

News Release

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Wisconsin, Racine, and Milwaukee voucher enrollments announced

MADISON — The Department of Public Instruction today announced enrollment figures for the Wisconsin, Racine, and Milwaukee parental choice programs for the 2016-17 school year.

Student enrollment in the various programs is determined by counts that take place on the third Friday in September. Across the three programs, 33,781 students received a voucher to attend one of the 209 participating private schools, which is 32,758.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. In most cases, one student counts as one FTE. However, in certain cases, the FTE can be less. For example, depending on services provided, a 4-year-old kindergarten (K4) student may be counted as 0.5 FTE or 0.6 FTE.

For the 2016-17 school year, each participating private school may receive a voucher payment of \$7,323 per FTE in grades kindergarten through eight and \$7,969 per FTE for students

enrolled in grades nine through 12. The cost of the three programs combined is estimated at \$244.6 million for the 2016-17 school year.

For the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP), vouchers will be paid for 3,061 students (2,992.7 FTE) attending 121 private schools participating in the program. Students must live in Wisconsin, but not in the city of Milwaukee or Racine Unified School District. New student eligibility also is based on family income and prior year attendance. For the 2016-17 school year, the family income of a student new to WPCP must be at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level (\$45,263 for a family of four or \$52,263 for a student whose parents or legal guardians are married). Additionally, a pupil must have been enrolled in a Wisconsin public school district in the previous year, not have been enrolled in any school in the prior year, have been a participating choice student in the prior year, or be enrolling in kindergarten, first grade, or ninth grade in a participating choice school in the current year.

Total Cost of Choice Programs 2016-17 School Year	
Program	Cost
MPCP	\$203.7 million
RPCP	\$18.3 million
WPCP	\$22.6 million
Total	\$244.6 million

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

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Enrollment in the WPCP in 2016-17 from a single public school district is limited to 1 percent of the school district’s membership. Student eligibility is reviewed by independent auditors per state law, so enrollment numbers are subject to change.

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

Incoming pupils in the WPCP are included in the resident public school district’s membership for state general aid purposes, but the district may not levy to backfill the aid reduction. The district instead receives a non-recurring revenue limit exemption, which the school board may include when setting its 2017 school taxes. The exemption is equal to a given district’s reduction in aid.

The Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) enrolled 2,532 students (2,463.6 FTE) in 19 private schools participating in the program. Funding mechanics and student eligibility are identical to the WPCP with two exceptions: a student must live within the bounds of the Racine Unified School District and the income limits for the RPCP are 300 percent of the federal poverty level (\$73,401 for a family of four or \$80,401 for a student whose parents or legal guardians are married).

In the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), 28,188 students (27,302.4 FTE) enrolled in 121 participating private schools for the 2016-17 school year. MPCP students are eligible if they live within the bounds of the city of Milwaukee and meet family income limits of 300 percent of the federal poverty level (\$73,401 for a family of four or \$80,401 for a student whose parents or legal guardians are married). The program is paid for with a split of GPR dollars (74.4% of the cost of the program) and a deduction in state aid that would be otherwise paid to MPS (25.6% of the cost of the program). The MPCP, which began in 1990 with seven schools and 337 FTE students, is the nation’s oldest voucher program.

Year	Schools or Systems	Headcount
2013-14	25	511
2014-15	31	1,008
2015-16	82	2,521
2016-17	121	3,061

NOTE: Enrollment numbers are unaudited and subject to change.

Year	Schools	Headcount
2011-12	8	228
2012-13	11	508
2013-14	13	1,240
2014-15	15	1,733
2015-16	19	2,126
2016-17	19	2,532

NOTE: Enrollment numbers are unaudited and subject to change.

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NOTES: More information about the WPCP, RPCP, and MPCP, including a list of all private schools participating and their enrollment and financial impacts, can be found at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/data>. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016_103.pdf.