

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI-NR 2020-67

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2020

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DPI releases fall student count and revenue limit information

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction today released information on fall student counts and school district revenue limits for the 2020-2021 school year.

Wisconsin school districts, independent charter schools, and private school parental choice programs reported overall slowdowns or declines in enrollment, particularly in 4K. Districts also reported summer school participation declined by more than half between 2019 and 2020. The data published is unaudited and is based off of enrollment counts performed on Sept. 18, 2020, the third Friday of September, and reported to the DPI.

The student count data includes unduplicated¹ headcounts and membership FTE (full-time equivalent). Headcount is the number of students enrolled for instruction in a given school or district on the count date. Membership is a full-time equivalent value used for school finance purposes, where students in preschool special education, 4K, and part-time kindergarten are counted as less than 1.0 FTE. Membership for school districts reflects residency, not enrollment; a student in the open enrollment program is included in the headcount for the district they attend, but the membership for the district where they reside. District membership also includes an addition of summer school FTE.²

Wisconsin's total school district headcount for the third Friday of September 2020 was 818,922, a decline of 3 percent from September 2019. In comparison, from 2018 to 2019, there was a decline of 0.4 percent. The September 2020 district headcount was led by a decline of 15.8 percent in 4K and preschool special education.³ The kindergarten headcount declined 4.9 percent, while first through 12th grades – where Wisconsin's mandatory school attendance laws apply – were down 1.9 percent.

¹ Some students enrolled in independent charter schools or parental choice programs are added to their resident school districts' memberships for finance purposes. District headcount and membership data does not include these students; they are in the charter/choice counts where they attend.

² Summer school is funded differently for school districts than in other types of publicly funded schools.

³ Preschool special education applies only for public (district and independent charter) schools and is 0.4 percent of the total headcount.

Total school district membership for fall 2020, which includes summer and September FTE, was 809,104. The decline from fall 2019 to fall 2020 was 3.9 percent, with summer FTE down by 57.2 percent and September FTE by 2.6 percent.

Independent charter schools reported a total third Friday of September 2020 headcount of 9,257, an increase of 1.6 percent from September 2019. The previous increase, from 2018 to 2019, was 2.8 percent. The 4K headcount was down by 16.7 percent and kindergarten by 0.1 percent, while first through 12th grades increased by 3.9 percent.

The state's four private school parental choice programs⁴ reported a combined third Friday of September 2020 headcount of 45,954. This was an increase of 5.9 percent over 2019, smaller than the increase from 2018 to 2019 of 8.3 percent. 4K headcount in the private school parental choice programs declined by 3.5 percent, kindergarten increased by 5.1 percent, and grades 1-12 were up by 6.7 percent.

A more complete picture of fall 2020 student enrollment will be available in November, as homeschool families and statewide private school enrollments have later reporting deadlines.

School district membership data are used to determine revenue limits, which, in combination with the general school aids certified today, determine school boards' maximum property tax levies. As part of [the 2019-2021 biennial budget](#), Wisconsin school districts received a \$179 per member increase in revenue limits for the 2020-21 school year, and the per-member minimum for low-revenue districts was increased to \$10,000. Students attending other school districts through open enrollment, independent charter schools, or private schools in parental choice programs can affect their resident school districts' revenue limits and/or general state aids, but the specific details vary by student and program.⁵

Revenue limits are based upon a three-year "rolling" average of September membership, plus 40 percent of summer FTE, where last year's average (2017-18 through 2019-20) is compared to this year's (2018-19 through 2020-21). Revenue limit membership also includes students attending certain independent charter schools and the Wisconsin National Guard's Challenge Academy at Fort McCoy. School districts with a decline will qualify for a non-recurring "declining enrollment" exemption, which provides a one-time increase to a school district's revenue limit for what otherwise would have been calculated had there been no decline in the three-year average.

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⁴ The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP), Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP), and Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP).

⁵ Details by program are available in the 2020-21 Choice Funding Options table at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sfs/pdf/FY21-ChoiceOptionsFundingTable.pdf>.

Third Friday Student Headcounts							
	Third Friday 2017	2017 to 2018 Change	Third Friday 2018	2018 to 2019 Change	Third Friday 2019	2019 to 2020 Change	Third Friday 2020
Public Schools							
School Districts							
4K/PK ¹	53,342	+ 0.2%	53,423	+ 0.4%	53,646	- 15.8%	45,183
Kindergarten	56,272	- 0.1%	56,206	- 0.5%	55,948	- 4.9%	53,208
Grades 1-12	742,566	- 0.6%	738,313	- 0.5%	734,560	- 1.9%	720,531
Total	852,180	- 0.5%	847,942	- 0.4%	844,154	- 3.0%	818,922
Independent Charter Schools							
4K/PK ¹	709	+ 15.8%	821	+ 4.1%	855	- 16.7%	712
Kindergarten	786	+ 7.0%	841	+ 2.9%	865	- 0.1%	864
Grades 1-12	6,654	+ 8.2%	7,200	+ 2.7%	7,393	+ 3.9%	7,681
Total	8,149	+ 8.7%	8,862	+ 2.8%	9,113	+ 1.6%	9,257
Total, Public Schools							
4K/PK ¹	54,051	+ 0.4%	54,244	+ 0.5%	54,501	- 15.8%	45,895
Kindergarten	57,058	- 0.0%	57,047	- 0.4%	56,813	- 4.8%	54,072
Grades 1-12	749,220	- 0.5%	745,513	- 0.5%	741,953	- 1.9%	728,212
Total	860,329	- 0.4%	856,804	- 0.4%	853,267	- 2.9%	828,179
Private Schools – Students in Parental Choice Programs Only							
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program							
4K	1,958	+ 1.6%	1,989	- 3.0%	1,929	- 5.0%	1,833
Kindergarten	2,246	- 5.4%	2,125	+ 2.7%	2,182	- 3.4%	2,107
Grades 1-12	24,476	+ 1.3%	24,790	+ 0.2%	24,840	- 0.8%	24,643
Total	28,680	+ 0.8%	28,904	+ 0.2%	28,951	- 1.3%	28,583
Racine Parental Choice Program							
4K	189	- 4.8%	180	+ 13.9%	205	- 25.9%	152
Kindergarten	289	+ 11.1%	321	- 9.3%	291	+ 12.0%	326
Grades 1-12	2,525	+ 12.2%	2,833	+ 11.3%	3,153	+ 6.5%	3,357
Total	3,003	+ 11.0%	3,334	+ 9.4%	3,649	+ 5.1%	3,835
Wisconsin Parental Choice Program							
4K	245	+ 96.7%	482	+ 32.2%	637	+ 9.9%	700
Kindergarten	533	+ 58.9%	847	+ 30.9%	1,109	+ 16.0%	1,286
Grades 1-12	3,756	+ 54.2%	5,790	+ 37.9%	7,986	+ 26.8%	10,125
Total	4,534	+ 57.0%	7,119	+ 36.7%	9,732	+ 24.4%	12,111
Special Needs Scholarship Program							
4K	4	+ 750.0%	34	+ 52.9%	52	- 25.0%	39
Kindergarten	15	+ 233.3%	50	+ 56.0%	78	+ 64.1%	128
Grades 1-12	227	+ 163.4%	598	+ 53.0%	915	+ 37.5%	1,258
Total	246	+ 177.2%	682	+ 53.2%	1,045	+ 36.4%	1,425
Total, Private Schools – Students in Parental Choice Programs Only							
4K	2,396	+ 12.1%	2,685	+ 5.1%	2,823	- 3.5%	2,724
Kindergarten	3,083	+ 8.4%	3,343	+ 9.5%	3,660	+ 5.1%	3,847
Grades 1-12	30,984	+ 9.8%	34,011	+ 8.5%	36,894	+ 6.7%	39,383
Total	36,463	+ 9.8%	40,039	+ 8.3%	43,377	+ 5.9%	45,954

¹ Public school counts combine 4K with PK (Pre-Kindergarten), which includes children 3 to 5 years old receiving special education and related services who are not enrolled in 4K or kindergarten.

Fall Student Membership – Full Time Equivalent (FTEs)							
	Third Friday 2017	2017 to 2018 Change	Third Friday 2018	2018 to 2019 Change	Third Friday 2019	2019 to 2020 Change	Third Friday 2020
Public Schools							
School Districts							
Third Friday	830,236	- 0.5%	826,212	- 0.5%	822,044	- 2.6%	800,587
Summer ²	19,692	+ 1.5%	19,992	- 0.4%	19,905	- 57.2%	8,517
Total	849,928	- 0.4%	846,204	- 0.5%	841,949	- 3.9%	809,104
Independent Charter Schools							
Third Friday	7,861	+ 8.4%	8,522	+ 2.8%	8,757	+ 2.4%	8,970
Private Schools – Students in Parental Choice Programs Only							
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program							
Third Friday	27,837	+ 0.8%	28,047	+ 0.3%	28,124	- 1.1%	27,806
Racine Parental Choice Program							
Third Friday	2,913	+ 11.6%	3,251	+ 9.4%	3,557	+ 5.8%	3,764
Wisconsin Parental Choice Program							
Third Friday	4,399	+ 56.0%	6,864	+ 36.8%	9,391	+ 25.0%	11,740
Special Needs Scholarship Program							
Third Friday	244	+ 172.7%	666	+ 53.2%	1,020	+ 37.9%	1,407

² Summer FTE is shown for school districts only because it is factored directly into aid and revenue limit memberships. The funding mechanisms for independent charter schools and private schools participating in parental choice programs to offer summer programming are different.