

Research Brief

Standardized Tests Taken by Nine Out of Ten Voucher Schools; Reporting Results Would Increase Accountability

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One criticism of Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program (MPCP) made by parents and policy makers alike focuses on the lack of information regarding student performance across participating schools. Currently, schools participating in the MPCP are not required to either administer standardized exams or report their scores. However the Public Policy Forum's annual census of schools in the MPCP has found that many schools are taking standardized exams. Ninety-two percent of voucher schools administer at least one type of standardized exam.

The most commonly administered exam is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Sixty-four voucher schools administer this exam. Interestingly, 40 schools administer the state test also taken by all public schools and charter schools in Wisconsin. Thus, most voucher schools have standardized information on student performance. As a next step policy makers and school administrators may want to develop an acceptable method for publicly reporting this information. Just as parents are able to discern school performance across all charter and public schools, their ability to discern performance across participating MPCP schools would enhance the choices they make.

The MPCP is in its 14th year of existence. Today over 12,500 full-time students attend 111 different private schools in the City of Milwaukee using a voucher worth \$5,882. Each year for the past five years the Forum has conducted a census of all participating schools. This Research Brief highlights the key facts obtained through the census of the program for the 2003-04 school year.

2003-2004 Program Highlights

- Total program enrollment increased 14.5% to 12,780 full-time students, which is the most growth since 2000-01.
- Choice participation increased at all grade levels in 2003-04.
- Five schools joined the program for the first time this year. The total number of schools went up by four due to the fact that one school dropped out of the program from last year.
- There are 78 religious schools participating this year, 38 are Catholic schools and another 20 are Lutheran schools.
- In the last six years, 20 schools have changed locations, and five of those schools have changed locations more than once.
- Forty-three percent of the students in the program are in schools that are 90 to 100% minority.
- Results from Milwaukee offer proof that schools do open in response to voucher programs. Forty-nine schools have opened in Milwaukee after 1989.
- For the senior class of 2004, the number of twelfth grade students receiving vouchers is 88% of the number of ninth grade voucher students three years ago.

Data for this Brief came from PPF's annual census of schools participating in MPCP, the Milwaukee child census, and from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

For a complete listing of private schools participating in the choice program, visit the PPF website at www.publicpolicyforum.org or contact the PPF at 633 W. Wisconsin Ave, Suite 406, Milwaukee, WI 53203, 414-276-8240.



MPCP Program is Still Growing

The MPCP program grew again this year in both number of students and number of schools. Enrollment in the program grew 14.5% this year to 12,780 students. The total number of schools went from 107 in 2002-03 to 111 in 2003-04. Five new schools were added this year and one school dropped out of the program.

In terms of individual schools, there were 69 schools that grew from 2002-03 to this year, 35 schools lost voucher students, and one school's voucher enrollment did not change. Table 1 shows the top ten gaining and losing schools. The top ten gaining schools accounted for 80% of the total gain in voucher students and the ten schools which lost the most voucher students accounted for 73% of the total loss. Six schools more than doubled in size from last year to this year. Mandella School of Science and Math* nearly tripled in size, going from 94 voucher students in 2002-03 to 274 students this year. Academic Solutions Center for Learning was the top gaining school for the second year in a row. In the past two years it has gained 436 voucher students. Alex's Academics of Excellence lost the most students, losing 121 voucher students from last year.

*The future of this school is uncertain, due to fiscal problems.

Change in MPCP Students and Voucher Payments

Schools Gaining or Losing the Most MPCP Students Sept. 2002 to Sept. 2003	Change in MPCP Students (FTE)	Change in Voucher Payment*
Academic Solutions Center for Learning	312	\$1,835,184
Mandella School of Science and Math	179	\$1,055,231
Saint Anthony's School	168	\$987,000
Jared C. Bruce Academy	161	\$947,002
Saint Philip's Lutheran School	95	\$558,790
Hope Christian School	77	\$452,914
Early View Academy of Excellence	46	\$271,748
Atlas Preparatory Academy	46	\$269,396
Clara Mohammad School	42	\$244,691
Siloah Lutheran School	38	\$224,692
Sharon Junior Academy	-16	-\$91,171
Holy Redeemer Christian Academy	-17	-\$98,818
Woodlands School	-17	-\$99,994
Saint Leo Catholic Urban Academy	-20	-\$118,816
Urban Day School	-24	-\$138,227
Saint Rose Catholic Urban Academy	-31	-\$182,342
Saint Catherine School	-31	-\$182,342
Harambee Community School	-65	-\$383,506
Saint Phillip Neri Catholic School	-77	-\$452,914
Alex's Academics of Excellence	-121	-\$709,369

*Based on \$5,882 per pupil. Bold indicates the school was also in the top ten for gaining or losing voucher students last year.

Table 1



Most MPCP Schools Already Administering Standardized Tests

Although it is not required, there are a number of MPCP schools that are taking some sort of standardized test. This year we asked for the first time whether the schools administer a standardized achievement test. Administrators of 102 schools indicated that their schools take a standardized test.

There are 19 different tests being taken by the MPCP schools. Chart 1 shows the different tests that are being taken and the number of schools taking those tests. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is being taken by the most schools, with 64 schools taking it. The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE) is the next most taken test by MPCP schools. Forty of the schools take the WKCE. There are nine schools that reported they do not administer any standardized tests to their students.

We also looked at the tests that are taken by religious affiliation as shown in Chart 2. For this chart we excluded the high schools and only used the schools which have students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The largest number of total schools was the Catholic schools. Of the 33 schools, only one school did not administer standardized tests. Thirty-two of the 33 schools reported that they administer the ITBS and 31 schools reported that they administer the WKCE.

There are 19 elementary and kindergarten through eighth grade Lutheran schools in the MPCP

program. These schools reported taking three different tests. Sixty-eight percent of the Lutheran schools reported administering the Terra Nova test and 26% administer the ITBS. Eleven percent reported that they do not administer tests. The remaining 51 schools took a variety of tests, with the highest percentage again being the ITBS.

Table 2 on pages 4 and 5 shows each school in the program and which standardized test or tests it administers. Many of the schools give the students multiple tests. Ten of the schools reported that they give their students more than two different tests.

Tests Taken by MPCP Schools

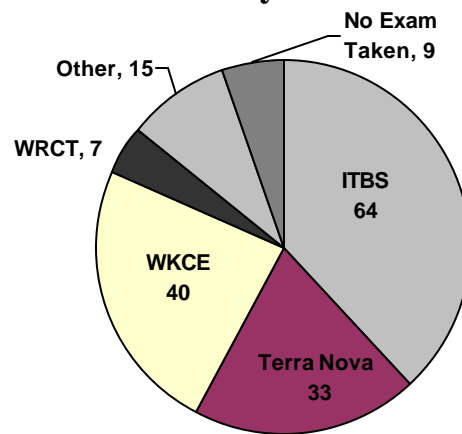


Chart 1

Percent of Tests Taken by Religious Affiliation

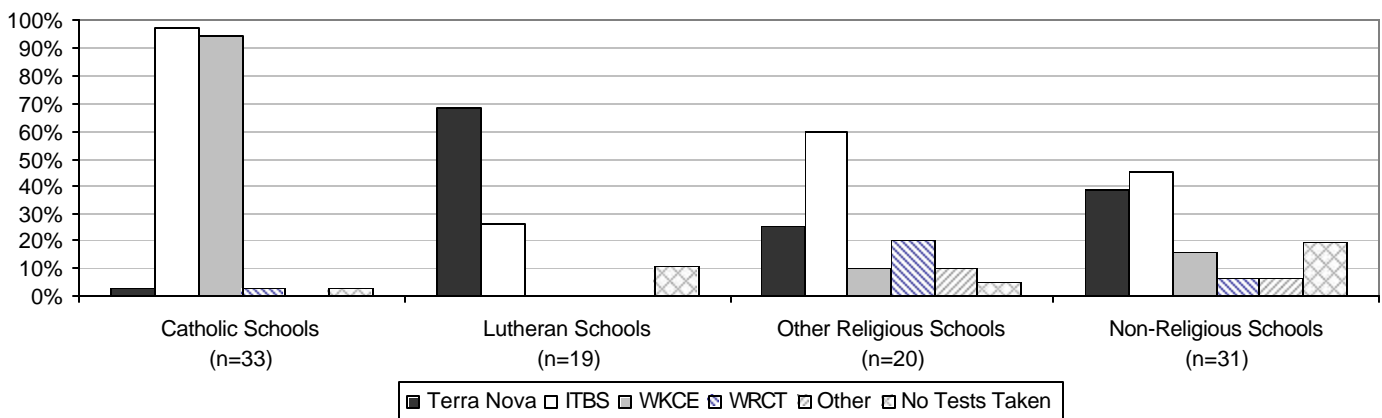


Chart 2



Standardized Tests Taken By MPCP Schools

School Name	Terra Nova	ITBS	WKCE	WRCT	Others
Academic Solutions Center for Learning	x				
Agape Center of Academic Excellence	x	x			
Alex's Academics of Excellence		x			
Atlas Preparatory School	x		x		
Atonement Lutheran School	x				
Believers in Christ Christian Academy				x	
Bessie M. Gray Preparatory Academy		x			
Blessed Sacrament School		x	x		
Blyden Delany Academy	x	x			
Bridging the Gap Learning Center		x			
Catholic East Elementary		x	x		
Ceria M. Travis Academy		x			
Christ Memorial Lutheran	x				
Christ St. Peter Lutheran School	x				
Clara Mohammed School		x			
Community Vision Academy		x			
Corpus Christi School		x	x		
Divine Savior Holy Angels					x
Dr. Brenda Noach Choice School	x				
Early View Academy of Excellence		x	x		x
Eastbrook Academy		x			
Emmaus Lutheran School	x				
Family Academy					
Family Montessori School					x
Garden Homes Lutheran School	x				
Gospel Lutheran School	x				
Grace Christian Academy of Greater Milwaukee, Inc.	x			x	x
Grace Preparatory School of Excellence					x
Grandview High (Seeds of Health)	x		x		
Greater Holy Temple Christian Learning Center		x			
Harambee Community School		x			
Hickman's Academy Preparatory School	x	x			
Hilltop Elementary (Seeds of Health)	x		x		
Holy Redeemer Christian Academy	x			x	
Holy Wisdom Academy East/West		x	x		
Hope Christian School	x				
Howard's Child Development Center/Learning Academy		x			
Jared C. Bruce Academy		x			x
Keal Preparatory School		x		x	
Kindergarten Plus					
King's Academy Christian School		x			
LaBrew Troopers Military University School		x			
Learning Enterprise High School	x		x		
Louis Tucker Academy	x				
Lutheran Special School					x
Mandella School of Science and Math					
Marquette University High School					x
Mary Queen of Martyrs		x	x		
Medgar Evers Christian Academy		x			
Messmer High School		x			x
Messmer Preparatory Catholic School		x			
Milwaukee Montessori School					x
Milwaukee Multicultural Academy	x		x	x	
Milwaukee School of Choice					
Mother of Good Counsel		x	x		
Mount Calvary Lutheran School	x				

Table 2 (Page 1 of 2)



Standardized Tests Taken By MPCP Schools

School Name	Terra Nova	ITBS	WKCE	WRCT	Others
Mt. Lebanon Lutheran	x				
Nazareth Lutheran School		x			
Noah's Ark Preparatory School		x		x	
Notre Dame Middle School		x	x		
Oklahoma Avenue Lutheran School		x			
Our Lady of Good Hope		x	x		
Our Lady of Sorrows		x	x		
Our Lady Queen of Peace		x	x		
Parklawn Christian School and Preschool	x				
Parkside Elementary (Seeds of Health)	x		x		
Pius XI High School					x
Prince of Peace		x	x		
Risen Savior Ev. Lutheran School	x				
Salam School		x	x		
Sharon Junior Academy		x			
Sherman Park Preschool					
Siloah Lutheran School		x			
St. Adalbert School		x	x	x	
St. Anthony School		x	x		x
St. Bernadette School		x	x		
St. Catherine of Alexandria		x	x		
St. Catherine School		x	x		
St. Charles Borromeo		x	x		
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Academy		x	x		
St. Gregory the Great		x	x		
St. Joan Antida High School					x
St. John Kanty School		x	x		
St. Josaphat Parish School		x	x		
St. Leo Catholic Urban Academy		x	x		
St. Marcus Lutheran School	x				
St. Margaret Mary School		x	x		
St. Martini Lutheran School	x				
St. Paul Catholic School		x	x		
St. Peter Immanuel Lutheran School		x			
St. Philip Neri Catholic School		x	x		
St. Philip's Lutheran School	x	x			
St. Rafael the Archangel	x	x	x		
St. Roman Parish School		x	x		
St. Rose Catholic Urban Academy		x	x		
St. Sebastian School		x	x		
St. Veronica School		x	x		x
St. Vincent Palloti		x	x		
Tamarack Community School					
Texas Bufkin Academy		x			
Urban Day School, Inc.	x				
Veritas Academy					
Victory Christian Academy		x			
Victory Preparatory Academy					
Voyager Academy of Technology	x				
Windlake Elementary (Seeds of Health)	x		x		
Wisconsin Lutheran High School					x
Woodlands School					
Woodson Academy		x			
Word of Life Evangelical Lutheran School	x				
Yeshiva Elementary School		x			

Table 2 (Page 2 of 2)



MPCP Schools Lack Integration

Each year we ask participating MPCP schools to provide information on the race/ethnicity of the students in their school. This year 101 schools reported information. The reported schools represent 91% of total enrollment. In the aggregate, MPCP schools report a student body that is 44% African American, 35% white, 15% Hispanic, and five percent Asian or other. This racial balance compares favorably to Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). In MPS, 83% of all students are non-white. However, the MPCP balance is not reflective of the balance for all Milwaukee children who attend private school. Forty-four percent of all Milwaukee children attending private school are minority compared to 65% of children in MPCP schools. The three percentage point decline from 2002 in the portion of

minority private school children in Milwaukee ends a seven year increase.

The racial/ethnic balance presented in the aggregate MPCP data is not carried over into the school-by-school analysis. In fact, 34 MPCP schools are 100% minority and another 23 are 90% to 100% minority. As illustrated in Chart 4, for the past four years, the smallest number of students have been in schools that are 40% to 59% minority. This year six percent of the students in the MPCP program are in schools that are 40% to 59% minority; 43% of the students are in schools that are 90% to 100% minority. Overall, 34% of MPCP students are in schools with minority enrollment under 40%, while 60% attend schools that are 60% to 100% minority.

Milwaukee Children Attending Private School 1995-2003

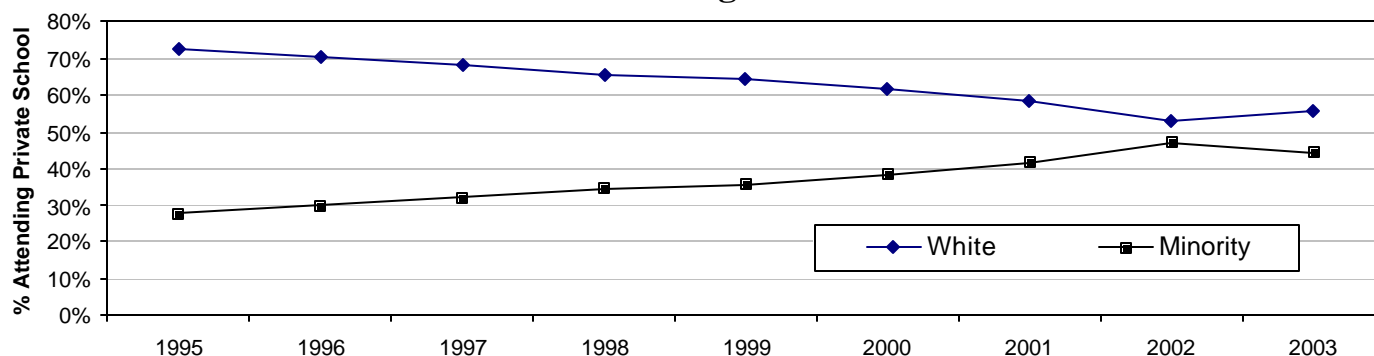


Chart 3

Minority Enrollment in MPCP Schools

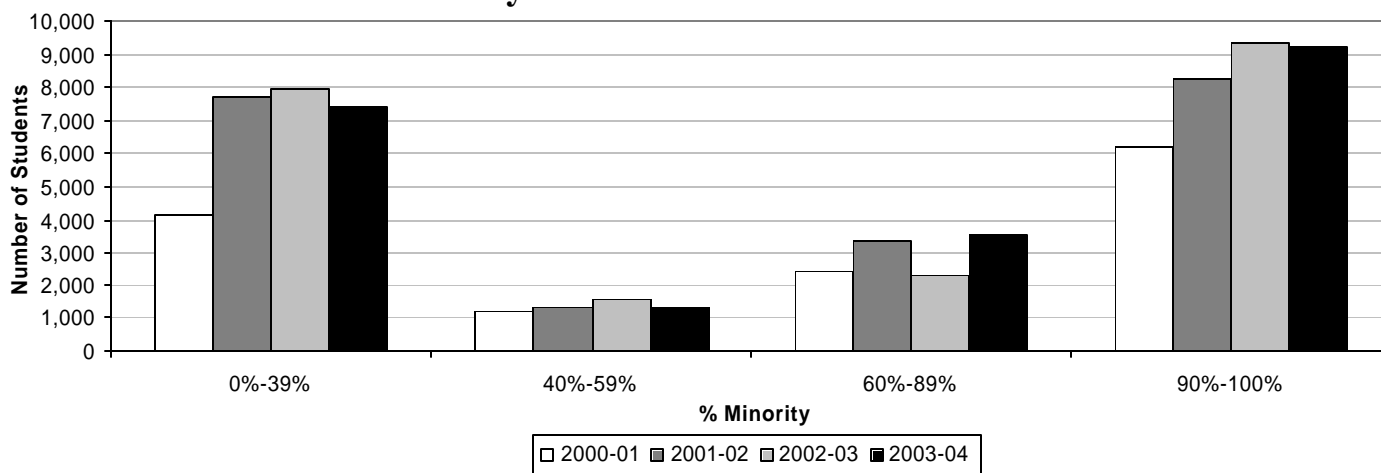


Chart 4



Voucher Program Prompts the Opening of New Private Schools

There are 111 schools in the choice program in 2003-2004, and of these schools, 78 of them are religious schools. As Chart 5 shows, one third of all MPCP schools are Catholic. Even though the number of Catholic schools increased by two, the percentage of the total stayed the same from last year. There are now 20 Lutheran schools in the program. Last year there were 18 Lutheran schools in the program. This year Lutheran schools account for about 18% of all MPCP schools. In addition to Lutheran and Catholic, there are seven different religions represented in the rest of the MPCP schools. There are 11 different schools that reported being Christian non-denominational schools.

The number of non-religious schools went down from last year. There are now 33 schools that report that they have no religious affiliation. Non-religious schools now make up 30% of the total schools and enroll 31% of the students. This is the first time the number of non-religious schools went down since the 1999-2000 school year.

There were five new schools that opened up this year. Of the five schools that joined the program, two are non-denominational, one is Catholic, one is Lutheran, and the other school has no religious affiliation.

Supply Side Response to Vouchers

One anticipated response to the establishment of voucher programs is the belief that new schools will be opened to meet the demand created by voucher parents. The experience in Milwaukee over the past 14 years is proof that this can happen.

Chart 6 identifies the year participating MPCP schools were opened. As the chart shows, of the 105 schools where data is available, 49 were founded after 1989. The oldest school in the choice program is Marquette University High School, which was founded in 1857. Eight schools in the MPCP program were founded before 1900. Fourteen schools enrolling 1,447 voucher students have opened up since the year 2000.

In total, schools that were created in response to the voucher program—those that opened after 1989—enroll 48% of all voucher students. The largest school in the voucher program, Academic Solutions Center for Learning, enrolling 548 students, was founded in 1999. On average, 82% of the students enrolled in schools opened after 1989 are voucher students compared with 50% in schools that were open before the start of the voucher program in 1990.

Religious Affiliations of MPCP Schools

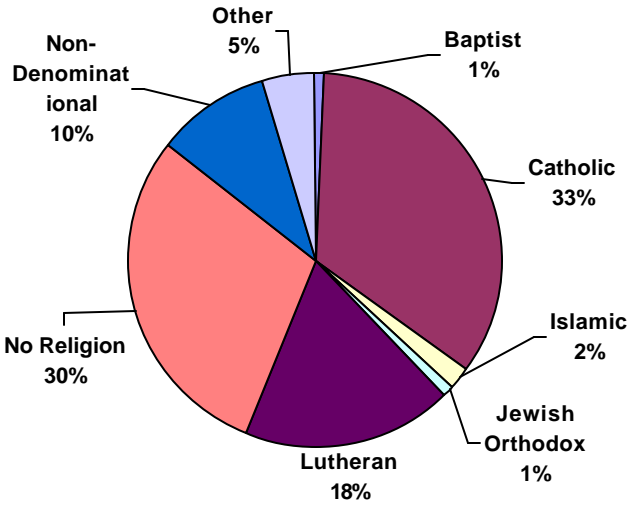


Chart 5

Year MPCP Schools Opened

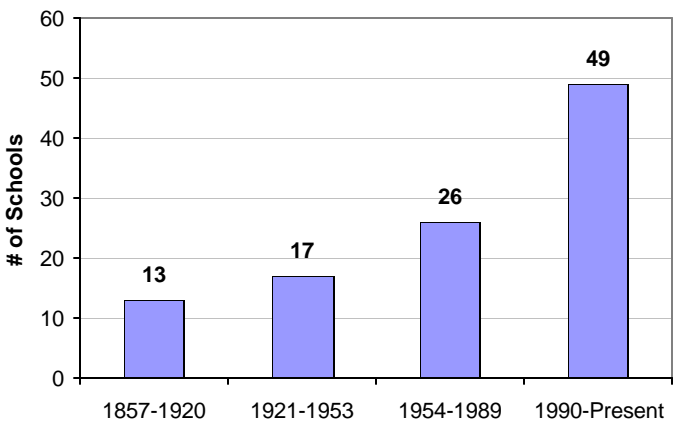


Chart 6



One-Fifth of Schools Changed Location in Past Five Years

Since the 1998-99 school year, MPCP schools have changed locations 26 times. These moves have ranged in distance from one school moving across the street to one school moving over 10 miles. When any school moves, it may disrupt the course of learning for the students and make it harder on the parents to get their children to school each day.

There were 15 schools that changed location one time between the 1998-99 and the 2003-04 school years. During this same time period, there were four schools that moved twice. One school in the program has moved three separate times during this six year period. From 2002-03 to 2003-04, there were eight schools that changed locations.

Of the 26 moves since 1989-99, eight of the moves have been less than one mile. There have been five moves that have been between one and three miles and 13 of the moves have been over three miles. Of these 13 moves, five of the moves were between five and eight miles and one of the moves was over 10 miles. It is important to understand why schools are changing locations. One reason may be to accommodate more students in a larger school. In fact, of the eight schools that moved since last year, four increased their enroll-

ment. However, other moves may be the result of the loss of a lease or other financial difficulty. It is important that this point is examined further so as to minimize the possible disruption in the lives of voucher students.

Voucher Student Mobility

From the September headcount of last year to the September headcount of this year, there were at least 2,899 students that did not renew their vouchers. Since September 1998 there have been 12,036 students that have not renewed their vouchers from one year to the next.

The aggregate mobility rate out of the program has stayed fairly consistent over the last six years. This mobility rate has been as high as 29% and as low as 24%. What these percentages show is that at least a quarter of the students each year are not renewing their vouchers. Until this year there had been an increase every year in the number of aggregate voucher students that did not renew their vouchers. This year the number of students decreased by 273 from last year's total of 3,172, which was the highest total in the last six years. Although the number of students not renewing vouchers went down from last year, it is still higher than any of the other years shown in Table 3.

MPCP School Location Changes

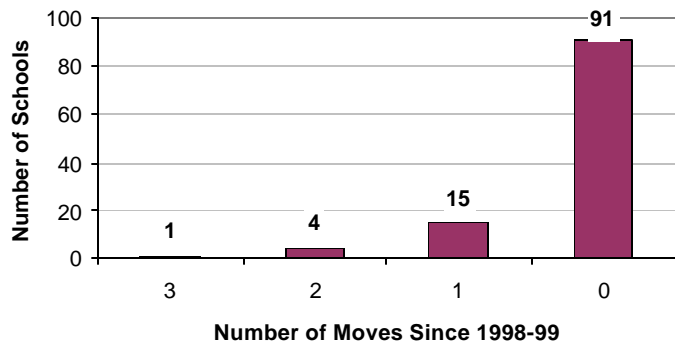


Chart 7

Aggregate Mobility Rate

	Sept. 98 to Sept. 99	Sept. 99 to Sept. 00	Sept. 00 to Sept. 01	Sept. 01 to Sept. 02	Sept. 02 to Sept. 03
Students Not Renewing Vouchers	1,477	2,170	2,318	3,172	2,899
% Mobility	25%	27%	24%	29%	25%

Table 3



Enrollment Up In Every Grade Level, Mostly in High School

Enrollment in the MPCP program increased in every grade level from last year to this year for only the second time in the last five years. Chart 8 shows the MPCP headcounts for the past six years by grade level. The number of students in each grade level has increased at least 60% since the 1998-99 school year. Each grade level from 5th grade and up has either doubled or more than doubled in size since the 1998-99 school year.

The increase in voucher students is most striking in high school. From 1998-99 to 2003-04, the number of students in high school has grown by almost 400%. This year there are more than 2,000 voucher students in high school. The number of students in high school is growing much faster than the number of elementary school students and the number of middle school students.

There are eight high schools in the voucher program. The largest is Messmer High School, which enrolls 36% of all high school voucher students, followed by Pius XI and St. Joan Antida at 20% and 18% respectively. Seventy-three percent of all high school voucher students attend one of these

three schools.

Today there are twice as many seniors in the class of 2004 than there were in 2003. Part of this increase may be explained by a decreasing number of voucher students who are leaving the program or dropping out of school. One way of looking at this is by looking at the change in enrollment between ninth grade three years prior and twelfth grade this year. For the senior classes of 2002, 2003, and 2004, the number of voucher students in ninth grade and the number of twelfth graders receiving vouchers three years later has been 67%, 64%, and 88% respectively. This indicates a decrease in voucher students who are either leaving the program or dropping out of school altogether. Specifically for the class of 2004, there were 409 students in ninth grade in the 2000-01 school year and three years later there are 360 students in the twelfth grade. This is a loss of just 49 students on the aggregate. In Milwaukee Public Schools in this same time period there were 8,275 students in ninth grade in 2000-01 and 3,782 in twelfth grade three years later.

MPCP Enrollment by Grade Level 1998-2003

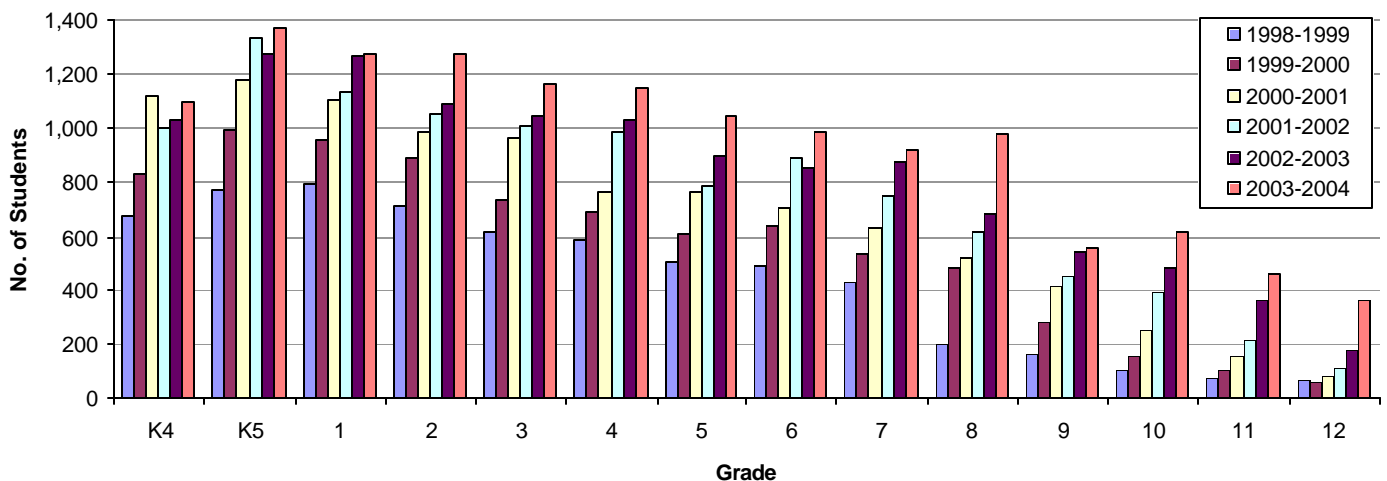


Chart 8



Voucher Program Growth Continues

There are now 111 schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). This number is up from 107 schools last year. The number of schools has only decreased once in 14 years and that was in the second year of the program. There were five new schools added to the program this year while one school dropped out of the program. There was also an increase in enrollment from last year to this year. In

the 14 years of the program's existence, there has only been one year in which the enrollment did not increase from the previous year. In 1997-98 there was a decrease in enrollment from the previous school year. Enrollment went down 10% that year. This year enrollment increased by 14.5%, which is the largest increase since the 2000-01 school year.

MPCP Full-time Enrollment and Number of Participating Schools

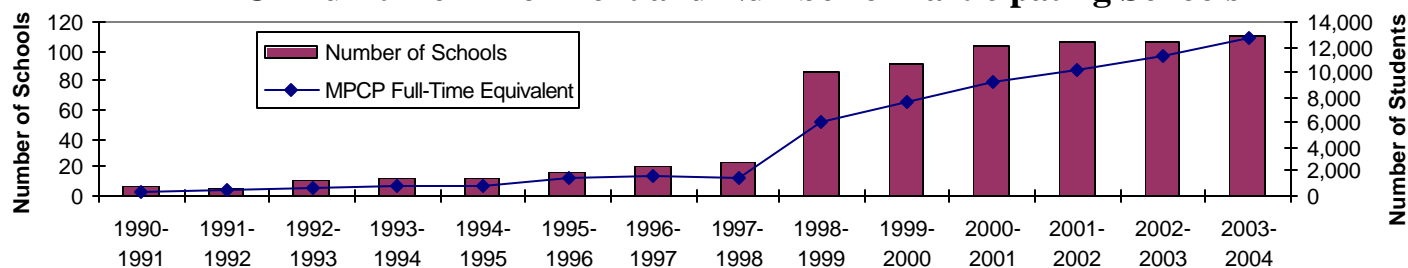


Chart 9

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