



March 22, 2002

Lynette Smith, President  
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Lake Mills, WI 53551

Richard Janosik, Treasurer  
W8227 Sunset Court  
Lake Mills, WI 53551

Robert Runte, Director  
N6640 Upper Shorewood Hills Rd  
Lake Mills, WI 53551

Dear Ms. Smith, Mr. Janosik, and Mr. Runte:

Thank you for your deliberate and thoughtful questions at Board meetings concerning the proposed virtual charter school within the Lake Mills Area School District.

I have some additional information concerning the April 5th deadline and some questions that you may find helpful to have answered. It is my hope that one or more of you will ask these questions in writing and ask for written responses before voting on the charter or any contract. (Reasons for asking such questions were presented in my testimony before your Board on March 11, 2002.)

### **The April 5th Deadline on Availability of Space**

You have been told that you have to act quickly because Wisconsin law requires that Open Enrollment applicants be notified by April 5th whether there is space available in districts to which they have applied. However, people who have applied for a transfer to the Lake Mills Area School District (LMASD) so they can attend a virtual charter school realize that the school for which they have applied may or may not be in existence. LMASD could simply notify people by April 5th that there will be space available pending school board approval of a virtual charter school. It should also be noted that under Open Enrollment, the April 5th deadline about availability of space pertains to the school district as a whole, not to a specific school or program within the district. This means that unless you are very short of classroom space for K-5th grade, you will have space whether or not you approve the virtual charter school since students who either do not want a placement in a school other than a virtual school or students who live some distance from Lake Mills will simply decline the assignment to a regular K-5th grade classroom. (For specific information about how Open Enrollment works and what your obligations are, you might want to talk with the DPI Consultant for Open Enrollment: Mary Jo Cleaver—608-267-9101.)

**Suggested Motion:** I move the Board authorize the superintendent to notify people who applied to the Lake Mills Area School District under the Open Enrollment statute that space will be available in a virtual charter school pending approval by the Board of a charter school and any necessary contract terms.

Passage of this motion would satisfy the April 5th requirement and provide time for getting answers in writing to questions such as the following before the Board votes on whether to charter a virtual school or enter into a contract to implement a virtual charter school.

### **Questions**

You may find it helpful to have the following questions answered in writing by the DPI, K12, Inc., and LMASD Superintendent. (These questions do not repeat those I raised in testimony at your March 11, 2002, Board meeting.)

#### **Questions for which I as a member of the Lake Mills School Board am requesting written answers from the DPI:**

1. Does a state-wide virtual charter school for a wide range of students in the elementary grades meet the constitutional definition of a common school as provided for in the Wisconsin constitution?

2. How can a virtual school insure that students are actually complying with the compulsory attendance law? Would completing lessons or passing tests alone meet the requirements of the compulsory attendance law? Would the Lake Mills Area School District be responsible for enforcing the compulsory attendance law for all students enrolled in this charter school?
3. How many states have one or more public virtual charter schools for a general student population for four or more grades in the United States today? (DPI personnel tracking virtual schools say this figure is 12, not 34—call Steve Sanders, DPI—608-266-7112.) What is their track record in terms of academic achievement, public acceptance, and legal standing?
4. Does the proposed contract with K12 meet the legal requirements for teacher contact time and involvement with students?
5. Can we legally target a certain segment of students, for example, homeschoolers, or pick and choose what kind of student we will accept into a virtual charter school advertised as a general elementary school for K through 5th grade?
6. Do we not have to accept all students, including special education students, into this program?

**Questions for which I as a member of the Lake Mills School Board am requesting written answers from K12, Inc.:**

1. In your advertising of this virtual public school offering in Wisconsin, did you target your direct mailings and telephone contacts primarily to people you thought were homeschoolers?
2. Has K12, Inc. received copies of completed Open Enrollment applications sent to the Lake Mills Area School District?
3. Has K12, Inc. contacted any of the applicants to determine their degree of interest in the proposed virtual charter school in Lake Mills and/or their interest in K12, Inc.?
4. Since it has been stated by Mr. Gilpatrick that K12, Inc.'s curriculum package includes money for marketing and advertising, what would the curriculum cost without money for marketing and advertising? Would K12, Inc. be willing to contract with Lake Mill Area School District if we specified in our contract with you that no direct marketing of this virtual school by your company or by the school district would be allowed?

**Questions for which I as a member of the Lake Mills School Board am requesting written answers from our school superintendent:**

1. Why are you proposing this charter school when we have heard the following in the Board:
  - very few students from Lake Mills are likely to want the program;
  - you say that it will be a break-even program financially;
  - it will take staff resources to develop the program and get it launched;
  - it is not clear that other school districts will cooperate with us over time, especially in providing special education services;
  - the K12, Inc. curriculum may not be consistent with our mission as a school and/or the curriculum we have chosen for our K-5th graders; and
  - our district might be sued for mismanagement of funds, misuse of public moneys, or failure to meet legal requirements of what constitutes a school or teacher contact with students?
2. Is it true that on average each student that becomes a part of a virtual charter school in Wisconsin costs the taxpayer between \$8,500 and \$9,000 because the school district in which the student resides can count the student for purposes of raising revenue through local property tax and state aids and ends up needing to send only about \$5,000 to the district with the virtual school, thereby keeping \$3,500 to \$4,000 and doing nothing for the student? Do you think this will go unnoticed by taxpayers for very long? Do you think it is ethical or fair? Do you think it is a solid basis for entering into a long-term contract?

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,

M. Larry Kaseman  
Executive Director