



Research Brief

Who's putting pressure on voucher enrollment cap?

This year continues a 14-year trend of growth in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). More students (14,427) than ever before are attending the city's private schools using taxpayer-funded vouchers. In addition, more private schools (121) participate than ever before, including an extraordinary number of schools new to the program.

This growth has put pressure on the program's statutory enrollment cap, set at 15% of enrollment in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), or about 15,000 voucher students. Because of recent declines in MPS enrollment and increasing numbers of voucher students, the voucher program is expected to reach the current enrollment cap in the 2005-2006 school year.

As state lawmakers debate the merits of lifting the cap, an analysis of the program's recent enrollment growth reveals that most of the growth is due to a small number of schools.

This year, growth in enrollment in just 14 schools—including five new schools—account for the 1,647 student increase in MPCP. Most of the nine schools that are not new have been among the top ten in growth for the past two years. Thus, less

than 10% of the participating schools is fueling overall growth in the voucher program.

Another way of looking at this phenomenon is to consider the new schools that have opened since the 1999-2000 school year. In that school year, the voucher program enrolled 7,576 full-time students. It has since grown to 14,427 students in 2004-2005, a 90% increase. But 40% of the overall growth in the program since 1999-2000 is due to the 29 start-up schools that opened in 2000 or later. Enrollment in these 29 new schools has grown to 2,726 voucher students in five years (or less, in some cases). The result is that a quarter of this year's 121 schools are less than five years old, yet they account for nearly half of the program's dramatic enrollment increase during those five years.

Lifting the cap would benefit fast-growing, new, secular schools. Would it similarly benefit long-established parochial schools? Due to school mergers, there are fewer Catholic schools in the program today than in 1999-2000. However, the total enrollment in the Catholic schools today is 5,244 full-time voucher students, compared to 3,423 in 1999-2000. While the program overall has nearly doubled in the past five years, Catholic

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school voucher enrollment has grown by slightly over 50%. In fact, since religious schools were allowed to participate in the program in 1998-1999, Catholic schools made up the largest portion of participating schools. This year, however, sees an equal portion of Catholic and non-religious schools, mainly due to the many start-up secular schools.

Pressure on the enrollment cap is thus due mostly to the fast growth of relatively few schools, as well as the increasing number of start-up schools. Should the cap be lifted, more new schools can be anticipated while enrollment becomes more concentrated in some schools. ➤

Schools and closures increase

The number of new schools added to MPCP this year is the highest since the program expanded in 1998-1999 to include religious schools. Seventeen new schools joined the program this year, bringing the total to 121, or 10 more than last year. Seven schools dropped out of the program after the 2003-2004 school year. Total enrollment grew again this year by 13% to 14,427 students.

Sixty-four MPCP schools increased enrollment from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005, 39 schools lost students and one school stayed the same.

Table 1 shows schools that gained and lost the most voucher students. Atlas Preparatory Academy gained 248 students this year, the most of any school.

Change in MPCP students and voucher payments

Schools gaining or losing the most MPCP students from Sept. 2003 to Sept. 2004	Change in MPCP students (FTE)	Change in voucher payment [~]
Atlas Preparatory Academy	248	\$1,473,864
Academic Solutions Center for Learning	176	\$1,045,968
Saint Anthony's School	145	\$861,735
Greater Holy Temple Christian Learning Center	103	\$610,940
Ceria M. Travis Academy	100	\$595,489
Hickman's Academy Preparatory School	99	\$585,980
Dr. Brenda Noach Choice School	78	\$464,743
Saint Philip Neri Catholic School*	76	\$451,668
Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy	65	\$383,324
Hope Christian School	53	\$314,979
Saint Peter-Immanuel Lutheran School	-19	-\$115,294
Sharon Junior Academy	-21	-\$124,803
Early View Academy of Excellence**	-25	-\$147,386
Learning Enterprise	-31	-\$184,233
Urban Day School	-33	-\$196,119
Texas Bufkin Academy	-36	-\$210,977
Woodson Academy	-38	-\$228,211
Victory Christian Academy	-47	-\$279,321
Agape Center of Academic Excellence, Inc.	-59	-\$349,448
Saint Philip's Lutheran School**	-70	-\$416,010

[~]Based on \$5,943 per pupil.

*Was in top ten losing schools last year. **Was in top ten gaining schools last year.

Bold indicates the school was also in the top ten for gaining or losing voucher students last year.

Table 1

Milwaukee children attending private schools

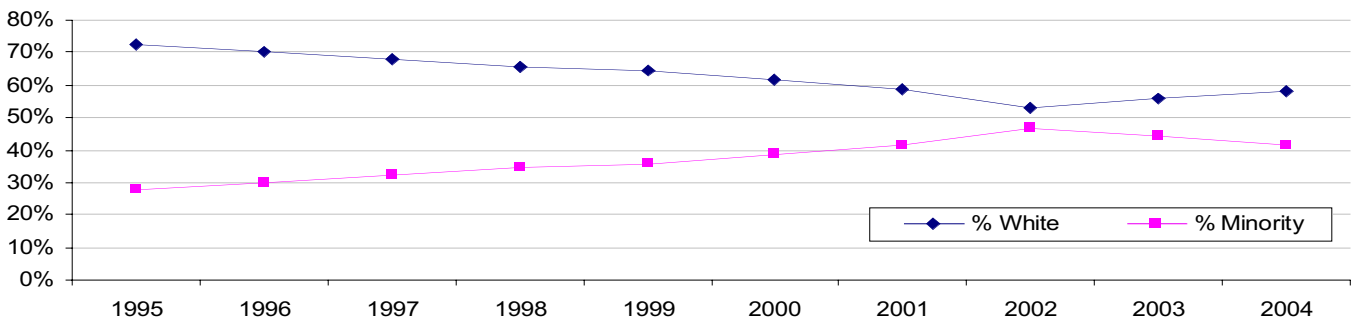


Chart 1

Atlas Preparatory Academy, Academic Solutions Center for Learning, St. Anthony’s School, and Hope Christian School were in the top ten in gains last year; the third year in row for Atlas Preparatory Academy and the fourth in a row for Academic Solutions Center for Learning. Over the past four years, Academic Solutions Center for Learning has gained 652 voucher students. St. Philip’s Lutheran School lost 70 voucher students, the most of any school. Sharon Junior Academy and Urban Day School were the only schools also in the top ten in losing voucher students last year. ❖

MPCP enrollment. Overall, MPCP schools report that 72% of the voucher students are minority. Fifty-two percent of the students in the program are African-American; 27% of the students are white; 15% are Hispanic; and the remaining 5% are Native American, Asian, or some other race. MPCP racial breakdown is comparable to that of MPS. In 2003-2004, 83% of the students in MPS were non-white.

This overall racial balance is not carried over in the school-by-school analysis. Forty-three of the participating schools are 100% minority and another 29 schools are 90-100% minority. Of the 43 schools that are 100% minority, 19 of them are 100% African-American. Chart 2 shows that over the past five years the majority of the students in the program are either in schools that are 90-100% minority or less than 40% minority. Few voucher students attend schools that are 40-59% minority. This year, 8% of the students attend schools that are

Most voucher students attend segregated schools

Each year, we ask participating schools for their racial/ethnic makeup. The 113 schools that reported this information represent 91% of the total

Minority enrollment in MPCP schools

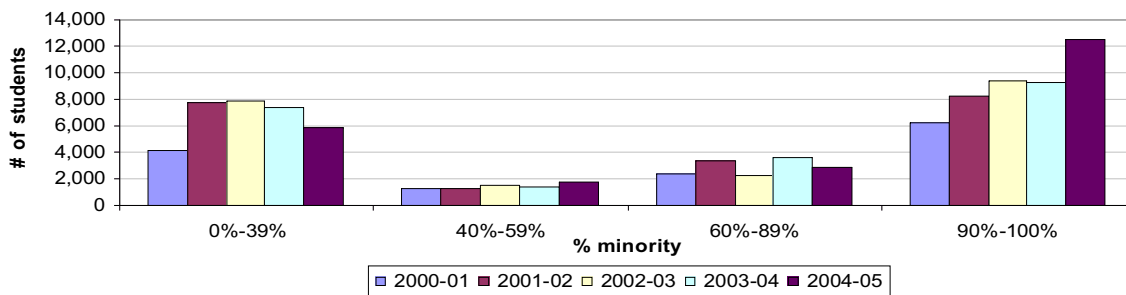
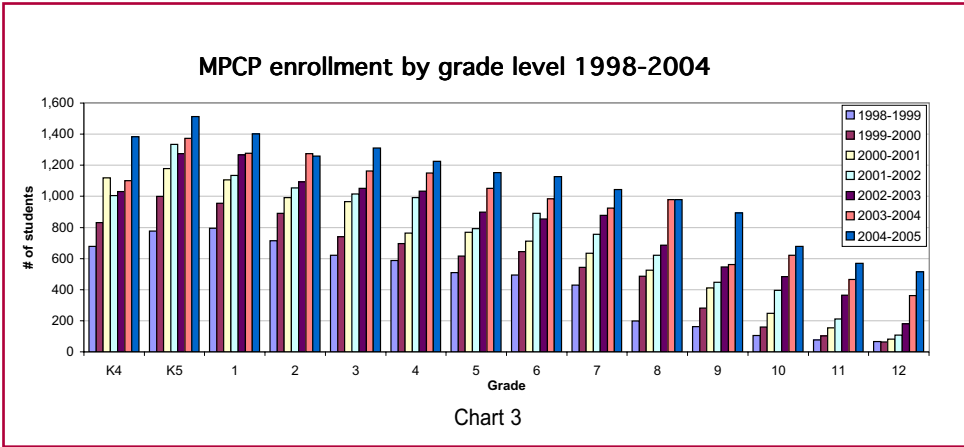


Chart 2



seven times, the highest seven-year increase of any grade. Grades having the largest seven-year increases are 12th, 11th, 10th, and 9th, in that order; 1st and 2nd grades have had the smallest seven-year increases, only 76% each. The next lowest increase is in K5, at 95% since 1998-1999.

40-59% minority, while 54% of the students attend schools that are 90-100% minority.

Largest ever 9th grade voucher enrollment

Except for 2nd and 8th grades, enrollment at all grade levels in MPCP is higher this year than last year. Chart 3 shows the MPCP third Friday in September headcounts for the past seven years by each grade level. In each grade level, the number of students has increased at least 76% since the 1998-1999 school year. Only five-year-old kindergarten (K5), 1st, and 2nd grade enrollments have not more than doubled in size since 1998-1999.

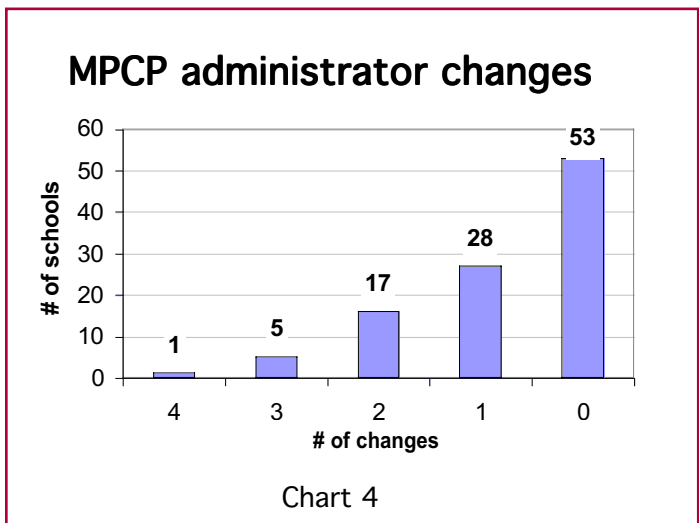
The largest increase in a single grade occurred in 9th grade where enrollment increased 60% from 560 students in 2003-2004 to 893 students in 2004-2005. Second grade decreased 1% in enrollment, the only grade level to decrease this year. The number of students in 8th grade was 978 students for the second year in a row. K5 has the greatest number of students (1,512) of any grade level.

High school enrollment increased 32% this year, five percentage points higher than last year. The largest increases were in the 9th and 12th grades, 60% and 43% respectively. Since the 1998-1999 school year, 12th grade enrollment increased more than

Almost half of voucher schools have changed administrators

Last year, we looked at the number of times that schools changed addresses since the 1998-1999 school year and found that a majority of the schools had not changed location. There were, however, 15 schools that changed location a total of 26 times.

This year, we look at how often a school has changed its contact person since 1998-1999. Usually, the contact person is the administrator, but in some cases it may be support staff. Of the 104 schools that have existed for more than one year, 51 have changed administrator. Chart 4 shows the breakdown of those changes. Only one school, Tamarack Community



Aggregate mobility rate

	Sept. '99 to Sept. '00	Sept. '00 to Sept. '01	Sept. '01 to Sept. '02	Sept. '02 to Sept. '03	Sept. '03 to Sept. '04
Students not renewing vouchers	2,170	2,318	3,172	2,899	3,340
% mobility	27%	24%	29%	25%	26%

Table 2

School, has changed administrator four times during this seven-year span. Twenty-two schools changed administrator more than once and 53 schools did not.

Sixty-six schools have been in existence since we started collecting data in 1998-1999. Of these, 40 have changed administrator at least once and half have changed administrator more than once during this seven-year span. Of the other 38 schools that have existed longer than one year, only 11 have changed administrator and three of these schools have changed twice.

Tests given by MPCP schools

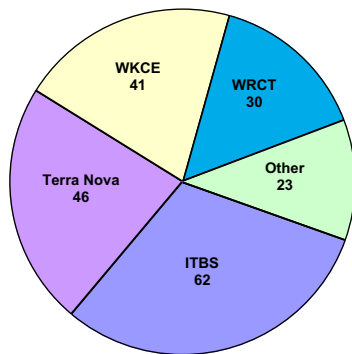


Chart 5

School stability can be measured by student mobility as well as administrator turnover. School-level student data are not available, but Table 2 shows the total number of students that did not renew their vouchers from the last September headcount to this September headcount, excluding graduating seniors. This year saw 3,340 students not renew their vouchers,

the most ever. Since September 1998, 15,376 students have not renewed their vouchers from one year to the next. The aggregate mobility rate has stayed fairly consistent the past seven years; this year the rate was 26%, up one percentage point from last year. Reasons students may not renew vouchers could include relocation to another city, ineligibility under income guidelines, or dissatisfaction with the program.

More voucher schools giving state standardized tests

Last year was the first year we asked schools if they administer standardized achievement tests. We found that, although it is not required, most of the schools administer some sort of standardized test. This year, 111 of the 121 schools report they administer at least one test.

Twenty different tests are being taken by MPCP students. Chart 5 shows the different standardized tests being used. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is utilized by the most schools, with 62 schools giving it. Forty-six are giving the Terra Nova exam, the next most utilized. Last year, only seven schools reported they administered the Wisconsin Reading and Comprehension Test (WRCT), but this year 30 report using it. This year, ten schools report they do not administer any standardized tests, compared to nine schools last year.

Chart 6 (see next page) shows each school's religious affiliation and the percent of schools, excluding high schools, that take each test. Of the 31 Catholic schools, only one school does not administer standardized tests. Thirty schools administer ITBS and 25 also administer the

Percent tests taken by religious affiliation

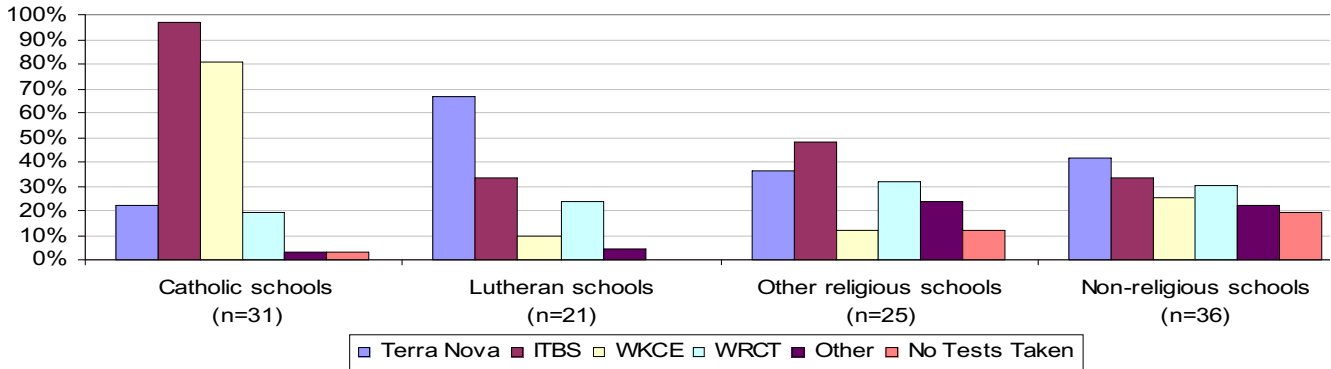


Chart 6

WKCE. Of the 21 Lutheran schools, 67% give the Terra Nova test and 33% the ITBS. The other religious schools and the secular schools give a variety of tests, with the Terra Nova the most popular for non-religious schools, and the ITBS most popular for other religious schools.

religiously affiliated, only Catholic schools declined in number from last year, going from 38 to 36.

There are now 38 schools in the program that are secular, up from 33 schools last year. Non-religious schools now make up 30% of all MPCP schools. Both Lutheran and Christian non-denominational schools increased from last year as well, as did other religious schools, which now make up 7% of the total number of schools.

More secular, new schools than ever before

Of the 121 MPCP schools, 83, or 69%, are religious. Chart 7 shows the different religious affiliations represented. Of those schools that are

Of the 17 new schools this year, eight are non-religious, four are non-denominational, two are Lutheran, and the last three are other religions.

Religious affiliations of MPCP schools

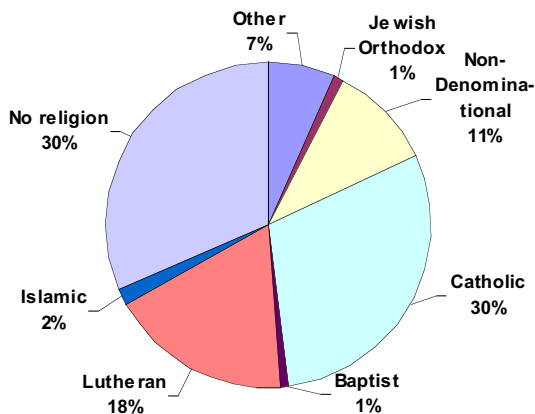
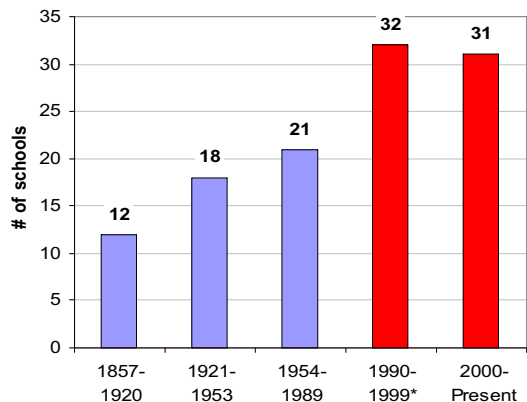


Chart 7

Year MPCP schools opened



*MPCP started in 1990-1999

Chart 8

As depicted in Chart 8, 63 schools in the program have opened since 1990, up from 49 schools last year. The number of schools that opened between 1954 and 1989 is down five, to 21 schools in 2004-2005. Seven schools in the program were founded before

1900 and 31 have opened since 2000. Of these 31 newer schools, nine opened for the first time this year. For the first time, this year more than half of the participating schools, 63, have opened since 1990, the year the choice program first started. ▸

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Voucher program larger than ever

- ⌚ There are 17 schools new to the program this year, the most new schools since the program expanded to include religious schools in 1998-99. Seven schools closed after last year, the most closures since 2002-03. The total number of schools is 121.
- ⌚ Total enrollment increased 13% this year to 14,427 full-time students. Enrollment increased in every grade level except 2nd and 8th grades.
- ⌚ Thirty-eight secular schools participate this year, accounting for 30% of all voucher schools. Catholic schools also make up 30%, more than any other religion.
- ⌚ At least one standardized test is administered by 111 of the 121 MPCP schools, with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills being the most common.
- ⌚ Fifty-one of a possible 104 schools have changed administrator at least once since the 1998-99 school year. Of these 51 schools, 23 of them have changed more than once. Of the 66 schools in the program since 1998, 40%, or 26, have not changed their administrator.