

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI-NR 2018-91

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

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Enrollments announced for Wisconsin, Racine, and Milwaukee voucher programs

MADISON – Student enrollment in Wisconsin’s three private school parental choice programs showed a one-year increase of about 8.7 percent. The Department of Public Instruction uses enrollment numbers to calculate public school district aid deductions related to these voucher programs.

Enrollment in the Wisconsin, Racine, and Milwaukee programs is determined by student counts taken on the third Friday in September and may change through the audit process. Across the three programs, 39,381 students received a voucher to attend one of the 279 participating private schools. This is an increase of 3,164 students and 43 schools compared to the prior school year. Full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment is 38,186.6 students, an increase of 3,037.5 FTE from 2017-18. In most cases, one student counts as one FTE.

However, in certain cases, the FTE can be less. For example, depending on services provided, a 4-year-old kindergarten (K4) student may be counted as 0.5 FTE or 0.6 FTE.

Cost of Parental Choice Programs	
2018-19 School Year	
Program	Cost
Wisconsin	\$54.6 million
Racine	\$25.6 million
Milwaukee	\$221.8 million
Total	\$302.0 million

NOTE: Cost figures are based on unaudited enrollment figures and are subject to change.

For the 2018-19 school year, voucher payments are \$7,754 per FTE in grades kindergarten through eight and \$8,400 per FTE for students enrolled in grades nine through 12. The cost of the three programs combined is estimated at \$302 million for the 2018-19 school year, which is an increase of about \$33 million (12.3 percent) from the prior year.

Wisconsin Parental Choice Program

For the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP), vouchers will be paid for 7,140 students (6,878.2 FTE) attending 213 private schools participating in the program. To be eligible, students must live

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in Wisconsin, but not in the city of Milwaukee or Racine Unified School District. New student eligibility also is based on prior year school attendance and family income. Student eligibility is reviewed by independent auditors per state law, so enrollment numbers are subject to change. Enrollment in the WPCP in 2018-19 from a single public school district is limited to 3 percent of the school district’s membership. That percentage increases by 1 percent each year until 2025-26 when the limit will be 10 percent of public school district membership. After that, the cap is removed.

The statewide private school choice program is paid for in two ways. General purpose revenue (GPR) pays for students who first participated in the program prior to 2015-16 on a sum sufficient basis. Incoming pupils, those who first participated in the 2015-16 school year or after, are paid for through a deduction in state general aid from the public school district where the student resides.

Incoming pupils in the WPCP are included in the resident public school district’s membership for state general aid purposes, but the district may not levy to backfill the aid reduction. The district instead receives a non-recurring revenue limit exemption, which the school board may include when setting its 2018-19 school taxes. The exemption is equal to a given district’s reduction in aid.

Wisconsin Parental Choice Program		
Headcount History		
<u>Year</u>	<u>Schools or Systems</u>	<u>Headcount</u>
2013-14	25	511
2014-15	31	1,008
2015-16	82	2,521
2016-17	121	3,059
2017-18	154	4,534
2018-19	213	7,140

NOTE: Enrollment numbers are unaudited and subject to change.

Racine Parental Choice Program

The Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) enrolled 3,324 students (3,241.6 FTE) in 26 participating private schools for the 2018-19 school year. Funding mechanics and student eligibility are similar to the WPCP with two main exceptions: a student must live within the bounds of the Racine Unified School District and the income limits for the RPCP are 300 percent of the federal poverty level rather than 220 percent for the WPCP.

Racine Parental Choice Program		
Headcount History		
<u>Year</u>	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Headcount</u>
2011-12	8	228
2012-13	11	508
2013-14	13	1,240
2014-15	15	1,733
2015-16	19	2,126
2016-17	19	2,531
2017-18	23	3,003
2018-19	26	3,324

NOTE: Enrollment numbers are unaudited and subject to change.

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Milwaukee Parental Choice Program

In the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), 28,917 students (28,066.8 FTE) enrolled in 129 participating private schools for the 2018-19 school year. Students are eligible for the MPCP if they live within city of Milwaukee boundaries and meet family income limits of 300 percent of the federal poverty level (\$73,800 for a family of four or \$80,800 for a student whose parents or legal guardians are married).

For 2018-19, general purpose revenue (GPR) pays for the majority of the MPCP, with state tax dollars covering 80.8 percent of costs. The balance of this school year’s program costs, 19.2 percent, is paid through a deduction in

Year	Schools	Headcount
1990-91	7	341
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2011-12	106	23,198
2012-13	112	24,596
2013-14	110	25,734
2014-15	113	26,868
2015-16	117	27,651
2016-17	121	27,975
2017-18	125	28,680
2018-19	129	28,917

NOTE: Enrollment numbers are unaudited and subject to change.

state general aid that would otherwise be paid to Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Under provisions of 2013 Wisconsin Act 20, the 2013-15 state budget, MPS aid deductions for the MPCP program decrease by 3.2 percent each year until GPR dollars pay the full cost of the Milwaukee choice program.

The MPCP, which began in 1990 with seven schools and 341 students (337.0 FTE), is the nation’s oldest voucher program.

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NOTES: More information about the Wisconsin, Racine, and Milwaukee Parental Choice programs, including a list of all private schools participating and their enrollment and financial impacts, can be found at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/data>. This news release is available electronically at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2018-91.pdf>.