

To the Editor:

Two out-of-state corporations are trying to establish virtual charter schools targeted at students throughout Wisconsin. Sylvan Ventures is seeking a charter from the Appleton Area School District to establish Wisconsin Connections Academy (WCA). Wisconsin Virtual Academy (WVA) is seeking a charter from the Lake Mills School District and would get its curriculum, software, and possibly computers from K12, an online school. They would funnel tax dollars through local school districts (which would earn a finder's fee) to the charter schools and on to the corporations.

The stakes are high. Laws passed before the advent of virtual charter schools make Wisconsin vulnerable. Under these laws, local school districts grant charters but the state has to foot the bill while open enrollment allows one virtual charter school to pull students from all over the state. For every student who enrolls, \$5,000 in state tax money goes to the district with the virtual charter school, not to the district in which the student resides. Thus local control has turned into corporate control through technology.

Common sense and evidence from research by people like Jane Healy suggest that trying to teach children primarily through computers and behavior modification limits their thinking, problem solving skills, creativity, and ability to deal with the real world.

Wisconsin can learn from the experience of other states. Similar Sylvan schools have recently been denied charters in Colorado, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and twice in Minnesota. New virtual charter schools run by other corporations in Ohio and Pennsylvania are causing numerous problems and generating lawsuits.

Let our school board know how you want your tax dollars spent. Send letters to [put here the address and e-mail address of your local school district].

Sincerely,