

Dept. of Public Instruction: Releases numbers on 2020-21 general school aids

Posted on Thursday, Oct 15, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON — The Department of Public Instruction today posted state general school aids school districts will receive during the current school year. The information published includes certified general school aid amounts for each school district, as well as 2020-21 student enrollment numbers for independent charter schools and private schools participating in state parental choice programs. The enrollment numbers are used to determine the dollar amounts to be deducted or withheld from school districts' aid payments to fund state parental choice programs.

General school aids are the largest form of state support for PK-12 schools in Wisconsin, and are based on prior year data. The private school choice and independent charter school programs are funded based on current year data. The department is required by state law to release the certified aid figures by Oct. 15 of each year. The general school aid amounts for school districts are calculated using student counts and year-end financial data from the previous school year (2019-20). This finalized data [replaces preliminary aid estimates released in July](#). Independent charter and private school choice enrollment counts come from schools' reporting the number of students enrolled on the third Friday of September 2020.

General school aids

The 2019-2021 state biennial budget increased funding for general school aids for the 2020-21 school year by 3.5 percent (\$163.5 million) to a total of \$4.90 billion. Statewide, the majority of general school aids is [equalization aid](#). Equalization aid is distributed according to a formula designed to help Wisconsin communities provide public education despite local differences in property wealth. The formula considers school district expenditures, property values, and resident student counts (called "membership").

The other, smaller elements of general school aids are [integration aid](#) (or “Chapter 220” aid) and [special adjustment aid](#). The latter, also known as “hold harmless” aid, generally prevents districts from seeing more than a 15 percent reduction in aid from one year to the next, and will go to 49 districts this year.

Aid varies widely by district based on the equalization formula. Of 421 districts, 297 will receive more aid than last year (71 percent); 119 will receive less (28 percent). Aid amounts for each school district [can be found on the department’s School Financial Services website](#), both alphabetically and by percent change. General school aids are paid in five installments during the school year and following summer.

By law, two kinds of reductions are made to general school aids to support private school choice and independent charter programs. Funding for legacy independent charter schools(1) and the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program is deducted before school district aid eligibilities are certified. Newer independent charter schools and the expanded private school choice programs involve withholding aid from districts for participating resident students, resulting in a difference between aid eligibility announced today and actual aid payments to be made this year. Shown in the table below are the 2020-21 reductions to state general school aids:

2020-21 Reductions to State General School Aids

Program	Impact	Method	Total Amount
Legacy Independent Charter Schools	416 Districts	Deducted	\$79.3 million
Newer Independent Charter Schools	18 Districts	Withheld	\$3.5 million
Wisconsin Parental Choice Program	297 Districts	Withheld	\$95.7 million
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program	Milwaukee	Deducted	\$30.0 million
Racine Parental Choice Program	Racine	Withheld	\$25.7 million
Special Needs Scholarship Program	139 Districts	Withheld	\$18.0 million

Private school choice program and independent charter enrollments

Enrollment in Wisconsin’s private school choice programs increased by 2,577 students and 26 schools over last school year (see table below). Voucher payments and independent charter payments are made to participating schools in four annual installments.

Program	Students	Schools*	Total Cost (2020-21)**
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program	28,583	131	\$234.2 million
Wisconsin Parental Choice Program	12,111	280	\$99.2 million
Racine Parental Choice Program	3,835	25	\$31.8 million
Special Needs Scholarship Program	1,425	124	\$18.1 million

Program	Students Schools*		Total Cost (2020-21)**
All Private School Choice Programs	45,954	343 ***	\$383.3 million
Legacy Independent Charter Schools	8,853	22	\$79.3 million
Newer Independent Charter Schools	404	4	\$3.5 million
Both Independent Charter Programs	9,257	26	\$82.8 million

Private school systems are counted as a single school for all programs except the Special Needs Scholarship Program, in which individual schools are counted separately. **Differences between total program cost and total program aid deductions are funded with state general purpose revenue. *Schools may participate in multiple parental choice programs.*

(1): Legacy independent charter schools are schools chartered by authorizers who had the authority prior to [2015 Act 55](#), and newer independent charter schools are those chartered by an authorizer who received authority following the law's implementation.

LINKS: General aid certification: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/aid/general/summary>. Funding comparison for public and private choice programs: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sfs/pdf/FY21-ChoiceOptionsFundingTable.pdf>. Wisconsin, Racine, and Milwaukee parental choice programs: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/data>. Special Needs Scholarship Program: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/special-needs-scholarship/data>. Independent charter programs: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/charter-schools/current/2r-membership>.