

# Research Brief

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## *Beyond an Experiment: 13 Years of Growth in School Choice Program*

Today in Milwaukee 11,163 children receive vouchers to attend 107 different private schools. What began as a bold, though small, experiment in market-based education reform has grown to be one of the largest educational programs in the state of Wisconsin. No longer an experiment in policy, a June 2002 U.S. Supreme Court decision upheld the constitutionality of using vouchers to attend private religious schools, the program is now too large to be considered of experimental size.

Over the past five years the Public Policy Forum has conducted a census of all schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). The schools' cooperation in this effort has resulted in a 100% response rate. The data include such factors as student characteristics, enrollment, facilities, staffing, religious affiliation, curriculum and transportation.

The data are most useful to parents who, because of the program, are empowered to choose where to school their children. Parents are encouraged to shop for a school, gather data, and ask tough questions of school officials. But our data are also useful to Wisconsin policymakers who want to know more about a program that annually receives over \$65 million in taxpayer financing. In addition, policymakers around the country want answers to questions regarding the impact of Milwaukee's voucher program and whether they might duplicate the results in their cities. Only with data on Milwaukee's program, can parents, taxpayers, and policymakers begin to understand if school choice is meeting its laudable goals.

### **2002-2003 Program Highlights**

- Total program enrollment increased 7% to 11,163 students, the 13th year of growth.
- Choice participation increased at all grade levels except K5 and 6th.
- Half of all MPCP students are enrolled in just 20 of the 107 participating schools.
- Seven schools joined the program for the first time this year. The total number of schools participating in the program did not change, as seven other schools left the program.
- There are 72 religious schools participating this year. Half of these are Catholic schools and another 18 are Lutheran.
- The number of non-religious schools grew for the first time since 1998-1999, to 35 schools. One-third of MPCP students now attend non-sectarian schools.
- The enrollments are at least 90% minority in 58 MPCP schools, up from 48 last year.

Data for this *Brief* came from the PPF's annual census of schools participating in MPCP, the Milwaukee child census and from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

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For a complete listing of private schools participating in the choice program, visit the PPF website at [www.publicpolicyforum.org](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org), or contact the PPF at 633 W. Wisconsin Ave., Suite 406, Milwaukee, WI 53203, 414-276-8240.

## Seven Schools Leave Choice Program, Yet Enrollment Grows



Over the past 13 years of continued enrollment growth, 131 schools have been participants in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program at one time or another, but as of the 2002-2003 school year, there were 107 participating schools. Of the other 24 schools, nine are now closed. Four still operate as schools or daycare centers, but no longer accept voucher students. Five pairs of Catholic schools merged; resulting in the closure of five schools.

In addition, six schools have left the choice program to become charter schools: three are chartered by the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, one by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and two are chartered by Milwaukee Public Schools. For those schools that desire charter status, it is an attractive option. Charter schools received more than \$6,900 per pupil last year for all children enrolled in the school. This compares to the \$5,783 per MPCP student in choice schools. The difference in state funds received can be substantial; without any change in enrollment, a school would expect to see a 21% increase in revenue after leaving the MPCP program to become a charter school. However, charter status entails several accountability requirements. At a minimum, charter schools, unlike participating MPCP schools, must take state standardized tests and hire certified teachers. However, only non-religious private schools may convert to charter status. Therefore, schools that operated as religious schools when participating in MPCP cannot retain their religious affiliations as charter schools.

Two of the new charter schools that are former MPCP participants became charter schools as of the 2002-2003 school year: D.L. Hines Academy, a former Christian school, and Marva Collins Preparatory. They and five other schools left the MPCP program after the 2001-2002 school year. One of these schools continues to operate as a daycare center, while the other three schools have closed. Each of these four schools were early childhood focused, offering seats to students in Kindergarten or first grade only. The schools enrolled a total of 30 MPCP students in 2001-2002. One of the three schools that has closed, Lakeshore Montessori, had participated in the voucher program for 12 years. The other three schools had each participated for three years.

In addition, two Catholic schools have merged since last year. St. Helen and St. Alexander are now Holy Wisdom Academy, which has East and West campuses. No MPCP seats were lost in the merger.

From the enrollment data, it appears the 24 schools that have ended their participation in MPCP based their decisions to do so on something other than lack of parental demand. None of the 24 schools dropped out of the program because they failed to attract families eligible for vouchers. In fact, they had a total of 1,657 voucher students enrolled in their last year of participation. Other factors have thus influenced their decisions to end their participation in MPCP, factors that need to be investigated. If schools close despite still being in demand by parents holding vouchers, the choice program may not be meeting parents' needs.



**Table 1: Status of Schools No Longer Participating in the Choice Program**

<b>School Name</b>	<b>Years in MPCP</b>	<b>Current Status/ Final Year in MPCP</b>	<b>Number of MPCP Students (FTE) in Final Year of Participation</b>
Harbor Cross School	3	Closed/2001-2002	6
Immanuel Christian Academy	3	Closed/2001-2002	14
Lakeshore Montessori	12	Closed/2001-2002	6
Stepping Stone Learning Center	3	Closed/2001-2002	5
D.L. Hines College Preparatory Academy of Excellence	5	Charter/2001-2002	149
Marva Collins Preparatory School	6	Charter/2001-2002	292
Gregory B. Flood Sr. Christian Academy	3	Closed/2000-2001	14
Zebaoth Learning Center	1	Closed/2000-2001	2
Bruce Guadalupe Community School	10	Charter/2000-2001	198
Neighborhood House	4	Closed/1998-1999	9
North Milwaukee Christian School	4	Closed/1998-1999	7
Khamit Institute	3	Charter/1997-1998	28
SER Benito Martinez Academy	7	Closed/1996-1997	39
Downtown Montessori	6	Charter/1996-1997	6
Exito Ed Center	3	Closed/1995-1996	113
Milwaukee Prep	4	Closed/1995-1996	173
Waldorf School of Milwaukee	4	Closed 1995-1996	24
Highland Community School	4	Charter/1995-1996	19
Juanita Virgil Academy	1	Closed/1990-1991	63
St. Helen merged with St. Alexander	5	Holy Wisdom Academy East/West	65
St. Stephen Martyr merged with Mother of Perpetual Help	5	Mary Queen of Martyrs	160
St. Lawrence merged with St. Matthew	5	Prince of Peace	117
Immaculate Conception merged with St. Augustine	4	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Academy	54
St. Barbara merged with Holy Spirit	4	St. Rafael the Archangel	53
Merger of St. Vincent Palloti East and West	5	St. Vincent Palloti	36

# MPCP Schools Experience Fluctuations in Enrollments from Year to Year



The MPCP program continues to grow and add new schools. Enrollment in the program grew this year by 7% to 11,163. In terms of the number of schools, there were 107 schools this year, as there were last year. However, seven of these schools were new to the program in 2002-2003. These new schools enrolled 375 students of this year's 11,163 student total. Schools that have been in the program for two years enrolled 559 MPCP students.

The rest of the enrollment growth is distributed among the 63 schools that gained MPCP students this year. But these schools did not grow at the same rate. Of the 70 schools that have been participants in MPCP since 1998-1999, 26 have increased their MPCP enrollments each year. The other 44 schools have had fluctuating MPCP enrollments.

Table 2 shows the schools gaining or losing the most voucher recipients since last year. Four of these schools are continuing growth trends from last year. All ten are receiving more money than they would be had their enrollment not grown, with Academic Solutions Center for Learning enrolling 124 more MPCP students bringing an additional \$797,092 in vouchers.

Of the ten schools losing the most MPCP students, only one remains from last year's list, underscoring the point that the number of students gained or lost can be volatile from year to year for these schools. Milwaukee Multicultural Academy alone lost 40 MPCP recipients and an associated \$233,633 in voucher payments compared to what it would have received had its enrollment been stable.

**Table 2: Change in MPCP Students and Voucher Payments**

<b>Schools Gaining or Losing the Most MPCP Students Sept. 2001 to Sept. 2002</b>	<b>Change in MPCP Students (FTE)</b>	<b>Change in Voucher Payment*</b>
<b>Academic Solutions Center for Learning</b>	124	\$797,092
Saint Marcus Lutheran School	104	\$599,119
Atlas Preparatory Academy	95	\$548,228
<b>Ceria M. Travis Academy</b>	89	\$514,687
<b>Messmer Catholic Schools</b>	83	\$479,989
<b>Pius XI High School</b>	47	\$271,801
Saint Adalbert School	41	\$238,838
Saint Rafael the Archangel School	39	\$225,537
Woodlands School	36	\$205,297
Saint Catherine School	34	\$198,935
Milwaukee Multicultural Academy	-40	-\$233,633
Family Academy	-25	-\$146,888
Saint Peter-Immanuel Lutheran Church and School	-25	-\$144,575
Catholic East Elementary School	-24	-\$135,901
Parklawn Christian School	-23	-\$133,587
Emmaus Lutheran School	-22	-\$129,539
<b>Woodson Academy</b>	-22	-\$129,539
Saint Josaphat Parish School	-19	-\$109,877
Noah's Ark Preparatory School	-18	-\$104,094
Saint Rose Catholic Urban Academy	-15	-\$86,745

\* Based on \$5,783 per pupil. **Bold** indicates the school was also in the top ten for gaining or losing students last year.

# MPCP Schools Improve their Facilities



The MPCP program has enabled a number of schools to improve their facilities. This year we asked for the first time whether the schools had undertaken any renovations since 1998-1999, the year the program expanded to include religious schools. Administrators of 51 schools indicated that they had done some kind of improvements to their buildings. Six schools had or were in the process of building additions to their existing facilities or building new buildings.

Two examples of these additions are the new gym at Messmer High School and a large addition to Yeshiva Elementary. Both schools now enroll many more MPCP students than they did in 1998-1999, their first year of participation in the program. Messmer's MPCP participation has grown from 155 students to 398 in 2002-2003. Yeshiva Elementary's MPCP participation has grown from 61 students to 101 students this year. Work in other schools has varied from adding classrooms and labs to replacing windows. Table 3 tallies the types of renovations MPCP schools have undertaken over the past five years.

Interestingly, a school need not be growing in

MPCP participation in order to have made renovations. Of the 63 schools that have gained MPCP students since last year, 59% have made renovations of some sort. This compares to 57% of the schools that have fewer MPCP students than last year.

Still, when it comes to overall size, there is a link between a school's enrollment and whether they have renovated the school building. Table 4 shows the schools with the most and fewest MPCP students, as well as their total enrollment. Schools in bold have made or are planning renovations and tend to be the larger schools.

**Table 4: School Size and Renovations**

<b>Largest MPCP Enrollments</b>	<b>Renovations?</b>	<b>MPCP</b>	<b>Total</b>
Messmer Catholic Schools	Y	704	929
Urban Day School*	Y	537	600
Harambee Community School*	Y	422	500
Saint Anthony's School*	Y	332	405
Holy Redeemer Christian Academy*	Y	330	369
Saint Adalbert School	Y	300	340
Ceria M. Travis Academy	Y	285	294
Prince of Peace	Y	282	367
Academic Solutions Center for Learning	Y	246	372
Salam School	Y	244	325
<b>Smallest MPCP Enrollments</b>			
Lutheran Special School	N	15	32
Bridging the Gap Learning Center	N	14	14
Sherman Park Preschool	Y	14	23
Divine Savior Holy Angels HS	Y	13	627
Milwaukee School of Choice	N	13	n/p
Milwaukee Montessori School	Y	12	348
Grace Preparatory School of Excellence	N	10	18
Howard's Child Development Center/Learning Academy	N	9	14
Keal Preparatory School, Inc.	Y	5	7
Multicultural Community Services	N	1	4

\*Schools have been in the top ten since 1998-1999.

**Table 3: Renovations Since 1998 at MPCP Schools**

<b>Type of Work</b>	<b>Number of Schools</b>
New classrooms/labs	17
Electrical	10
New non-classroom space	8
Painting	8
Air conditioning/heating	6
New building or addition	6
Bathrooms	4
Elevator/other ADA	5
Roofing	5
Windows	5
Asbestos removal	2

# Minority Enrollment on the Rise in MPCP Schools, Private Schools



Critics contend the voucher program has the potential to increase segregation in Milwaukee's schools. The program's supporters counter this accusation by noting the increased enrollment of minority students in the city's private schools over the time period the program has been in effect.

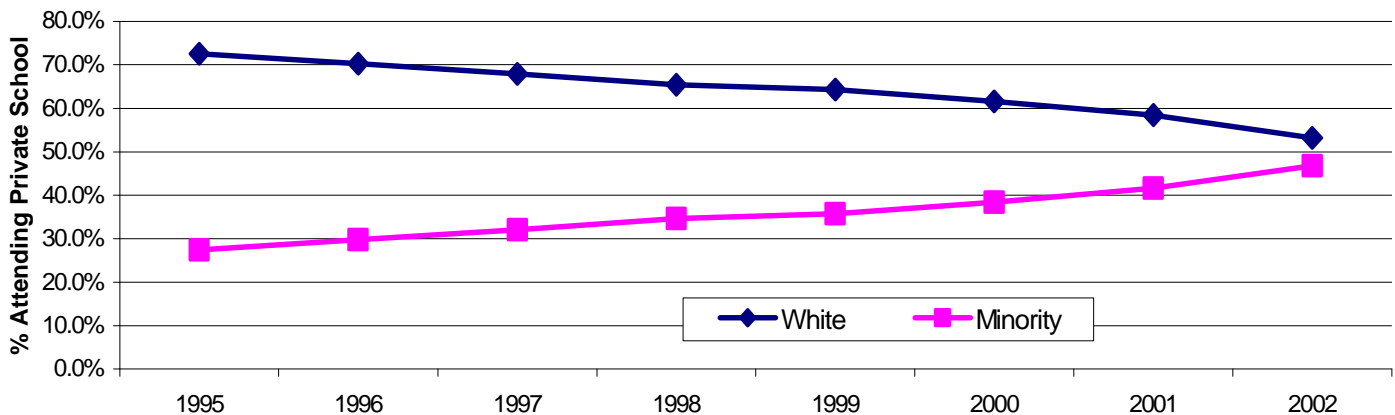
As Chart 1 below depicts, the percent of Milwaukee's private school students who are minority has steadily increased throughout the lifespan of the choice program. Of 25,150 private schoolers, 47% are now minority. The city's private school student body is thus approaching an even split between whites and minority students, and may soon have a majority of minority students, as does the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) school district.

For now, though, the city's private schools together have a far larger white population than does

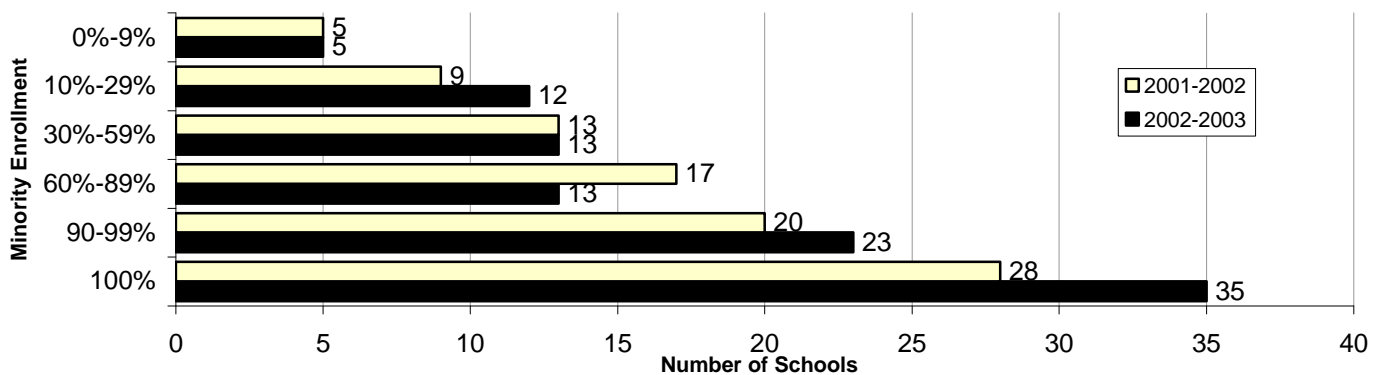
MPS. However, like MPS, the private schools participating in the choice program mostly enroll students from minority groups. Of the 101 MPCP schools providing race and ethnicity data, 58 have student bodies of 90% or more minority students. This compares to 83 of 168 MPS schools. In fact, despite having a total district enrollment of 18% white students, no MPS school enrolls 100% minority students. There are 35 MPCP schools enrolling 100% minority students.

In addition, the number of MPCP schools enrolling 90% minority students has grown from last year (Chart 2). Although the total number of MPCP schools has remained the same, there are 10 more of these highly segregated schools this year. The number of schools enrolling 90% or more white students is the same as last year, at five. There are no MPS schools that enroll 90% or more white students.

**Chart 1: Milwaukee Children Attending Private School 1995-2002**



**Chart 2: Minority Enrollment in MPCP Schools**



# Central-city MPCP Schools Enroll Fewer White Students



By plotting the MPCP schools, we get a better picture of how the diversity within the program is distributed throughout the city.

First, it is clear that the majority of MPCP schools are located in the North and Northwest regions of the city. This is not accidental; most of the city's population is located in those areas as well. Overall, the participating schools are spread out throughout the city—most neighborhoods appear to have a MPCP school close-by.

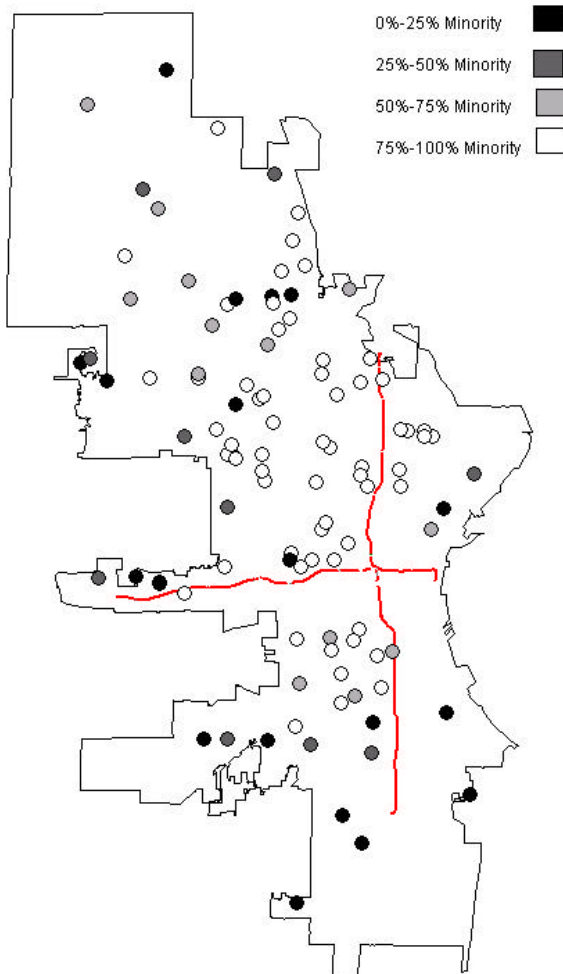
Second, the map indicates that the further out from the city center a school is located, the more likely it is to serve a greater percentage of white students. Schools located in the central region of the

city are more likely to enroll higher percentages of minority students. This also mirrors the demographics of the city's population.

Thus, it appears from the map that, for the most part, the racial make-up of a MPCP school is a reflection of the population of the school's neighborhood. However, we do not know how many students participating in MPCP actually attend the private schools located in their neighborhoods. We do know that about half of the MPCP schools do not offer transportation for their students; these schools enroll 51% of all MPCP students. In addition, of the 51 schools that do offer transportation, 17 indicate that they offer limited transportation from certain regions only. Until more data become available regarding the MPCP students, we cannot determine how far these students travel to attend their schools of choice.

One other thing many of the schools enrolling high percentages of minority students have in common is that they tend to be newer schools. Of the 58 schools enrolling 90% or more minority students this year, 23 were founded since 1998. (A total of 32 schools currently in the program are five years old or less.) The choice program thus appears to have had a hand in creating new schools to serve urban, minority populations.

**Map 1: Minority Enrollment**



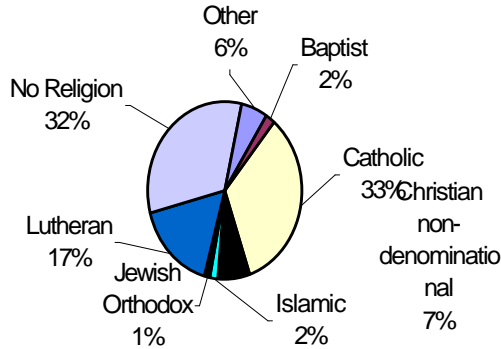
**Table 5: Minority Enrollment by Location**

	Number of Schools			
	75-100% Minority	50-75% Minority	25-50% Minority	0-25% Minority
Downtown	0	1	1	0
North Side	19	0	0	0
Northwest	26	8	3	3
South Side	12	3	2	4
Southwest	0	0	1	4
West Side	6	0	3	4

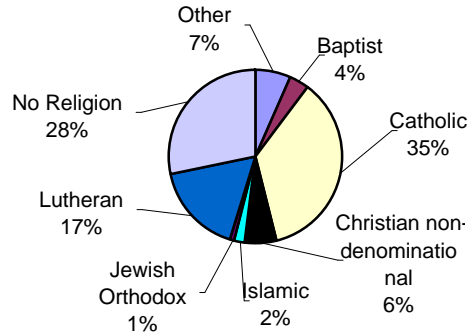
# Non-Sectarian Schools Enroll Larger Share in 2002-2003



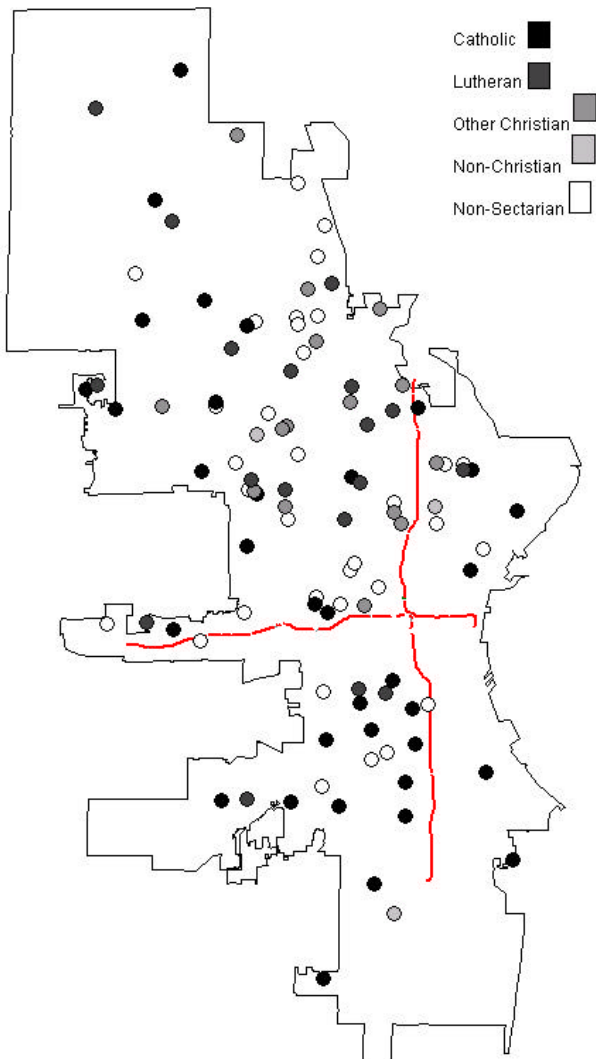
**Chart 3: Religious Affiliations of MPCP Schools 2002-2003**



**Chart 4: Religious Affiliations of MPCP Schools 2001-2002**



**Map 2: Religious Affiliations**



Of the 107 participating schools in 2002-2003, one third, or 36 schools, are Catholic, making that the predominant religious affiliation of MPCP schools. Since religious schools first joined the program in 1998-1999, Catholic schools have been the largest contingent of sectarian schools. This year they enrolled 40% of all MPCP students. As depicted in Map 2, most of the south side schools are Catholic, with the rest distributed more evenly around the city.

Lutheran schools continue to make up 17% of the pie with 18 participating schools, the same number as last year. Ten percent of all MPCP students attended Lutheran schools this year. The Lutheran schools tend to be on the north side of the city. There remain one Jewish Orthodox school and two Islamic schools. Non-Christian religious schools enroll about 4% of all MPCP students. A total of 72 choice schools are religiously affiliated, representing 68% of the total MPCP enrollment.

This year saw an increase in the number of non-sectarian schools, from 30 such schools last year to 35 in 2002-2003. Non-religious schools now make up 32% of the participating MPCP schools and enroll 32% of the MPCP students. These schools are located predominantly on the north side.



# High School Enrollment Up, Kindergarten Enrollment Down



The 2002-2003 school year marks the graduation of the choice program's first Kindergarten class. Students who started K5 in 1990-1991 are now seniors in high school. Fittingly, this school year saw the largest high school enrollment in the program's history.

Enrollment in MPCP grew 7% this year to 11,163 full-time students. Much of this increase can be attributed to an increase in the number of high school students participating in the program. This year there were 1,570 MPCP students in 9th through 12th grades, an increase of over 400 students from last year. For the first time in the program's history, the number of K4 and K5 students *was not* double the number of high school students.

However, it is very unlikely that many of this year's graduating senior class have been MPCP participants since Kindergarten. As can be seen in Chart 5, historically the choice program tends to lose participants each year as they progress to the next grade. In addition, the aggregate mobility out of the program has been at least 26% each year since 1998-1999 and this year has decreased to 24% (Table 6). This means that a quarter of those who received vouchers in 2001-2002 did not participate

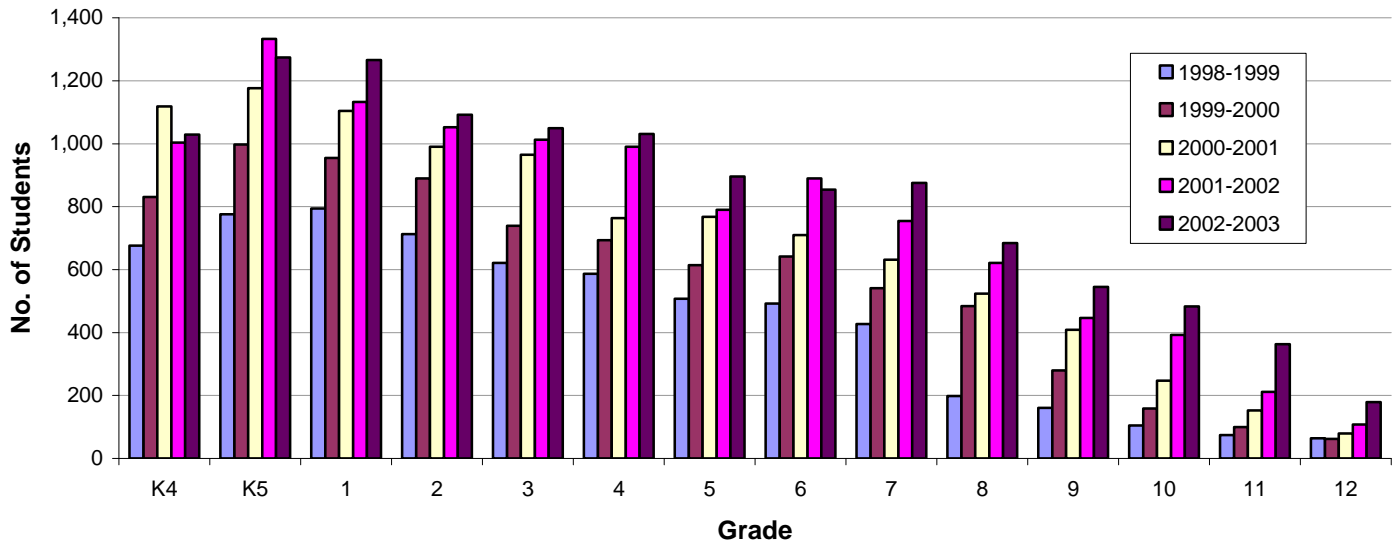
in the program this year (accounting for last year's graduating seniors).

Thus, MPCP schools must continue to attract new participants to the program in order to maintain enrollment. And they must do so while the total number of private school students in the city continues a 14-year decline. Not all MPCP schools have been successful in doing so. Of the 69 schools for which we have data, 27, or 39%, have smaller total enrollments this year than they did in 1998-1999, despite the MPCP program's 100% growth over that same time period.

**Table 6: Aggregate Mobility Rate**

	Sept. 1998 to Sept. 1999	Sept. 1999 to Sept. 2000	Sept. 2000 to Sept. 2001	Sept. 2001 to Sept. 2002
<b>Students Not Renewing Vouchers</b>	1,621	2,312	2,501	2,446
<b>% Mobility</b>	26%	29%	26%	24%

**Chart 5: MPCP Enrollment by Grade Level 1998-2002**



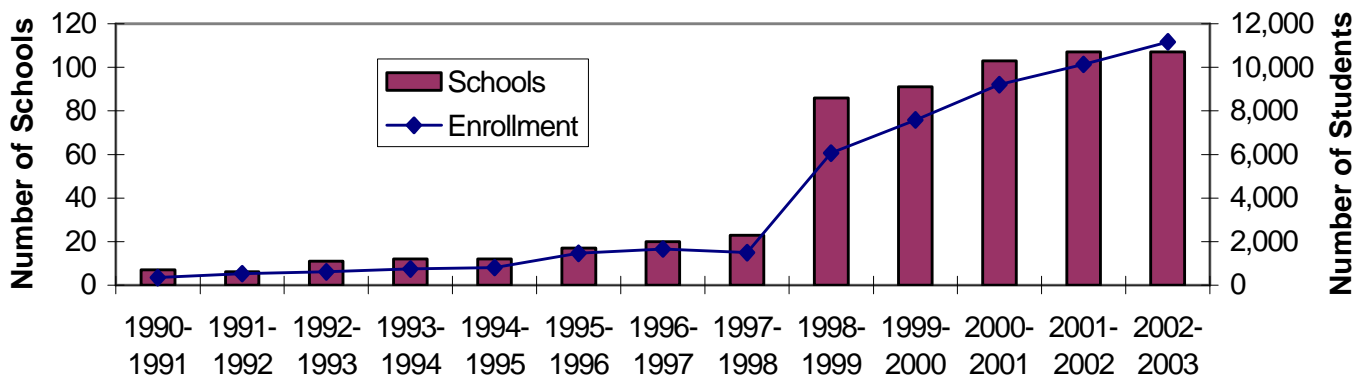
# 13th Year of Growth for School Choice Program



With 107 schools, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) enrolls more students than ever before—7% more than the previous year for a total of 11,163 participating students. For the first time since 1994, the enrollment has grown despite the number of participating schools remaining the same.

More high school students now participate in the choice program and enrollment in nearly every grade is greater than the previous year. In addition, the turnover rate, the number of last year's voucher recipients who did not participate in the program this year, has declined for the second year in a row to 24%.

**Chart 6: MPCP Full-time Enrollment and Number of Participating Schools**



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