



Research Brief

Volume 90, Number 1

January 23, 2002

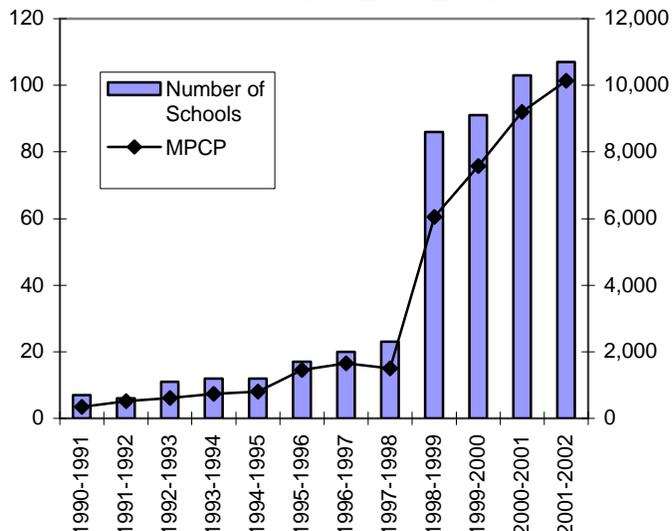
Choice Schools Enroll Fewer K4 Students

For the first time since the expansion of the choice program to include religious schools in 1998-1999, fewer K4 students are receiving vouchers than in the previous year. This decrease accompanies the first year of implementation of the Milwaukee Public Schools' Neighborhood Schools Initiative, which added full-day K4 to 27 MPS neighborhood schools, bringing the total number of MPS schools offering K4 to 117. Are parents choosing MPS over vouchers?

Unfortunately, the data cannot conclusively answer this question. The data can, however, paint a picture of the program's growth in its twelfth year.

The number of schools accepting voucher students in 2001-2002 increased from 103 to 107. The number of full-time voucher students also increased by 12% to 10,131.

MPCP Full-time Enrollment and Number of Participating Schools 1990-1991 to 2000-2001



12th Year Highlights

- Total choice enrollment increased 12% to 10,131 students, the highest enrollment in the program's history.
- Choice enrollment grew at all grade levels except K4. The total number of four-year-olds in the city has been declining since 1994, from 10,622 to 7,900.
- Although more schools are participating than ever before, choice enrollment is concentrated in just a few schools. The ten largest choice schools enroll 1/3 of all voucher students. Nineteen schools enroll half of all voucher students.
- Two choice schools opened for the first time in 2001-2002, joining 21 other schools that have opened since the choice program expanded in 1998.
- There are 76 religious choice schools and 30 secular choice schools. Half of the religious schools are Catholic and another 18 are Lutheran.
- Transportation is provided by 48 choice schools, yet only a handful of the schools on the south side provide transportation.
- Fifty-three choice schools are hypersegregated, enrolling either 90% or more minority students or 90% or more white students.

Data for this *Brief* came from the PPF annual census of choice schools, the Department of Public Instruction (October 2001 numbers), and the 2001 Milwaukee Child Census.

This research is supported by The Joyce Foundation of Chicago and the Faye McBeath, the Richard and Ethel Herzfeld, and the Halbert and Alice Kadish Foundations of Milwaukee.

For a complete listing of choice schools visit the Forum website at www.publicpolicyforum.org.

Choice Program Enrollment Increases Not Due to New Schools



Since 1990-1991, 124 different schools have participated in the choice program. The 107 schools accepting vouchers in 2001-2002 reflect the fact that since 1990, eight choice schools have closed (including one this year), there have been five mergers between Catholic schools, and four schools left the program to become charter schools.

Six schools are new to the program this year and enrolled 130 voucher students, accounting for 14% of the total increase in enrollment over last year. Thus, most of this year's increase in enrollment occurred in schools that have previously participated in the program.

This growth in existing choice schools was not uniform, however. Of the schools continuing their participation in 2001-2002, 69 schools gained voucher students over last

year. There were 29 schools that lost voucher students compared to last year. The table below highlights the schools that gained and lost the most voucher students.

It is important to note that schools losing voucher students are not necessarily poorly performing schools, nor are schools gaining voucher students better performing schools. The schools losing students this year include several that have been recognized by foundations, the media, and by reputation as being successful private schools. One of these is a flagship school that has been part of the voucher program since its inception, Urban Day. Another is Holy Redeemer Academy, which received a \$1 million Bradley Foundation grant a year ago to add new classrooms and a range of services and recreational activities.

Schools Losing the Most Voucher Students Sept. 2000 to Sept. 2001	Change in FTE Voucher Students	Schools Gaining the Most Voucher Students Sept. 2000 to Sept. 2001	Change in FTE Voucher Students
Early View Academy	-42	Messmer Catholic Schools (2 sites)	279
Woodson Academy	-34	Seeds of Health (4 sites)	185
Holy Redeemer Acad.	-23	Pius XI High School	80
Immanuel Christian Academy	-22	Ceria M. Travis Academy	75
St. Leo Catholic Acad.	-19	Harambee Community School	68
Urban Day School	-15	Prince of Peace/Principe de Paz	58
Gregory B. Flood	-14	Marva Collins Prep. School	52
Kindergarten Plus	-14	Academic Solutions Center for Learning	40
Gospel Lutheran	-11	Alex's Academics of Excellence	39
Blessed Sacrament	-10	Siloah Lutheran School	34



Another way to look at the issue of enrollment is to consider the concentration of attendance. In 2001-2002 one-third of all voucher students were enrolled in only 10 schools. Fifty percent of the voucher students were enrolled in 19 schools.

The table below shows the top ten largest voucher schools, which together enroll a third of all voucher students, and the smallest ten voucher schools, which enroll less than 1% of all voucher students.

Again, there is no way to draw any conclusions

about school quality from a voucher school's size. Too many factors determine the number of voucher students in a building. For instance, schools with greater numbers of tuition-paying families may make fewer seats available for voucher students. Since Divine Savior Holy Angels High School enrolls 615 total students and 941 total students attend Wisconsin Lutheran High School, it is apparent that many tuition-paying parents are choosing these schools. Therefore, despite their lower numbers of voucher students, these two schools appear very successful.

Ten Largest Voucher Schools	FTE Voucher Students 2001	Ten Smallest Voucher Schools	FTE Voucher Students 2001
Messmer Catholic Schools (2 sites)	610	Grace Prep. School of Excellence	14
Urban Day School	512	Bridging the Gap Learning Center	13
Harambee Community School	397	Divine Savior Holy Angels HS	13
St. Anthony School	323	Mt. Lebanon Lutheran School	13
Holy Redeemer Academy	321	Lutheran Special School	12
Marva Collins Prep. School	292	Blessed Sacrament School	11
Prince of Peace/Principe de Paz	266	Lakeshore Montessori School	6
St. Adalbert School	259	Wisconsin Lutheran High School	6
Woodson Academy	244	Harbor Cross School	6
Early View Acad. of Excellence	242	Stepping Stone Learning Center	5

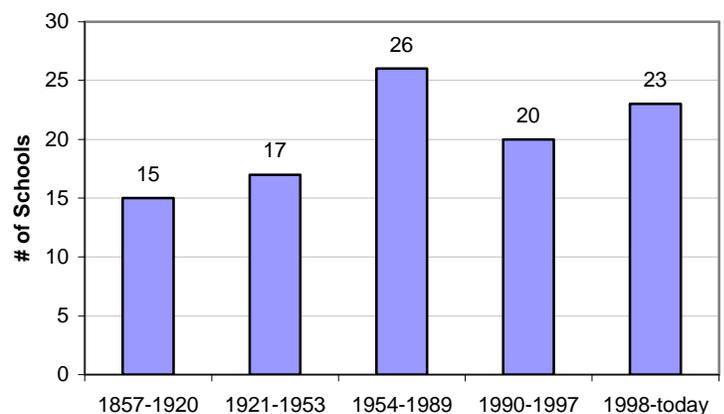
**Schools in bold have been in top ten since 1998-1999.*

Creation of New Schools

Although the available data does not allow us to measure the choice program's success at meeting its primary goal—improving school performance—we can measure the program's progress in meeting one of its secondary goals—ensuring more educational options for Milwaukee parents.

Since the program started twelve years ago, 43 new voucher schools have opened their doors, including two in 2001-2002. The 23 schools that have started just since 1998 now enroll 2,100 voucher students. While we may not know much about the quality of these schools, their very existence certainly increases parents' options when choosing schools.

Year School Opened





Enrollment Grows at Every Grade Except K4

For the first time since the choice program's expansion in 1998, fewer four-year-old Kindergartners enrolled than in the previous year. In 2001-2002 there were 114 fewer K4 seats than the year before.

The cause of this decrease is not clear. Perhaps the addition of new all-day K4 offerings at 27 MPS neighborhood schools has made MPS more competitive. MPS now has either half-day or all-day K4 at 117 schools. Unfortunately, we have no way to measure whether parents who sent their children to K4 in MPS were also considering a choice school.

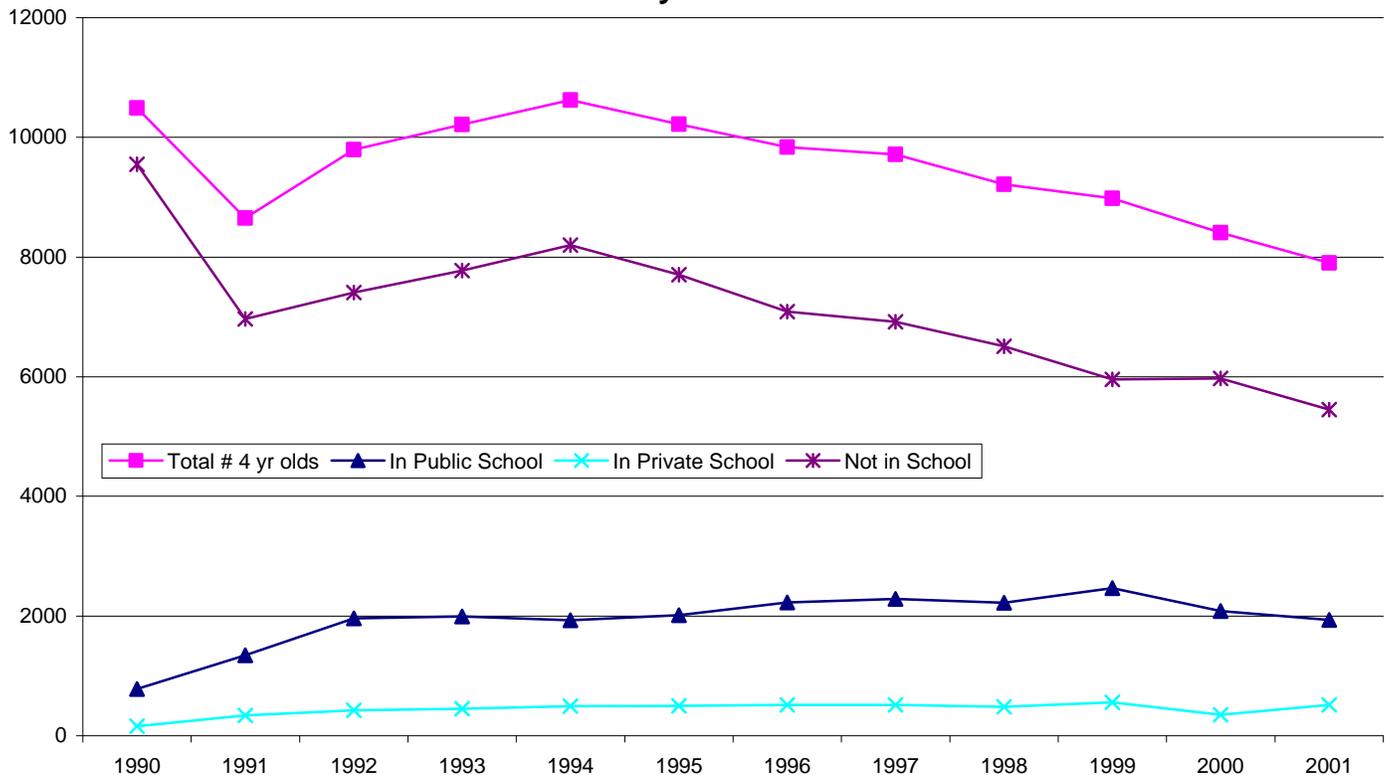
Another reason K4 enrollment could be down is that there are fewer four-year-olds in Milwaukee than in 2000. However, the data from the annual Milwaukee child census indicate that this is not a new phenomenon; the total number of four-year-olds in the city has been decreasing since 1994. In addition, while the total number of four-year-olds declined this year, the number of four-year-olds at-

tending private schools increased. The line graph below depicts these trends.

Despite this decrease in K4, the choice program continued to enroll over twice as many Kindergartners than high schoolers, a pattern that has been in effect throughout the life of the program. Yet, this year's high school classes are the largest ever, increasing 30% over last year.

This growth in high schools seats has to continue if today's middle schoolers are to be able to stay in the program for high school. Currently, there are many more 8th graders receiving vouchers than 9th graders, meaning that many students choose not to continue in the program for high school. This choice may reflect the lack of high school seats or may be unrelated. In general, the number of students in each grade declines over the four years of high school, with less than half of the 1998-1999 9th grade class receiving vouchers four years later as 12th graders.

Number of Four-year-olds in Milwaukee



Less than Half of Choice Schools State They Have Sought Accreditation



Forty-eight of this year's choice schools indicated that they have some form of accreditation by an outside agency. Accreditation is a process of evaluation that certifies schools meet standards defined by an independent entity, called an accrediting agency. The evaluation is of the operations of the school and may or may not include measurement of scholastic achievement of the students. This evaluation process is meant to assure families, foundations, corporations, financial institutions, and all interested parties that a school meets generally accepted standards of educational quality, operation, and staff competence.

Regional accreditation is the most common type of accreditation for public schools and can also be sought by private schools. It is obtained through one of six regional accrediting bodies. These regional bodies are non-profit, non-governmental agencies and are recognized as being reliable authorities concerning the quality of education offered by a school. A school's participation in the regional associations' accrediting process is always voluntary and is intended to encourage educational excellence, promote cooperative action, and protect the public interest by assuring the integrity and future preparedness of accredited schools. The regional accrediting body for Wisconsin is the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS).

In addition, some independent school associations evaluate their own members as an alternative to the regional accrediting process, which was developed mainly to serve public schools. One such independent school association is the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS). A local independent school association is the Wisconsin Nonpublic Schools Accrediting Association (WNSAA).

Of the 48 choice schools listing accreditation with at least one agency, 30 are accredited by the WNSAA. Twenty-six list the Archdiocese of Milwaukee as their accrediting agency. Five schools are accredited by NCACS and three by ISACS. Two schools state they are accredited by the Asso-

ciation of Christian Schools International. Other accrediting agencies listed include: the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (2 schools), the National Lutheran Schools Association (2 schools), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1 school), the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (1 school), the National Catholic Education Association (1 school), and the National Private School Association (1 school). Sixty choice schools indicate they are not accredited by any agency.

Enrollment Periods

For the 2002-2003 school year, choice schools can choose to participate in any or all of 11 DPI-defined open enrollment periods. These periods are the first 20 days of each month, except for a December/January period that runs from December 1 to January 7. In previous years, choice schools could define their own open enrollment periods anytime throughout the year.

During any open enrollment period in which a school is participating, the school must accept MPCP applications for every grade in which the school will have MPCP students. If a school has more applicants than seats available at a certain grade level, then random selection is required. If MPCP seats in certain grade levels are already filled by that enrollment period, the school must still accept applications for those grades for placement on the waiting list. The random selection process must occur within one week of the close of the open enrollment period. All applicants must be notified, in writing, within 60 days of their application whether they are accepted or not. MPCP applications received by a school outside the school's open enrollment periods will not be eligible for a voucher.

It is hoped this new open enrollment process will clarify when random selection is required. In addition, DPI is publicizing the open enrollment periods and which schools are participating in each period, in order to maximize potential voucher applicants' information about the application and enrollment process. This information can be found on the DPI website at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/choice.html.



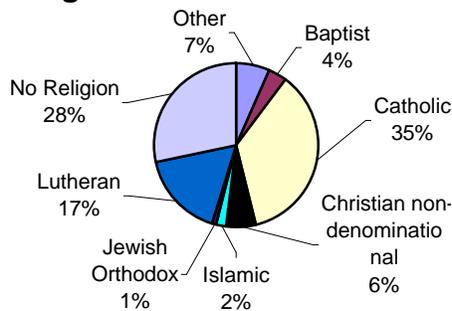
Catholic Schools Dominate but Transportation Less Likely on South Side

Seventy-six choice schools have a religious affiliation, the largest affiliation being Catholic, with 38 schools. These figures are virtually identical to 2000-2001, when there were 75 religious schools, 38 being Catholic. Catholic schools also serve the most choice students, enrolling 44% of all voucher students. Of the choice schools located on the south side, the southwest side, and downtown, the majority are Catholic.

Lutheran schools are the next largest group, with 18 schools enrolling 10% of all MPCP students. This is an increase over last year, when there were 15 Lutheran schools. Perhaps the most visible addition to the list of Lutheran schools is the program's first Lutheran high school, Wisconsin Lutheran High School. Most Lutheran schools are located on the north and northwest sides of the city.

Thirty schools have no religious affiliation, compared with 28 such schools last year. Non-secular schools enroll 29% of all voucher students and, except for the southwest side, can be found throughout the city.

Religious Affiliations of Schools



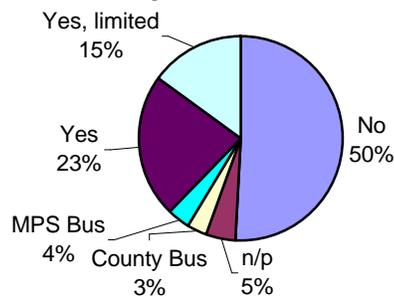
# OF SCHOOLS	Down town	North Side	South Side	North-west	South-west	West Side
Other	0	3	0	5	0	0
Christian						
Baptist	0	1	0	2	0	1
Catholic	2	3	14	9	3	7
Christian Non-denominational	0	1	0	4	0	1
Islamic	0	1	0	0	1	0
Jewish	0	0	0	1	0	0
Lutheran	0	5	2	8	1	2
Not Religious	1	5	7	12	0	5
TOTAL	3	19	23	41	5	16

Transportation

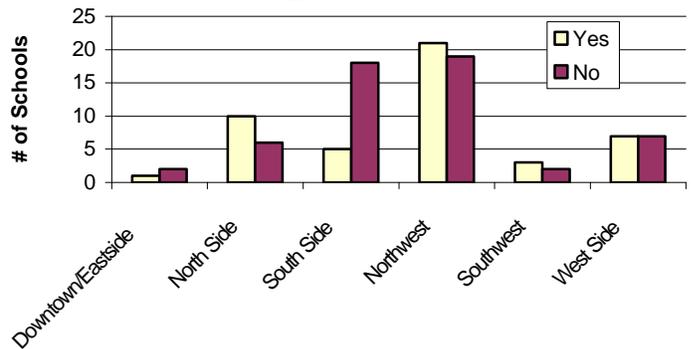
Of the schools providing information on transportation, 54 do not have transportation available for students, while 48 offer some form of transportation. Sixteen schools provide transportation, but limit it in some way, usually geographically.

Choice students attending school on the south side are less likely to receive transportation than students in schools in any other part of the city.

Is Transportation Provided?



Transportation Provided by Location



Aggregate Student Turnover

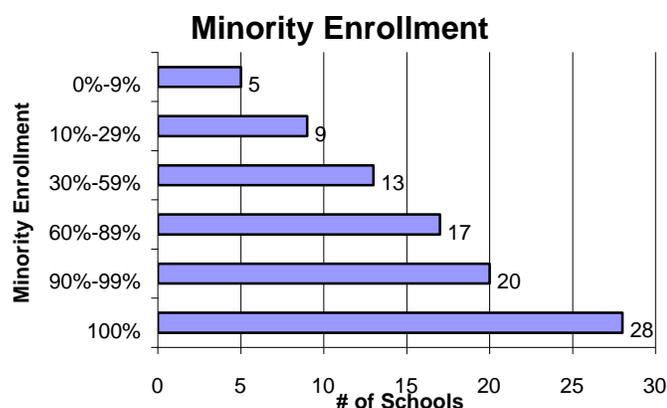
Aggregate level turnover, measured as the percent of students receiving vouchers last year who did not receive vouchers in 2001-2002 (accounting for graduating seniors), totals 26%. This is three percentage points lower than last year's turnover rate.

TURNOVER RATE	Sept. 1998 to Sept. 1999	Sept. 1999 to Sept. 2000	Sept. 2000 to Sept. 2001
Students Not Renewing Vouchers	1621	2312	2501
% Turnover	26%	29%	26%

Nearly Half of All Choice Schools Enroll More than 90% Minority Students

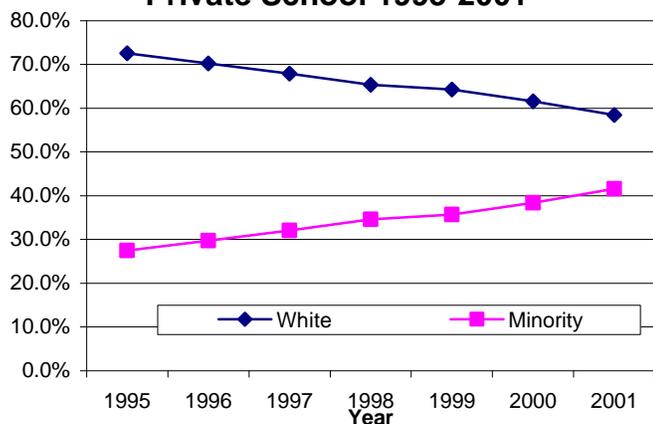


Sixty-five choice schools have enrollments made up of greater than 60% minority students. This seems to indicate that many choice schools are well-integrated. However, a closer look reveals that there are 48 schools enrolling 90% or more minority students and 5 schools enrolling less than 10% minority students, meaning that half of all choice schools can be termed hypersegregated (enrolling more than 90% or less than 10% minority students).



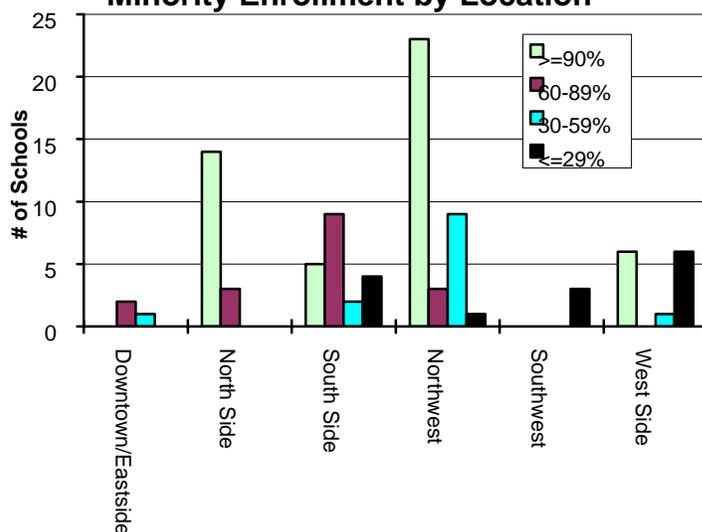
High levels of minority enrollment may well reflect the overall population of Milwaukee's private school children, as measured by the annual MPS child census. This annual count of all city children indicates that the percentage of Milwaukee children attending private school who are minority is approaching 50%. However, increasing enrollment of minority students should not necessarily result in greater numbers of hypersegregated schools.

Milwaukee Children Attending Private School 1995-2001



The hypersegregated choice schools are not evenly disbursed throughout the city. The north and northwest sides have the most majority minority schools, while the southwest side has none. Whether this pattern is merely a reflection of where voucher students live or the result of school policies, the data do not reveal.

Minority Enrollment by Location



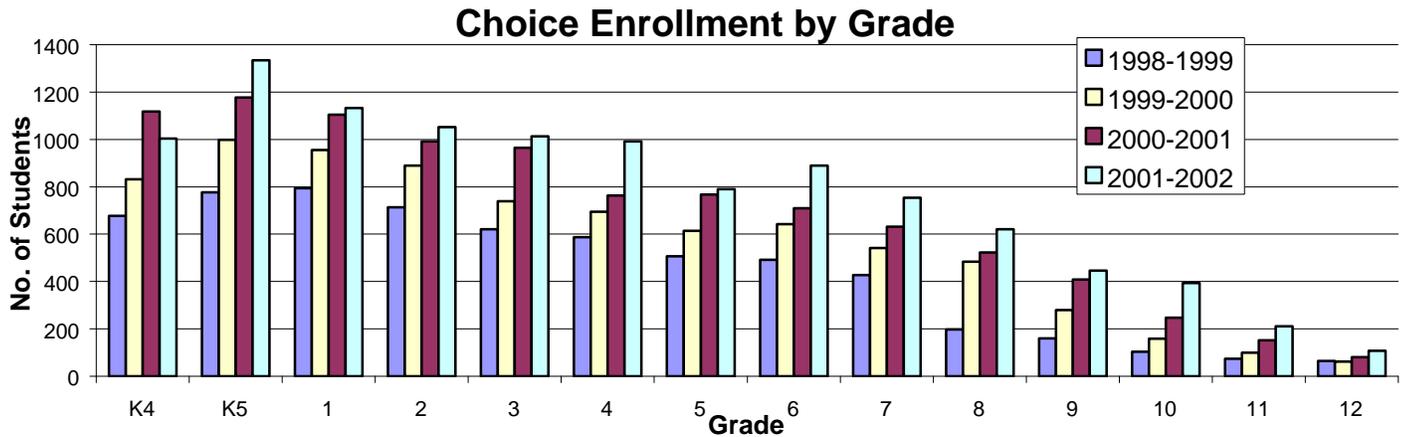
Before/After School Programs

Fifty-seven schools offer before/after school programs and 20 schools offer after school programs only. This is about the same number of schools as last year; 17 schools added before and/or after school programs this year while 20 schools cut some part of their programs this year.

These changes provide no clear message about parents' choices—there is no trend in the data to indicate whether parents prefer schools with one type of program over another. An equal number of before school programs were cut as after school programs, with 12 each. However, fewer before school programs were added. Six before school programs are new this year compared to 12 after school programs. Twenty-three schools do not provide any before or after school programming at all, while 6 schools did not indicate whether they offer such programs.



Highlights of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in its 12th Year



- The number of students receiving vouchers in 2001-2002 grew 12% to 10,131.
- The number of students receiving vouchers increased at every grade level except K4, which had 114 fewer voucher recipients this year.
- Less than half of the 1998-1999 9th graders are receiving vouchers this year as 12th graders.
- About a fourth of last year's voucher recipients are not receiving vouchers this year, a turnover rate slightly lower than last year's.

PRESIDENT: David G. Meissner

SENIOR RESEARCHER: Emily Van Dunk, Ph.D.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Amy Schwabe

VP/RESEARCH DIRECTOR: Jeffrey C. Browne

RESEARCHER : Anneliese M. Dickman, J.D.

OFFICE MANAGER: Catherine A. Crother