lots of flexibility, and other schools aren’t as flexible. Our school is just as good as traditional schools, if not better. This is my personal opinion about this.”

Paige Lindauer  
3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Student  
1214 Collins Ct.  
Eau Claire, WI  
715-552-0732



## WCVSF Testimonial

“Wisconsin has always prided itself as being on the forefront of education, providing a standard of educational excellence that is rarely exceeded. WIVA is a great example of this. Not only does it meet the same high standards as our state’s traditional schools, but also provides an individualized, self-paced learning program for each student. Our public schools are great, but this level of individualized learning is impossible to achieve in a traditional school environment. WIVA is a perfect example of how our state is providing innovations in education to benefit all children.

“I am saddened when people call this groundbreaking form of public education, essentially home schooled.” Unlike home schooled students, students in WIVA are held accountable for their learning through mastery level assessments and state standardized testing. They are required to use a public school approved curriculum which complies with state standards. WIVA’s licensed teachers are essential in planning individual learning programs, providing quality instruction, and ensuring accountability. Parents play a role in helping their children learn, doing the same types of things that unlicensed teachers’ aids do. Many of the same students who struggled to succeed in traditional schools are flourishing in WIVA. Because of tight budgets and limited staff, many couldn’t receive the remediation or enrichment which would have benefited them. The state of Wisconsin should be proud that through the innovation of the virtual academy, these children are no longer falling through the cracks, but are having their educational needs met at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

“If this isn’t in the best interests of both children and taxpayers, I don’t know what is.”

Pam Lindauer  
1214 Collins Ct.  
Eau Claire, WI  
715-552-0732





## WCVSF Testimonial

“As a parent with two children currently enrolled in the Wisconsin Virtual Academy, I have seen the results a public virtual education can give children.

“The students are using a curriculum developed by a team led by some of the country's most respected and experienced educators, ranging from Nobel laureates to veteran public and private school teachers. The state of the art use of technology combined with the teacher's instruction is one of the main reasons many of us have chosen WIVA as our school.

“As to the teacher's role in our school, there is no doubt that they deliver instruction to our students. The students are accountable to their teachers, and are required to submit work to be reviewed and discussed via the regular conferences. The students are also required to submit to the same state mandated proficiency tests as other public schools.

“Students in home-school are not required to submit to this level of state oversight.

“Perhaps it's not a traditional form of education, but the question is, do the children get high quality, teacher based instruction that meets State standards?

“Let our test results speak for themselves.

“This is where we, as taxpayers, want to spend our educational dollar.”

Brenda Shields  
13900 Wrayburn Rd  
Elm Grove, WI  
262 782 6809



## WCVSF Testimonial

“Many people have tried to say that public virtual education is merely tax-funded home-schooling. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

“The requirement of home-schoolers in Wisconsin is that they file the PI-1206 form by October of each year. They commit to “provide a sequentially progressive curriculum ... in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and health and to complete 875 hours of instruction per year. They are not required to take part in state testing, send in attendance records, turn in portfolios, get their curriculum approved, or consult teachers.

“WIVA families have much different requirements and the only way we resemble home-schooling families is in the location of our children during school. Wisconsin Virtual Academy students are required to attend 180 school days a year. They are required to send in Essential Teacher Assignments (ETA) every month. Students must show curriculum progression. They are required to take state standardized testing. (Which they travel to do as it is proxy by a school official.)

“WIVA families have bi-monthly phone conferences where the students must be able to show understanding of the curriculum they have studied. Parents and teachers also discuss problems the children are having and exercises that can help. Between conferences, teachers are available on any school day by email or phone for consultation. Our students have more one-on-one contact with their teachers than most traditional students.

Ann Marie Mackin  
1101 Lakeshore Drive East  
Ashland, WI  
(715) 685-0132



## WCVSF Testimonial

“I am a teen enrolled in the Wisconsin Virtual Academy (WIVA). I went to traditional public school through sixth grade. I did not do so well. My grades were not always the best and I didn’t feel like I was that smart. I did not do well in math and I hated to read. I did not learn most of my subjects well because I needed more time to understand the material. Most of the time we would be taught something in thirty minutes, which didn’t give me enough time to understand the material. If I didn’t get it, I wouldn’t feel confident enough to ask questions.

“The first year I started WIVA I adjusted a lot. I started to learn fast because I could ask my mom or my teacher a question if I didn’t get it. My confidence grew. I now understand the material. This is my second year in WIVA and I love it! I am allowed to study at MY own pace, which means I sometimes complete an entire unit of lessons in one day.”

Rena Hamilton  
2793 Ruffian Circle  
Cottage Grove, WI  
608-839-5151



## WCVSF Testimonial

“My daughter attended a brick and mortar public school K-1. I chose to remove her from public school at the end of first grade.

“Thank heavens for the option of the Wisconsin Virtual Academy. Without it, my child would have been condemned to suffer through an inadequately-run local school. Not all brick and mortar schools are bad. But not all of them are perfect, either.

“I no longer have to worry my child will be reassigned to another school or be placed in a class of 20+ students due to annual budget cuts. I know my child is getting a well balanced diet, not taking a few bites and throwing the rest in the trash can either because she doesn't like the food or she's too anxious to get outside to play. She can eat her lunch without wearing her snow pants and boots while lugging her winter coat, hat and mittens along to the cafeteria because they're not allowed to go back to the classroom to don cold weather attire.

“I now know my child has comprehended the curriculum rather than merely being exposed to the curriculum. Our virtual school provides an open door policy of communication, our public school's was terribly inadequate.

“I have had no frustration understanding any of our virtual public school objectives. I had absolutely no knowledge what objectives to work toward with our brick and mortar public school experience. I thought the curriculum which did make it into our home from our school district was miserable. Especially the math and reading program, which I understand has the gifted and talented teachers in the mainstream classrooms assisting the teachers because it's so incomprehensible. My child doesn't have to take remedial math or reading in summer school – she is excelling in both areas.

“I can choose who my daughter spends time with rather than be subjected to children who may expose her to drugs, have a no spiritual life or respect for others.

“Her self-esteem is in abundance, not being drained by a public school teacher who classifies all students' quarterly performance on a 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper ranging from 1-10. She is no longer subjected to a segregated math or reading program, rather is a high honor virtual school student.

“I hope and pray our family can continue on this path.”

Heidi Robertson  
N3709 Goepfert Rd  
Monroe, WI  
608-325-5014



## WCVSF Testimonial

"I am a parent of two children enrolled in the Wisconsin Virtual Academy (WIVA). The frustration my children experienced at not being able fit the mold of an academically successful brick & mortar school student was socially, emotionally and academically damaging. It was my oldest who could see this so clearly and begged to get out of that environment. I grasped at the incredible opportunity to provide them with an excellent curriculum combined with certified teachers who would help me fill in and repair all the holes left by years of not always catching on fast enough, as a 'model' student does. I wanted the accountability, instruction and guidance for them, but also for myself. Student work is submitted and reviewed by the teacher. I can be confident what's taught is understood, as there are always lesson assessments which must be mastered before moving on. Through the teacher's online monitoring, they can see exactly how various courses are progressing.

"The curriculum is provided through both standard written materials and virtually. To say otherwise is to not have taken even a peek at what's offered through the engaging software. Does it meet our state's standards? Yes. Has that been verified? Yes. Do our children participate in state testing? Yes. Can we confidently answer "if the education the taxpayers are buying for WIVA students meets our state standards?" A most resounding, yes!

"Most importantly, "because great schools benefit everyone", the children that attend WIVA now have the benefit of a great school that fits their needs. Through this environment they can excel, at their own pace. Why would anyone want to take away something that has been of such benefit? ALL children are entitled to the chance to succeed according to this state's school standards."

Jan Hamilton  
2793 Ruffian Circle  
Cottage Grove, WI  
608-839-5151



## WCVSF Testimonial

“As a former home-school parent, I can tell you that public virtual schools are nothing like home-schooling. The standards that we have at WIVA are much higher. We participate in standardized testing, just like any other public school. But every test within the curriculum must be 80% or better - unlike a brick and mortar school which is 70% (and grades on curves). As a WIVA student, my child has access to wonderful teachers that are **eager** to exchange emails and phone calls so my child understands all the concepts she is learning.”

Laura Klopfenstein  
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Milwaukee, WI  
414-358-8595