

WILL: Fifth edition of Apples to Apples once again reports school choice performance advantage

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The News: The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) issued its fifth edition of the [Apples to Apples](#) report, an assessment of the state of education in Wisconsin. After a two-year pause due to COVID, the policy report resumed last year and now continues with data from the 2021-22 school year.

In this report, we take a comprehensive look at Wisconsin's schools by assessing outcomes on a level playing field, while taking into account student characteristics. Unlike last year's report, much of the school year studied was conducted under "normal" circumstances—in person, with far fewer virtual learning days. **Consequently, this year's report paints a clearer picture of where education stands in the Badger State: that school choice options continue to provide a significant performance advantage for Wisconsin students.**

Webinar Today: WILL Research Director, Will Flanders, PhD, and Associate Counsel, Cory Brewer, will be talking about the state of school choice in Wisconsin today at 10 AM CT. Register for today's webinar [here!](#)

What is Apples to Apples? WILL's annual *Apples to Apples* report puts Wisconsin's schools on a level playing field, determining if public, charter, or private voucher schools are educating students best. Demographic factors historically play a large role in student performance; and taking these factors into account gives an honest assessment of how schools—and school sectors—are performing.

This report aims to incorporate these factors through rigorous and sophisticated statistical modeling, that controls for and assesses the impact of a number of

student characteristics. The report has been updated to include data from the 2021-22 report cards, even though the state's report card often fails to accurately record demographic factors.

Key Findings: When taken into account, the [report](#) finds that Wisconsin's charter schools and private schools in the choice program are outperforming traditional public schools. This year's report includes these four takeaways:

- **Students in the state's school choice programs continue to outperform their public-school peers.** Proficiency rates in private choice schools were 8.1% higher in English/Language Arts (ELA) and 8.3% higher in math on average than proficiency rates in traditional public schools in Milwaukee. Proficiency rates were about 3.2% higher in ELA for students participating in school choice statewide than traditional public-school students, and 2.1% higher in math, on average.
- **Charter school students in Milwaukee continue to outperform their public-school peers.** Independent charter schools in Milwaukee had proficiency rates 3.7% higher in ELA and 4.6% higher in math on average than their traditional public-school peers. District charters saw 8.5% and 8.8% higher proficiency respectively in ELA and math respectively.
- **Wisconsin continues to struggle with achievement gaps.** Schools with more minority and low-income students have significantly lower proficiency than schools with fewer students in these categories.
- **Proficiency remains well below pre-COVID levels.** While math proficiency rebounded slightly, ELA proficiency continued to decline once non-participation on the test is accounted for. ELA proficiency is down 3.16% since 2019, while math proficiency is down 3.46%.

The Quote: WILL Research Director, Will Flanders, PhD, stated "It's crystal clear that school choice continues to offer a valuable alternative for families, as students in the program outperform their public-school peers in both ELA and Math. As we celebrate School Choice Week, Wisconsinites have a lot to be proud of. But we also have a long way to go to ensure that educational options are available for everyone."

Read More:

- [Apples to Apples: Assessing Wisconsin's State of Education](#), January 25, 2023



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