

# Research Brief

## Choice schools have much in common with MPS, including student performance

If Milwaukee’s taxpayer-funded private school choice program were a school district, it would be the third-largest district in the state, with nearly 25,000 publicly-funded students (**Table 1**). In addition, the participating schools would rank second only to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) in terms of the proportions of low-income and minority students enrolled. In terms of student headcount, schools in the choice program educate a larger number of both African-American and Hispanic students than any other Wisconsin district, except MPS.

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), now in its 23rd year, includes 113 private schools. For most of the program’s history, little has been known about the performance of the participating students. Today, schools report MPCP student proficiency rates as measured by state standardized exams, which tend to be slightly below proficiency rates of students in MPS (**Table 2, page 3**). (Other MPCP performance measures, such as attendance and graduation rates, remain unknown.)

The limited data available make clear that when the MPCP is considered as a whole, it has much in common with other large, urban districts in the state in terms of student demographics, exam outcomes, and state aid. Where it differs significantly, however, is the rapid rate of enrollment growth it is experiencing, the much lower per-pupil costs, and the lack of performance data related to student achievement.

**Table 1: MPCP compared to four largest Wisconsin school districts**

District	Total publicly-funded enrollment PK-12	Economically disadvantaged	Minority	African American	Hispanic	White	General state aid per pupil*	Cost per pupil
Milwaukee	79,130	84%	86%	56%	24%	14%	\$6,442	\$9,812
Madison	26,817	49%	55%	20%	18%	45%	\$2,214	\$10,784
<b>MPCP</b>	<b>24,941</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>\$6,442</b>	<b>\$7,670</b>
Kenosha	22,905	49%	44%	16%	23%	56%	\$6,453	\$9,954
Racine	20,809	62%	56%	26%	25%	44%	\$5,811	\$9,053

\* See February 14 clarification on page 2.

Note: Enrollment data for school districts is 2011-12 and 2012-13 for MPCP. For MPCP schools, the economically disadvantaged percentage equals the number of voucher users (24,941) divided by total school enrollment (31,502). MPCP race/ethnicity percentages are based on total enrollment data from 104 schools. Cost per pupil is the sum of the general fund cost plus debt service cost per pupil for 2009-10. General aid figures are 2012-13.



## Data and methodology

This report presents data collected as part of the Public Policy Forum’s 15th annual census of MPCP schools and 2nd annual census of Racine’s Parental Private School Choice Program (PPSCP), conducted October-December 2012. Schools were initially mailed a survey to complete and return; schools that failed to do so were visited to ensure a survey participation rate as close to 100% as possible. This year, three Milwaukee schools refused to participate in the census: Immanuel Lutheran School, Travis Technology High School, and Wisconsin Academy. Two Racine PPSCP schools refused participation: Mount Pleasant Renaissance School and John Paul II Academy.

Any missing survey data were imputed from responses to the prior year’s census or, in the case of enrollment, were obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). All enrollment figures presented here represent headcount unless otherwise noted. All census data represent the most recent year available, which is 2012-13 unless otherwise noted.

Student reading and math proficiency data for MPCP,

PPSCP and MPS were provided by DPI. Not all private schools have scores to report, for several reasons. Some schools may not offer the grade levels in which testing is required. In addition, individual students are allowed to opt out of the testing and there is no limit as to how many students per school may opt out. Thus, some schools may have had all their voucher students opt out of the tests. Finally, DPI does not release scores when five or fewer students in a grade are tested, out of concern for students’ privacy.

MPCP and PPSCP student proficiency rates cannot be compared to those of tuition-paying students because private schools are not required to administer the state exam to private students, nor is there a requirement that the scores of private students be reported.

MPCP operating cost data were obtained from DPI.

**2/14/13 Clarification:** The state legislature biannually establishes the voucher amount. The MPCP funding formula, coupled with other aids, results in 65% of the voucher amount being comprised directly of state aid, while the remainder is state aid that passes through MPS. MPS may opt to levy an amount equal to the pass-through, which has resulted in 35% of the voucher amount being supported by Milwaukee property taxpayers. Where the voucher amount is referred to as “state aid” in this report, state *authorized* aid is the reference.

<i>MPCP by the numbers</i>			
	Schools	Percent of MPCP schools	Percent of MPCP Enrollment
Schools	113	--	--
<i>Preschool through early grade schools</i>	3	3%	1%
<i>Elementary schools</i>	8	7%	3%
<i>Kindergarten through 8th grade</i>	67	59%	58%
<i>Middle schools</i>	1	1%	1%
<i>High schools</i>	17	15%	13%
<i>Kindergarten through high schools</i>	17	15%	24%
Religious schools	96	85%	87%
<i>Catholic</i>	34	30%	38%
<i>Lutheran</i>	26	23%	20%
<i>Christian, non-denominational</i>	22	19%	17%
<i>Other religion</i>	14	12%	12%
Non-religious schools	14	12%	12%
Accredited	94	83%	92%
Working toward accreditation	16	14%	7%

Three schools (Immanuel Lutheran School, Travis Technology High School, and Wisconsin Academy) did not respond to our survey.



## Milwaukee Parental Choice Program 2012-13

### MPCP student performance on state exams remains poor

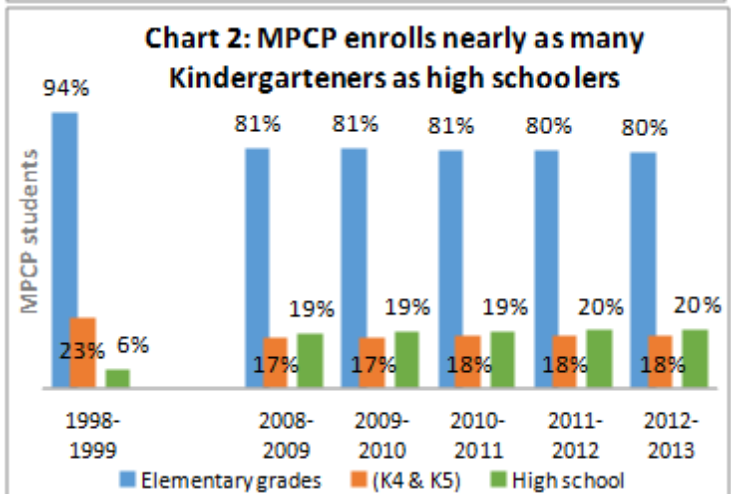
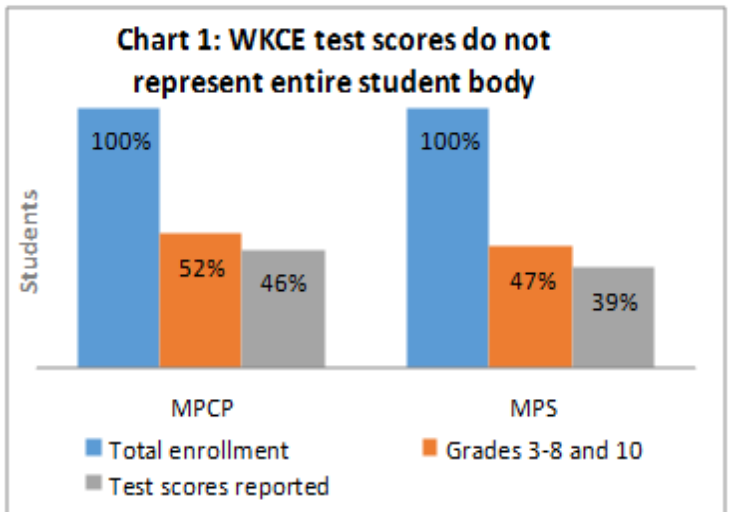
This marks the second year in which student performance on Wisconsin’s state standardized exam has been reported for each MPCP school. The scores in **Table 2** reflect aggregate reading and math performance on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE), which is administered to Wisconsin students in grades 3-8 and 10. The scores are presented under two definitions of proficiency: state and national. The new national definitions of proficiency were adopted by Wisconsin in 2012. These new standards set a higher bar than the previous state standards.

As shown in **Table 2**, on the aggregate, the rate of proficiency among MPS students is slightly higher than among MPCP students in 2011-12. Neither group of students compares favorably to the statewide aggregate proficiency rates. In addition, the new national proficiency standards clearly represent a challenge to most students in the state, particularly those in MPCP.

It is important to note, however, that these scores do not reflect the performance of all students in the schools (**Chart 1**). For the past several years, just under half of voucher users have been enrolled in grades in which there is no testing requirement. In fact, almost as many Kindergarteners use vouchers as high school students (**Chart 2**). For these two large populations of students, we have almost no information on student performance. In addition, there are many other MPCP students for whom we have no information on proficiency, either because they attend a school so small that their performance data are withheld to protect privacy, or because the students have opted not to take the exam. MPS students’ scores may be missing for similar reasons, although they cannot opt out of the exam.

**Table 2: 2011-12 MPCP proficiency rates under state and national proficiency standards as compared to MPS and statewide proficiency rates**

	Parent opt-out	Not tested	Reading Proficient/Advanced	Math Proficient/Advanced
<i>Existing state proficiency standards</i>				
MPCP	1%	1%	57%	41%
MPS	N/A	1%	60%	50%
WI	N/A	1%	82%	78%
<i>New national proficiency standards</i>				
MPCP	1%	1%	10%	12%
MPS	N/A	1%	Not reported	Not reported
WI	N/A	1%	36%	48%





While judging the performance of MPCP students is difficult without more student-level information, presenting WKCE proficiency rates by grade level provides a bit more context. In **Table 3** we display MPCP and MPS aggregate proficiency rates in math and reading. Across both school years and in seven grade levels, MPCP students earn proficient scores at a lower rate than MPS students in both subjects, with the exception of 8th grade reading in 2011-12, where the rates were nearly identical.

When analyzing relative performance among the MPCP schools, there are also interesting patterns of performance. For example, we again find this year that the Catholic and Lutheran schools tend to have more students with proficient scores than other types of schools (**Chart 2**). Similarly, we found that schools accredited by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee or the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod tend to have slightly higher proficiency rates than schools with other accreditation.

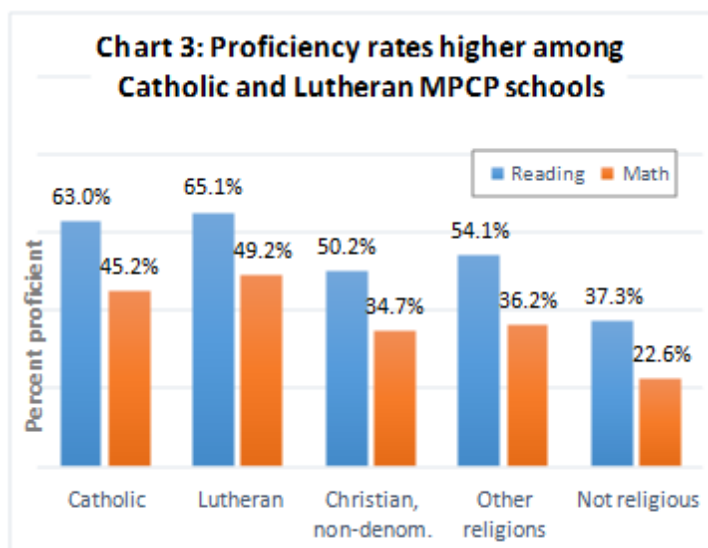
Because the Catholic and Lutheran parish schools tend to have been in existence longer, we also analyzed student proficiency rates by the number of years the school has been part of the MPCP program, to see whether a school's age might be correlated to student performance. We found no consistent patterns in this regard, however.

In conducting this analysis, we did notice that eight of the nine schools that have closed their doors in the past two years were schools that had each been open four or fewer years. Four of these nine had WKCE scores reported, three of which had proficiency rates lower than the MPCP average. The closure of these schools may indicate that parents are dissatisfied with struggling schools and may be opting for better alternatives. Without data on student mobility, however, we cannot be sure. In at least two cases, the local media reported that financial difficulties in the schools contributed to their closure.

See **Table 4** on the pages 4-5 for proficiency rates of MPCP students by school.

**Table 3: Percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in reading and math by grade and type of school attended**

	Math		Reading	
	MPCP	MPS	MPCP	MPS
<b>3rd grade</b>				
2011-12	36.9%	50.2%	54.2%	59.6%
2010-11	30.1%	50.3%	51.1%	62.0%
<b>4th grade</b>				
2011-12	40.2%	54.7%	54.9%	61.1%
2010-11	36.6%	56.7%	51.1%	62.3%
<b>5th grade</b>				
2011-12	43.7%	54.3%	53.2%	57.4%
2010-11	34.3%	56.2%	54.9%	63.8%
<b>6th grade</b>				
2011-12	40.1%	49.9%	61.8%	62.6%
2010-11	38.2%	55.2%	61.5%	65.3%
<b>7th grade</b>				
2011-12	45.5%	54.8%	63.2%	65.3%
2010-11	39.2%	51.0%	63.7%	66.9%
<b>8th grade</b>				
2011-12	45.1%	53.6%	63.8%	63.7%
2010-11	35.6%	47.5%	64.3%	65.7%
<b>10th grade</b>				
2011-12	26.4%	33.1%	43.3%	47.8%
2010-11	22.5%	31.6%	33.9%	40.2%




**Table 4: Percentage of MPCP students scoring proficient or advanced in reading and math**

School	Reading		Math	
	Proficient/Advanced 2010-11	2011-12	Proficient/Advanced 2010-11	2011-12
Alston's Preparatory Academy	40.9%	46.7%	31.8%	30.0%
Atlas Preparatory Academy, Inc.	41.0%	41.8%	20.7%	25.1%
Atonement Lutheran School	69.1%	78.0%	46.9%	69.5%
Believers in Christ Christian Academy	61.3%	54.3%	17.9%	28.6%
Blessed Sacrament School	67.5%	68.0%	33.7%	40.0%
Blessed Savior Catholic School	62.8%	53.0%	31.2%	31.7%
Carter's Christian Academy	24.0%	36.2%	6.7%	18.8%
Catholic East Elementary School	86.6%	75.0%	59.7%	63.6%
Ceria M. Travis Academy, Inc.	19.0%	18.1%	6.0%	10.4%
Christ Memorial Lutheran School	80.4%	60.9%	29.4%	23.9%
Christ St. Peter Lutheran School	59.5%	55.6%	33.3%	32.3%
Christian Faith Academy of Higher Learning	35.2%	50.0%	29.6%	32.3%
Clara Mohammed School, Inc.	35.2%	41.3%	15.2%	19.0%
Concordia University School	47.1%	52.7%	28.1%	31.3%
CrossTrainers Academy	38.5%	44.1%	19.2%	29.4%
Daughters of the Father Christian Academy	34.2%	36.0%	0.0%	20.2%
Destiny High School	15.8%	32.7%	8.8%	5.5%
Divine Savior Holy Angels High School	n/a	100.0%	n/a	100.0%
Dr. Brenda Noach Choice School	18.2%	17.2%	0.0%	6.9%
Early View Academy of Excellence	41.4%	36.3%	18.9%	26.9%
Eastbrook Academy	93.3%	91.6%	90.7%	92.8%
Emmaus Lutheran School	30.3%	44.9%	13.1%	21.8%
Family Montessori School	87.5%	75.0%	87.5%	50.0%
Garden Homes Lutheran School	67.9%	67.4%	59.7%	59.4%
Greater Holy Temple Christian Academy	38.6%	41.0%	15.7%	23.7%
Hickman Academy Preparatory School	41.9%	50.9%	24.8%	36.3%
Hillel Academy	n/a	80.0%	n/a	93.3%
Holy Redeemer Christian Academy	51.1%	33.9%	18.6%	21.6%
Holy Wisdom Academy	85.0%	82.1%	55.6%	65.5%
HOPE Christian High School	31.3%	49.3%	28.8%	16.4%
HOPE Christian School: Fortis	55.7%	57.7%	34.2%	43.6%
HOPE Christian School: Prima	61.6%	60.8%	56.4%	59.8%
Immanuel Lutheran School	n/a	94.4%	n/a	83.3%
Institute of Technology and Academics	34.2%	35.4%	23.9%	28.5%
Jared C. Bruce Academy	42.2%	53.0%	18.1%	26.1%
Learning Bridges Kingdom Academy, Inc.	n/a	33.3%	n/a	16.7%
LifeSkills Academy	48.0%	57.1%	32.0%	22.9%
Lutheran Special School & Education Services	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Messmer High School	n/a	66.3%	n/a	41.7%
Messmer Preparatory Catholic School	n/a	68.4%	n/a	36.9%
Milwaukee Lutheran High School	38.8%	62.1%	27.6%	36.9%
Milwaukee Seventh Day Adventist School	52.4%	59.4%	28.6%	30.4%
Mother of Good Counsel School	70.9%	70.5%	47.6%	50.9%
Mount Calvary Lutheran School	67.3%	78.3%	32.7%	50.0%
Mount Lebanon Lutheran School	51.9%	44.3%	28.8%	23.7%
New Testament Christian Academy	77.8%	82.9%	42.9%	52.9%



**Table 4: Percentage of MPCP students scoring proficient or advanced in reading and math, *continued***

School	Reading Proficient/Advanced		Math Proficient/Advanced	
	2010-11	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12
Northwest Catholic	66.9%	55.8%	44.8%	34.2%
Northwest Lutheran School	72.0%	66.2%	48.5%	51.4%
Notre Dame Middle School	93.2%	89.8%	75.2%	85.2%
Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish	62.9%	66.0%	40.2%	38.8%
Parklawn Christian Leadership Academy	42.3%	52.3%	21.5%	24.3%
Pius XI High School	54.1%	68.9%	37.8%	53.3%
Prince of Peace/Principe de Paz	61.4%	58.0%	38.6%	34.9%
Right Step, Inc.	23.3%	35.6%	8.8%	10.4%
Risen Savior Lutheran School	70.2%	68.2%	46.8%	51.9%
Salam School	74.0%	77.0%	52.7%	54.9%
Sharon Junior Academy	52.9%	65.7%	29.4%	34.3%
Sherman Park Lutheran School/Preschool	59.3%	52.1%	27.1%	23.4%
Siloah Lutheran School	56.9%	70.9%	28.5%	62.4%
St. Adalbert School	58.7%	55.6%	44.2%	42.7%
St. Anthony School	54.9%	55.9%	39.8%	44.1%
St. Catherine School	45.3%	44.8%	20.9%	15.2%
St. Charles Borromeo School	87.5%	81.5%	66.7%	74.1%
St. Gregory the Great Parish School	70.3%	66.7%	45.3%	54.5%
St. Joan Antida High School	42.4%	40.0%	23.7%	21.5%
St. John Kanty School	68.4%	61.3%	37.8%	49.1%
St. John's Lutheran School	73.3%	69.2%	73.3%	69.2%
St. Josaphat Parish School	68.3%	73.4%	44.4%	56.8%
St. Lucas Lutheran School	70.0%	83.7%	60.0%	71.4%
St. Marcus Lutheran School	85.6%	80.1%	78.2%	76.4%
St. Margaret Mary School	67.8%	63.2%	46.1%	43.4%
St. Martini Lutheran School	72.6%	66.9%	41.6%	65.4%
St. Peter-Immanuel Lutheran School	75.5%	76.0%	30.9%	47.0%
St. Philip's Lutheran School	58.2%	54.4%	41.8%	47.1%
St. Rafael the Archangel School	71.8%	67.8%	58.8%	66.8%
St. Roman Parish School	56.7%	64.2%	28.4%	37.3%
St. Rose and St. Leo Catholic School	54.8%	55.9%	28.1%	34.3%
St. Sebastian School	83.1%	85.2%	56.3%	71.3%
St. Thomas Aquinas Academy	74.4%	79.7%	48.8%	56.3%
St. Thomas More High School	n/a	66.7%	n/a	66.7%
St. Vincent Pallotti School	84.9%	85.7%	67.1%	61.0%
Tamarack Waldorf School	42.0%	87.5%	23.9%	55.0%
Texas Bufkin Christian Academy	11.6%	38.8%	14.0%	14.3%
Torah Academy of Milwaukee	n/a	78.6%	n/a	71.4%
TransCenter for Youth/El Puente High School	n/a	40.7%	n/a	14.8%
Travis Technology High School	16.7%	12.1%	5.6%	6.1%
Victory Christian Academy	52.6%	66.1%	42.1%	53.6%
Washington DuBois Christian Leadership Academy	20.2%	47.6%	7.1%	24.4%
Wisconsin Lutheran High School	46.8%	61.8%	37.7%	49.1%
Word of Life Evangelical Lutheran School	76.0%	90.9%	52.0%	72.7%
Yeshiva Elementary School	80.7%	79.6%	70.5%	78.6%
Young Minds Preparatory School	34.8%	26.4%	8.7%	14.4%



## Voucher use grows, more new schools open

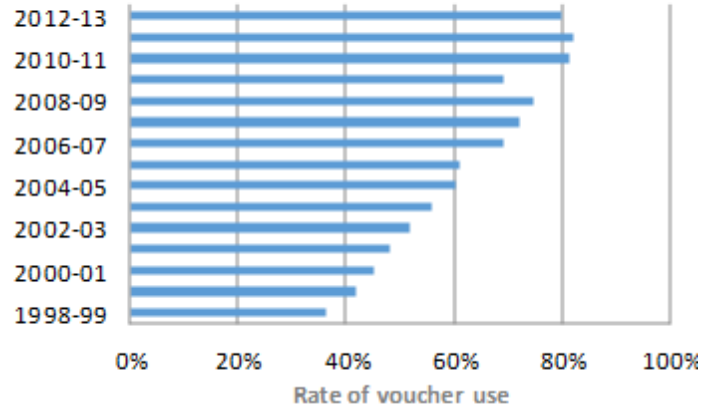
Overall use of vouchers among students at MPCP schools is 80% in 2012-13, down slightly from the previous year, when 82% of students in participating schools used vouchers (**Chart 4**). This change reflects an increase in both total enrollment and voucher student enrollment (**Chart 5**).

While many schools experience wide swings in voucher use from year to year, a few have been able to maintain and expand MPCP growth. **Chart 6** shows that as the program has grown over the years, the 10 largest schools have typically enrolled about one-third of all voucher users. In 2012-13, these 10 schools enroll 7,505 voucher users, or 30% of all MPCP students. The largest of these 10 schools is St. Anthony's, with 1,640 MPCP students representing 99% of its total enrollment, while the smallest is Ceria M. Travis Academy, with all of its 486 students using vouchers. The 10 largest schools each have been among those with the highest program enrollments for several years.

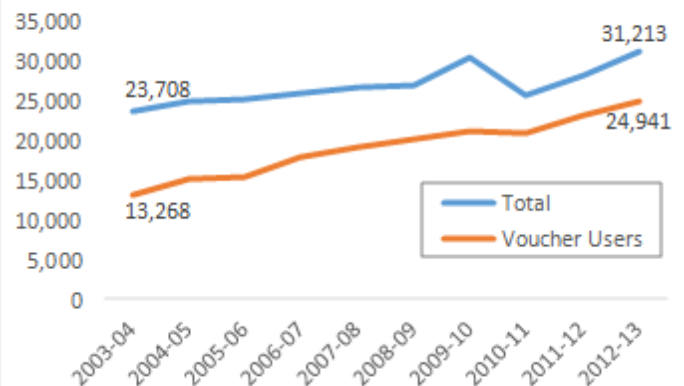
Enrollment growth occurs both when existing schools add students and when new schools join the choice program. Unlike the previous two years, when the growth in voucher use occurred predominantly among students in existing private schools, a major contributing factor to this year's growth is voucher use in schools new to the program (**Chart 7** on next page). Voucher users in new MPCP schools represent nearly half (47%) of all new voucher users this year. Last year, students in new schools represented just 18% of new voucher users.

This year's new schools range in MPCP enrollment from 186 voucher students at Wisconsin College Preparatory Academy, a former charter school once known as Wisconsin Career Academy, to two voucher students at Divine Mercy Catholic School in South Milwaukee.

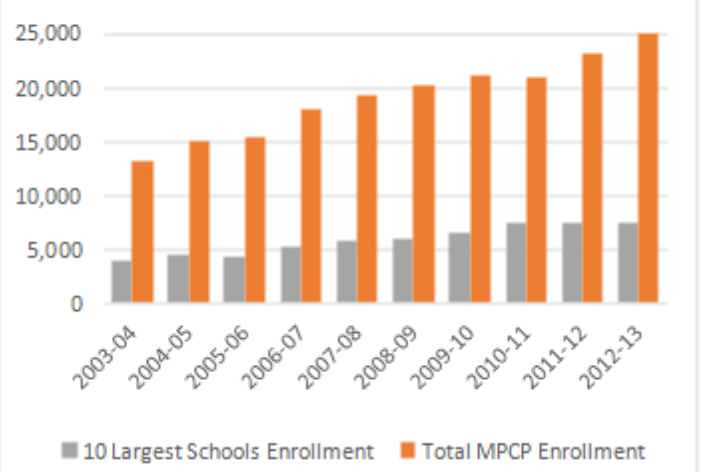
**Chart 4: 80% of students in MPCP schools use vouchers**

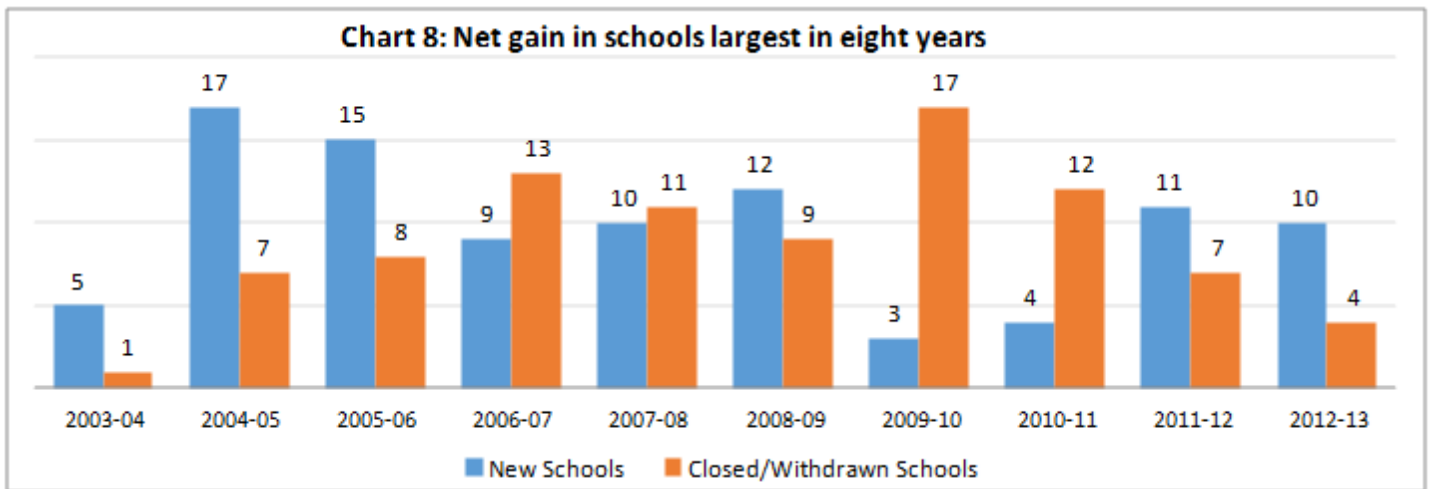
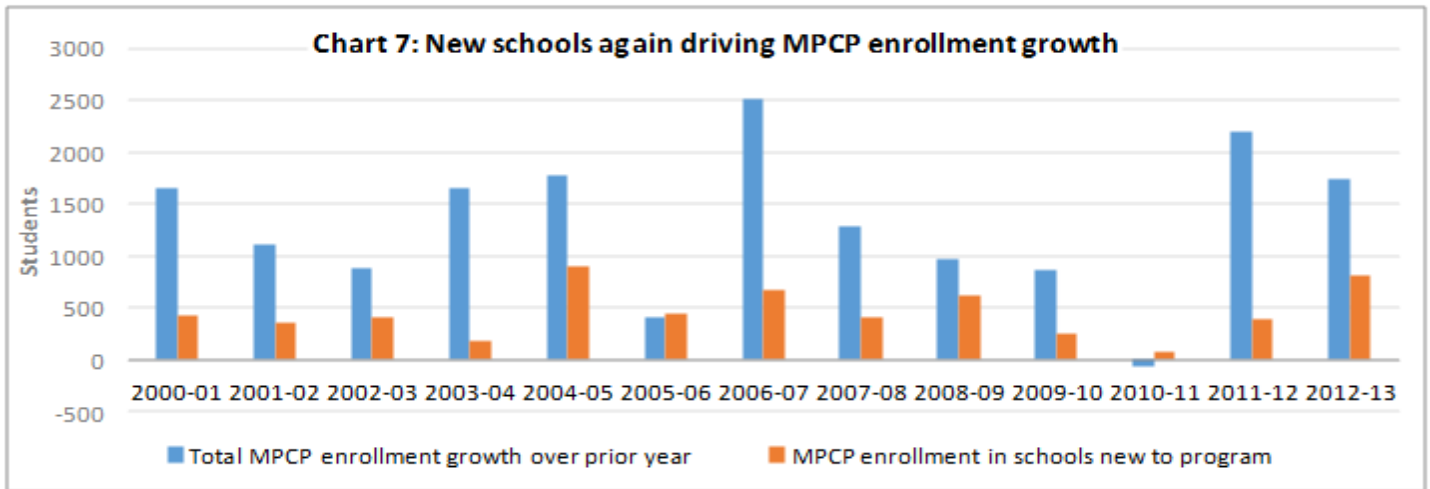


**Chart 5: MPCP enrollment up 88% in past decade, private school enrollment up 32%**



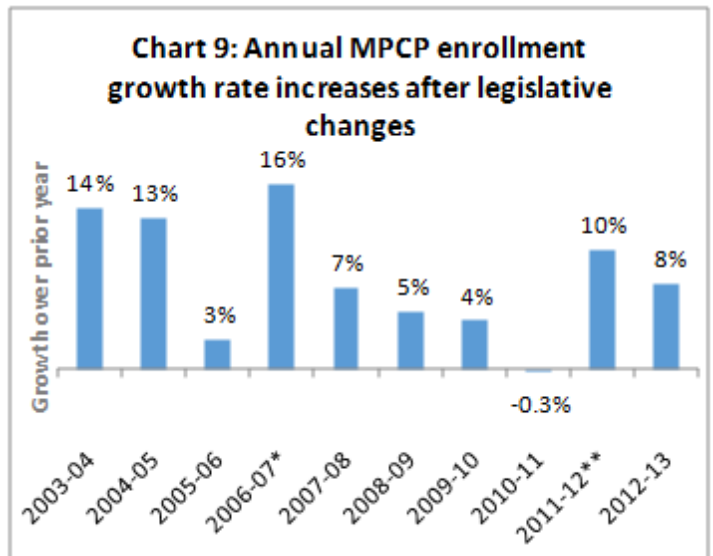
**Chart 6: 30% of MPCP students attend 10 schools**





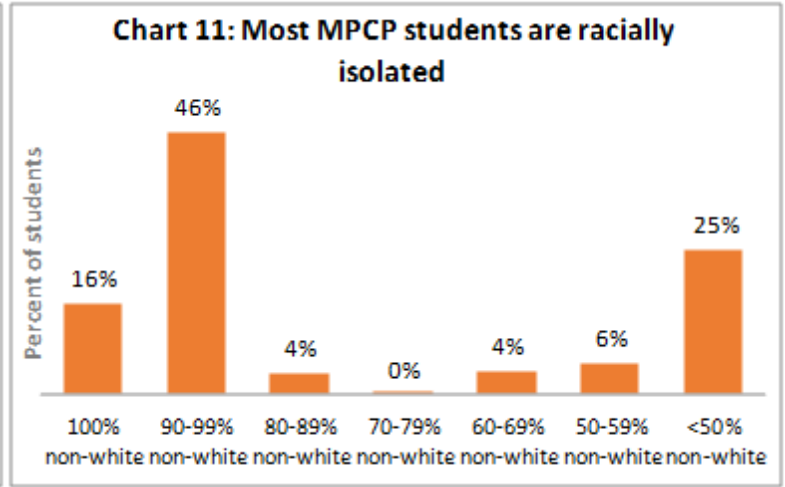
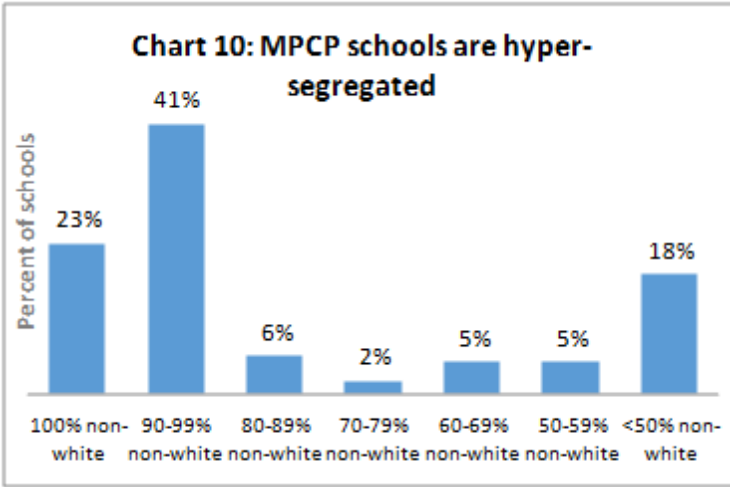
The significant growth in voucher use attributable to new schools results from the relatively large net gain in schools this year. **Chart 8** shows the annual number of schools closing or leaving the program alongside the annual number of schools new to the program. The net change in schools this year is the largest gain since 2005-06.

In addition, new schools tend to have a larger impact on enrollment in years, like this one, in which no regulatory or policy changes to the program have occurred. **Chart 9** depicts the annual growth in voucher use for each of the past 10 years. Growth slowed from 2003-04 to 2005-06 until the statutory cap on the total number of vouchers was lifted in 2006-07, at which point the program grew 16% over the previous year. Following that change, annual growth slowed for the next several years, until enrollment declined in the 2010-11 school year. In



2011-12, the legislature expanded the program to include schools beyond the City of Milwaukee, contributing to a 10% increase in enrollment.





### MPCP schools concentrate race, income

As discussed, the tremendous growth of the choice program since its inception in 1990 has resulted in a program that mirrors the state’s large, urban districts in terms of student demographics—the students who attend MPCP schools are mostly minority and mostly low-income. The extent to which this is true may vary for particular schools, but most schools in the program are nearly entirely minority and most are made up nearly entirely of low-income students.

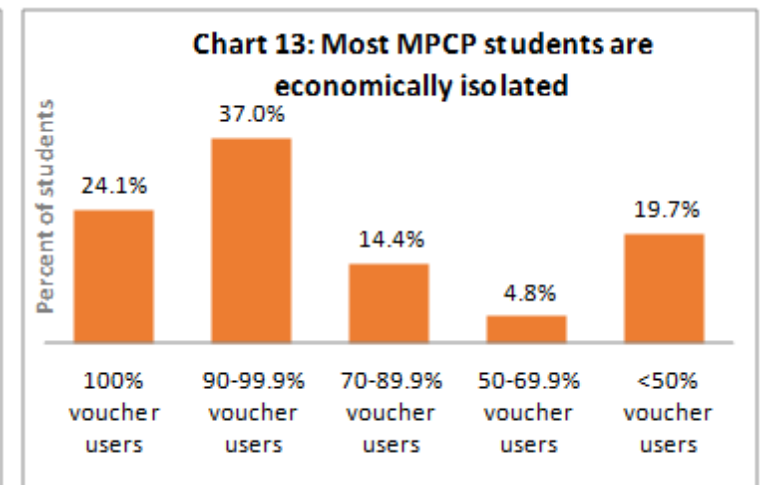
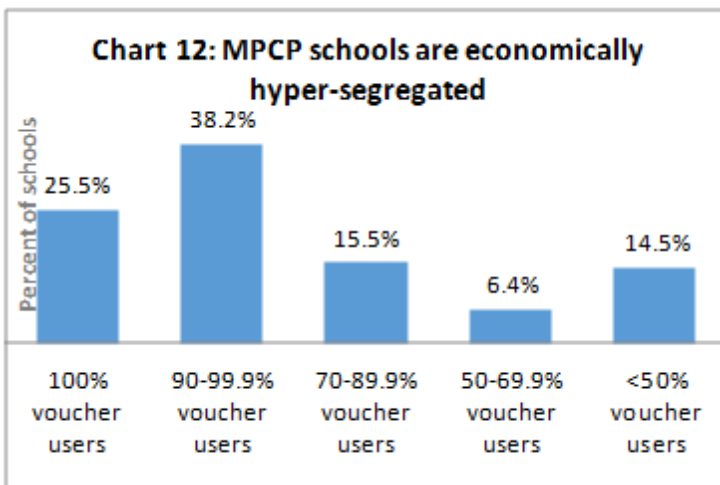
**Charts 10** and **11** illustrate the racial hyper-segregation among schools in the program, while **Charts 12** and **13** illustrate the socio-economic segregation.

**Chart 10** shows that nearly a fourth of MPCP

schools have 100% minority student populations, including 12 schools with students comprised entirely of one minority race. Most schools (64%) are over 90% minority, meaning they are hyper-segregated. **Chart 11** shows that 62% of all MPCP students attend racially hyper-segregated schools.

**Chart 12** shows a similar pattern of hyper-segregation by income, with 64% of schools having over 90% of their students use vouchers. **Chart 13** shows that 61% of voucher users attend schools with poverty rates of at least 90%.

The overall picture is a program with few racially or socio-economically balanced schools. For schools with high concentrations of low-income students in particular, a lack of balance may also mean a lack of resources.





### MPCP costs and offerings

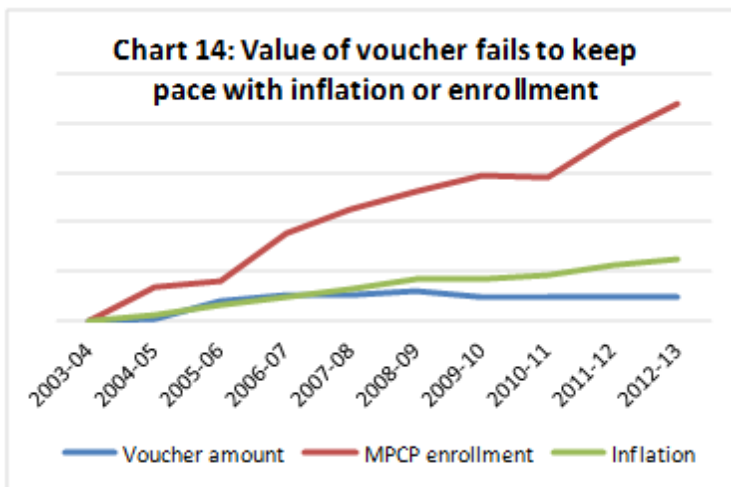
Over the past decade, the number of low-income students using vouchers has increased 88%, while the value of the voucher itself has increased just 10% and has failed to keep pace with inflation (**Chart 14**).

This trend is troubling given that the concentration of poverty and the racial hyper-segregation of the schools is coupled with low rates of reading and math proficiency. It is clear that MPCP schools are serving high concentrations of poor, low-performing, minority students.

School choice advocates have long argued that the voucher program saves taxpayers money, as the voucher amount is less than the MPS cost per pupil. Yet, given what is now known about MPCP student characteristics and outcomes, should policymakers reconsider the amount and pace of growth of the tuition voucher?

As shown earlier in **Table 1** on page 1, the voucher amount actually compares favorably to state taxpayer investments in large, urban school districts statewide, and matches the MPS general state aid per pupil. The aid figures presented in that table were calculated by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau and include all net equalization, integration, special adjustment, and high poverty aids.

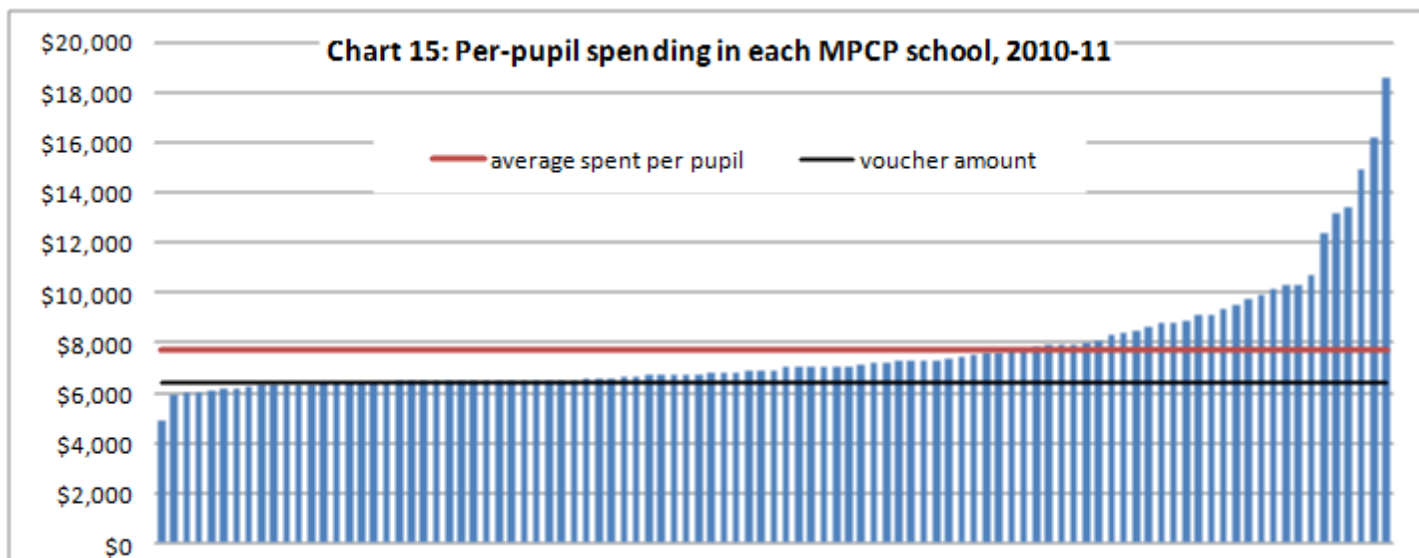
In addition to these state aids, however, public schools also receive other categorical state aids,

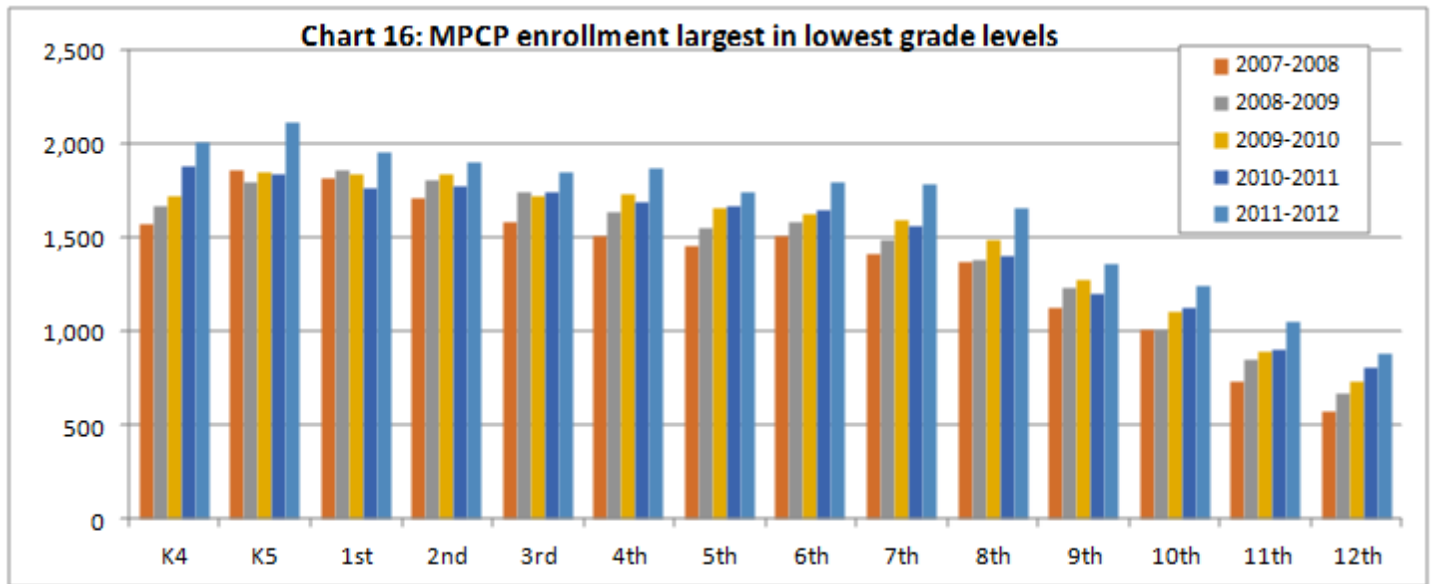


federal aids, and local property tax support. Thus, public schools, with access to more public revenues, are able to spend more than MPCP schools.

**Table 1** compares the most analogous per-pupil cost figures for public and private schools; the average MPCP school spends less. The difference is particularly striking given that the public school cost figures presented in the table represent only a portion of a district's total cost (that which is funded by a district's general fund, plus debt service). Total costs per-pupil are much higher.

In addition, the average MPCP spending figure is somewhat misleading, as most schools in the program are below-average spenders. **Chart 15** shows the most recent per-pupil spending on operating and debt-service costs by each MPCP school (2010-11). Among the low spenders are 18



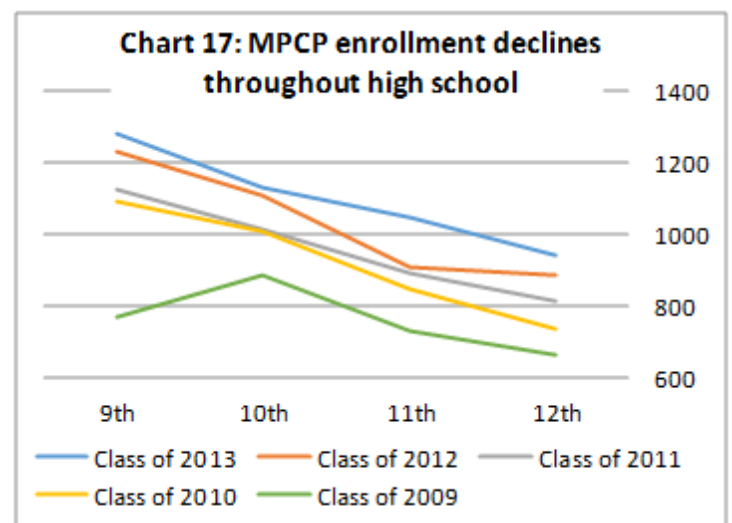


schools spending less than the voucher amount.

There are several obvious ways in which private schools keep costs down as compared to public schools, including the avoidance of the steep legacy costs many school districts incur for retiree pensions and health care. In addition, MPCP schools may opt to control costs by not providing expensive instructional offerings, such as teacher specialists (art, music, etc.), or by offering only certain grade levels.

For example, in this year's census, 39 of 110 MPCP schools report having no art, music, PE, library or technology specialist teachers. Schools report a total of 52 art teachers, 52 music teachers, 72 PE teachers, 30 librarians, and 51 technology teachers, which represents a program average of less than one of each type of specialist per school.

Of the 18 schools reporting five or more specialist teachers on staff, two-thirds are high schools. For many years school choice advocates have noted that the voucher value is too small to fully fund comprehensive high school costs, which likely contributes to the relatively few high schools participating in the program. As a result, schools are now able to charge high school students whose families earn above 220% of the federal poverty level the tuition difference.



Other high school offerings, such as college-level advanced placement (AP) courses or career and technical education, can be expensive as well. Of the 24 schools serving high school students, 15 report student participation in AP English, calculus, or science programming.

**Chart 16** depicts the number of MPCP students by grade level; it is clear that there are fewer voucher students in the higher and more expensive grades than in the younger grades. In fact, voucher use in high school drops over four years, as shown in **Chart 17**, although the aggregate four-year "retention" rate among the class of 2013, at 74%, is significantly higher than the MPS four-year rate.



### Conclusion

In its 23rd year, Milwaukee’s private school choice program has grown to more than 24,900 students attending 113 private schools using taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers worth \$6,442, for a total cost of \$154.8 million in 2012-13.

Most of the students using vouchers attend religious schools, indicating their families have opted for a school distinctly different from a public school in this aspect. In several other ways, however, MPCP schools have much more in common with the Milwaukee Public Schools than is generally acknowledged, including the racial diversity of the student body, the incidence of poverty among the students, student performance on state standardized exams, and general state support per pupil.

Given these similarities in “inputs” and “outputs,”

the difference in spending levels between the two school types is of consequence. While public school costs will be higher for several obvious reasons, including their pension and health care obligations to retired staff, the other reasons for the cost differential should be more fully explored.

For example, the inability of many MPCP schools to offer special programs needs further exploration, as this year’s census indicates that few art, music, PE, library, or technology specialists are employed by these schools.

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program has operated for more than two decades with little information about student achievement. With new data showing two years of lackluster proficiency rates among voucher students, now may be the time for better understanding of the interplay between the program’s cost and performance.

### Research Sponsors

The Forum appreciates the continued support of the **Fleck Foundation** for our annual census of Milwaukee and Racine choice schools. In 1996, as a result of the sale of Fleck Controls, the Fleck Foundation was formed with the intent of supporting people who are dedicated to improving the City of Milwaukee. The foundation’s mission is to expand opportunities for Milwaukee children to obtain an excellent education.

In addition, the Forum would like to acknowledge the generosity of the **Herzfeld Foundation**, one of our 2013 Pillars of Public Policy. The foundation has provided a substantial grant to the Forum to support our educational policy research in honor of our 100th anniversary. This grant will provide the capacity for enhanced research activities in all facets of Milwaukee’s education landscape, from early childhood to postsecondary. Founded by Richard and Ethel Herzfeld, the foundation focuses its grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, and arts education, and also makes limited investments in civic improvements. The Herzfeld Foundation has been one of the Public Policy Forum’s most stalwart supporters and is widely known as one of Milwaukee’s true community champions in its support for education (particularly early childhood education) and the arts. It served as lead funder for the Forum’s award-winning, five-year research project on high-quality early childhood education and its multi-year projects on afterschool programming and arts education, and it also has generously supported the Forum’s work on Milwaukee County government finances.

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## Racine Parental Private School Choice Program 2012-13

The Racine Parental Private School Choice Program (PPSCP) is now in its second year, with 11 schools participating, as compared to eight in 2011-12. Four schools joined the program this year while one ceased participation. The total number of students using vouchers in Racine has more than doubled, from 228 in 2011-12 to 520 this school year.

Unlike in Milwaukee, Racine's growth in voucher use this year occurred mostly in existing schools. On average, the seven continuing schools saw 26 additional voucher users this year, nearly doubling the average number of PPSCP students enrolled last year. Just 38% of the growth in voucher use is attributable to enrollment in schools new to the program.

Of the five schools for which we have two years of total enrollment data, it appears most of the new voucher users were existing students in the schools. Among these schools, total enrollment grew by 20 students, while voucher use grew by 129 students. This mirrors the pattern seen over the years in Milwaukee, where changes in program policy or regulations result in greater numbers of existing

private school students accessing vouchers. In Racine's case, a statutory cap on the total number of vouchers was lifted after the first year of the program.

Voucher users now make up 38% of total enrollment in the nine PPSCP schools for which we have complete data. Seven of the nine schools reported the racial and ethnic breakdown of their students. Among those seven schools, 77% of students are white, 7% are African-American, 10% are Hispanic, and 5% are some other race/ethnicity.

Similar to Milwaukee, most voucher users in Racine (83%) attend religious schools; however, the only secular school in the Racine program, Mount Pleasant Renaissance School, enrolls more voucher users than any other individual school (**Table 6**). Almost half of Racine's voucher students attend Lutheran schools, while a third attend Catholic schools. No other religious sects participate in the program.

The value of a voucher in Racine is \$6,442, the same as in Milwaukee, resulting in a total program cost of more than \$3.2 million in 2012-13.

### PPSCP by the numbers

	Number of schools	Percent of PPSCP schools	Percent of PPSCP enrollment
Schools	11	--	--
Elementary schools	1	9%	17%
Kindergarten through 8th grade	7	64%	63%
High schools	3	27%	20%
Religious schools	10	91%	83%
Catholic	4	36%	34%
Lutheran	6	55%	49%
Non-religious schools	1	9%	17%
Accredited	8	73%	66%
Working toward accreditation	1	9%	6%

Mount Pleasant Renaissance School and John Paul II Academy did not respond to the survey.



### Racine PPSCP’s proficiency rates lower than Racine Unified School District’s

Performance among Racine’s voucher students is mixed. While WKCE reading proficiency rates for PPSCP students are comparable to those of MPCP students, PPSCP math proficiency rates are much higher than in Milwaukee’s voucher program. Similar to MPCP, the aggregate PPSCP proficiency rates are lower than the aggregate public school proficiency rates—in this case, the Racine Unified School District (Table 5).

The number of students represented by the PPSCP performance data is quite small. A total of 50 PPSCP students’ 2011-12 scores are reported, which represents just 22% of the Racine voucher users that year.

Table 6 reports the proficiency rates by school. As compared to the MPCP proficiency rates, schools in the PPSCP are more likely to have students who are proficient in both reading and math. The proficiency rates vary considerably by school, however.

Table 5: 2011-12 PPSCP proficiency rates as compared to RUSD and statewide proficiency rates

	Parent opt-out	Not tested	Reading Proficient/Advanced	Math Proficient/Advanced
PPSCP	0%	9%	56%	53%
RUSD	N/A	1%	70%	62%
WI	N/A	1%	82%	78%

Table 6: Racine PPSCP enrollment and proficiency rates by school

New to PPSCP in 2012-13	School Name	Grades	2012-13 PPSCP enrollment	2012-13 Total enrollment	2011-12 PPSCP reading proficiency	2011-12 PPSCP math proficiency
	Mount Pleasant Renaissance School	K4-3	89	n/p	62.5%	62.5%
	Wisconsin Lutheran School	K4-8	67	170	*	*
	Our Lady of Grace Academy	K5-8	66	133	76.9%	61.5%
	John Paul II Academy	K5-8	57	n/p	44.4%	44.4%
	Trinity Lutheran School	K3-8	54	210	n/a	n/a
	Shoreland Lutheran High School	9-12	41	300	*	*
x	Lutheran High School Association of Racine	9-10	41	223	n/a	n/a
	St. Joseph School	K5-8	34	160	57.1%	57.1%
x	Concordia Lutheran School	K5-8	33	114	n/a	n/a
x	St. Catherine's High School	6,9-10	20	398	n/a	n/a
x	St. John's Lutheran School	K3-8	18	166	n/a	n/a

\* Fewer than 5 students enrolled in grades tested.