



## Email Correspondence with Public School Charter School Superintendents

Note: The content of the email below that was sent to Superintendent Schmidt was also sent on June 9, 2008 to Superintendent William Harbron of the Wisconsin Northern Ozaukee School District who is responsible for the Wisconsin Virtual Academy. On June 9, 2008, Mr. Harbron emailed WPA stating "Your letter has been forwarded to the K12 marketing department." As of August 22, 2008, WPA had heard nothing further from Mr. Harbron or K12, Inc.

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From: WPA <wpa@homeschooling-wpa.org>  
Date: June 9, 2008 2:25:43 PM CDT  
To: David Schmidt Superintendent of Schools <dshmidt@waukesha.k12.wi.us>  
Cc: All Wisconsin Legislators

Subject: Stop advertising your virtual charter school as homeschooling

Mr. David Schmidt  
Superintendent of Schools  
Waukesha School District  
Lindholm Building  
222 Maple Avenue  
Waukesha WI 53186

Dear Superintendent Schmidt:

This letter is to request that you stop advertising IQ Academy Wisconsin in ways that are false, misleading, and harmful to the public. You are operating a public virtual charter school called IQ Academy Wisconsin, and you or someone representing this school have contracted with Internet search engines and are or were recently using keywords including "homeschooling," "homeschool," "homeschooler," and perhaps other forms of "homeschool" and related words to link Internet users to information about your public virtual charter school.

Wisconsin Act 222, which was enacted on April 7, 2008, contains explicit statutory language worded to ensure that public virtual charter schools are not confused with homeschools.

- First, the law defines a public virtual charter school by stating that "the pupils enrolled in and instructional staff employed by the school are geographically remote from each other," i.e., not in the home (Wis. Stat. 115.001 [16]).
- Second, the statutes further define a public virtual charter school as a school located in the chartering school district, again not in the homes of students enrolled in such a school (Wis. Stat. 118.40 [8]).
- Third, the statutes require that anyone seeking to teach in a public virtual charter school to be licensed or receive a permit from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Wis. Stat. 118.19 [1]). By contrast, this is not required of homeschools.
- Fourth, the statutes define the "staff duties" in a public virtual charter schools to include all of the elements of teaching and instruction (Wis. Stat. 118.40 [8] [c]). In other words, it is the staff that does the teaching, not the parents of the students who are enrolled in the school.

It is commonly accepted that "homeschooling" and related terms mean parents or guardians taking direct responsibility for the education of their children with as little state regulation as possible. As early as 1993, "homeschool" was defined by the 10th edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as: "vi (1980) to teach school subjects to one's children at home ~ vt: to teach (one's children) at home."

It is essential to the concept and practice of homeschooling that the distinction between homeschools and public virtual charter schools be maintained. Homeschools are private schools and subject to the same state regulation as other private schools, which receive no public money. By contrast, public virtual charter schools, which receive tax money, are subject to much greater regulation. If the distinction between homeschools and public virtual charter schools becomes blurred, state regulation of homeschools will increase, much to their detriment.

During the past 30 years, millions of homeschoolers in this country have worked courageously as families and through grassroots

organizations to ensure that homeschooling means parents taking direct responsibility for the education of their children with as little state regulation as possible. Homeschooling is successful precisely because parents take direct responsibility for and work one on one with their children in what is in effect a tutorial arrangement. If public school interests were allowed to represent themselves as homeschools, the essential nature and practice of homeschooling would no longer exist.

Representatives of Wisconsin Parents Association, a statewide, inclusive, grassroots homeschooling organization of nearly 1,000 member families, have made clear the importance of defining public virtual charter schools as distinct from homeschools. This has been expressed repeatedly since 2002 in calls and emails to legislators and in testimony before the Wisconsin Legislature and before school boards in Lake Mills, Appleton, and Northern Ozaukee.

Despite the clear distinction between homeschools and public virtual charter schools, as stated above, you or someone representing IQ Academy Wisconsin have contracted with Internet search engines and are or were recently using keywords including "homeschooling," "homeschool," "homeschooler," and perhaps other forms of "homeschool" and related words to link Internet users to information about your public virtual charter school.

These advertisements are dishonest and appear to be in violation of the advertising guidelines specified by search engines such as Google. For example, Google includes the following language on its web pages where one enters into advertising contracts:

Accurately represent your product or service.

Your ads and keywords must directly relate to the content on the landing page for your ad. When users see your ad, they should be able to understand what kind of product, service, or other content they will find on your site. Products or services promoted in your ad must be reflected on your landing page; ads can be disapproved if a promoted product is not offered or available for sale as promised.

<http://adwords.google.com/support/bin/static.py?page=guidelines.cs&topic=9271&subtopic=9277>

Therefore, we are requesting that you immediately stop advertising your public virtual charter school by using "homeschooling" and related words as keywords in your Internet ads and in all other forms of communication, including oral, written, and graphic.

We will be contacting the major Internet search engines with our concerns. We are also requesting that the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau audit the advertising you have done regarding your public virtual charter school and report specifically the amount of taxpayers' money you have expended through your Internet advertising using the keywords referenced above. Furthermore, we will be asking this bureau to make findings as to how to deal with the false advertising you have engaged in. (In recent hearings that led to the passage of Wisconsin Act 222, several Wisconsin legislators expressed serious concerns about how well local school districts were accounting for the public's money while operating public virtual charter schools and, therefore, wisely included in Act 222 specific auditing requirements.)

This letter will also be sent to all Wisconsin legislators since many of them assured homeschoolers that they could not foresee this kind of usurping by public school officials of "homeschooling" as a concept and practice, and they did not want the passage of Act 222 to result in such usurping.

Please respond in writing.

Sincerely,

Larry Kaseman

Executive Director

Wisconsin Parents Association

Post Office Box 2502

Madison WI 53701-2502

Voice Mail 608.283.3131

[www.homeschooling-wpa.org](http://www.homeschooling-wpa.org)

P. S. Because we are sending a copy of this email to all Wisconsin state legislators and our email program will not send to more than 60 addresses at one time, you will receive more than one copy of this email.

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On Jun 16, 2008, at 8:43 AM, Mr. Schmidt wrote:

Mr. Kaseman,

Thank you for your input related to Waukesha's iQ Academy and our relationship to internet search engines, and other advertising opportunities. In a review of our advertising practices, we have not overtly or consciously targeted any for "homeschooling", or any of its derivations. Your long and detailed letter seems to infer that we do not know the difference between our public virtual school and "homeschooling". We are extremely clear on the difference and work to help home school parents, as well as others, make choices that best suit their families and children. Virtual schools are a choice for all parents in Wisconsin. We are proud of the fact that we have enrolled about 1000 students for the 2008-2009 school year. None of these parents or students were forced to attend our public

school nor do I believe they were misdirected into applying. I will not underestimate the sophistication and intelligence of the home school parent and student community.

We will continue to monitor our advertising and continue to provide clear choices for all families in Wisconsin to receive a quality public education. As our world is rapidly changing, many parents want choices. Our district supports "homeschooling" as a practice and a choice for parents. We also support our iQ Academy and public virtual schools as a choice for all parents and students in the state.

Sincerely,

David Schmidt  
Superintendent Waukesha Schools

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Mr. Kaseman's email to Mr. Schmidt on June 25, 2008 3:00:40 PM CDT

Mr. Schmidt,

You claim that "In a review of our advertising practices, we have not overtly or consciously targeted any for 'homeschooling', or any of its derivations." If this is the case, why does iQ Academy Wisconsin appear as a paid advertisement when one does Internet searches (including Google searches) for "homeschooling" and why does your ad say "Homeschool through high school. Enroll at iQ Academy Wisconsin now!" ?

As I said in my email of June 9, 2008, "We are requesting that you immediately stop advertising your public virtual charter school by using 'homeschooling' and related words as keywords in your Internet ads and in all other forms of communication, including oral, written, and graphic." Will you do this? Please answer this question in writing.

Larry Kaseman  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin Parents Association  
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Madison WI 53701-2502  
Voice Mail 608.283.3131  
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As of August 22, 2008, Mr. Schmidt had not replied.