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# The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Descriptive Report on Participating Schools 2008 – 2009

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SCDP Milwaukee Evaluation

Report #17  
April 2010





**The University of Arkansas** was founded in 1871 as the flagship institution of higher education for the state of Arkansas. Established as a

land grant university, its mandate was threefold: to teach students, conduct research, and perform service and outreach.

The College of Education and Health Professions established the Department of Education Reform in 2005. The department's mission is to advance education and economic development by focusing on the improvement of academic achievement in elementary and secondary schools. It conducts research and demonstration projects in five primary areas of reform: teacher quality, leadership, policy, accountability, and school choice.

The School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP), based within the Department of Education Reform, is an education research center devoted to the non-partisan study of the effects of school choice policy and is staffed by leading school choice researchers and scholars. Led by Dr. Patrick J. Wolf, Professor of Education Reform and Endowed 21st Century Chair in School Choice, SCDP's national team of researchers, institutional research partners and staff are devoted to the rigorous evaluation of school choice programs and other school improvement efforts across the country. The SCDP is committed to raising and advancing the public's understanding of the strengths and limitations of school choice policies and programs by conducting comprehensive research on what happens to students, families, schools, and communities when more parents are allowed to choose their child's school.

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**SCHOOL CHOICE  
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

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## **Executive Summary**

This report is the third in a series of annual reports produced by the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) that will provide descriptive information about the schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). This year's report contains a new section that examines schools from both the public and private sectors that are no longer receiving public funds.

### **MPCP Participating Schools – Basic Characteristics**

A total of 127 schools participated in the MPCP for the entire 2008-09 academic year, with 19,803 students enrolled in the schools using MPCP vouchers. Generally speaking, MPCP students made up a large part of participating schools' total enrollment—the average school-level percentage of MPCP students in these schools was 79 percent. Over 70 percent of participating schools had student enrollments that were greater than 80 percent MPCP students, while 54 percent had MPCP enrollment percentages above 90. Collectively, private schools participating in the MPCP in 2008-09 offered the full range of grade options, from Kindergarten to 12th grade. Eighty-eight percent of schools served elementary students, while 80 percent served middle school students. Twenty-five percent offered high school.

### **MPCP Participating Schools – Religious Status**

Participants include schools representing at least 10 distinct religious affiliations, non-religious schools that follow a religious tradition, and purely secular schools.

- Eighty-three percent of the schools identified themselves as religious,
- Seven percent were classified as non-religious with a religious tradition, and
- Ten percent of the participating schools identified themselves as non-religious.

### **MPCP Participating Schools – Programs Offered**

Private schools participating in the MPCP offer an array of programs typically found in traditional public schools. High percentages of schools offer programs for students with learning problems (77%), music programs (75%), arts programs (74%), and afterschool programs (71%). Roughly half of the schools incorporate student government, foreign language programs, programs with special instructional approaches, summer school, and before school programs.

### **MPCP Participating Schools – Accountability Testing**

With the passage of the 2005 Wisconsin Act 125, private schools participating in the MPCP are now required to annually administer a nationally normed standardized test or the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) in reading, mathematics, and science to their MPCP students enrolled in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. The law further directs MPCP schools to submit copies of the scores from those tests to the SCDP. During the 2008-09 school year, the SCDP received student test scores from 113 schools. Eleven MPCP schools were not required to test their students as they did not have any students in grades 4, 8, or 10. Three schools failed to submit adequate test scores for the 2008-09 school year.

## **MPCP Participating Schools – Support Staff and Facilities**

Private schools participating in the MPCP incorporate support staff and facilities typically found in traditional schools. Most provide individual tutors (66%), over a third provide guidance counselors (39%), and close to one-third have a school nurse (28%). Over 80 percent of the schools have a computer lab, gym, and a cafeteria. Slightly fewer have a library (69%) and lunches prepared at the school (66%).

## **MPCP and MPS Schools Compared—Racial/Ethnic Enrollment Comparisons**

Both the MPCP and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) enroll a high percentage of minorities. However, the MPCP schools exhibit modestly lower school-level percentages of minorities—an average of 80 percent compared to 89 percent in MPS. On the whole, the nine point difference in average percent minority levels between the two groups of schools was found to be statistically significant.

## **MPCP and MPS Schools Compared—Teacher Qualification and School Size Comparisons**

Compared to MPS reported data, the teachers at participating MPCP schools exhibit different attributes when it comes to measurable teacher characteristics. On average, 37 percent of the teachers at MPS schools have a master's degree, while only 28 percent of the teachers at MPCP schools that responded to the SCDP survey did. Eighty-six percent of MPS teachers are certified by the State of Wisconsin, compared to 62 percent of the teachers at the MPCP schools. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers at MPCP schools have at least five years of teaching experience while 75 percent of MPS teachers have this same characteristic.

Compared to MPS schools, MPCP schools are smaller and have a lower average student-teacher ratio. The average school participating in the MPCP has 220 students, while the average MPS school has almost twice that amount. The average student-teacher ratio in MPCP schools is 14.6, compared to 18.4 in MPS schools.

## **Characteristics of Schools No Longer Participating in the Program**

Former MPCP schools that no longer receive public funds differ from current participants in a number of ways. On average, these schools were smaller than current MPCP schools and they participated in the MPCP for less time. These schools also had a higher percentage of their total student enrollments comprised of MPCP students. When compared to current participants, they exhibit a pattern of lower student achievement data. On the WKCE, the schools no longer receiving public funds have average 4th, 8th, and 10th grade scale scores that range from -13 to -71 points lower than currently operating schools. Schools no longer receiving public funds that administered nationally normed tests had national percentage rank scores that ranged from -1 to -10 percentage points lower than currently participating schools. The same comparison conducted for MPS schools shows similar results.

## **Future Reports**

This report and its companion reports are the third in a series of annual reports produced by the SCDP. For information about MPCP schools in previous years of this evaluation, see [http://www.uark.edu/au/der/SCDP/Milwaukee\\_Research.html](http://www.uark.edu/au/der/SCDP/Milwaukee_Research.html). Future reports will continue to monitor changes and trends at the school level within the choice landscape in Milwaukee.

## The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Descriptive Report on Participating Schools

This report is the third in a series of annual reports produced by the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) providing descriptive information about the schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). Following a brief history of the MPCP, this year's report contains descriptive statistics about schools participating in the MPCP and provides comparisons to Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) when possible. This year's report contains a new section that provides a look at schools from both the public and private sectors that are no longer receiving public dollars.

### **Overview of School Choice in Milwaukee**

Families in Milwaukee have an array of government-funded educational options. In addition to being able to choose any traditional school within MPS, estimates indicate that over 30 percent of the city's 130,000 school-age children take advantage of non-traditional forms of government-funded school choice.<sup>1</sup> Families can also choose from the following educational options regardless of where they live in Milwaukee:

- MPS Specialty Schools
- Contracted Agency Schools
- Partnership Schools
- MPS Small High Schools
- Charter Schools
  - MPS Instrumentality Charter Schools (MPS employs staff)
  - MPS Non-Instrumentality Charter Schools (staff non-MPS employees)
  - Charter Schools Authorized by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
  - Charter Schools Authorized by the City of Milwaukee Common Council
- Chapter 220 Program
- Statewide Inter-district Open Enrollment
- Milwaukee Parental Choice Program

### **Milwaukee Parental Choice Program**

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program began in 1990 as a tax-payer funded voucher program that allows low-income students to attend a private school (including religious schools as of 1998) in the City of Milwaukee. It started with seven nonsectarian schools enrolling 341 students and is the nation's oldest and largest urban school voucher program.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent changes affecting transportation policies in Milwaukee may reduce the availability of intra-district choice. For more information, see "Functional Plan: Transportation," October 2008, Milwaukee Public Schools: [http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_2\\_3754\\_335\\_0\\_43/http%3B/www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/port/docs/Tran-Plan.pdf](http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_2_3754_335_0_43/http%3B/www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/port/docs/Tran-Plan.pdf).



To be eligible for the program in 1990, families were required to live in Milwaukee and have a household income equal to 175 percent of the poverty line or lower. In addition to the family's residency and income qualifications, a student's grade and enrollment status the previous school year had to meet at least one of the following criteria:

- (1) the child was enrolled in MPS;
- (2) the child was enrolled in the MPCP the previous year;
- (3) the child was enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 in a non-MPCP participating school; or
- (4) the child was not enrolled in any school.

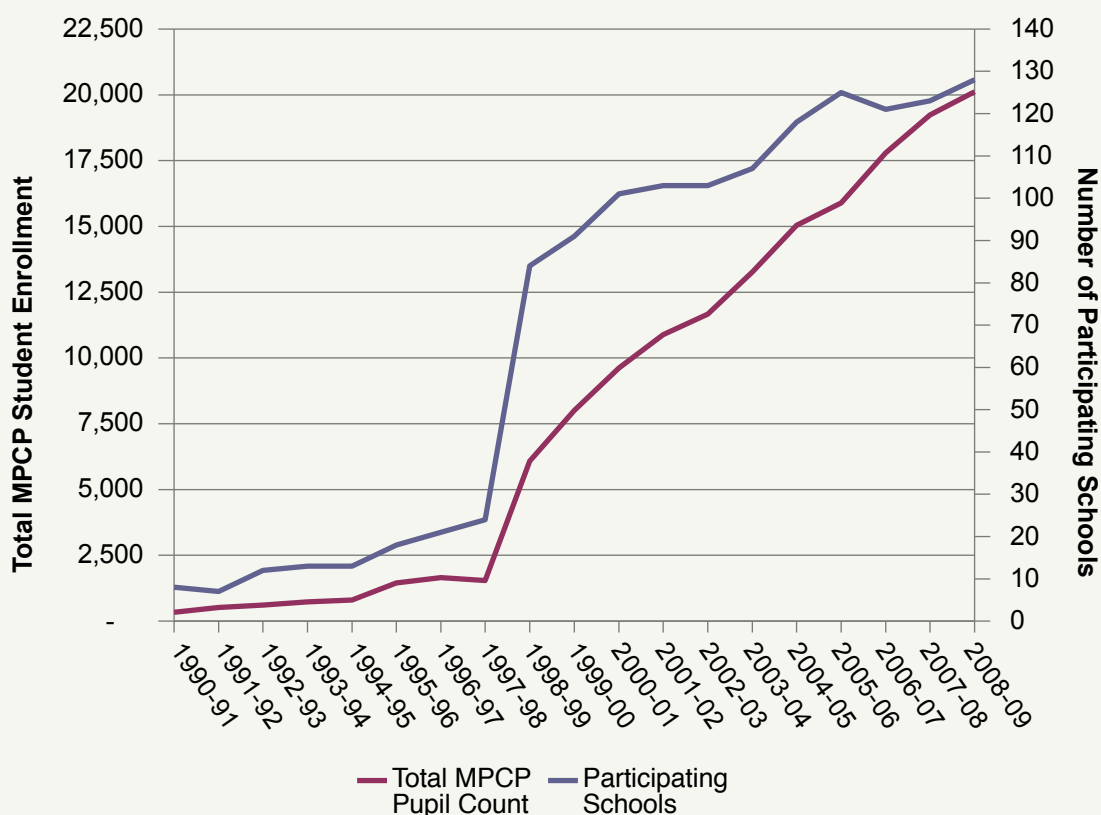
The prior-year enrollment qualifications were eliminated via 2005 WI Act 125. Act 125 also modified the income guidelines. While the 175 percent benchmark was maintained for entry into the program, a household's income could subsequently rise as high as 220 percent of the poverty line without children in the household becoming ineligible for the program.

Initially the MPCP was capped at one percent (900) of the total Milwaukee Public Schools enrollment (approximately 90,000 at that time), with the additional limit that no more than 49 percent of an individual school's students can be eligible for the MPCP. The cap was raised to a 1.5 percent/65 percent limit (WI Act 16) in 1993 and to a 15 percent/no limit in 1995 (WI Act 27). Act 27 also made religious schools eligible for participation in the MPCP, although that eligibility was delayed while the constitutional questions surrounding religious-school participation were being determined by the courts.

The MPCP's first major enrollment surge occurred during the 1998-99 school year following the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling that religious schools could participate in the program. Close to 6,000 students attended one of 83 schools participating in the MPCP during the 1998-99 academic year—a 400% increase from the preceding year. Over the next seven years, enrollment in the MPCP steadily increased until a predetermined cap of 16,500 students was reached in 2005. In March of 2006, Governor Jim Doyle signed SB 618 which lifted the cap to 22,500. During the 2008-09 school year 127 private schools participated in the MPCP, with 19,803 students enrolled in the schools using MPCP vouchers. Figure 1 shows the growth of the MPCP since its establishment in 1990.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Total number of MPCP schools for any given year may include schools that closed during the academic year. In this series of descriptive reports on MPCP schools, the authors only include information on schools that remain open for the full academic year. For this reason the total number of schools described in this series of reports may not match the total number of schools listed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Historical MPCP School and Student Enrollment**

In July of 2009, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed 2009 Wisconsin Act 28 which mandates a series of changes that will directly affect the MPCP schools. Beginning in the fall of 2010, all MPCP schools must:

- (1) Administer the WKCE in reading, math, and science to all of their MPCP pupils in 3rd-8th and 10th grade.
- (2) Adopt a written policy specifying criteria for promoting a pupil from 4th to 5th grade and from 8th to 9th grade and for granting a high school diploma.
- (3) Adopt pupil standards in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography, and history.
- (4) Ensure that all MPCP administrators have at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education.
- (5) Ensure that all MPCP teachers have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education.
- (6) Provide the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction with pupil scores on all standardized tests administered under s. 119.23(7)(e)1 (a.k.a. 2005 Act 125) for the previous 5 years.

## Data and Methodology

During the period of February–September of 2009 the SCDP administered a survey to the principals of the 127 private schools that participated in the MPCP for the full academic year. The initial set of surveys was distributed at the February 3rd, 2009 MPCP Pupil Assignment Council meeting in Milwaukee, WI. Schools that did not send representation to the meeting received the survey through a mailing the following week. In order to increase the response rate, a second wave of surveys was mailed to non-responding schools in July 2009. Over the months of July and August 2009, the SCDP team followed up with reminders through telephone calls and e-mails to schools that had not returned surveys. At completion, the SCDP received 98 completed surveys from the MPCP schools, which equates to a final response rate of 77.9 percent. Twelve of the 29 non-respondents previously completed the 2007–08 principals’ survey. Where appropriate, baseline data that are considered constant (e.g. historical information and religious affiliation) from the 2007–08 principals’ survey are used in this report to reduce the amount of missing data. Known characteristics of non-respondents are detailed in Appendix A. Additional data were provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Data for MPS were gathered from the Wisconsin DPI, Wisconsin’s Information Network for Successful Schools (WINNS) database, and the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).



## MPCP Participating Schools – Basic Characteristics

### Participation in the Program

Each year the Wisconsin DPI publishes student enrollment figures for all the schools participating in the MPCP as of the third Friday in September. There were 19,803 students using vouchers to attend 127 private schools participating in the MPCP in 2008-09, an increase of 734 students from the previous year (Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1. Change in MPCP Population of Schools: 2006-07 to 2008-09**

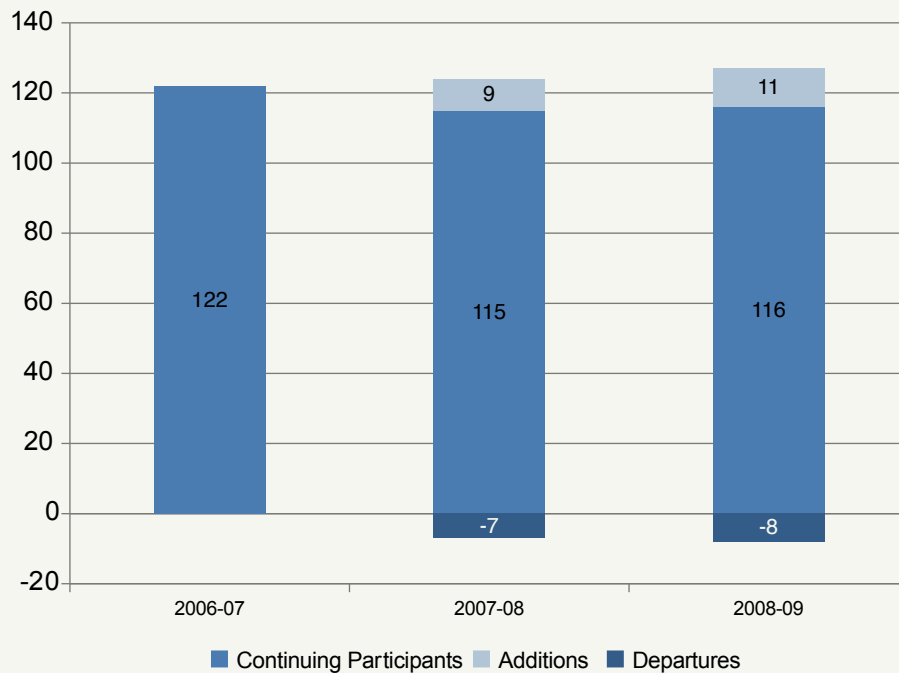
School Year	Schools Participating in the MPCP for the entire academic year	Total MPCP Student Enrollment
2006-07	122	17,749
2007-08	124	19,069
2008-09	127	19,803

NOTES: Figures for this chart were based upon communications with MPCP administrators at the Wisconsin DPI as well as the DPI's enrollment charts which are available at <http://dpi.state.wi.us/sms/geninfo.html>. Student enrollment figures are from DPI's unaudited third Friday in September head count.

The number of schools participating in the MPCP increased from 124 in 2007-08 to 127 in 2008-09. Eleven schools joined the MPCP for the first time during the 2008-09 school year, while eight schools that participated in 2007-08 left the Program in 2008-09 (Figure 2).

According to the SCDP survey responses, most schools that participated in 2008-09 existed prior to the establishment of the program in 1991 (Table 2). However, 36 percent of the participating schools indicated that they were created after the program began. Of that 36 percent, over half (63%) indicated that the MPCP was a major factor in their decision to open a school, while an additional 8 percent said that it was a minor factor.

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this report, schools that fall under an umbrella organization (e.g. Messmer Schools and Blessed Savior Schools) are broken down into separate campuses. When possible, schools are separated by their individual campuses which results in a total of 122 MPCP schools for 2006-07, 124 MPCP schools for 2007-08, and 127 MPCP schools for 2008-09. However, when reporting school level enrollment, we must rely on DPI's data which combines these schools under their umbrella organization, resulting in a total of 119 schools for 2006-07, 120 schools for 2007-08, and 123 schools for 2008-09.

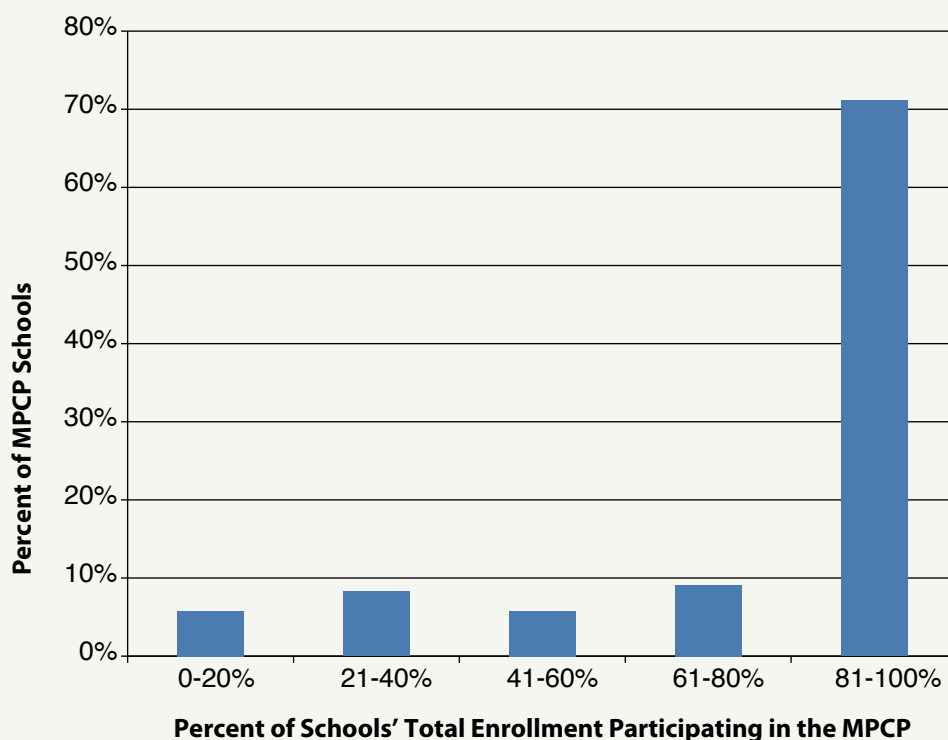
**Figure 2: Number of Participating MPCP Schools, 2006-07 through 2008-09****Table 2: School Participation in the MPCP**

Did school exist prior to the establishment of MPCP?	Total	Percent
Yes	70	63.6
No	40	36.4
Was the MPCP a factor in your decision to open a school?	Total	Percent
Not a factor in our decision	9	22.5
A minor factor in our decision	3	7.5
A major factor in our decision	25	62.5
Don't know	3	7.5

NOTES: Valid N=110. Figures are based upon 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 MPCP Principal Survey responses.

Generally speaking, MPCP students made up a large part of participating schools' total enrollment—the average school level percentage of MPCP students in these schools was 79 percent. Seventy percent of participating schools had student enrollments that were greater than 80 percent MPCP students, while 54 percent had MPCP enrollment percentages above 90 percent (Figure 3).

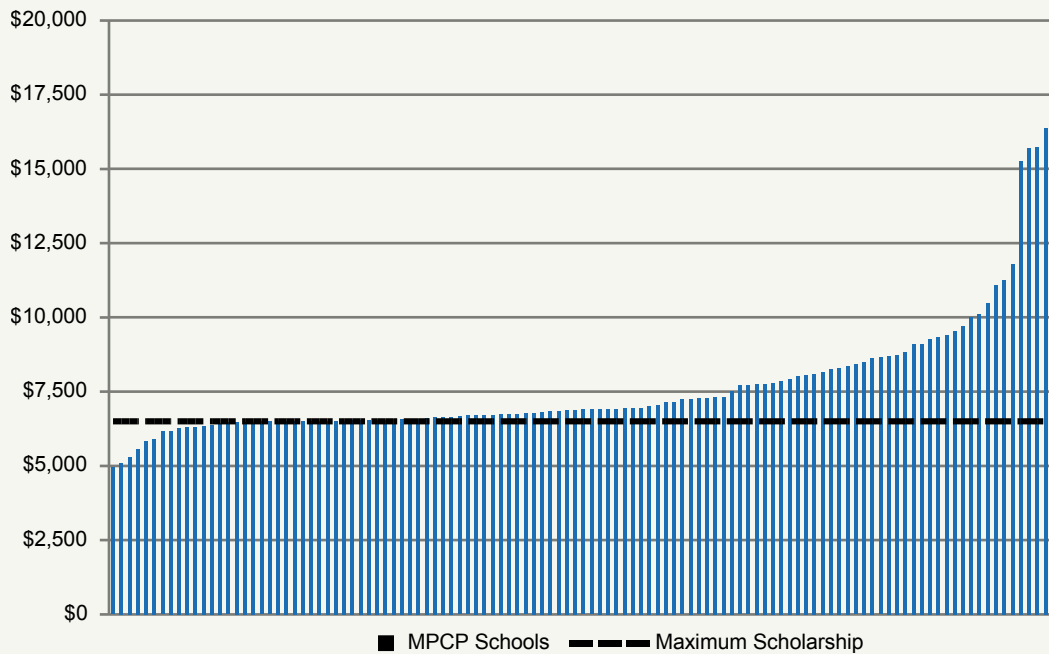
**Figure 3: Percent of Schools by MPCP Percent of Schools' Enrollment, 2008-09**



NOTES: Valid N=121. Source: Enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list. In the few cases where reported MPCP enrollment exceeded reported DPI total enrollment, DPI enrollment data was supplanted with SCDP survey data (N=5).

Private schools participating in the MPCP are required to file a Financial Information Report (FIR) with DPI each year that represents the school's per pupil costs. The average per pupil cost at participating schools in 2007-08, the most recent year for which data were available, was \$7,703--an increase of \$236 from 2006-07. The maximum scholarship amount in 2007-08 of \$6,501 was unchanged from 2006-07. In 2006-07, 78 percent of the schools reported operating costs of more than \$6,501. In 2007-08, that number grew to 83 percent (Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Reported Per Pupil Costs at MPCP Schools, 2007-08**

NOTES: Valid N=115. Each vertical bar represents an individual school. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Financial Information Report (FIR) for Participating Schools: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/mpcfinf.html>.

### MPCP Participating Schools – Grade-Levels Served

Collectively, private schools participating in the MPCP in 2008-09 offered the full range of grade options, from Kindergarten to 12th grade (Table 3). Eighty-eight percent of schools served elementary students, while 80 percent served middle school students. Twenty-five percent offered high school.

**Table 3: Types of MPCP Schools by Levels Served**

School Type	Total	Percent of all MPCP Schools
MPCP offering elementary school	112	88.2
MPCP offering middle school	101	79.5
MPCP offering high school	32	25.2

NOTES: Valid N=127. Data taken from the Wisconsin DPI's Directory of 2008-09 MPCP and MPS schools. School classified as offering elementary if they offered any grade within the K-5 range; middle school if they offered any grade within the 6-8 range; high school if they offered any grade within the 9-12 range.

## MPCP Participating Schools – Religious Status

Since the 1998 Wisconsin Supreme Court decision, private school options for the MPCP have included both religious and secular schools. While most MPCP schools have a religious character, as a group they are religiously diverse. In 2008-09 no single religious affiliation enrolled more than 35 percent of all MPCP students.

Participants include (Table 4) schools representing at least ten distinct religious affiliations, non-religious schools that follow a religious tradition, and purely secular schools:

- 102 of the schools identified themselves as religious (82.9%),
- Nine were classified as non-religious with a religious tradition (7.3%), and
- Twelve of the participating schools identified themselves as non-religious (9.8%).

**Table 4: Religious Identification of MPCP Schools**

Religious Identification of Schools	Total	Percent of participating schools	Percent of MPCP students attending
Religious	102	82.9	80.7
Non-religious (with a religious tradition)	9	7.3	5.6
Non-religious (secular)	12	9.8	13.7

NOTES: Valid N=123. Information concerning religious identification and affiliation was taken from the 2008-09 MPCP Principal's Survey (N=96), the 2007-08 MPCP Principal's Survey (N=18), and the 2006-07 MPCP Principal's Survey (N=1). Subsequent missing data came from the Public Policy Forum (N=8). Total MPCP enrollment for the 123 schools that had religiosity identified is 19,611. MPCP enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list.

Of the 102 schools (83%) that identified themselves as religious, 35 (29%) were Catholic, 28 (23%) were Lutheran, and 26 (21%) were non-denominational Christian. Other options include 4 schools that were Church of God in Christ, 3 Apostolic/Pentecostal, 2 Islamic Schools, 2 Seventh-Day Adventist Schools, 1 Baptist school, and 1 Jewish School (Table 5).



**Table 5: Affiliations of Religious MPCP Schools**

Affiliation of Religious Schools	Total	Percent of participating schools	Percent of MPCP students attending
Catholic	35	28.5	34.9
Christian, non-denominational	26	21.1	15.8
Lutheran (WELS)	16	13.0	11.6
Lutheran (LCMS)	12	9.8	7.4
Church of God in Christ	4	3.3	4.5
Apostolic/Pentecostal	3	2.4	1.8
Islamic	2	1.6	3.1
Seventh-Day Adventist	2	1.6	0.7
Jewish	1	0.8	0.8
Baptist	1	0.8	0.1

NOTES: Valid N=123. Information concerning religious identification and affiliation was taken from the 2008-09 MPCP Principal's Survey (N=96), the 2007-08 MPCP Principal's Survey (N=18), and the 2006-07 MPCP Principal's Survey (N=1). Subsequent missing data came from the Public Policy Forum (N=8). Total MPCP enrollment for the 123 schools that had religiosity identified is 19,611. MPCP enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list. Lutheran (ELCA) was also included as a category on the survey, but generated no cases.

When observed inside the context of MPCP enrollment levels (column 3 compared to column 4), some notable clustering can be observed within the available options. Explicitly, clustering is evident when the percentage of MPCP students attending a school with a particular characteristic exceeds the percentage of schools offering

that same characteristic. This is a noteworthy trend, though it is important to keep in mind that multiple explanations can be inferred from this clustering. While it hints at the preferences for particular characteristics among choice families, many other factors can influence enrollment rates. For example, either the size of a school and available seats or its location could influence enrollment levels independently, regardless of other school characteristics. Thus, while student clustering is an important description of the types of school experiences students are receiving, readers are cautioned against drawing casual inferences as to the exact forces behind it.

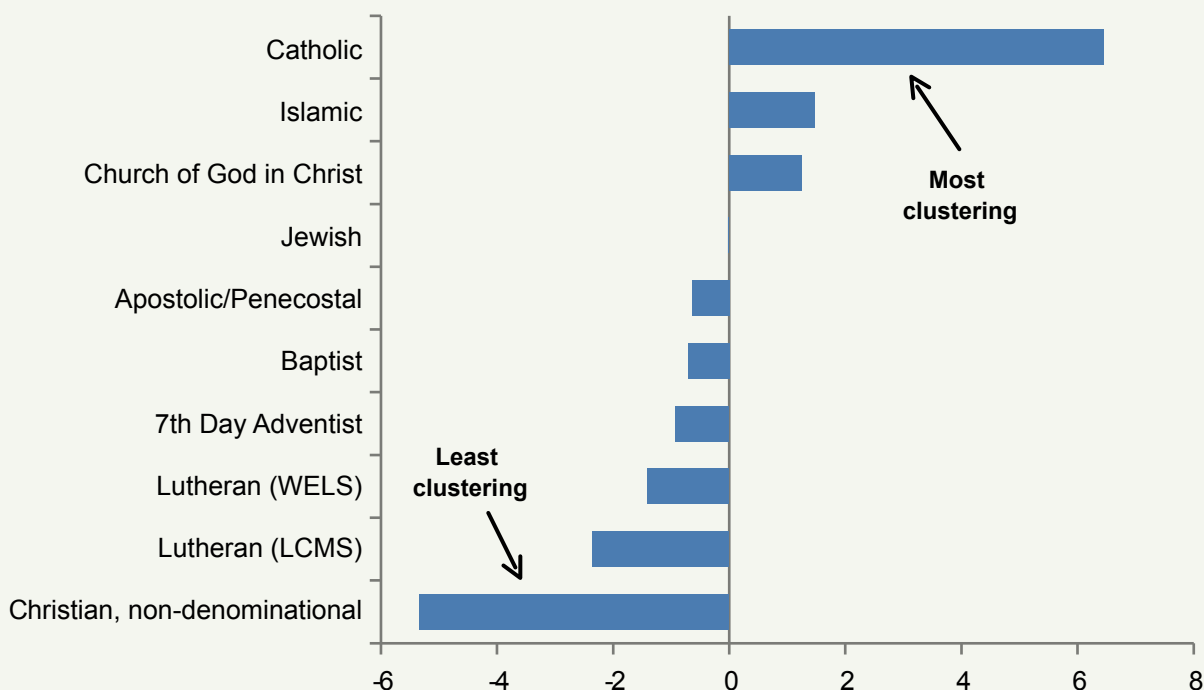
The most notable pattern of clustering is that while 29 percent of all MPCP schools are Catholic, they enroll 35 percent of MPCP students. Additionally, though 23

percent of schools are Lutheran, they enroll only 19 percent of MPCP students.

Figure 5 shows the differences between the percentage of students attending schools of each religious affiliation and the percentage of participating schools that identify with a particular religious affiliation.



**Figure 5. Religious Affiliations: Share of Enrollment in Schools Compared to Share of Schools**



NOTES: Valid N=123. Information concerning religious identification and affiliation was taken from the 2008-09 MPCP Principal’s Survey (N=96), the 2007-08 MPCP Principal’s Survey (N=18), and the 2006-07 MPCP Principal’s Survey (N=1). Subsequent missing data came from the Public Policy Forum (N=8). Total MPCP enrollment for the 123 schools that had religiosity identified is 19,611. MPCP enrollment data from DPI’s unaudited list. Lutheran (ELCA) was also included as a category on the survey, but generated no cases.

**MPCP Participating Schools – Programs Offered**

Private schools participating in the MPCP offer an array of programs typically found in traditional public schools (Table 6). High percentages of schools offer programs for students with learning problems (77%), music programs (75%), arts programs (75%), and afterschool programs (71%). Roughly half of the schools incorporate student government, foreign language programs, programs with special instructional approaches, summer school, and before school programs. Fewer schools offer gifted and talented programs and programs for non-English speakers.

**Table 6: School Programs in MPCP Schools**

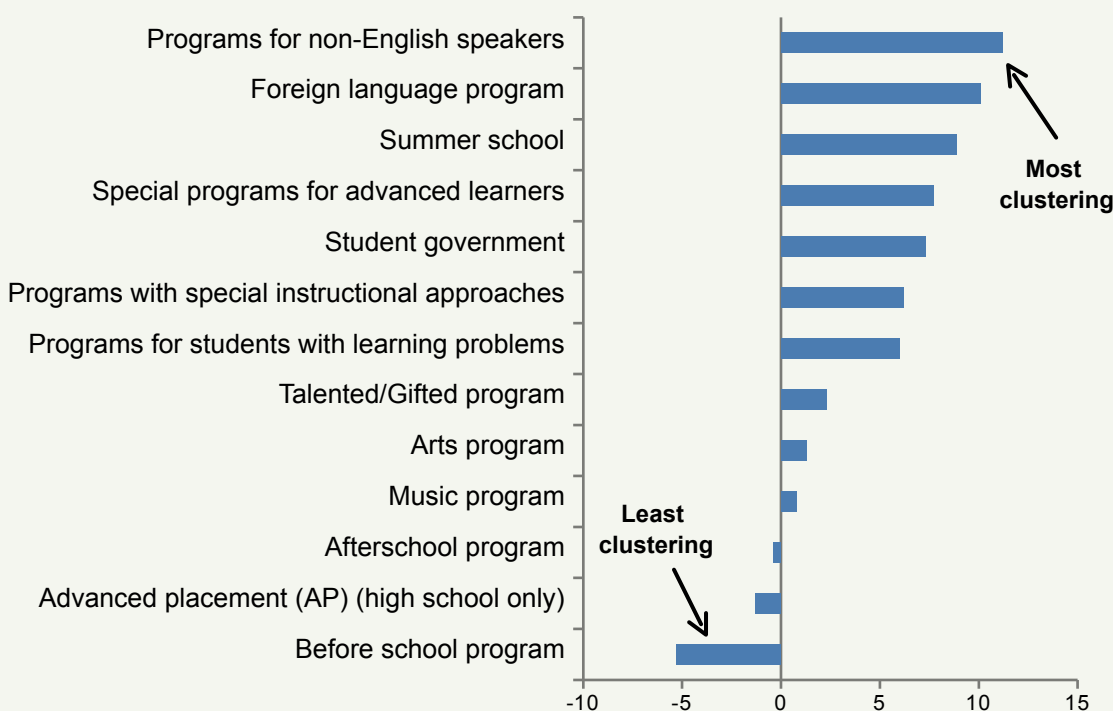
Programs	Percent of Schools	Percent of MPCP Students Attending
Programs for students with learning problems	76.6	82.6
Music program	75.0	75.8
Arts program	74.5	75.8
Afterschool program	71.0	70.6
Student government	55.0	62.3
Foreign language program	50.5	60.6
Before school program	48.1	42.8
Programs with special instructional approaches <sup>4</sup>	44.0	50.2
Summer school	43.1	52.0
Advanced placement (AP) (high school only)	38.5	37.2
Special programs for advanced learners	28.2	35.9
Programs for non-English speakers	11.3	22.5
Talented/Gifted program	11.2	13.5

NOTES: Information concerning school programs was taken from the 2007-08 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=14) and the 2008-09 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=98). MPCP enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list. International Baccalaureate programs were also included in the survey but generated only one affirmative responses. In cases where DPI collapsed enrollment figures for multiple campuses, schools are included in this figure if all of the campuses shared the same responses regarding programs offered. In cases where multiple campuses differed in their responses, those schools were excluded because MPCP enrollment breakdowns for those individual campus experiences are not available to us.

Moreover, as was the case with schools' religious affiliations, enrollment levels suggest that students are clustered within schools that have particular programs (Figure 6). In all but three instances, the percentage of students attending a school with a particular program is larger than the percent of all schools that offer the program. As previously mentioned, this is a noteworthy finding, yet the cause of this clustering is somewhat difficult to interpret. While it suggests that there is greater demand among choice families for schools with certain characteristics, other explanations--such as a positive correlation between the size of a school and the amount of programs offered--could be driving these results.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Success for All, Reading Recovery, Direct Instruction etc.

**Figure 6. School Programs: Share of Enrollment in Schools Compared to Share of Schools**



NOTES: Information concerning school programs was taken from the 2007-08 MPCP Principal’s Survey (n=14) and the 2008-09 MPCP Principal’s Survey (n=98). MPCP enrollment data from DPI’s unaudited list. Bars represent the difference between the percent of MPCP students attending each type of school and the percent of participating schools that offer a particular program.

**MPCP Participating Schools – Accountability Testing: 2008-09**

With the passage of the 2005 Wisconsin Act 125, private schools participating in the MPCP are now required to annually administer a nationally normed standardized test or the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) in reading, mathematics, and science to their MPCP students enrolled in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. The law further directs MPCP schools to submit copies of the scores from those tests to the SCDP. During the 2008-09 school year, the SCDP received student test scores from 113 schools. Eleven MPCP schools were not required to test their students as they did not have any students in grades 4, 8, or 10 (Table 7). Three schools failed to submit adequate test scores for the 2008-09 school year.

**Table 7: Accountability Testing: 2008-09**

Type of Test Given	Total	Percent of participating schools	Percent of MPCP Students Attending
Norm-referenced	77	65.3	61.1
WKCE	17	14.4	18.6
Both Norm-Referenced and WKCE	13	11.0	19.4
No Test Given	11	9.3	0.9

NOTES: Information concerning standardized testing was taken from scores submitted by the MPCP schools (n=118). The Messmer schools and the Blessed Savior schools are not included in Table 7 because they had differing test plans across their campuses. Total MPCP enrollment for the 118 schools is 17,936.

### MPCP Participating Schools – Support Staff and Facilities

Private schools participating in the MPCP incorporate support staff and facilities typically found in traditional schools. Most provide individual tutors (66%), over a third provide guidance counselors (39%), and close to one-third have a school nurse (28%). Over 80 percent of the schools have a computer lab, a gym, and a cafeteria. Slightly fewer have a library (69%) and lunches prepared at the school (66%).

**Table 8: Support Staff and Facilities in MPCP Schools: 2008-09**

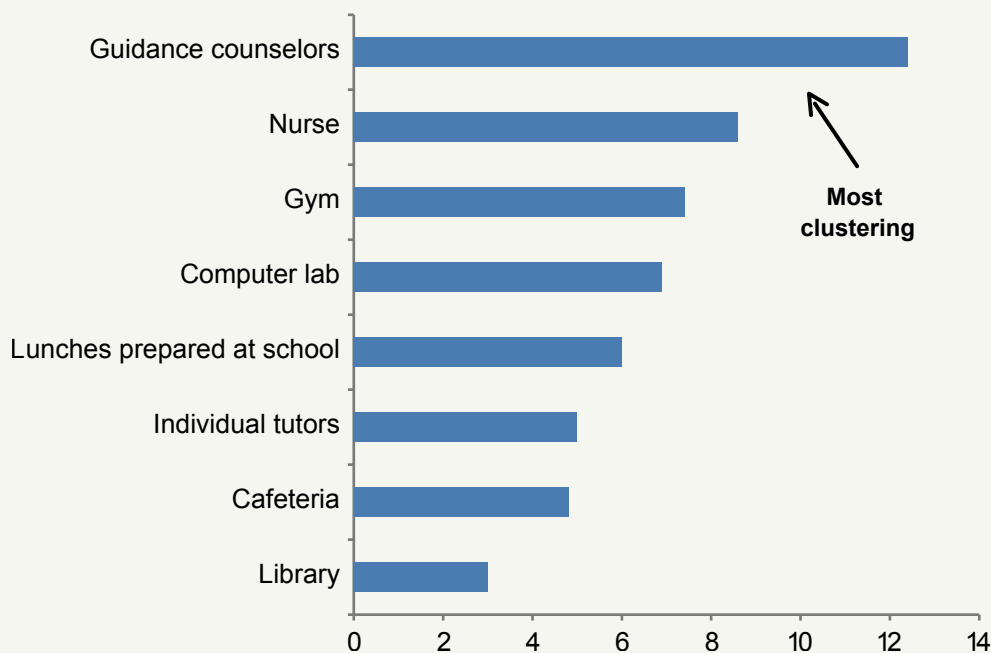
Staff	Percent of Schools	Percent of MPCP Students Attending
Individual tutors	66.4	71.4
Guidance counselors	39.4	51.8
Nurse	27.6	36.2
<b>Facilities</b>		
Computer lab	84.7	91.6
Cafeteria	86.2	91.0
Gym	84.8	92.2
Library	68.9	71.9
Lunches prepared at school	66.4	72.4

NOTES: Information concerning school staff and facilities was taken from the 2007-08 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=14) and the 2008-09 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=98). MPCP enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list.

When examining the availability of specialized staff and facilities offered, the same pattern of clustering within schools that have more offerings is observable. While 39 percent of schools offer guidance counselors,

52 percent of MPCP students attend schools that offer them. This same general pattern can be seen with regard to the availability of school nurses and individual tutors (Figure 7). Students are also attending schools with computer labs, libraries, gyms, and cafeterias at a higher rate than the rate at which these facilities are offered. This could suggest a positive relationship between school offerings and available seats for MPCP students, or it could be that parents are more likely to choose the schools that offer a higher range of services.

**Figure 7. Staff and Facilities: Share of Enrollment Compared to Share of Schools**



NOTES: Information concerning school staff and facilities was taken from the 2007-08 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=14) and the 2008-09 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=98). MPCP enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list.

### MPCP Participating Schools – Communication with Parents

Private schools participating in the MPCP communicate with parents in a variety of ways. Nearly all schools provide families with a mid-term report of their child's grades (96%) and distribute a yearly newsletter with information concerning the school or school system (96%) (Table 9). Over two-thirds (67%) of the schools notify parents if disruptive behavior results in the student being sent to the office. Over half of the schools produce weekly or daily updates on each student's progress.

**Table 9: Communication with Families in MPCP Schools: 2008-09**

Method of Communication	Total	Percent of Schools	Percent of MPCP Students Attending
School newsletter	107	96.4	98.7
Mid-term grade report	106	95.5	97.7
Notification of child sent to office	74	67.3	70.1
Regular progress updates	61	58.6	67.3

NOTES: Information concerning communication with families was taken from the 2007-08 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=13) and the 2008-09 MPCP Principal's Survey (n=98). MPCP enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list. In cases where DPI collapsed enrollment figures for multiple campuses, schools are included in this figure if all of the campuses shared the same responses regarding programs offered. In cases where multiple campuses differed in their responses, those schools were excluded because MPCP enrollment breakdowns for those individual campus experiences are not available to us.



## MPCP and MPS Schools Compared

### MPCP and MPS Schools Compared—Racial/Ethnic Enrollment Comparisons

In order to get a meaningful description of some aspects of the private schools participating in the MPCP, it is valuable to compare them to their public counterparts when the data are available.

Both MPCP and MPS schools enroll a high percentage of minorities (Table 10). However, the MPCP schools exhibit modestly lower school-level percentages of minorities—an average of 80 percent compared to 89 percent in MPS in 2008-09. On the whole, the nine point difference in average percent minority levels was found to be statistically significant.

This pattern was consistent with both average African-American and Hispanic percentages, but when broken down into those specific subgroups the differences were not statistically significant.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 10: Racial/Ethnic Enrollment Data: 2008-09**

School Level Enrollment Data (PreK-12)	MPCP	MPS	Difference
Average % Racial/Ethnic Minority	80.2	89.2	-9.0**
Average % African-American	61.4	62.1	-0.7
Average % Hispanic	12.8	19.1	-6.3
Average % Other Non-White	6.0	8.1	-2.0

\*\* Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

NOTES: Valid N for MPCP = 92; MPS = 213. MPCP figures are based upon MPCP Principal Survey responses. MPS schools with fewer than 5 students were excluded as outliers. "Other non-white" includes Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian, and a mixed race category.

### MPCP and MPS Schools Compared—Teacher Qualification and School Size

Compared to MPS reported data in 2008-09, the teachers at participating MPCP schools exhibit different attributes when it comes to measurable teacher characteristics (Table 11). On average, 37 percent of the teachers at MPS schools have a master's degree, while only 28 percent of the teachers at MPCP schools that responded to the SCDP survey do. Eighty-six percent of MPS teachers are certified by the State of Wisconsin, compared to 62 percent of the teachers at the MPCP schools. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers at MPCP schools have at least five years of teaching experience while 75 percent of MPS teachers have this same characteristic.

<sup>5</sup> These results regarding the relative racial integration of MPCP and MPS schools are merely descriptive. For information about the extent to which the MPCP itself affects the racial integration of Milwaukee schools, see Jay Greene, Jonathan Mills, and Stuart Buck, *The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program's Effect on School Integration*, SCDP Milwaukee Report #20, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, April 2010, available at [http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee\\_Research.html](http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/SCDP/Milwaukee_Research.html).



**Table 11: Teacher Qualifications in MPCP Schools and MPS: 2008-09**

Teacher Attribute	MPCP	MPS	Difference
% licensed by Wisconsin	61.9	85.8	-23.9
% with master's degree	27.9	37.3	-9.4
% with at least five years of experience	66.9	74.7	-7.8

NOTES: MPCP figures are based upon MPCP Principal Survey responses. Valid school N for MPCP percent of teachers with a master's degree or higher = 98. Valid school N for MPCP percent of teachers with at least five years total experience = 98. Valid school N for MPCP percent of teachers certified in the state of Wisconsin = 96. Public school data obtained from WINNS. Tests for statistical differences were not conducted because MPS averages were only available at the district level. As a result, the means in this table were produced by aggregating at the district level instead of at the school level.

Compared to MPS schools, MPCP schools are smaller (Table 12). The average school participating in the MPCP has 220 students, while the average school in MPS has almost twice that amount. This average difference of 181 students was found to be statistically significant.

**Table 12: School Enrollment: 2008-09**

Average enrollment	MPCP	MPS	Difference
	220.1	400.8	-180.7**

\*\*Statistically different at the 99% confidence level.

NOTES: MPCP enrollment data from DPI's unaudited list; MPS enrollment data was obtained from MPS. In cases with large discrepancies, DPI enrollment data was supplanted with SCDP survey data.

The average student teacher ratios are also smaller within the MPCP schools (Table 13). Readers should note that the most recent data available for student/teacher ratios in MPS was from the NCES' Common Core of Data for the year 2007-08. The MPCP ratios were computed from SCDP survey data from 2007-08. Ratios for both MPCP and MPS were smaller in 2006-07.

**Table 13: Student/Teacher Ratios: 2007-08**

Student/teacher ratio	MPCP	MPS	Difference
	14.6	18.4	-3.8**

\*\*Statistically different at the 99% confidence level.

NOTES: MPCP student/teacher ratios were computed from SCDP survey data by dividing total teachers by school reported student enrollment. MPS data for student/teacher ratio obtained from NCES' Common Core of Data, for which 2007-08 is the most recent year available. Schools were omitted from the MPS student/teacher ratio as outliers if they had student/teacher ratios over 60. All types of MPS public schools were used as observations, including MPS magnet schools and charter schools.

## Characteristics of Schools No Longer Participating in the Program

Since the SCDP evaluation of the MPCP began with the 2006-07 school year, 32 private schools that received MPCP vouchers at some time in the last three years are no longer participating in the program. Four of these schools converted to public charter schools; the remaining 28 are no longer receiving public funds.<sup>6</sup> These schools stopped participating for a variety of reasons. Some voluntarily chose to stop participating in the program, while some were barred from participation by the Wisconsin DPI for non-compliance. Some continue to operate as private schools in Milwaukee, while others have ceased to operate entirely. In this section we compare known characteristics of schools that continue to participate in the MPCP with those that are no longer receiving public funds as of the beginning of the 2009-10 school year.<sup>7</sup>

Former MPCP schools that no longer receive public funds differ from current participants in a number of ways (Table 14). On average, these schools were smaller than current MPCP schools and they participated in the MPCP for less time. These schools also had a higher percentage of their total student enrollments comprised of MPCP students. Former participants had an average of 93 percent MPCP students, while schools that are participating as of the start of the 2009-10 school year have an average of 78 percent MPCP students. Schools no longer receiving public funds were less likely to be religious schools. Current and former participants were roughly equivalent in the percent that offered elementary, middle, and high school.

**Table 14: Current MPCP Schools Compared to Former MPCP Schools**

	MPCP Leavers (n=28)	MPCP Stayers (n=115)	Difference
Average total enrollment	74.5	227.5	-153.0**
% of total enrollment MPCP	93.2	78.0	15.2**
Average number of years in the MPCP	4.6	8.2	-3.6**
% religious	55.6	83.9	-28.4**
% serving elementary	85.7	87.0	-1.2
% serving middle	67.9	79.1	-11.3
% serving high school	25.0	24.3	.7

\*\* Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

NOTES: 2008-09 data was used for current MPCP schools. For former MPCP schools, the most recent year available was used.

<sup>6</sup> A detailed list of schools no longer receiving public funds is provided in Appendix C.

<sup>7</sup> Four private schools that participated previously have converted to public charter schools. For the purposes of this analysis, these schools are not included in the category of schools that no longer receive public funds.

As mentioned previously, the 2005 Wisconsin Act 125 requires private schools participating in the MPCP to annually administer a nationally normed standardized test or the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) in reading, mathematics, and science to their MPCP students enrolled in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. Of the 28 schools that participated in the MPCP between 2006 and 2010 but no longer receive public funds, 24 were required under Act 125 to submit test scores to the SCDP. Of the 24 testing schools, 18 submitted test score data to the SCDP. When compared to current participants, they exhibit a pattern of lower student achievement data. On the WKCE, the schools no longer receiving public funds have average 4th, 8th, and 10th grade scale scores that range from -13 to -71 points lower than currently operating schools (Table 15). Schools no longer receiving public funds that administered nationally normed tests, which produce results measured using a different metric, had national percentage rank scores that ranged from -1 to -10 percentage points lower than currently participating schools (Table 16).

**Table 15: Comparison of WKCE Scores: Current MPCP Participants and Schools No Longer Receiving Public Funds**

Previous Year Average Scale Score	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10		
	MPCP Leavers (N)	MPCP Stayers (N)	Diff.	MPCP Leavers (N)	MPCP Stayers (N)	Diff.	MPCP Leavers (N)	MPCP Stayers (N)	Diff.
Reading 4th	403.9 (51)	452.5 (511)	-48.6**	429.2 (71)	442.0 (506)	-12.8	399.6 (16)	441.9 (516)	-42.3**
Math 4th	384.6 (51)	431.3 (511)	-46.7**	401.5 (71)	424.5 (514)	-23.0**	NA	NA	NA
Reading 8th	475.6 (30)	512.1 (704)	-36.5**	454.2 (30)	501.4 (714)	-47.2**	452.7 (12)	501.6 (578)	-48.9**
Math 8th	472.0 (32)	516.7 (705)	-44.7**	433.7 (30)	504.3 (717)	-70.6**	NA	NA	NA
Reading 10th	NA	NA	NA	431.1 (25)	464.4 (111)	-33.3**	NA	NA	NA
Math 10th	NA	NA	NA	507.2 (25)	489.7 (109)	17.5	NA	NA	NA

\*\* Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

NOTE: Cells with "NA" had fewer than 10 valid student observations from former MPCP schools. N refers to the number of student observations.

**Table 16: Comparison of Nationally Normed Test Scores: MPCP Current Participants and Schools No Longer Receiving Public Funds**

Previous Year NPR Score	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10		
	MPCP Leavers (N)	MPCP Stayers (N)	Diff.	MPCP Leavers (N)	MPCP Stayers (N)	Diff.	MPCP Leavers (N)	MPCP Stayers (N)	Diff.
Reading	41.3 (150)	41.8 (6897)	-0.6	32.0 (108)	41.8 (7834)	-9.8**	31.6 (274)	40.4 (9495)	-8.8**
Math	35.7 (131)	39.9 (6747)	-4.3	30.5 (109)	39.0 (7950)	-8.5**	28.2 (273)	38.0 (8718)	-9.8**

\*\* Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

NOTE: N refers to the number of student observations.

The same comparison conducted for MPS schools shows similar results. MPS schools that have ceased to operate during the period between 2006 and 2010 have average WKCE scale scores that range from -4 to -46 points lower than currently operating MPS schools (Table 17).



**Table 17: Comparison of WKCE Scores: Current MPS Schools and Former MPS Schools**

Previous Year Average Scale Score	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10		
	MPS Closed (N)	MPS Open (N)	Diff.	MPS Closed (N)	MPS Open (N)	Diff.	MPS Closed (N)	MPS Open (N)	Diff.
Reading 4th	435.1 (137)	450.0 (5618)	-15.0**	NA	NA	NA	429.5 (46)	447.5 (5751)	-18.0*
Math 4th	415.7 (141)	435.4 (5775)	-19.7**	NA	NA	NA	408.7 (46)	444.0 (5822)	-35.4**
Reading 8th	469.3 (81)	490.4 (6031)	-21.0**	460.5 (315)	487.3 (5528)	-26.8**	452.2 (40)	488.7 (5291)	-36.5**
Math 8th	464.7 (82)	501.2 (6116)	-36.5**	461.4 (317)	495.8 (5542)	-34.4**	464.1 (40)	504.9 (5387)	-40.8**
Reading 10th	455.5 (338)	486.7 (5166)	-31.2**	NA	NA	NA	439.9 (10)	486.0 (5157)	-46.1*
Math 10th	489.2 (334)	515.1 (5219)	-26.0**	NA	NA	NA	510.6 (10)	514.3 (5253)	-3.7

\*\* Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

\* Statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

NOTE: Cells with "NA" had fewer than 10 valid student observations from former MPS schools. N refers to the number of student observations.

There are a host of reasons why these former MPCP and MPS schools have lower average test scores than currently operating schools. It is possible that the lower achievement levels exhibited by students at these schools is a reflection of ineffective schooling. As such, the fact that these schools are no longer receiving public funds to educate students in Milwaukee is a positive sign that the interplay of market forces and governmental oversight is having a desirable effect. The numbers presented here, however, do not control for student background characteristics. It is possible that the lower scores exhibited by the schools no longer receiving public funds could be a result of these schools serving students who are more educationally disadvantaged. Thus,

readers are cautioned against drawing firm conclusions regarding what specific factors explain why these former MPCP and MPS schools, on average, produced such low student test scores.

### Future Reports

This report and its companion reports are part of a series of annual reports that will be conducted by the SCDP. Specifically, future reports will:

- Continue to monitor changes and trends at the school level within the choice landscape in Milwaukee, and
- Look inside the “black box” to identify the school-level mediating effects that may impact the educational achievement and attainment of students.

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## Appendix A: Details of Non-Respondents

Of the 127 schools that participated in the MPCP during the 2008-09 school year, 29 did not return principal surveys. This section briefly describes the characteristics of non-respondents in cases where data were available from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, NCES' Common Core of Data, and other additional sources.

On average, the schools that did not respond to data collection had lower levels of enrollment, were less likely to offer middle school and high school, and more likely to offer elementary school than the schools that completed the SCDP survey. Additionally, while 86 percent of schools that completed the survey were identified as religious, only 73 percent of schools that did not respond to data collection were identified as religious. Lastly, the non-responding schools had a higher percentage of their enrolled students using MPCP vouchers. None of the differences between respondents and non-respondents were found to be statistically significant.

**Table A1: Characteristics of Respondents and Non-respondents**

Characteristic:	Non-Respondents	Respondents	Difference
Average enrollment	195.4	222.6	-27.2
% religious	73.1	85.6	-12.5
% of students that are in MPCP	85.1	77.7	7.4
% Offering elementary school	93.1	86.7	6.4
% Offering middle school	69.0	82.7	-13.7
% Offering high school	20.7	26.5	-5.8

NOTES: Characteristics of non-respondents based upon N=29 for grade levels offered, N=26 for religious status, N=29 for percent of school's students that participate in MPCP.

## Appendix B:

### List of Schools that Participated in the MPCP for the Entire 2008-09 School Year

Alston's Preparatory Academy	Dr. Brenda Noach Choice School	Johnson Christian Academy, Inc.
Atlas Preparatory Academy	Early View Academy of Excellence	KidPreneur
Atonement Lutheran School	Eastbrook Academy	Kindergarten Plus
Believers in Christ Christian Academy	Emmaus Lutheran School	King's Academy Christian School
Bessie M. Gray Prep Academy	Excel Academy	Life 101 "THINK" Institute
Blessed Sacrament School	Excel Learning Academy	LifeSkills Academy
Blessed Savior - East Campus	Fairview Lutheran School	Lutheran Special School & Education Services
Blessed Savior - North Campus	Family Montessori School	Malaika Early Learning Center
Blessed Savior - West Campus	Garden Homes Community Montessori School, Inc.	Marquette University High School
Blessed Savior-South Campus	Garden Homes Lutheran School	Messmer High School
Calvary's Christian Academy, Inc.	Gilchrist Christian Academy	Messmer Prep Catholic School
Carter's Christian Academy	Gospel Lutheran School	Mills Christian Academy
Catholic East Elementary School	Greater Holy Temple Christian Center	Milwaukee Lutheran High School
CEO Leadership Academy	Grisby's Academy for the Gifted and Talented	Milwaukee Montessori School
Ceria M. Travis Academy, Inc.	Harambee Community School	Milwaukee Seventh Day Adventist School
Christ Memorial Lutheran School	Hickman Academy Preparatory School	More Than Conquerors Pre-School
Christ St. Peter Lutheran School	Holy Redeemer Christian Academy	Mother of Good Counsel School
Christian Faith Academy of Higher Learning	Holy Wisdom Academy	Mount Calvary Lutheran School
Clara Mohammed School	Hope Christian School	Mount Lebanon Lutheran
Community Vision Academy LTD	Hope Middle School	Mustard Seed International School
Concordia University School and Institute for LIGHT	Institute of Technology and Academics	New Holy Ghost Tabernacle Pre-School/Academy
CrossTrainers Academy	Jackson Preschool Learning Academy	New Testament Christian Academy
Daughters of the Father Christian Academy	Jared C. Bruce Academy	Northwest Lutheran School
Destiny High School		Notre Dame Middle School
Divine Savior Holy Angels High School		Oklahoma Avenue Lutheran School



Our Lady of Good Hope School	St. Gregory the Great Parish School	The AppleCrest Preparatory Leadership Academy
Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish	St. Joan Antida High School	The Hope School
Outlook University Independent School Network	St. John Kanty School	The Margaret Howard Christian Leadership Institute
Parklawn Christian Leadership Academy	St. John's Evangelical Lutheran	The Way and the Truth Christian Academy
Pius XI High School	St. Josaphat Parish School	Travis Technology High School
Prince of Peace	St. Leo Catholic Urban Academy	Trinity Christian Academy for Nonviolence
Resurrection Christian Academy	St. Lucas Lutheran School	Tuskegee Aviation Academy
Right Step, Inc.	St. Marcus Lutheran School	Urban Day School
Risen Savior Lutheran School	St. Margaret Mary School	Victory Christian Academy
Salam School	St. Martini Lutheran School	Victory Preparatory Academy
Sharon Junior Academy	St. Peter-Immanuel Lutheran School	Washington DuBois Christian Leadership Academy
Sherman Park Lutheran School/Preschool	St. Philip's Lutheran School	Wisconsin Lutheran High School
Siloah Lutheran School	St. Rafael the Archangel School	Word of Life Evangelical Lutheran School
St. Adalbert School	St. Roman Parish School	Yeshiva Elementary School
St. Anthony School	St. Rose Catholic Urban Academy	Young Minds Preparatory School
St. Bernadette School	St. Sebastian School	
St. Catherine of Alexandria (76th)	St. Thomas Aquinas Academy	
St. Catherine School (51st)	St. Vincent Pallotti School	
St. Charles Borromeo School	Tamarack Community School	
	Texas Bufkin Academy	

## Appendix C:

### MPCP Participating Schools No Longer Receiving Public Funds, 2006-07 through 2009-10

School Name	First Year in the MPCP	Last Year in the MPCP
Christ Kids Academy of Excellence	2005-06	2006-07
Keal Preparatory School, Inc.	1998-99	2006-07
STS Christian Academy	2006-07	2006-07
Agape Center of Academic Excellence, Inc.	1996-97	2007-08
Blyden Delany Academy	1998-99	2007-08
Grace Preparatory School	2000-01	2007-08
Institute for Career Empowerment	2004-05	2007-08
Jesus Academy of Learning	2007-08	2007-08
Noah's Ark Preparatory School	2000-01	2007-08
Nzingha Institute of Creative Learning for Living	2005-06	2007-08
Paige II University School, Inc.	2005-06	2007-08
SMI Early College Preparatory High School	2007-08	2007-08
Bessie M. Gray Prep Academy	2000-01	2008-09
Collins Christian Academy	2008-09	2008-09
Community Vision Academy	1998-99	2008-09
Excel Learning Academy	2004-05	2008-09
Fairview Lutheran School	2004-05	2008-09
Family Academy	2005-06	2008-09
Gilchrist Christian Academy	2007-08	2008-09
Grisby's Academy for the Gifted and Talented	2008-09	2008-09
Johnson Christian Academy, Inc.	2006-07	2008-09
LaBrew Troopers Military University School	2003-04	2008-09
New Holy Ghost Tabernacle Pre-School Academy	2007-08	2008-09
Teenpreneur #2/KidPreneur	2006-07	2008-09
The Way and the Truth Christian Academy	2008-09	2008-09
The Young Women's Institute for Global Studies	2008-09	2008-09
Trinity Christian Academy for Nonviolence	2006-07	2008-09
Victory Preparatory Academy	1999-00	2008-09



## The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Descriptive Report on Participating Schools

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