
Wisconsin Legislative Council

ACT MEMO



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December 26, 2019

2019 Wisconsin Act 55 [2019 Senate Bill 495]

Deadlines and Accreditation for Parental Choice Program Schools

2019 Wisconsin Act 55 makes four changes to the law regarding parental choice programs:

1. Under prior law, a participating private school was permitted to accept applications for the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (the “statewide parental choice program”) for the following school year from February 1 to April 20. Instead of providing specific dates, the act provides that the application period begins on the first weekday in February and ends on the third Thursday in April.
2. Under prior law, a participating private school that received applications from pupils under the statewide parental choice program was required to report the number of applicants to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) by no later than May 1 immediately following the application period. Under the act, the report must be made to DPI by the first weekday in May.
3. Private schools participating in the Milwaukee, Racine, and statewide parental choice programs and in the Special Needs Scholarship Program must obtain and maintain accreditation. State law lists by name the entities from which private schools may obtain accreditation. The act replaces the name “AdvancED” with “Cognia, Inc.” in the list of approved accrediting entities.
4. Private schools participating in the Milwaukee, Racine, and statewide parental choice programs must annually provide to DPI evidence demonstrating that the schools remain accredited for the current school year. Under prior law, such evidence included a letter from an accrediting entity confirming that the school is accredited by that entity as of the date of the letter. The act provides that a private school must submit a notice from an accrediting entity rather than a letter.

Effective date: November 24, 2019. The modified application period for the statewide parental choice program first applies to an application to attend a participating private school submitted for the 2020-21 school year.

RES:mca;jal