

For Immediate Release

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Parental Choice Programs Grow To Over 40,000 Students

After Nearly Three Decades of Growth, Superintendent Evers Wants To End Programs

The Department of Public Instruction released the number of students that have enrolled to participate in the Parental Choice Programs in Wisconsin. There are currently four Parental Choice Programs - The Milwaukee and Racine Programs serve those communities and the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program serves the rest of the state. Additionally, the Special Needs Scholarship Program serves students statewide. All four programs saw enrollment increases over last year.

“Parental demand for the programs keeps driving up enrollment,” Jim Bender, President of School Choice Wisconsin said. “Knowing that popularity, it is surprising that the Superintendent of Public Instruction wants to stand in the school house door and deny access to the program, especially for low-income and minority students.”

Numerous public statements by Superintendent Evers indicate his desire to freeze enrollment and end the programs. This policy stance would result in the closure of dozens of urban private schools in high poverty neighborhoods, many of which significantly outperform their neighboring public schools.

Since they were created the Parental Choice Programs have grown from one year to the next. As seats become available, parents have shown a clear desire to fill them. For the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, that enrollment streak stretches to 29 straight years.

Below are the number of schools and students enrolled in the four Parental Choice Programs this fall.

A note to media on the DPI press release. They list all returning students, regardless of their status when entering the program, as having attended private school the year before. This does NOT mean that all of those students had attended private school as a paying/scholarship student prior to entering the Parental Choice Program. In fact, due to the dramatic increase in the number of students who are first entering the programs and those switching from public schools, the students who ever attended a private school before entering the program has dropped below 29% by our calculations. Please contact SCW to discuss further.

Enrollment Comparison 2018-19
Comparing the 3rd Friday of Sept. Counts of 2017-18 and 2018-19

Head Count (HC) and Full-Time Equivalency (FTE)	
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program	
2017-18 126 schools 28,680 student HC 27,837.3 student FTE	2018-19 133 schools (7 increase) 28,917 student HC (237 increase) 28,066.8 student FTE (229.5 increase)
Racine Parental Choice Program	
2017-18 23 schools 3,003 student HC 2,912.9 student FTE	2018-2019 26 schools (3 increase) 3,324 student HC (321 increase) 3,241.6 student FTE (328.7 increase)
Wisconsin Parental Choice Program	
2017-18 154 schools 4,534 student HC 4,398.9 student FTE	2018-2019 222 schools (68 increase) 7,140 student HC (2,606 increase) 6,878.2 student FTE (2,479.3 increase)
Special Needs Scholarship Program	
2017-18 28 schools 246 student HC 244.2 student FTE	2018-2019 84 schools (56 increase) 692 student HC (446 increase) 675.9 student FTE (431.7 increase)