

School Choice Wisconsin, Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty: New report shows impact of current accountability measures in Milwaukee Parental Choice Program

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Report challenges voucher program critics' that schools are "unaccountable"

August 1, 2017 - Milwaukee, WI - School Choice Wisconsin (SCW) and Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) have co-authored a new, comprehensive [study on the impact of Wisconsin's accountability laws](#) on private schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). The study, the first of its kind, explains how these laws - and parental choice - have influenced the manner that private schools have gained or lost access the MPCP, their fiscal viability and enrollment trends over time.

The study focuses on the current administrative accountability measures and how they impact a private school's eligibility within the MPCP. Based predominately on fiscal management, the study looks at academic performance of the private schools who have had administrative violations. The study also references school safety data and enrollment trends to also see their impact on school viability. At the crossroads of these findings, some clear paths emerge - administrative measures were closely tied to academic performance and school safety was a strong driver of parent demand.

The study also utilizes an econometric "survival" model to explain the factors that are related to a school leaving the MPCP. Schools that perform poorly academically on state-mandated testing are more likely to be forced out of the MPCP. "Our analysis also gives an insight about how parents are choosing their child's school. We show that parents are choosing schools based upon a school's safety and religious affiliation, both of which are related to a school's academic quality," explains Will Flanders, Ph.D., WILL's Research Director and co-author of the study.

Jim Bender, president of School Choice Wisconsin, explained, "The strong accountability measures provide fiscal and operational oversight to ensure proper use of taxpayer dollars. Combined with direct parent accountability, the MPCP has both increased high quality and removed low quality seats."

Rick Esenberg, president and general counsel at WILL, noted, "Opponents of school choice have always maintained, explicitly or implicitly, that parents are incapable of deciding which school is best for their children. They need politicians and bureaucrats to do it for them. This study finds powerful evidence of what common sense was already telling us: The opponents are wrong. While reasonable rules can help parents make good decisions, families do vote with their feet when it comes to their kids' education."

The MPCP is the nation's oldest parental choice program, created in 1990.

The report is available for download at both www.will-law.org and www.schoolchoicewi.org.