SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
MONROE

"Preparing for the Future, One Child at a Time"

VIRTUAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
MONROE

District Administrative Center

925 16th Avenue, Suite 3
Monroe, WI 53566

"Preparing for the Future, One Child at a Time"

Position

The School District of Monroe supports virtual charter school legislation that addresses the three areas of concern raised in the December 5, 2007 Court of Appeals case involving WEAC, the Department of Public Instruction and the Northern Ozaukee School District. It is in the state's interest to allow virtual charter schools the flexibility necessary to operate and administer an innovative and evolving online educational program. Though we strongly believe state law already provides for this type of innovation, we support legislation meant to address the issues noted by the Court of Appeals.

The three issues that were addressed by the Court of Appeals are: (1) the location of the virtual charter school; (2) whether the virtual charter school student is attending school in the non-resident school district; and (3) licensing requirements with respect to individuals involved in the virtual charter school program.

Endorsement

The School District of Monroe endorses the Assembly legislation proposed by Representative Brett Davis as the Bill addresses the areas of concern from the Court of Appeals while maintaining the flexibility necessary to operate and administer an innovative and evolving online educational program.

The School District of Monroe opposes any legislation which provides for additional language and restrictions which would effectively render the state's current virtual charter schools non-operational. We support Representative Davis' Bill because it allows virtual charter schools the flexibility to continue operating in their current manner. Legislative provisions halving the open enrollment revenue transfer amount, requiring daily pupil contact minutes and limiting enrollment numbers would effectively shut down virtual charter schools—foreclosing a valuable and innovative option for students, parents and teachers in the School District of Monroe and the State of Wisconsin.

mw1439794_2

Information 608-328-7171 | Facsimile 608-328-7214 | Superintendent 608-328-7109 | Business Office 608-328-7133 | Curriculum 608-328-7528 | Pupil Services 608-328-7184

Testimonials on Virtual Education

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE

Virtual education offers the best choices in public education available in Wisconsin today. I enrolled my daughter in the Monroe Virtual School because public schools had no viable answer for gifted education. This program allows her to set her own pace academically, choose classes of real interest to her, and actually enjoy the learning process. The difference it has made in her life and therefore in mine, is astounding. She is excited about learning and thrilled to have the choices that she does. How often do you really hear that in relation to a teenager attending a public school?

Samantha R. Lewis

Both of my sons have been home schooled by my wife and I since they were born. But the quality and variety of information, inspiration, and yes – EDUCATION that Monroe has provided them has been wonderful. As a property taxpayer for all these years, I resent paying for schools that my boys never attended. Then when they began with the Monroe District, I was more than happy to have paid every tax dollar over the years. Home schooled children deserve the opportunity to enjoy an enhanced education and benefit from what the State provides.

Mark Peltier-Robson

I realize and fully believe that the virtual school setting is not for every student, and that the traditional school setting is still an excellent means of education for many, many students. However, the virtual school is just one more way for students to expand their education and find their individual fit. We do not expect all students to play the same instruments in band, play the same sports or attend the same extra curricular activities. Why do we expect them all to learn the same way? Students are individuals with individual needs and individual interests. The virtual schools are one more way for us to help students meet those needs.

Melinda Mulryan-Gehin

My son Matthew was 15 years old and a sophomore in high school when he told us he was going to be a father. We felt it was important for our son to be financially responsible for his child. His girlfriend has been able to continue attending her high school full time and my son works a full time job. Thanks to Monroe Virtual School he is able to continue in high school and do the work on nights or weekends. Both of these children are enrolled in high school, paying for health insurance, food, and clothes for their child and looking into further education after high school. My son is planning to work toward his pilot license and his girlfriend going on to college. Teenage pregnancy is becoming more and more common in our society and it is an unfortunate fact that many teens deal with. Virtual education has made it possible for two teenagers to raise a beautiful healthy baby, support him financially and emotionally while continuing their education. If virtual schools are eliminated the lives of not just one student will be affected but the lives of three children all succeeding, thanks to virtual schools.

Linda Anfang

Our son's learning style did not conform to the public school delivery system to the masses. Brick and mortar style schools seem to exacerbate all his weaknesses and support few of his strengths. When we found Monroe Virtual School, it quickly became clear what a good fit this would be. Our son's self esteem has soared and his confidence has been restored. It is truly a fair statement to say, Monroe Virtual School has been an academic life saving experience for our son.

Lisa Garsee

For the first eleven years of my life, I was home schooled by my mother, and though I never had a problem gobbling up knowledge, I was never truly motivated. I believe virtual schooling to be an excellent method of education and should not be shut down.

Tyler Evert

My decision to home school my son was based on the limited choices that were available. As Tyler reached junior high age, he was looking for more educationally that I was able to provide due to our family circumstances. We discovered virtual school by accident but it was a perfect fit! We would be hard pressed to find an alternative to this educational choice that has been available to use for the last several years.

Kristen Evert

Virtual schooling is a great option for homebound students. My son had cancer when he was 3. Granted at 3 he was not in school but had he been in a brick and mortar school, there would have been many days when he would have missed because of low blood counts. I see virtual schools as being a lifesaver for kids with cancer or other illnesses that would keep them out of school.

Laura Kulp

We home schooled our daughter until it got to be too difficult for us to help her with her studies. We chose Monroe because we like that it is controlled by the District. While virtual schools are not for everyone, it is a great opportunity for our children that either don't fit in with the school system or need more in the way of educational challenge. It is extremely important to us as parents that our children have a choice and a voice in their education.

L. John Peters & Deborah L. Peters

Last February, our 15 year old son was expelled from his high school half way through his freshman year for being party to online threats that were made while playing an online video game. He was expelled from school until the age of 21. He had no previous record at school or in the law. He was a good student, on the football and wrestling teams and very involved with activities at school. We were heartbroken with what to do with a 15 year old who needs an education. We were impressed with Monroe Virtual School and virtual education was the last option we had. The nation's kids need our help, and they need an education when the public schools do not work for them. Without virtual schools these kids will not be given the chance to become productive adults.

Jackie Wojciechowski

Virtual Schooling

A story from a MVHS student.

What MVHS is...

- MVHS stands for Monroe Virtual High School.
- It is a virtual school based out of the Monroe School District in Wisconsin.

What it does...

MVHS provides an online learning experience for students who are either unable to participate in regular schooling, or would rather use the vast expanse of the World Wide Web for their day-to-day schooling.

Who am I?

My name is Raechel Richardson. I am 14 years old and living in Oconto, Wisconsin. I participated in regular schools through 8th grade, but for my freshman year of high school, decided to try something different.

Why?

I loved the idea of doing school work online. It was new and convenient. No more running to the library for research, I could do it at my kitchen table! There were so many options for courses that I never thought were possible.

Like What?

- In place of a boring old English course, I took a Mythology course, and a Journal Writing Course.
- I am taking Chemistry, which to me is much more fun than Biology!
- I am also taking first year Spanish.

An advantage of MVHS is that they don't regulate what courses you can and can't take. I don't need to take Biology or Algebra I to graduate, but I do need a certain number of math and science credits.

Pros and Cons

Pros...
- Wide variety of courses
- Teachers come to you
- Open communication between staff and students

Cons
- Difficult to choose between courses
- No socialization with peers
- Missing out on major high school experiences, like prom.

My favorite thing...

My favorite thing about MVHS is probably my teacher Matthew Steffeck. When I first met him, within ten minutes he was telling jokes and laughing. I don't like mean teachers (who does?) and he is so nice and always willing to answer any questions I have. If I lose a password or just need some help with Geometry, he's just and email or phone call away.

What's this all about?

You may be wondering what this whole PowerPoint is all about. Well, I'll tell you. A few weeks ago my mom came to me and told me that another virtual school in Wisconsin was being shut down by the state. Here is a quote about the legislation that I got from weac.org "The court ruled that the online taxpayer-funded charter school operated by the Northern Ozaukee School District relies on parents to serve as teachers, and therefore violates Wisconsin's teacher certification requirements." The state didn't like that it's money was going to schools where there weren't even real teachers.

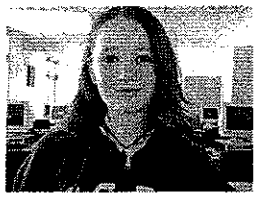
What's this all about? (cont.)

In my opinion parents are the best teachers. However the state doesn't feel the same way. Now my school is threatened with this legislation, and I plan to try and do something about it! Therefore, I am creating this as a way to hopefully convince state legislators that MVHS is a wonderful school and many students would be sent back to boring school districts, where teachers are no fun and school work is intense, if this is passed.

Conclusion

Now as I finish this slideshow I will ask from the bottom of my heart, please please let me keep my school! Yes there are disadvantages to it, but the payout is more than worth it. I know that if you were to spend a month doing this work you would love it just as much as I do.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.



I certify that all work in this power-point is mine and mine alone, unless otherwise noted. This project was completed Monday, January 14, 2008.

Catherine Caudill
901 Mira Avenue
Crivitz, WI 54114
December 19, 2007

Senator Roger Breske
Representative Jeffrey Mursau
US Representative Steve Kagen
US Senator Russ Feingold
US Senator Herb Kohl

Dear Sirs:

I have drafted about five letters in an attempt to express how important Monroe Virtual High School is to me and my family. This topic has brought up a lot of unresolved rage and the thought that this educational opportunity may not be available for my son in the future is very unsettling.

I am not opposed to my local public school, I have two children that have graduated from Crivitz High School and I have been very satisfied with their education. My eldest son is learning disabled and Crivitz School District really has some OUTSTANDING LD teachers. That being said, Crivitz School is not a good fit for my fourteen year old son Matthew.

When I tell people that I have a child in a virtual school I usually get one of two reactions. First, people assume that my son must be a problem child or he would be in a traditional school or second, that my husband and I must be some type of fanatic. Neither is the case. Matthew is a very well mannered, bright young man. He works part-time at McDonalds, he started in July and is already completed training to be a "crew trainer". He is also a very gifted student. His favorite subject is math, and he does complex math problems in his head. This was mistaken by one of his early math teachers as "daydreaming."

Monroe Virtual High School offers my son the very best educational opportunities. He has teachers all over the country, his Algebra teacher is in Texas, his Biology teacher is in Washington, his Japanese teacher is in Utah, and his English teacher is in Florida. He can call, IM, text, or email any of his teachers at any time of the day, and well into the night. He has one on one contact with his teachers and does not feel embarrassed about asking questions. When he's finished with a discussion with his teachers, he fully understands the concepts being taught. It's like having a private tutor at all times. He also has group discussions via the internet with his teacher and other students.

His teacher at MVSH, Matthew Steffeck, is also available day or night. He is well informed, prompt and very helpful. If an issue arises, it is dealt with immediately; I have not received the same service from our local public school.

My son can choose from literally hundreds of courses. He has already completed a half credit course in Computer Applications, and is currently enrolled in Honors Algebra, Honors Biology, Honors English, and Japanese. His electives are ones HE chooses, not just whatever slot is left over after the upper classmen have chosen. The last year he was in the local school, he absolutely HATED going to school, one of the reasons was he had to take woodshop and absolutely detested it. He had no other choice. There is no way that he would be able to have this many choices at our local school.

The last year my son was in Crivitz Jr. High, I had to fight with him every morning to get him to go to school. He hated it so much he would be physically ill. He hated the harassment he had to deal with from other students, he hated some of the teachers he had to deal with, and he hated the elective classes that he was forced to take. He was a very stressed out and unhappy child. Now, it is like night and day. When a course arrives it is like Christmas. I cannot tell you what a relief that is as a parent. He is excited about school again! When he talks to his teacher on the telephone or through the internet, he's laughing! He loves his teachers and talking with students from all over the country. He is so dedicated and enthusiastic, that he will finish a full two semester Algebra I course in just over one semester, because he can't wait to get to Algebra II. Could he do that in "normal" school? Absolutely not!

What it all boils down to is I am a customer. I am unsatisfied with my local school. I had one teacher tell me that he did not believe that there were LD students, that "they're just lazy". I had another attempt to justify refusing to teach to her class, close her book and tell them to "figure it out on your own" because of three troublemakers (none of whom were my child) because "peer pressure can be a better tool than sending someone to the Principal's office". This was a math class for crying out loud! Not something the boy would never use again! These same troublemakers... are the ones that started a rumor that my son was gay and harassed him constantly. I complained on a regular basis to the administration. The Superintendent stopped taking my calls and was "busy" when I went to his office. I was finally fed up and began Home Schooling him. But now with his advanced math, he will most probably finish Algebra II this year, I am not qualified to teach him any longer.

It irritates me that half of the money the state, i.e. me the taxpayer, delegates to his education is given to the local school. If the local school had been more concerned with ensuring a safe, comfortable place to educate my son, he'd still be in the school. If I change my telephone service from Sprint to ATT, ATT does not have to send half of their fee to Sprint for the privilege of giving me service. I also have a problem with the very short window that students can enroll in Virtual School.

I knew that a problem would arise with the Virtual School System, it is a wonderful thing and it was only a matter of time before the local schools started causing trouble. Maybe if they spent a little of that time and money creating a healthy learning environment for all, no one would feel the need for a Virtual school. I'm an advocate of Monroe Virtual High School, and when friends talk about frustrations with public schools, I give them Monroe's information. Frankly I do not know why anyone would choose a public school over a virtual school. I have not found a disadvantage to the Virtual School. When my son was ill, he did not fall behind, his lessons were there waiting for him, right where he left off.

Allowances have already been made to appease the local schools, short enrollment window and shared funding. Instead of working on the problems in schools: harassment from fellow students, lack of educational choices, and teacher and administrators that do not care or know how to deal with these problems, they're trying to force us back through other means. Not only do I think that the Virtual School system should remain, I think we should be able to choose freely, I should be able to enroll my child in a virtual school at any time, just as I can choose to take my child to any other physical school at any time. And the school educating my son should get ALL of his state funding!

Based on my research, comparing Monroe Virtual High School and Northern Ozaukee School District's WIVA virtual school is comparing apples to oranges. All of my son's lessons are taught, graded, and assessed by the teachers of the course and he has almost daily contact with each of his teachers. My role in his education is the same as it was when he was in regular school, I take that back, it's actually less! When he has a question I don't have to do a frantic internet, encyclopedia or book search, I can just say "I don't know" hand him the phone and say "call your teacher."

In closing I would like to stress the fact that I have made a **conscience decision** to enroll my child in Monroe Virtual High School. I did not make this choice lightly. My son is receiving an excellent education from outstanding teachers at his own pace. I cannot see how eliminating this program benefits anyone except the local school districts that would have our children as students if they offered the same services.

Sincerely,
Catherine Caudill

P.O. Box 2061
Manitowoc, WI 54221
January, 4, 2008

Senator Joe Leibham
Room 5 South, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Joe Leibham,

I am writing out of concern about the potential loss of a parent's right to choose the best educational setting for their children after the recent decision about Ozaukee. I'm asking that you consider the fact that all children learn in different ways and to try to pack them all into the same schooling mold is an injustice to those who do not learn thinks according to the expected mold.

My daughter is an example. She did well in a private school setting with the smaller classes and more one-on-one with the teacher, but after we went through a divorce, my income could not continue to support the tuition. In the private school, she bloomed, did very well and loved math. She was placed in public school in third and fourth grade. She was frustrated with the fact that she had already learned things in the private school that had not been taught yet to her new classmates and as a result, her teachers held her back so the class could catch up to her. So school got boring for her until her classmates caught up to her. Then in fourth grade, her teacher yelled a lot at the whole class when she had an issue with a student. This frustrated her and she was in tears about it. Seeing that she was beginning to hate school, and even her favorite class (math), I talked with the principal about the issues, but he basically called my daughter a liar. So I began to investigate other options.

I could not afford to send her back to private school. I had previously done the traditional home schooling of her brother and I knew the challenges of it. I did not feel adequately qualified do switch to this option. Then I found a public school that could be done online, had qualified teachers readily available to help, did not cost anything, and all the record keeping and paperwork was handled by the school. They even provided textbooks and computers. It seemed the 'best of both worlds', a perfect mix of being able to school her at home, but have the advantages that regular schools has to offer. They handled testing, too.

I immediately enrolled her in Wisconsin Connections Academy. We both loved the physical textbooks that she could curl up on the sofa to read. I loved that I could monitor what she was learning and I became more aware of her learning style, her strengths and weaknesses. I was dismayed to learn how her bad experiences with the previous teacher affected her attitude about math! We liked it that we had a teacher available to help answer our question. We enjoyed the fact that if she was frustrated with an assignment, she could set it aside and do something else and then come back to it when she felt less frustration. She did very well in this virtual setting, even though I had to constantly encourage her on her math. We went as far as we could in Connections.

So in eighth grade, we looked around for schools with a similar setting for her to continue in and we found Monroe Virtual, another public school that was online. We

liked the variety of choices for class options. We liked that this one also had physical text books available. We were also impressed with all the Universities that are affiliated with Monroe. We feel it is going to be a good fit for her to finish her high school years. And I'm thrilled to report that she is finally beginning to like math again and this year it's Algebra! It took a while to undo the damage that was done in the brick and mortar setting.

She has plenty of social life, involved in two youth groups, church choir, and bowling league. Each time she hears from a friend about a bomb scare at the local Jr. High and High Schools, she is so glad that she does not have to be afraid in her school setting. She can just concentrate on her learning.

There are so many positives that we have experienced in the virtual school settings, that I would hate to see this option taken away. My daughter is blooming in the virtual school setting and she was frustrated in the brick and mortar one. And I know that there are others out there who have had to find other options to keep their child in an academic setting that worked best for them.

These Virtual schools offer educational options to families, regardless of geographic, financial or economic circumstances. They are public schools and offer the same innovations as the brick and mortar public schools, but in a home setting.

I believe the Court of Appeals made a bad decision, one that could jeopardize many families around Wisconsin that have struggled to find the best setting to help their children achieve academically. Consider the barriers that would be put up for families if this is not corrected. I've known of families who chose the virtual school setting because of health issues their children had or disabilities that made the brick and mortar schools too challenging. Virtual schools are public schools and offer the advantages of the brick and mortar public schools but in the comforts of the home setting. If this is what some children need to succeed, their parents should have the right to be able to make this choice.

Please do whatever is necessary to correct this and preserve the parent's rights to choose what academic setting is best for their children. Since these children are our future, we need to do the best we can to provide them with the most suitable academic environment available so they can achieve their highest learning potential. This impacts their future. Do your best to make it a bright future for each child.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Grosskopf

P.O. Box 2061
Manitowoc, WI 54221
January, 4, 2008

Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster
Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
PO Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841

Dear Superintendent Burmaster,

I am writing out of concern about the potential loss of a parent's right to choose the best educational setting for their children after the recent decision about Ozaukee. I'm asking that you consider the fact that all children learn in different ways and to try to pack them all into the same schooling mold is an injustice to those who do not learn thinks according to the expected mold.

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Please do whatever is necessary to correct this and preserve the parent's rights to choose what academic setting is best for their children. Since these children are our future, we need to do the best we can to provide them with the most suitable academic environment available so they can achieve their highest learning potential. This impacts their future. Do your best to make it a bright future for each child.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Grosskopf

Subject: FW: letter of support for virtual school
From: "Judy David" <1fostermom@att.net>
Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2008 11:57:41 -0600
To: <cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>

Cory,

Here is a copy of what I sent Mindy. Feel free to use part of all of it

Judy David

-----Original Message-----
From: Judy David [mailto:1fostermom@att.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 08, 2008 6:46 PM
To: Melinda mulryangehin
Subject: RE: letter of support for virtual school

Mindy, Here you go

Judy

Brett Davis

Representative Davis,

I am a parent of a 14 year old girl who has suffered great damage in her young life. Thyme came to us at the age of 9 as our foster daughter. We tried the MPS system and also a choice school in our area. Neither school was able to meet her needs. She attended Hampton Elementary in 4th grade. Although her teacher was competent, my daughter learned little. This was due to the atmosphere of the classroom. Several students with behavior issues kept the classroom in an uproar. The teacher spent most of her day trying to maintain order. The bullies at that school were very devious. They threatened my daughter when the teacher was not around and made sure that the abuse happened out of sight. Once a child threw my daughter's personal library book out of the window. Her favorite book was lost. When I tired to address the issues with the parents of the child involved, I was told I could not have that parents phone number and that nothing could be done to gain restitution. We had to ask ourselves, what lessons was my daughter actually learning?

The next year we moved to a private school. Discipline was somewhat better in the 5th grade class, But, when we reached Junior high things fell apart again. Once again bullies and disruptive students hindered my daughter's learning.

We chose to enroll her in Monroe Virtual School. We had her repeat 7th grade and this year she is in 8th. Her grades are much better. As a former

teacher I know that she is now learning. I asked her to give me four things she liked about her home-based education. Her answers were (1) Great teacher (I think she was "kissing up to me") (2)No bullies (3) I can work at my own pace and (4) I have no distractions. Now I must tell you we do have a 3year old at home so there are some distractions but apparently Tye feels she can still learn in spite of her little sister's chatter.

The curriculum we use to very age appropriate and challenging. Tye has been diagnosed with a Non- Verbal Learning Disorder. By using home based education we are able to meet Tye's needs one to one. We believe Tye is reaching her fullest potential through the education at Monroe Virtual Schools.

My husband and I could not afford to home school Tye if we had to purchase all of the curriculum. Although virtual schools are not for everyone, they do meet a great need for many. We urge you to consider those students who like Tye find virtual education a perfect fit for their situation. Tye has experienced great success and her self-concept has been strengthened through her positive success in school this past year.

I leave you with this thought. There was a great storm and the beach was cluttered by thousands of starfish stranded and dying. A small boy was walking down the beach picking up starfish and throwing them back into the surf. An old man approached the boy and questioned, "Son, what are you doing?"

The boy replied, "I'm saving the starfish."
The elder man, with the wisdom of the world, sadly shook his head and said, "You might as well stop now. With all these thousands of starfish you will never make a difference."
The boy with the wisdom of compassion, picked up a starfish and replied as he tossed the creature back into the sea, "I made a difference to that one!"
Perhaps you like the boy can make a difference.
Thank you for taking time to read this.

Mike and Judy David
4814 N 58th St
Milwaukee, WI 53218
414-461-5403
1fostermom@att.net

Subject: Letter to share with legislative colleagues
From: <jackie555@charter.net>
Date: Sat, 12 Jan 2008 10:24:34 -0800
To: cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us

To: jackie555@charter.net
Subject:
Date: Sat, 12 Jan 2008 12:19:24 -0600

To Monroe Virtual school,

I am writing this letter in regards to the legislative activity currently going on regarding virtual schools.

Please feel free to share our story.

Last February our 15 year son was expelled from his High School half way through his freshman year for being a party to online threats that were made while playing an online video game.

What started out as kids talking stupid turned into a nightmare for our family.

Our 15 year old son was expelled from school until the age of 21. He had no previous record at school or in the law. He was a good student, on the football and wrestling teams. And very involved with activities at school.

He is a good kid!

While we know and understand how serious this was, we feel the punishment did not fit the crime!

The public school did not want to try to work anything out, they just wanted him gone.

We were heartbroken what do you do with a 15 year old who needs an education? We were also told by the private schools they would not accept him.

I started to research online schools; I was very negative but felt it was our only option.

We were accepted during open enrollment, within a few weeks later a counselor for Monroe schools came to our home for a visit. We were very impressed.

Our son began his new life being an online student of Monroe virtual academy in July. He is doing wonderful in his studies. He has completed all of his missing freshman credits and is now almost finished with his sophomore credits. He is even taking an online guitar class that is great.

Don't get me wrong virtual school is tough, the student needs to be very dedicated. And the parents need to also give 100 %

Our Sons teacher Mr. Matt Stefeck has been great he comes to our house every time our son needs him to.

He is always just a phone call away.

I do not know where we we be without Monroe Virtual school, I feel they saved my sons education.

For many kids this is the only option, and without them they will slip through the cracks.

Kids are being expelled from the public schools at a very high rate, and need this option!

After the September 11th attacks, the zero tolerance laws at school are expelling more kids then ever.

Our district expelled 29 kids last year, many for similar reasons. And more this current year.

This Nations kids needs our help, they need an education when the public schools do not work for them.

Without Virtual schools these kids will not be given the chance to become productive adults.

Sincerely, Jackie Wojciechowski

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January 8, 2008

Dear Rep. Davis,

We are writing you in regards to the Monroe Virtual School. We have 3 students attending the Monroe Virtual School at this time. We decided to enroll our children in the school because of a lot of factors. The first factor is education is the most important tool of their lives and without a good education they will not have a chance in this day and age. I want to monitor each and everyday of the class they are taking so they are not falling behind and I was unable to do that with the tradition school. That is critical for our children to succeed in school. How can a child feel good about themselves if they are left continually to fall behind in school. No wonder the drop out rate is so high! Our children have struggled in the traditional schools for years. I have had so many problems with the public school. We have spent so many countless days after school for my son's talking with their teachers, each time I found out that they were behind in class on their school work. The only way I found out they were behind was by a progress report sent out just a few weeks before their report cards would come out. I would go in and ask the teacher why she couldn't call us, she would reply it not a big deal. She herself didn't learn math until she was in college. This is unacceptable to my husband and I. Why are we paying taxes for this kind of education? We have wanted our child out of the public school system for years. Then we found the option of the Monroe Virtual School where we didn't have to search for curriculum. The school has excellent curriculum already in place. I knew our children were going to receive an excellent education and I would be able to monitor their education every step of the way. In the traditional school I never was able to monitor their education. I had to try to call or email the teachers and hope that they would return my emails and calls. Even with all the calls and emails to the school I was not able to keep up with my 3 sons education. When it came time for teacher conferences it was to late my sons had already fallen behind in their classes. Even in some cases at teacher conference, some of the teacher were not even there to talk with. Our sons have really struggled with school, I know the teachers have their schedule of what they have to teach in each of the classes. But in our case our boys were always falling behind in the tradition classes because they have problems concentration on the material in the classes and the environment in school made it hard with to many distractions. The teachers have so many students they don't have time to take it slower with the classroom school work. So our children kept getting behind or just bad grades and were barely passing the class. We have two children in 11th grade that don't even know basic math and last year at teacher conferences we talked to their teacher and she said she doesn't have time in her schedule to re-teach what was missed because she has her curriculum that she is required to teach. With the virtual school my sons can take 3 classes at a time and not feel so overwhelmed and work at their own pace. So that they can succeed in their classes and feel good about themselves. Our oldest child got to the point between the peer pressure at school, low self esteem, and the poor grades. He gave up and dropped out of school in his senior year of 2007. The only last option for our son Paul to graduate with a diploma is the virtual school, so he can fulfill his goal of joining the Navy. The Navy will not accept a GED only a diploma. So in closing the virtual school is another very important way for today's youth to succeed in life. Please don't let

this tool of education be taken away. My children are succeeding in their classes with A's and B's now and are retaining what they have learned. They are feeling good about themselves and we are so proud of their accomplishments. My son Paul who has dropped out of the public school has made great strides in school and is feeling confident again because of the virtual school. Without the Virtual school Paul wouldn't have had a chance to accomplish is dreams of joining the Navy and having a career. Without the credit recovery program my son Paul would be an person without a diploma. Plus the service learning is great! I love the fact that our boy's can work with the community and volunteer helping people. The work experience is another great option for them to we run 3 businesses and they are learning responsibilities in our business which will help the in life. They are getting a far better education now and my only other option is to home school them or drive them to another school in another district that I feel good about. Why is it alright to home school our children but it not alright to get the education through the virtual school. I take my continuing education on line and that is acceptable. The virtual school is the best option for us. We need our school so more children can succeed in school.

Sincerely, Laurie Haberman

From: Steven Haberman
481 Janesville St.
Janesville, WI. 53548
608-876-6682

RE: Virtual School Educations January 11, 2008

Representative: Brett Davis

Hello Mr. Davis I am writing you in response to the legal challenges and questionable attacks from WEAC! I am very strongly in support of this Virtual School program for reasons that are proven on a daily basis in our own children's lives.

Back in January of 1996 we started as foster parents of two boys. These boys had three other siblings in the foster care system at the same time. This family had been lacking parental guidance due to drugs and alcohol which eventually led to termination of parental right's. Which you well know how far behind this would set any person of an adult's age to say nothing about children in the ages of four to ten years. When this happened we were asked by the state of Wisconsin if we would consider adoption of the two boys as well another brother whose foster family had recently lost their father in an accident. We did adopt three of the boys as well the other two siblings were adopted into good homes also.

With having this all happening to these kids at such a young age you can imagine the baggage and struggles these kids have had to overcome. We had the kids enrolled in school from the very first days of foster care. The problems that came up at school were usually related to slower learning and getting left behind. I can't remember how many special test and classes the school had tried, but most of them required the student being pulled out of their regular classes to be worked with which only furthered them being labeled as problems to their classmates. Several teachers along the way were very helpful taking extra time with the kids, but more often other teachers dealing with large class sizes and set state requirements for there own curriculum had to push past what the students were missing. There is no time for these teachers to go back to cover what another instructor missed two or three years prior. Besides that teacher told my wife and I she never learned math until she went to college anyway.

Since we have made the switch away from the traditional school toward the Monroe Virtual High School program the kids have been more relaxed and even enjoy school now, which is evident from the better grades they have been getting on their homework as well as test scores. The teachers have always been available for questions when ever the kids needed. We do acknowledge that this program is not for everyone and that is why we appreciated the way the Monroe Virtual School had us try the system before we ran with it. They had the kids take a few classes in the summer which got them familiarized with the program, so if there was going to be a problem or it was not what we wanted for them all we had to do was re-enroll back into our traditional school.

I have talked with many friends and neighbors from outside our district who have told me that they had lost from there own schools very good well respected teachers to the Monroe Virtual School system which leads me to believe we have a very qualified teaching staff.

Some critics would try using social skills as a reason these kids should stay in traditional schools. Fact was when these kids fell behind we would help them to try and get caught up just to loose the battle to the other kids that would not take the class serious because no one cared about their grades. We have seen some very exciting changes in our own kid's social skills in the fact that they are much more open to talking with adults and asking questions that at times in the past I know they would have waited until we were home and then asked us. They still have their friends they see around town as well we feel they're not exposed to as much of the negative influences as we had been dealing with in the past.

I have several family members that are in the teaching profession, of which if I would have asked anyone of them two years ago if there was a program to help those kids that fall into say the five percent range of their own classes that easily fall behind would they make use of it. Personally I believe a good teacher is going to do what ever is best for the kids. We live in a small farming community which is very limited to what is available for other education options. So this has really been good for our kids, besides being able to take college courses to further their education. They are able to further their education on-line just like a lot of their teachers do. In business as well as in education there is one thing that is guaranteed that is change. There are a lot of times I wish things would stay the same because it is comfortable, but in all three of our family run businesses change is what happens whether we like it or not. So in closing I hope you will support this concept of education because of the facts that have been proven in our own experiences.

Thanks, Steven Haberman

Subject: support for Virtual Schools
From: "jarts" <jarts@merr.com>
Date: Mon, 14 Jan 2008 09:53:18 -0600
To: <cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>

Dear Principal Hirsbrunner,

I wanted to forward copies of the letters that I wrote to our representatives. We plan to attend the rally on Wednesday and if there is anything else that you can think of that we can do or should do to help, please let me know.

Thanks to you and all of your staff for everything that you do, and for the time and effort that is involved in trying to keep our great school open.

-April Shrader

Senator Dale Schultz
Room 127 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Schultz,

Representative Steve Hilgenberg
Room 3 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Hilgenberg,

We are writing to show our support for the virtual schools in Wisconsin. We believe virtual schools are a wonderful alternative to the public brick and mortar schools. When deciding on a high school for our teenage son, we were not impressed with some of the curriculum choices that our local high school offered. In particular, the math curriculum. Students are required to take 2 years of ‘integrated math’ before they are allowed to take college preparatory classes. This math curriculum has come under scrutiny by many parents, as students that have already graduated from the school district found themselves unprepared for college math and many were, therefore, taking refresher math in college. We did not feel this school was the best fit for our son.

We searched for alternatives and considered private, out-of-state schools (both on-line and correspondence) before learning about Wisconsin’s Virtual schools. After meeting with a teacher, we decided on the Monroe Virtual High School. I cannot say enough good things about this school. The teachers are wonderfully supportive, available whenever my son has a question. My son is able to progress at his own pace and is doing very well in this school. If our virtual school is no longer allowed to operate, we will once again consider an out-of-state school.

We pay too much in taxes in Wisconsin to not have our youth allowed every opportunity to succeed. What a sad time for the residents of Wisconsin if these virtual schools are no longer allowed to exist. The youth of today, including the students of the Wisconsin Virtual Schools, are the future of Wisconsin. Let’s make

sure we show them how much they matter.

I do believe that indeed every child deserves a great school.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Shrader
725 7th Street
Prairie du Sac, WI 53578

Subject: Support for Monroe Virtual School
From: Jane Banning <jbanning@wisc.edu>
Date: Mon, 14 Jan 2008 09:32:27 -0600
To: Cory.Hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us

Hi Cory,
This is a letter of support from my husband, Rick Kelley, and I. Our 17 year old is enrolled currently.
When students learn in a manner that is 'outside the box' of what a traditional public school can provide, there are only a few options and these options' availability depends on family income, proximity to home, philosophy of teaching and learning, and other variables. For us, after 8 years in our home district, we had to decide on whether to continue to let our child falter and fail, or find an educational home where he could complete his high school diploma. After looking at as many options as I could find, I set up an interview with Dan Bauer. He so impressed us with his empathy, insight, and the structure of the Monroe Virtual School that we made the hard decision many parents must make to take this alternative path. Our son recently completed a Business Math class thru the Monroe Virtual School, and got an A. He can use the skills he learned, he felt supported and successful. Virtual school is not for everyone, but for those who need it, it means the world.
Please let me know if there is additional information I can provide so that the leaders of the State of Wisconsin, known for it's high educational standards, can support the continuing virtual school structure.
Jane Banning

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Jane Banning, MSSW
Director, Clinical Teaching and Assessment Center
University of Wi. School of Medicine and Public Health
Phone: (608) 265-5387

Original-envelope-id: 0JUG00N06BAF5600@smtpauth2.wiscmail.wisc.edu
Reporting-MTA: dns;smtpauth2.wiscmail.wisc.edu (tcp-daemon)

Original-recipient: rfc822;Cory.Hirsbrunner@monrie.k12.wi.us
Final-recipient: rfc822;Cory.Hirsbrunner@monrie.k12.wi.us
Action: failed
Status: 5.4.4 (Illegal host/domain name found)

Subject: Support for Monroe Virtual School
From: JANE A BANNING <jbanning@facstaff.wisc.edu>
Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2008 17:15:50 -0600
To: Cory.Hirsbrunner@monrie.k12.wi.us

Hi Cory,
This is a letter of support from my husband, Rick Kelley, and I. Our 17 year old is enrolled currently.
When students learn in a manner that is 'outside the box' of what a traditional public school can provide, there are only a few options and these options' availability depends on family income, proximity to home, philosophy of teaching and learning, and other variables. For us, after 8 years in our home district, we had to decide on whether to continue to let our child falter and fail, or find an educational home where he could complete his high school

diploma. After looking at as many options as I could find, I set up an interview with Dan Bauer. He so impressed us with his empathy, insight, and the structure of the Monroe Virtual School that we made the hard decision many parents must make to take this alternative path. Our son recently completed a Business Math class thru the Monroe Virtual School, and got an A. He can use the skills he learned, he felt supported and successful. Virtual school is not for everyone, but for those who need it, it means the world.
Please let me know if there is additional information I can provide so that the leaders of the State of Wisconsin, known for it's high educational standards, can support the continuing virtual school structure.
Jane Banning

Jane Banning, MSSW
Director, Clinical Assessment Center
Health Sciences Learning Center
750 Highland Avenue, office 1184
Madison, Wi. 53705-2221
Phone: 608-265-5387

file:///C|/DOCUME%7E1/JAB/LOCALS%7E1/TEMP/nsmail-50.tmp **Content-Type:** message/delivery-status
Content-Encoding: 7bit

(null).eml **Content-Type:** message/rfc822

P.O. Box 2061
Manitowoc, WI 54221
January, 4, 2008

Rep. Bob Ziegelbauer
Room 207 North, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Rep. Bob Ziegelbauer,

I am writing out of concern about the potential loss of a parent's right to choose the best educational setting for their children after the recent decision about Ozaukee. I'm asking that you consider the fact that all children learn in different ways and to try to pack them all into the same schooling mold is an injustice to those who do not learn thinks according to the expected mold.

My daughter is an example. She did well in a private school setting with the smaller classes and more one-on-one with the teacher, but after we went through a divorce, my income could not continue to support the tuition. In the private school, she bloomed, did very well and loved math. She was placed in public school in third and fourth grade. She was frustrated with the fact that she had already learned things in the private school that had not been taught yet to her new classmates and as a result, her teachers held her back so the class could catch up to her. So school got boring for her until her classmates caught up to her. Then in fourth grade, her teacher yelled a lot at the whole class when she had an issue with a student. This frustrated her and she was in tears about it. Seeing that she was beginning to hate school, and even her favorite class (math), I talked with the principal about the issues, but he basically called my daughter a liar. So I began to investigate other options.

I could not afford to send her back to private school. I had previously done the traditional home schooling of her brother and I knew the challenges of it. I did not feel adequately qualified do switch to this option. Then I found a public school that could be done online, had qualified teachers readily available to help, did not cost anything, and all the record keeping and paperwork was handled by the school. They even provided textbooks and computers. It seemed the 'best of both worlds', a perfect mix of being able to school her at home, but have the advantages that regular schools has to offer. They handled testing, too.

I immediately enrolled her in Wisconsin Connections Academy. We both loved the physical textbooks that she could curl up on the sofa to read. I loved that I could monitor what she was learning and I became more aware of her learning style, her strengths and weaknesses. I was dismayed to learn how her bad experiences with the previous teacher affected her attitude about math! We liked it that we had a teacher available to help answer our question. We enjoyed the fact that if she was frustrated with an assignment, she could set it aside and do something else and then come back to it when she felt less frustration. She did very well in this virtual setting, even though I had to constantly encourage her on her math. We went as far as we could in Connections.

So in eighth grade, we looked around for schools with a similar setting for her to continue in and we found Monroe Virtual, another public school that was online. We liked the variety of choices for class options. We liked that this one also had physical

text books available. We were also impressed with all the Universities that are affiliated with Monroe. We feel it is going to be a good fit for her to finish her high school years. And I'm thrilled to report that she is finally beginning to like math again and this year it's Algebra! It took a while to undo the damage that was done in the brick and mortar setting.

She has plenty of social life, involved in two youth groups, church choir, and bowling league. Each time she hears from a friend about a bomb scare at the local Jr. High and High Schools, she is so glad that she does not have to be afraid in her school setting. She can just concentrate on her learning.

There are so many positives that we have experienced in the virtual school settings, that I would hate to see this option taken away. My daughter is blooming in the virtual school setting and she was frustrated in the brick and mortar one. And I know that there are others out there who have had to find other options to keep their child in an academic setting that worked best for them.

These Virtual schools offer educational options to families, regardless of geographic, financial or economic circumstances. They are public schools and offer the same innovations as the brick and mortar public schools, but in a home setting.

I believe the Court of Appeals made a bad decision, one that could jeopardize many families around Wisconsin that have struggled to find the best setting to help their children achieve academically. Consider the barriers that would be put up for families if this is not corrected. I've known of families who chose the virtual school setting because of health issues their children had or disabilities that made the brick and mortar schools too challenging. Virtual schools are public schools and offer the advantages of the brick and mortar public schools but in the comforts of the home setting. If this is what some children need to succeed, their parents should have the right to be able to make this choice.

Please do whatever is necessary to correct this and preserve the parent's rights to choose what academic setting is best for their children. Since these children are our future, we need to do the best we can to provide them with the most suitable academic environment available so they can achieve their highest learning potential. This impacts their future. Do your best to make it a bright future for each child.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Grosskopf

January 14, 2008

As a school counselor who previously worked at our local brick and mortar high school and now works at the Monroe Independent Education Charter High School or more commonly, Monroe Virtual School, I have a unique perspective on several students and their performance at the brick and mortar school as compared to the virtual school. Before I get started I want to note our brick and mortar school is not a bad place to be - many if not most of the students don't bother locking their lockers, physical fights are rare and student have known all their classmates since 6th grade or earlier. But like any other traditional high school, there is the need to belong, to fit in and that does not happen for every one of the 800 students who sift through the halls each day, especially if anxiety is an issue.

I remember one of our current virtual students from the brick and mortar school as the freshman girl who sat in the counselor office and sobbed for hours, days on end. When I started at the Virtual School initially, I didn't recognize her from the brick and mortar when I was reintroduced to her, because I rarely saw her face it was always buried in her arms or red and tear streaked. Now, she has a warm smile, works at a local telecommunications office and is taking the last four classes she needs to graduate. Right now we are looking into job shadows to give her direction for post-secondary educational options.

Another student, despite his tall stature used to try to hide in his mop of wavy hair at the brick and mortar school and eeked through with mostly, C's D's and F's. At the Virtual School graduation last year I saw bright-eyed, clean cut young man who had earned A's and B's with us and was considering his options at a technical college.

My voice caught in my throat at the virtual school graduation as I read the name of one of the students who had missed graduating at our brick and mortar high school - twice. When she attend the brick-and mortar, she had a lot going on outside of school. Those outside forces got between her and her desire to graduate. She returned for the second semester after her high school class had gradated to take one regular high school class and a correspondence class, but a surgery and recovery interfered with her attendance and chances for graduation. After I was transferred to the Virtual School, I saw this student in the community and encouraged her to come in so we could look at what it would take for her to graduate. In under four months she took the few remaining classes she needed to earn her diploma. Last week I reviewed her application to our local technical college.

The majority of the students who come to our virtual school were not being successful at their brick and mortar school, often because of circumstances beyond their control. We provide the flexibility that is not practical or possible at the brick and mortar schools and serve students needs that most traditional school settings cannot. To this end, our existence provides a valuable service, an alternative to the traditional brick and mortar school for students who do not fit the traditional mold. It follows that the elimination of virtual school would not only hurt our students and their families, but traditional schools as well.

Debra A. Schmidt
School Counselor

Subject: Wisconsin virtual schools WE NEED THEM!
From: Tammy Baker <schoolgirls2@hotmail.com>
Date: Thu, 3 Jan 2008 23:50:00 -0600
To: <elizabeth.burmaster@dpi.state.wi.us>, <virtual.school@monroe.k12.wi.us>

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter out of concern for the Wisconsin Virtual Schools and to share my view on how badly this program needs to remain an option for families in Wisconsin and other states!

My daughter Amanda is a student of the Monroe Virtual School. She has learning disabilities because of numerous brain surgeries she has undergone. She has a cyst on her brain and has a shunt in place. That shunt placement has caused her terrible bouts with headaches, in turn caused her to miss a great deal of school and made it necessary for her to leave school sick quite frequently. This in turn made her truant and had me, being threatened with court proceedings fro truancy. Amanda's neurosurgeon in Madison diagnosed the headaches as a symptom often seen in people with shunts, caused by pressure in the shunt from sitting in the same position for long periods of time. She would sometimes come home from school and have no choice but to go straight to bed to even be able to function and get to school the next day.

His diagnosis prompted me to look into home schooling my daughter. With homeschooling she is able to work on her homework when she can and she does not need to be sitting steady for 8 hours. She can work for an hour or two and then take a break and go back to it. This has made all the difference in the world with her education. And given her a chance to actually graduate, which I do not believe she would have acheived if she had had to stay in the classroom setting.

Monroe Virtual School has been a God send for us. They are wonderful teachers and keep in close contact with the students. If my daughter needs help with something she can call or email her teacher and he always responds to her within a day or two, sometimes less! They are a great help to her and to me. I tried to homeschool her on my own prior to finding Monroe and that was very difficult to structure on my own. But Monroe has made it so easy and they are so helpful that I feel a huge burden lifted off of me by having them to work with us to help my daughter to graduate high school!

In closing I just want to say that I feel the virtual school is a necessary choice for education in todays world! Everyone learns in different ways and should be given the option of these virtual schools! I do not know what I would have done if I hadn't discovered Monroe Virtual School! I give them great thanks and appreciation for all of their help and support they give me and my daughter in her educational needs! Please fight for our schools and our rights to make this choice!

Thank you,
Ms. Tammy Baker
1502 S. Adams Ave. #106
Marshfield, WI. 54449

"In God we trust"

Subject: Letter to pass on
From: "Scott Menhennet" <smenhennet@gimail.af.mil>
Date: Fri, 28 Dec 2007 13:35:33 -0500
To: melinda.mulryangehin@monroe.k12.wi.us
CC: linda.carl@monroe.k12.wi.us, peggy.bahler@monroe.k12.wi.us, benita.schneeberger@monroe.k12.wi.us

Scott Menhennet
3215 Ala Ilima St
B1012
Honolulu Hi 96818

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of my son, Gabriel Santos, who attends Monroe Virtual Middle School. We started with this school around May 07, and every day has been a blessing. The history behind my choice for this format for my son: I am an active duty Air Force member serving at Hickam AFB Hawaii. I am a single parent, and only want the best for my son. I have an eldest son, who graduated from the public school system here in Hawaii, and I felt the need not to repeat mistakes with Gabe. Yes my son graduated, but along with other outside influences that I work hard to protect my son from. I believe that school is primarily a place to learn, not a social training ground. I make sure my son gets this from soccer practice, church group, and other social groups. Gabe came to me, and asked if he could be home schooled. I gave it some thought, and I pursued the reason why. I am Gabe's legal Guardian, and he has had an interesting past. Education was the last thing on his parents mind. Since becoming part of Gabe's life my number one focus has been getting him up to speed on his reading and math. This also became Gabe's priority, feeling the pressure at school, he felt in-adequate, the fear of others finding out about his lack of education. Since starting down this path, Gabe has been getting good grades, and passing in school, moving up in grade. But we both noticed he still wasn't progressing in what he knows. It was almost like he was repeating what he learned each year, but still moving up in grade. Just to give an example, my son is still at 4th Grade Math, bu t in the 8th grade. But since starting with Monroe, the pressures and distraction of other classmates has been removed, and he can get back to number one priority, just in math alone he has mastered addition and subtraction, and well into mastering multiplication and division. Along with moving up into 5th grade math, and pressing forward!! Also with reading, I recently sent a book report that Gabe did to his counselor with the court, and she was so impressed. She could not believe how much he has improved. I was also so proud of my son, and it couldn't have happened without Monroe. This schools format is perfect for my son, and my life style. It relieves the burden of worrying about deploying, or moving to another assignment, and having Gabe start all over with a new school. He just picks his stuff up and continues with the same format and great teachers where ever we go!!!! I also enjoy the fact, and main reason for not choosing tr aditional Home school, that I know that my son has a real teacher checking his work, and keeping up with his progress along with me, and the parent teacher relationships is so much stronger in this environment. This school truly is a win win situation for everyone. It gives us the parents the options in life for our kids. Monroe truly has stepped into the future of schools. If you have any question about my experience with Monroe, please call me anytime at home 808-721-1917 or work 808-448-2579

Thank you,
Scott Menhennet

January 9, 2008

To whom it may concern,

I want to go on record that I believe it is an imperative for the State of Wisconsin to continue funding Virtual schools such as Monroe Virtual School.

Both of my sons have been homeschooled by my wife and I since they were born. But the quality and variety of information, inspiration, and yes – EDUCATION that Monroe has provided them has been wonderful, and I strongly believe it's the way of the future.

As a property tax payer for all of these years, I resent paying for schools that my boys never attended. Then when they began with Monroe Virtual Schools, I was more than happy to have paid every tax dollar over the years.

Homeschoolers deserve the opportunity to enjoy an enhanced education and benefit from what the State provides.

I for one, will never vote for a representative for any office who takes away the funding for virtual schools. Let my voice be heard...

Mark Peltier-Robson
1422 Clary St.
Beloit, WI 53511
608-362-6193

Dear Rep Davis,

Monroe Virtual school has been a great opportunity for me . The classes are organized excellent and are easy to understand. I am able to take more time to do my assignments. With not many disruptions. Virtual school is a great way for students to work at there own pace to help them understand what they are learning. This schooling has boosted my grades up. I like the fact that when I study for my exam I review the assignments that I did allowing me to go over exactly what I learned. When I take the exam its helpful not to have a time limit and no one there to distract me. Monroe Virtual is a good way for students to feel confident in what they are learning. Its good for students to pick subjects that interest them. I like that its not a fixed schedule. I like the fact that I can take only three classes at a time so I'm not so overwhelmed with school work. I can also work on classes all year long any time I want. The Teachers and Staff are always there the answer my question on my school work. I feel good about my grades and myself where before I didn't. I was always falling behind on my school work and feeling overwhelmed. This school has helped me so much for the better.

Sincerely, Martin Haberman

Dear Rep Davis,

January 10, 2008

I am glad that I'm enrolled in Monroe Virtual School. Now I am getting better grades and am more organized. Since I started the virtual school I have been able to get my work done a lot quicker, because there are not as many distractions that could cause me to get failing grades. Monroe Virtual School is more flexible then my old school. It's more flexible because if my Dad or Grandpa needs my help on the farm. I can help them then go back to my schoolwork later. Another reason I like this school better is I can make my own schedule. We have three businesses that my family run and I can use this for credits for my school as work experience. I can work at my own pace and do my subjects in the order I want to do them. I can take more or less classes at a time, so I don't feel so pressured. My semester exams I only have one or two at a time so I'm not so overwhelmed. This school has helped me feel more confident and not so stressed. This school gives me so many opportunities like service learning. I can help people and get experiences volunteering to help In hospitals, humane society or just help a neighbor out. This school has really help in so many ways.

Sincerely, Cody Haberman

Dear Mr. Hirsbrunner,

I want to share my son's story with you regarding Monroe Virtual School and how it has impacted our lives.

My son Matthew was 15 years old and a sophmore in High School when he told us he was going to be a father. He immediately began working nights and continued school during the day, his girlfriend also did the same during her pregnancy. We felt it was important for our son to be financially responsible for his child but school and work and a newborn were too much on him. We looked into Monroe Virtual School and he began enrollment the summer between his Sophmore and Junior year. Thanks to Virtual School his girlfriend who is the same age has been able to continue attending her high school full time while my son works a full time job. He does school work at night and on the weekends when he is not watching his son while his girlfriend works. Thanks to Virtual School both children are juniors in high school, getting above average grades, paying for health insurance, food, and clothes for thier child AND looking into further education after high school. My son is going to begin working toward his pilot license this summer at only 17 years old, his girlfriend will be able to graduate a semester early and go on to college at 17. Teen pregnancy is becoming more and more common in our society and it is an unfortunate fact that many teens have to deal with. Your school has made it possible for two teenagers to raise a beautiful healthy baby boy, support him financially and emotionally while continuing thier education. Without this option for my son he would never have been able to finish school and his girlfriend may not have either. I have included a picture of them. Please feel free to use his story because if Virtual School is eliminated the lives of not just one student will be affected but the lives of three children all succeeding thanks to Virtual School.

Thank you,
Linda Anfang
mother of a Monroe Virtual School student

January 14, 2008

Greetings:

Concerning legislature governing Wisconsin virtual schools, I feel compelled to tell our story.

Our son Andrew has been home schooled from the 4th grade so we could spend time with him alone while his severely handicapped brother was in a special education class in public school.

In August 2004, when Andrew was finishing his freshman year, I (his mother and primary teacher) suffered kidney failure and had a transplant in May of 2005. This was a drastic interruption of Andrew's schooling and left me unable to give Andrew the help he needed with his school work.

When we learned of Monroe Virtual School, we were thrilled. Andrew loved the idea of taking the same kind of classes other teens were taking. He feels a connection to the school and is doing very well in his studies. After so many years of home schooling, it would be extremely tough for Andrew to adapt to public school.

Monroe Virtual School has been a God-send. We are so thankful to have the opportunity to be involved with the school and to have the chance it gives Andrew to excel. I fear the outcome might be very different without Monroe Virtual School and the exceptional Virtual School staff, especially Andrew's teacher, Mrs. Margie Brunette, who has been wonderfully helpful.

Sincerely,

Victoria A. Marcum

Support for Monroe Independent Education Charter High...

Subject: Support for Monroe Independent Education Charter High School
From: "S.L.Wilson" <linear99@charter.net>
Date: Mon, 14 Jan 2008 10:27:40 -0600
To: <cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>

The traditional educational school system was not working for our family. Our son has a sleep disorder where it is difficult for him to wake up early mornings. As both working parents, we had tried everything to try and get him up ourselves in the morning. When we were able to awaken him mornings, and we had left for work, he would go back to sleep. The traditional educational school system was unsympathetic to our situation. They responded with issuing truancy tickets for us and our son. It was suggested that one of the parents should at home to make sure our son got to school. This was an unrealistic option because of the fact that both parents need to work to provide a home for their families. The days of **Leave It To Beaver** are over. We feel the traditional school system does not acknowledge the fact that there needs to be both parents working. We couldn't help but feel helpless. It was clear to us that we had to pursue another option for education for our son. We were so excited when we saw the add on television for Monroe Virtual High School! Finally, there could be an solution to our situation. Our son is one credit away from graduation through your school. The education through the Missouri-Columbia college has been wonderful! He has received a much superior education through your school them what he would have received through the traditional educational school system. Monroe Virtual High School has been a godsend to our family. It is imperative that it remains available to all the other families in Wisconsin that might be in similar circumstances that we once faced with the traditional educational school system.

Sara
Prairie Du Sac

January 11, 2008

Dear Rep Davis,

I have grandson's attending Monroe Virtual School , I have seen such an improvement in their school work and behavior. They are so much happier and their school work has improved tremendously. The traditional school just was not working for them. With all the distractions in the classroom and peer pressure they just couldn't do their school work. It was very hard for them to concentrate and sit all day in a classroom setting. Now that they can make their own schedule and a well as schedule their own classes that they are able to handle taking at one time. They don't feel so stressed out and overwhelmed in return they are doing a lot better in school. The virtual school is helping a lot of students to be able to be successful in school. We need this option without it, Students keep falling behind in the classroom and don't perform to their ability, which set them up for a minimum wage job and they are not very likely to further their education.

Sincerely, Wanda Meighan

Subject: My support for virtual schools
From: "Kristen Evert" <kevert@wi.rr.com>
Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2008 14:38:52 -0600
To: <Cory.Hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>

Dear Mr. Hirsbrunner,

Here are a couple of stories we would like to share in support of virtual schools:

For the first eleven years of my life, I was homeschooled by my mother, and though I never had a problem gobbling up knowledge, I was never truly motivated. Then we found out about virtual schools and decided to enroll. Since then I have made incredible progress while earning excellent scores. I'm already almost two years ahead thanks to the freestyle learning provided by virtual schools, including Monroe Virtual Diploma. I believe virtual schooling to be an excellent method of education and should not be shut down.

Tyler Evert, age 14

My decision to homeschool my son was based on the limited choices that were available at the preschool age. We continued into elementary school because it worked. Tyler was able to accomplish more in a couple of hours in the morning than children in a brick and morter school accomplished in an entire day. As Tyler reached junior high age, he was looking for more educationally than I was able to provide due to our family circumstances. We discovered virtaul school by accident but it was a perfect fit! Tyler has been able to proceed at his own advanced pace without being tied to the needs of other students in a classroom. He is choosing his own courses, setting his own study schedule, preparing for his exams and scheduling them when he is ready. In addition to learning traditional academic subjects, he is learning time management and life skills: skills often not learned in a brick and morter school where children are told when to go to class, when to stop learning and move to another class, even when to go to the bathroom! Tyler completed grades 6-8 in 2 years and is on track to complete all the required high school credits in 3 years. We would be hard pressed to find an alternative to this educational choice that has been available to us for the last several years. We respectfully request that the legislators and teachers union find a way to compromise and keep the educational opportunities of the children uppermost in their minds.
Thank you-
Kristen Evert
Mother of Monroe Virtual Diploma student

Samantha R. Lewis
123 5th Avenue
Baraboo, WI 53913
January 8, 2008

Brett Davis
State Representative
80th Assembly District
Room 308 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Davis:

I am writing to ask you to support the Monroe Virtual Schools. This issue needs to come to the attention of the state senate. As a parent of one of the middle school students, I believe the education they offer cannot be easily replaced. From my view point, and that of thousands of others, the virtual school offers the best choices in public education available in Wisconsin today.

The real issue here is that legislation has failed to keep up with technology. A recent court case, brought by the teachers union against the Wisconsin Virtual Academy, made a mockery of public education and its purpose. They used current legislation (which was not written with Virtual Schools in mind) to close down an effective program. We need to be sure that the Department of Public Instruction understands the purpose these programs serve in Wisconsin and its importance.

I enrolled my daughter in the Monroe Virtual Academy because Baraboo Public Schools had no viable answer for gifted education. This program allows her to set her own pace academically, choose classes of real interest to her, and actually enjoy the learning process. The difference it has made in her life, and therefore in mine, is astounding. She is excited about learning, thrilled to have the choices that she does. How often do you really hear that in relation to a teenager attending a public school?

There is a significant reason why the Wisconsin legislature passed requirements for Gifted Education. As much as I can dream about a real classroom environment for my daughter, it simply does not exist in our area. Without this program, she will return to an extremely limited curriculum which offers little challenge and even fewer opportunities for real gifted education.

I think that this is an important moment in the history of education. There is no doubt in my mind that this is where the future lies for education. Monroe Virtual Schools cannot wait another year for this issue to be addressed. I urge you to take action now in support of your community and even more so in support of decent choices for education in the State of Wisconsin.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Samantha R. Lewis
Proud Mother of a Monroe Virtual School Student

cc: Elizabeth Burmaster
Melinda Mulryan-Gehin

MeLinda Mulryan-Gehin
1106 Welch Street
Belleville, WI 53508

January 10, 2008

Senator Jon Erpenbach
Room 8 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Representative Brett Davis
Room 308 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Governor James Doyle
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton
19 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 2043
Madison, WI 53702

Re: Wisconsin Virtual Schools

Dear Elected Officials:

I am writing in support of the virtual schools in the State of Wisconsin. I am a teacher with the Monroe Independent Charter School, a virtual school within the Monroe School District. The recent Court of Appeals ruling against WIVA has me concerned about the future of virtual schools in Wisconsin. In the short time I have been a teacher at the Monroe Virtual School I have fallen in love with my job. Just as any other teaching position I have had in the past, I am honored to be able to help students, touch their lives and watch them grow. This position is different in that I am able to work with students who have not had the same success as their peers in traditional school settings, but then chose to attend our virtual school and have discovered experiences they never thought possible.

I have students who use to go to school in fear because they were being bullied on a daily basis. I have students who dreaded going to school because they were bored, didn't feel challenged and were frustrated but have now taken accelerated classes at the virtual school and are working a grade to three grades ahead of their peers and keep asking me for more! I have students who were considered the 'trouble-makers' in the traditional school setting, but are now working on their own pace in subjects they are able to chose to fit their needs and making more progress now in a few weeks than what they did in semesters at their prior schools because they feel in control of their lives.

I realize and fully believe that the virtual school setting is not for every student, and that the traditional school setting is still an excellent means of education for many, many students. However, the virtual school is just one more way for students to expand their education and find their individual fit. We do not expect all students to play the same instruments in band, play the same sports or attend the same extra curricular activities. Why do we expect them all to learn the same way? Students are individuals with individual needs, individual interests. The virtual schools are one more way for us to help students meet those needs.

Please keep these students and the thousands of others in virtual schools in mind. We need to save our virtual schools for our students' sakes.

Sincerely,

MeLinda Mulryan-Gehin

Virtual school continuation

Subject: Virtual school continuation
From: John Peters <ljohnpeters@yahoo.com>
Date: Wed, 9 Jan 2008 09:10:54 -0800 (PST)
To: cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us
CC: Rep.Davis@legis.wisconsin.gov

Hello Cory,

As a concerned parent with a child enrolled in Monroe Virtual Highschool, I am writting to express my feelings for the Virtual school program continuation. First a little history of why we chose Monroe Virtual School.

We home-schooled our daughter until it got to be too difficult for us to help her with her studies. She was schooled by us starting in the third grade and we chose this route because the Colfax school district had no gifted program and she was bored because it was taking so long to learn anything new.

We began researching virtual schools and found Monroe's to be the best program. I feel it is the best program because it is controlled by the school district and not farmed out to some private company that only sees dollar signs. The course offerings are remarkable and my daughter has taken advantage of them to the extent she will likely graduate early. This means she will have a diploma from a respected Wisconsin High school and she plans on going on college to pursue a career that will challenge her. She made Honor role last year and is on pace to do it again this year.

While virtual school is not for everyone, it is a great opportunity for our children that either don't fit in with the school system or need more in the way of educational challenge. It is extremely important to us as parents that our children have a choice and a voice in their education. This being said we fully support the continuation of virtual schools in Wisconsin and are willing to pursue the issue with our state government.

If you need further information from us, we can be reached at (715) 523-1774 or at 220 12th St. SE, Menomonie, WI 54751

Sincerely,
L. John Peters (Candidate for the 29th Assembly District)
Deborah L. Peters

Save Virtual Schooling!

Subject: Save Virtual Schooling!
From: "David K." <davemixerman@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri, 11 Jan 2008 11:07:12 -0800 (PST)
To: cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us

PLEASE SAVE VIRTUAL SCHOOLING!

My daughter and her 6 month old son would be lost without it. It allows her to be a stay at home parent. She is a child herself. It is very important for her to get a education to be able to help support her young family in the near future. Her family is depending on Virtual Schooling to make this possible. PLEASE Save this program.

Sincerely,

David Kummerer

Virtual School Education and Pending Legislation

Subject: Virtual School Education and Pending Legislation
From: TERRY WILKER <tbwilker@msn.com>
Date: Sun, 13 Jan 2008 23:11:03 -0600
To: <sen.kapanke@legis.wisconsin.gov>, <rep.huebsch@legis.wisconsin.gov>, <cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>, <tbwilker@msn.com>

From Betty Wilker, mother of Colin Wilker, a Monroe Virtual School Student

After years of frustration with the public school system and finally finding a place where my son feels successful, I am saddened and anxious that virtual education in Wisconsin is in jeopardy. A cutting edge solution for a small percentage of students who don't fit the public school model should not be a threat to the teachers, unions, and the DPI. The majority will choose public education.

My son is taking most of his courses from University of Missouri-Columbia High School, which is fully accredited by numerous commissions, and offers a large variety of classes. These are not watered down courses! Colin reads the material, does the lessons, and tests his understanding of it. It is active, self-directed learning vs. the less effective passive learning model that has been the status quo. This bright eldest son of mine learns best this way. He is taking challenging courses at present that are not offered at public school; for example, Aerospace (a gifted course) and Economics...and he's enjoying them! Assistance with these classes is an email or phone call away, either to Jeff at Monroe or an instructor at U of Missouri. Before this, he was just getting by.

Two of my three children go to public school and enjoy it for the most part...good education but really about socialization. The social situation for my oldest was hostile (he was named 'most bullied' by over 80% of the junior high in a survey done a few years ago). I could elaborate on this subject but that would make this a very long email. It is difficult to undo the pecking order...it is established early. At home, he can develop healthy social skills, as his flexible schedule allows for volunteer opportunities such as Mobile Meals, as well as a part time job. In these activities he can interact with a wide variety of people from varied ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Please do what you can to keep the future of virtual schools alive and well. Throughout history, many of the greatest minds in this country were schooled at home. With public virtual school, we have the best of both worlds.

Sincerely,

Betty Wilker
328 N. Van Ness St.
West Salem, WI 54669

tbwilker@msn.com

Legislative letter

Subject: Legislative letter
From: Nolan Thomason <nolan_aka_randomthoughts@yahoo.com>
Date: Sun, 13 Jan 2008 21:38:38 -0800 (PST)
To: cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us

Hi, my name is Nolan Thomason. and I would like to share my story about how the Monroe Virtual School helped me. Before i joined Monroe, I was in the bottom 10% of my class and it didn't look like I was going to graduate. Now, Monroe has helped me tremendously and it looks like i will graduate and I will able to fufill my dreams of joining the Marine Corp.

Thanks Monroe!

January 13, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a letter, in our opinion, regarding the effectiveness of the Monroe Independent Education Charter High School (Virtual School). Our daughter, Leah, had a very difficult transition from middle school to high school. It didn't take long and she was completely lost, and once you are lost, it's very difficult to be found. We tried working with school officials, principals, counselors, and teachers. We spent a lot of time at her school to no avail in helping her to get acclimated. It had gotten to the point where she was so scared that she never attended classes. She would arrive, but would leave right away. No one in the system seemed to be able to correct her behavior, not her parents, school officials, police or anyone else. When she was supposed to become a sophomore, she had the credits of a first semester freshman. We then enrolled her in the Monroe Virtual School. Wow! Now Leah has been working very hard to get the credits to earn her diploma. She and the Monroe Virtual School staff have been able to work together toward this goal. She has not been "home-schooled" in any way except by her own efforts and the school staff. We have seen, first-hand, that this form of learning has worked very well for our daughter. In reading newspaper articles that describe the large number of families who have been helped in the past and currently, this alternative learning method must be working for their children also. And after all, it's all about the children, isn't it?

Sincerely,

Tom Kuban and Barb Wulf

testamonial

Subject: testamonial
From: Garsee636@aol.com
Date: Fri, 11 Jan 2008 01:18:08 EST
To: cory.hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us

This isn't adding up,we kept telling ourselves!
How can our child have such extraordinary comprehension skills and a vocabulary well beyond his years and be struggling so in school? He loved learning and always got along with everyone, but because his learning style didn't conform to the public school delivery system to the masses, he was considered a challenged student. He was constantly behind and we were constantly in conferences with teachers,whom by the way just dumped him back in our lap. They rarely, if ever, offered a usable, positive solution. Brick & mortar style schools seem to exacerbated all his weaknesses and support few of his strengths. So, we began the search for our own solutions.When we found Monroe Virtual Middle School, it quickly became clear what a good fit this would be.Our son can now breeze through the subjects that come easy to him and devote as much time as needed to the subjects that don't.This also gave us the ability to hire a private tutor (certified teacher) to work with him on his most challenging subject, math.
The certified teachers at MVMS are always professional and positive.They are always in touch checking on his progress, providing assistance, and ready to proctor a test anytime.
Our sons self esteem has soared and his confidence has been restored.The fact that he is almost a straight A student says it all. It is truly a fair statement to say, MVMS has been a academic life saving experience for our son

Sincerely
Lisa Garsee

I have been studying with the Monroe Virtual High School since the summer of 2007. I enjoy Virtual High School because, there are no outside distractions from other students. I had trouble concentrating at the traditional public school. The courses are outstanding and I can take courses that were not available at the public school I attended. Having one on one contact with the teacher is very beneficial to me. I can schedule my studies to work around my other activities and appointments. With my various doctors' appointments, I would miss too much school, which would make me fall behind on more than one occasion. The Virtual High School has changed my life tremendously, in very positive ways.

Sincerely,

Joseph Deiler

To Whom It May Concern:

My daughter is now attending Monroe Virtual High School. She is succeeding very well at this. She is excited about her classes finally!! And they are keeping her interest and I notice a big boost in her self-esteem. She could not handle going to regular School for various reasons. Monroe Virtual School has given her an opportunity to get her HS Diploma right from our home. If this gets taken away, so will her education at this point. Please lets keep the Virtual Schools for the sake of our Children that need them and benefit from them. They are just as important as the students that attend regular public and private Schools.

Thank you for your time

Deborah J Johnson and Tessa Johnson

Dear Brett,

We in Wisconsin are privileged to have representatives like you. I appreciate your hard work regarding so many issues. I know you will make wise decisions regarding virtual schools as well.

Virtual School has been the best decision we've made. The kids have accountability to someone outside of Mom and Dad. They can go at their own pace, no waiting on the rest of the class. We can all go with my husband on his business trips. Being former homeschoolers virtual school is a great savings for us financially It is a great option for our family.

We currently have our 5 school age children in 4 different virtual schools. It is great to have a choice of several virtual schools because our children are all different.

My 11 year old son is very goal oriented. He wants to get through highschool by the time he is 16 and be a Dr. by the time he is 24. Monroe Virtual school is going to make this possible. Without virtual school I would have to hold him back but because of virtual school, he is a grade ahead.

Kids in virtual schools can focus on getting an education rather than how to fit in with their peers. My 15 year old son is in our local district's virtual school so he can play football. Having homeschooled and then done virtual school, watching kids at the football games was a real eye opener. They are all fighting to be popular with their peers. I think it would be really sad if the option of virtual education were taken a way from Wisconsin students.

Virtual School is a great option for homebound students as well. My son had cancer when he was 3. Granted at 3 he was not in school but had he been in a brick and mortar school there would have been many days when he would have missed because of low blood counts. I see virtual schools as being a lifesaver for kids with cancer or other illnesses that would keep them out of school. Do we really want to take this option away from them? They already have a lot to deal with.

I am praying that you will do what it takes to include the virtual school choice.

May God bless you as you do you do your part in making our country the greatest place to live!

Laura Kulp

Dear Legislator

My name is Jennifer.I have a daughter that gos to Monroe Virtual School. It has helped her in so many ways .you see she is not ready to go back to public school. She has A.D.D. , Bi-polor,and has no self control. I had to pull her out of school. Because she was very inappropriate with her boyfriend in the hall way . She was not getting her work done . She was not at grade level . The friends at the school dragged her down . Monroe is helping her to have her stay at home or any were else that has a computer for her to use .Most of all her being safe . And not hang out with the wrong crowed . Olivia is a very emotional girl with a lot of drama . She has a big mouth that gets her in trouble. She is getting help with dr's , therapy.and is on mediation. If she was going to public school she would miss a lot of school due to her appointments . The best choice for Olivia is a Charter School. The flexible , the way they address individual needs makes school program fit her . Not her fit the school. I ask you please do not close Charter Schools if it wasn't for them my child would drop out of school. And I do not want that !

Jennifer Girtler

Subject: Re: Support for Monroe Virtual School
From: Jane Banning <jbanning@wisc.edu>
Date: Mon, 14 Jan 2008 12:14:55 -0600
To: Cory Hirsbrunner <Cory.Hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>

I sent another one this morning to Brett Davis. I like it better. See if you can use it:

Hi,
I am the parent of a Monroe Virtual School student. We live in the Oregon school district. For 10 years, we worked closely with the Oregon district, teachers, tutors, reading teachers, and our son's pediatrician to try to facilitate his learning. As early as first grade, we knew he had difficulties and needed a unique approach to learning. We hung in there.

Our child had every test for determining what his learning needs were. Nothing very clear or straightforward became apparent. He took 4 different medications, none of which helped, and none, in his words, made him "feel better." You can understand our dismay when we learned that he could not get into a GED track at OHS until he had failed so badly so as to qualify. We, in essence, needed to keep him in school where he needed to fail 10th grade in order to get into a program that would allow him a GED. This is poor educational resource management, poor learning theory, and poor esteem-building to say the very least.
I understand the challenges of a traditional public school teacher. I was raised by two teachers and my sister is a teacher. I have worked in the UW School of Medicine and Public Health for 14 years. It's not that I am angry that in a class of 30 students, one teacher can't meet the needs of individuals. Of course they can't. It's that my child's needs and our family life have been deeply affected by the absence, in traditional classrooms, of the ability to help him learn in the way he needs to learn.
Educators and parents, if they haven't had a child of their own struggle in the traditional classroom, can't grasp the remarkable impact that sequential educational failure has on the child, and on the family. It's heart-wrenching. Thank goodness we heard about Monroe Virtual School, and Dan Bauer, and the option for our son to work at his own pace, with high caliber curriculum, and with teachers who don't have to balance his needs against 30 other needs.

He took a Business Math class this last semester and got an A. Unprecedented.

Please, please do not let the State of Wisconsin regress to the point of providing resources only to the kids who fall within the bell curve. And please don't allow the State of Wisconsin to throw up more barriers to families who are pro-education, who 'get it', who are hopeful.

We need the virtual schools. I'm not sure what we'll do if the State turns their back on us.

Sincerely,
Jane Banning
jb

Cory Hirsbrunner wrote:

> Jane,
>
> Thanks so much for sending this my way. I truly appreciate it as well as hearing how virtual education has impacted your family. Thanks again for helping to
> "save our school!"
>
> Cory Hirsbrunner

Jane Banning wrote:

Hi Cory,
This is a letter of support from my husband, Rick Kelley, and I. Our 17 year old is enrolled currently. When students learn in a manner that is 'outside the box' of what a traditional public school can provide, there are only a few options and these options' availability depends on family income, proximity to home, philosophy of teaching and learning, and other variables. For us, after 8 years in our home district, we had to decide on whether to continue to let our child falter and fail, or find an educational home where he could complete his high school diploma. After looking at as many options as I could find, I set up an interview with Dan Bauer. He so impressed us with his empathy, insight, and the structure of the Monroe Virtual School that we made the hard decision many parents must make to take this alternative path. Our son recently completed a Business Math class thru the Monroe Virtual School, and got an A. He can use the skills he learned, he felt supported and successful. Virtual school is not for everyone, but for those who need it, it means the world.
Please let me know if there is additional information I can provide so that the leaders of the State of Wisconsin, known for it's high educational standards, can support the continuing virtual school structure.
Jane Banning

Subject: Support for Monroe Virtual School
From: JANE A BANNING <jbanning@facstaff.wisc.edu>
Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2008 17:15:50 -0600
To: Cory.Hirsbrunner@monrie.k12.wi.us
To: Cory.Hirsbrunner@monrie.k12.wi.us

Hi Cory,
This is a letter of support from my husband, Rick Kelley, and I. Our 17 year old is enrolled currently.
When students learn in a manner that is 'outside the box' of what a traditional public school can provide, there are only a few options and these options' availability depends on family income, proximity to home, philosophy of teaching and learning, and other variables. For us, after 8 years in our home district, we had to decide on whether to continue to let our child falter and fail, or find an educational home where he could complete his high school diploma. After looking at as many options as I could find, I set up an interview with Dan Bauer. He so impressed us with his empathy, insight, and the structure of the Monroe Virtual School that we made the hard decision many parents must make to take this alternative path. Our son recently completed a Business Math class thru the Monroe Virtual School, and got an A. He can use the skills he learned, he felt supported and successful. Virtual school is not for everyone, but for those who need it, it means the world.
Please let me know if there is additional information I can provide so that the leaders of the State of Wisconsin, known for it's high educational standards, can support the continuing virtual school structure.
Jane Banning

Jane Banning, MSSW
Director, Clinical Assessment Center
Health Sciences Learning Center
750 Highland Avenue, office 1184
Madison, Wi. 53705-2221
Phone: 608-265-5387

Subject: [Fwd: Virtual Schools Worth Saving]
From: Melinda mulryangehin <melinda.mulryangehin@monroe.k12.wi.us>
Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2008 14:28:51 -0600
To: Cory Hirsbrunner <Cory.Hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>, Vickie Whitehead <vickie.whitehead@monroe.k12.wi.us>

Student letter~

-------- Original Message --------
Subject: Virtual Schools Worth Saving
Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2008 12:27:28 -0800 (PST)
From: Lessa Scherrer <lessascherrer@yahoo.com>
To: voices@ecpc.com

My name is Zack Scherrer and I?m an 8th grader at the Monroe Virtual School. I?m concerned that I won?t be able to go to this school anymore because it isn?t in my home district. If the school helps me learn faster, I don?t think it should matter whether the school is in my district or not.

Virtual school is important to me because of all the opportunities it gives. You can work at your own pace in a virtual school, so if you find something easy to understand you don?t have to spend a lot of extra time on it because it?s harder for someone else and if you?re having trouble with it then you can spend more time learning it.
I can take classes that wouldn?t usually be available to me through Monroe. One example of this is a Medieval History class I took last year. I probably would have never known what a trebuchet or the feudal system was without it.

Virtual schooling is also much more flexible and efficient than public schooling. English class usually takes me more time to do than math or science, and in a public school I would have to spend the same amount of time in each class each day, leaving me with not a lot to do in math and science during school and a lot in English when I got home. In a virtual school, I can spend as much time as I need for each class so there isn?t as much time wasted.

These are just a few of the reasons that I think the charter school law should be changed. This is also the reason that I?m going to Madison on Wednesday the 16th to support Wisconsin virtual schools.

Zack Scherrer
3720 Forest Heights Drive
715-838-9198

http://growingupgifted.blogspot.com

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive." --Howard Thurman

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Mindy Mulryan-Gehin <mindy.mulryan-gehin@monroe.k12.wi.us>
Middle School Teacher
Monroe Virtual Middle School

Subject: [Fwd: RE: letter of support for virtual school]
From: Melinda mulryangehin <melinda.mulryangehin@monroe.k12.wi.us>
Date: Wed, 09 Jan 2008 08:22:02 -0600
To: Cory Hirsbrunner <Cory.Hirsbrunner@monroe.k12.wi.us>
CC: Vickie Whitehead <vickie.whitehead@monroe.k12.wi.us>

Below is a letter from a parent for Rep. Davis. I emailed all parents that I had email address for and asked for their support and testimonials. I informed them of how we would be using the letters, we have this parent's permission to use her letter.
Thanks, and I'll have more... tech dept is working on the formatting of one letter I just received.
Mindy

-------- Original Message --------
Subject: RE: letter of support for virtual school
Date: Tue, 8 Jan 2008 18:45:44 -0600
From: Judy David <1fostermom@att.net>
Reply-To: <1fostermom@att.net>
To: Melinda mulryangehin <melinda.mulryangehin@monroe.k12.wi.us>

Mindy, Here you go

Judy

Brett Davis

Representative Davis,

I am a parent of a 14 year old girl who has suffered great damage in her young life. Thyme came to us at the age of 9 as our foster daughter. We tried the MPS system and also a choice school in our area. Neither school was able to meet her needs. She attended Hampton Elementary in 4th grade. Although her teacher was competent, my daughter learned little. This was due to the atmosphere of the classroom. Several students with behavior issues kept the classroom in an uproar. The teacher spent most of her day trying to maintain order. The bullies at that school were very devious. They threatened my daughter when the teacher was not around and made sure that the abuse happened out of sight. Once a child threw my daughter's personal library book out of the window. Her favorite book was lost. When I tired to address the issues with the parents of the child involved, I was told I could not have that parents phone number and that nothing could be done to gain restitution. We had to ask ourselves, what lessons was my daughter actually learning?

The next year we moved to a private school. Discipline was somewhat better in the 5th grade class, But, when we reached Junior high things fell apart again. Once again bullies and disruptive students hindered my daughter's

learning.

We chose to enroll her in Monroe Virtual School. We had her repeat 7th grade and this year she is in 8th. Her grades are much better. As a former teacher I know that she is now learning. I asked her to give me four things she liked about her home-based education. Her answers were (1) Great teacher (I think she was "kissing up to me") (2)No bullies (3) I can work at my own pace and (4) I have no distractions. Now I must tell you we do have a 3year old at home so there are some distractions but apparently Tye feels she can still learn in spite of her little sister's chatter.

The curriculum we use to very age appropriate and challenging. Tye has been diagnosed with a Non- Verbal Learning Disorder. By using home based education we are able to meet Tye's needs one to one. We believe Tye is reaching her fullest potential through the education at Monroe Virtual Schools.

My husband and I could not afford to home school Tye if we had to purchase all of the curriculum. Although virtual schools are not for everyone, they do meet a great need for many. We urge you to consider those students who like Tye find virtual education a perfect fit for their situation. Tye has experienced great success and her self-concept has been strengthened through her positive success in school this past year.

I leave you with this thought. There was a great storm and the beach was cluttered by thousands of starfish stranded and dying. A small boy was walking down the beach picking up starfish and throwing them back into the surf. An old man approached the boy and questioned, "Son, what are you doing?"

The boy replied, "I'm saving the starfish."
The elder man, with the wisdom of the world, sadly shook his head and said, "You might as well stop now. With all these thousands of starfish you will never make a difference."
The boy with the wisdom of compassion, picked up a starfish and replied as he tossed the creature back into the sea, "I made a difference to that one!"
Perhaps you like the boy can make a difference.
Thank you for taking time to read this.

Mike and Judy David
4814 N 58th St
Milwaukee, WI 53218
414-461-5403
1fostermom@att.net

Mindy Mulryan-Gehin <mindy.mulryan-gehin@monroe.k12.wi.us >

Public Hearing on AB 697
Before the Education Committee of the Wisconsin Assembly
Wednesday, January 16, 2008, 1 PM

Testimony Presented by Larry Kaseman
Executive Director, Wisconsin Parents Association

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am Larry Kaseman, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Parents Association, a state-wide organization of 1,000 member families that was founded in 1984. WPA works to protect the rights of parents and families in education, primarily homeschooling.

I want to begin by thanking the Legislature for listening carefully to homeschoolers in 1984, for passing one of the most reasonable homeschooling laws in this country, and for not changing that law. Wisconsin's homeschooling law recognizes the right of parents to educate their children according to their principles and beliefs, not those of the state. This law has served hundreds of thousands of homeschoolers well over the past 24 years. It has also served the state of Wisconsin well. Wisconsin benefits from its strong homeschooling families and its commitment to freedom of education.

I want to make sure the Legislature understands and maintains the distinction between homeschools and virtual charter schools. Homeschoolers take responsibility for their children's education, including setting their own priorities and standards, choosing curriculum, establishing a yearly calendar and daily schedule, and assessing children's learning. On the other hand, virtual charter school parents turn their children's educations over to the state. They follow the curriculum chosen by the state, report frequently to the public school teachers directing their work, and have the state assess their children's learning. Homeschools are private and, like other private schools, do not have to comply with the values and beliefs incorporated into state standards. By contrast, virtual charter schools are supported by public money and are required to comply with state standards. In short, homeschools are very different from virtual charter schools.

I oppose AB 697 for three major reasons. First, the provisions in AB 697 would undermine fundamental principles essential to citizens in Wisconsin. Second, it would violate the sanctity of the homes of private citizens. Third, instead of saving taxpayer dollars, virtual charter schools waste them.

Beginning with the first objection, the Wisconsin Court of Appeals ruled that virtual charter schools are illegal in part because much of the teaching is done by parents who are not certified teachers, and Wisconsin statutes require that teachers in public schools be certified. AB 697 attempts to solve this problem by describing a virtual charter school parent as "providing educational services to the pupil in the pupil's home." **This provision undermines fundamental principles.**

As homeschoolers, we have worked very hard to get the general public to understand that parents have the right to educate their own children according to their principles and beliefs and that parents can homeschool their children without direct oversight or control by the state. The success of hundreds of thousands of homeschoolers demonstrates this, and Wisconsin statutes reflect and support it.

However, AB 697 would require that parents of virtual charter school students be closely supervised and monitored by certified teachers for two reasons. One, the statutes require that teachers in public schools be certified. Two, virtual charter schools receive tax dollars and need to show that this money is being used effectively and not wasted. However, virtual charter school parents are capable of educating their own children, as other parents are, without monitoring and supervision.

The risk from AB 697 is that legislators, the media, the general public, and parents themselves will lose sight of the legal reasons why virtual charter school parents are being monitored by the state and begin thinking that they are being monitored because they are incapable of educating their children without such monitoring. This would undermine and could eventually destroy one of the most important principles of parental and family rights and a key support for families, which are the fundamental unit of our society and every known society. (over)

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Second, AB 697 undermines the sanctity of the home. It sets a precedent and provides ways for the government to monitor and supervise what families are doing in the privacy of their homes. It would give the state control and authority over the interactions of parents with their own children in their own homes and give the state the authority to make rules governing these interactions. It would violate basic principles of individual liberties and freedom. It would create dependency rather than independence on the part of parents and children.

Virtual charter school families are required to report frequently to their supervising teacher. Their activities are closely monitored, including the use of web cams that allow public officials to view what is happening within their homes in real time. We don't want public schools in people's homes to become the government's ticket into the homes of private citizens and set a precedent for further government intrusions into family life.

Third, instead of saving taxpayer dollars, virtual charter schools waste them. Under open enrollment, large sums of money are transferred from the school district where a virtual charter school student resides to the school district operating the virtual charter school they are attending. From that district, much of the money goes to out-of-state corporations and educational institutions making a profit by selling computerized curriculum.

To be more specific, for the current school year, the estimated cost per public school pupil in Wisconsin is $12,000. (This figure is derived by using the actual 2005-2006 per pupil figure of $10,989 and adding an average yearly increase of 4.5% for the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years.) This year, the school district of residence keeps approximately $6,000 even though the school does not see the student or do any work except for a modicum of administrative bookkeeping. The rest of the $12,000, an estimated $6,043, is sent through open enrollment to the district operating the virtual charter school. (The final figure will be determined in May, 2008.)

However, for only $1,128, any family can purchase a curriculum for elementary students from K12, Inc., the corporation that has contracted with Northern Ozaukee's virtual charter school. Just think how large the discount should be if a school district were purchasing 400 curriculums. Why are Wisconsin taxpayers paying $12,000 for each virtual charter school student? How is this expenditure justified by legislators, especially those who consider themselves fiscally conservative?

Three additional points: First, some people may say that we homeschoolers are just concerned about the competition from virtual charter schools. Actually, after over six years of effort, there are only about 3,000 students attending virtual charter schools, indicating that these schools are not growing very rapidly despite free computers and curriculum. Although advocates of virtual charter schools have claimed that as many as 80% of virtual charter school students are former homeschoolers, our investigations indicate only roughly one third of the students are former homeschoolers. In other words, homeschoolers clearly are not flocking to virtual charter schools, and we are not worried about the competition.

Second, we are hearing today from families who claim that their children will be harmed if virtual charter schools close and they have to attend brick and mortar schools. Let me point out that these families have several other options. They could purchase a curriculum from a provider such as K12, Inc. and follow its clear instructions on their own. Or, if they could not or did not want to spend that much money, they could develop their own curriculum and homeschool very inexpensively. Of course, this would be different from participating in a virtual charter school. But it is important to remember that these families would have choices besides enrolling their children in a brick and mortar public school. Is it really worth undermining fundamental rights and freedoms, threatening the sanctity of our homes, and misusing tax dollars, just so a few families will be spared the inconvenience of choosing one of the other options available for their children?

Third, AB 697 attempts to provide a stop-gap solution that would have dangerous long-term consequences. It violates a number of what I see as fundamental principles of true conservatism. The basic idea of trying to privatize education by using statutes and public funds is a contradiction and an oxymoron. AB 697 sacrifices the independence of individual citizens, brings the state into the daily life of families, and makes families dependent on the government. It leads to a violation of basic principles of liberty and private interests. It gives the government increased power and authority over citizens and opens the door to government monitoring of the activities of private citizens in their own homes. It promotes government spending and is fiscally irresponsible.

A better solution would be to provide families with economic relief that is not tied to education. This could be done, for example, by increasing tax deductions for dependent children.

It is ironic that lawmakers would try to solve education problems by applying more of the same bad practices and, in the process, undermine one of the few institutions that holds some promise of a solution, namely, the family. I am surprised and disappointed to see conservatives supporting this bill. Perhaps that is because they mistakenly think it will promote the privatization of education in a healthy and effective way. It will not.

I hope the committee will vote to defeat AB 697.

Thank you.