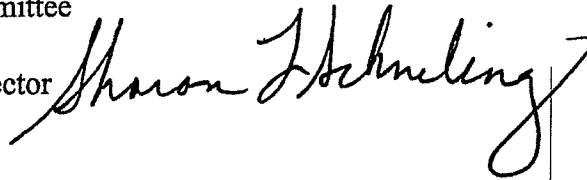


**TO:** Members, Assembly Education Committee

**FROM:** Sharon L. Schmeling, Executive Director



**DATE:** April 18, 2019

**RE:** Assembly Bill 129 – Virtual Instruction in Private Choice Schools

The Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools (WCRIS), strongly supports Assembly Bill 129.

This bill would allow private schools in the Parental Choice Programs to use virtual instruction in the event of an emergency or inclement weather, which would cover not just “snow days” but also ice storms, tornados, flooding, and the like, and have it count towards required hours of pupil instruction.

We are grateful that the bill covers other emergencies, which we specifically requested of sponsoring legislators, since schools encounter other incidents that warrant closing a building. While it’s common to think of the tragic school safety incident as the emergency that would require school closure, a school is far more likely to close because of a water main break, plumbing or heating issues, a neighborhood gas leak, or emergency building repairs.

Allowing Choice schools to include virtual instruction hours in their count of mandatory hours of pupil instruction is a sensible way to allow children to continue their education despite such incidents.

But if this is so commonsensical, why not allow virtual instruction to be counted in all cases – just like in the public schools, as allowed in PI-8? We would urge you to expand the law to allow Choice schools the same flexibilities.

Digital learning technology is more widespread and useable than in times past. Many schools are using virtual instruction as an extension of the brick and mortar school experience. Many Choice schools have developed full learning management systems where they can deliver their course content to students in a digital environment. Schools adjust their techniques and usage levels based on feedback from parents, students and faculty. These management systems also allow the schools to record and generate statistics for every user (students and faculty) to show the amount of time that each spends working in a digital platform.

Many schools report that they get a higher rate of assignment completion during digital learning days than “normal” school days.

Assembly Bill 129 is a necessary adjustment to the law regulating hours of classroom instruction and recognizes the reality of current education practices that utilize technology to educate our state’s K-12 school children.

We strongly urge you to support AB 129.

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Association of Christian  
Schools International

Christian Schools  
International

Diocese of Green Bay

Diocese of LaCrosse

Diocese of Madison

Diocese of Superior

Lutheran Church  
Missouri Synod  
North Wisconsin District

Lutheran Church  
Missouri Synod  
South Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Association  
of Independent Schools

Wisconsin Conference  
of Seventh Day Adventists

Wisconsin Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
Northern Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
Western Wisconsin District

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Lutheran Synod  
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