

Private School Choice Programs

The state of Wisconsin manages three separate programs that allow eligible students to attend a participating private school. The private school, on behalf of the student’s parent or guardian, receives a state aid payment for each eligible student. The three private school choice programs (Choice) are:

- Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP);
- Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP); and
- Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP).

A list of participating private schools can be found on the program’s webpage at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/student-application>.

Student Eligibility

Student eligibility, which is established by state law, varies for each program. Student eligibility is a combination of student residence, income and prior year attendance. There is also an age requirement that must be met for grades K4, K5, and 1.

All students must apply each year and provide documentation that they meet the residency requirements that are specific to each program. Students continuing in the program or students that were on a Choice waiting list in the prior year for the same program they are applying are not required to provide income documentation.

MPCP: Students in grades kindergarten through 12 residing in the City of Milwaukee may apply for the MPCP during a period the school is accepting Choice applications. To qualify for the program, a new student must have a family income equal to or less than 300% of the federal poverty level income limits shown in Table 1. If the student’s parents/legal guardians are married their income is reduced by \$7,000 when determining income eligibility for the program. **All students must meet the residency requirement every year.**

RPCP: Students in grades kindergarten through 12 residing in the Racine Unified School District may apply for the RPCP during a period the school is accepting Choice applications. To qualify for the program, a new student must have a family income equal to or less than 300% of the federal poverty level income limits shown in Table 1. If the student’s parents/legal guardians are married their income is reduced by \$7,000 when determining income eligibility for the program.

In addition, all students applying for the RPCP must meet one of the following prior year attendance requirements: (1) have attended a public school in Wisconsin the previous school year; (2) was not enrolled in school in the previous school year; (3) is applying for grades kindergarten, first or ninth in the current school year or; (4) participated in the RPCP or WPCP in the previous school year. **All students must meet the prior year attendance and residency requirements every year.**

WPCP: Students in grades kindergarten through 12 residing in a Wisconsin school district, other than in the city of Milwaukee or Racine Unified School District, may apply for the WPCP between February 1st and April 20th. To qualify for the program, a new student must have a family income equal to or less than 185% of the federal poverty level income limits shown in Table 2. If the student’s parents/legal guardians are married their income is reduced by \$7,000 when determining income eligibility for the program.

In addition, all students applying for the WPCP must meet one of the following prior year attendance requirements: (1) have attended a public school in Wisconsin the previous school year; (2) was not enrolled in school in the previous school year; (3) is applying for grades kindergarten, first or ninth in the current school year or; (4) participated in the WPCP or RPCP in the previous school year. **All students must meet the prior year attendance and residency requirements every year.**

WPCP continued: For the 2017-18 school year, state law mandates that no more than 2% of the pupil membership of a public school district may participate in the WPCP. The DPI will conduct a random drawing of eligible applications. DPI will also notify parents of student acceptance and establish a waiting list for students not selected in the random drawing.

Payment of Allowable Fees

A Choice student cannot be charged fees for registration or application to the Choice program, books, teacher salaries, buildings, maintenance, equipment, or computers. A private school may charge a Choice student reasonable fees for certain personal use items.

Special Education Services

A Choice school may not discriminate against a student with special needs during the admissions process or elsewhere. However, as a private school, the Choice school is only required to offer those services to assist students with special needs that it can provide with minor adjustments. Parents should contact the public school district in which the private school is located for more information on the services provided to students with special needs enrolled in the public schools and the lesser services that school district provides to those students enrolled in private schools.

Payment of Tuition – Grades 9-12

A private school may, in addition to the state aid payment it receives, charge a Choice student tuition in an amount determined by the school if both of the following apply: (a) the student is in grades 9 through 12; and (b) the family income of the student exceeds 220% of the federal poverty level as shown in Table 3 in this brochure. If the student’s parents/legal guardians are married their income is reduced by \$7,000 when determining income for tuition purposes.

Table 3 – Tuition Income Limits

220% of the Federal Poverty Level 2017-18 Maximum

Family Size	Yearly Income
1	\$26,136
2	\$35,244
3	\$44,352
4	\$53,460
5	\$62,568
6	\$71,676
7	\$80,806
8	\$89,958

For each additional member add \$9,152.

Table 1 – MPCP and RPCP Income Limits

300% of the Federal Poverty Level - 2017-18 Maximum

Family Size	Yearly Income
1	\$35,640
2	\$48,060
3	\$60,480
4	\$72,900
5	\$85,320
6	\$97,740
7	\$110,190
8	\$122,670

For each additional member add \$12,480.

Table 2 – WPCP Income Limits

185% of the Federal Poverty Level - 2017-18 Maximum

Family Size	Yearly Income
1	\$21,978
2	\$29,637
3	\$37,296
4	\$44,955
5	\$52,614
6	\$60,273
7	\$67,951
8	\$75,647

For each additional member add \$7,696.

How to Apply

Parents must complete the on-line parent application available at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/student-applications>. An email is required to use the online application. Parents may only apply during the open application periods available for each school/program. Each program has different application periods. Also, deadlines for parents to apply vary by program. A student can apply to the Choice program at one or more schools during the open application period(s).

In addition to completing the on-line application, parents must provide income documentation (if applying for a new student) and residency documentation (for all students) directly to the school(s) they apply to during the application period or their application is ineligible. Parents/guardians of new applicants must show they are income eligible by either: (a) providing their social security numbers or taxpayer identification number to the school and having the Department of Revenue determine whether the student is income eligible for the program; or (b) using the Department of Public Instruction's income determination method by answering a series of income questions in the on-line application and providing paper income documentation to the school(s) as directed in the application during the open application period. The school will verify that the student meets the income requirements. Applicants must also provide proof of residency directly to the school(s) during the open application period.

If a Choice school in the MPCP and RPCP receives applications from more eligible students than it has Choice seats available, selection of students will be determined on a random basis. **Schools cannot use grades, test scores, or other factors besides eligibility for the program in admitting Choice students.** The private school may give preference to the following in accepting applications, in order of preference listed: (1) students who attended the private school under the choice program during the previous year and their siblings; (2) students who attended a different private school under a choice program during the previous year and their siblings; and, (3) siblings of students who have been randomly accepted to attend the private school under the choice program who did not attend a private school under a choice program in the previous year. **Parents are encouraged to keep in touch with the school to receive the latest information.** Schools must notify MPCP and RPCP parents, within 60 days of receiving the application, of admission or non-admission to the Choice program at the school.

MPCP Open Application Periods

February 1 – February 20
March 1 – March 20
April 1 – April 20
May 1 – May 22
June 1 – June 20
July 1 – July 20
August 1 – August 21
September 1 – September 14
October 1 – October 20
(for 2nd semester participation only)
November 1 – November 20
(for 2nd semester participation only)
December 1 – January 8
(for 2nd semester participation only)

RPCP Open Application Periods

February 1 – February 20
March 1 – March 20
April 1 – April 20
May 1 – May 22
June 1 – June 20
July 1 – July 20
August 1 – August 21
September 1 – September 14

WPCP Open Application Period

February 1 – April 20

Frequently Asked Questions

Q.1 Can the Choice school require fundraising and school service of the Choice parent?

A.1 A school may not impose any penalties on a parent or student in the Choice program for failure to engage in fundraising (which would include any required service to the school).

Q.2 Is a student in the Choice program at a private religious school required to participate in religious activities or instruction?

A.2 No. If a Choice student's parent submits to the student's teacher or the school's principal a written request that the student be excused from any religious activity, the teacher and school must honor that request.

Q.3 Are there statutory procedures regarding student suspensions and expulsions that a private Choice school is required to follow?

A.3 Yes. State law requires private Choice schools have procedures in place regarding student suspensions and expulsions. Parents should ask the Choice school to provide a copy of the procedures the school has in place for imposition of or appeal of suspensions or expulsions.

2017-18

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, creed, age, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital status or parental status, sexual orientation, or disability.



2017-18 School Year

Private School Choice Programs in Wisconsin

Milwaukee Parental Choice Program
Racine Parental Choice Program
Wisconsin Parental Choice Program

Information for Parents

For more information contact:

Private School Choice Programs
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841
Toll-free: 888-245-2732, ext. 3

Web site: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/student-applications>



Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent