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Milwaukee Longitudinal School Choice Evaluation: Annual School Testing Summary Report 2009-10

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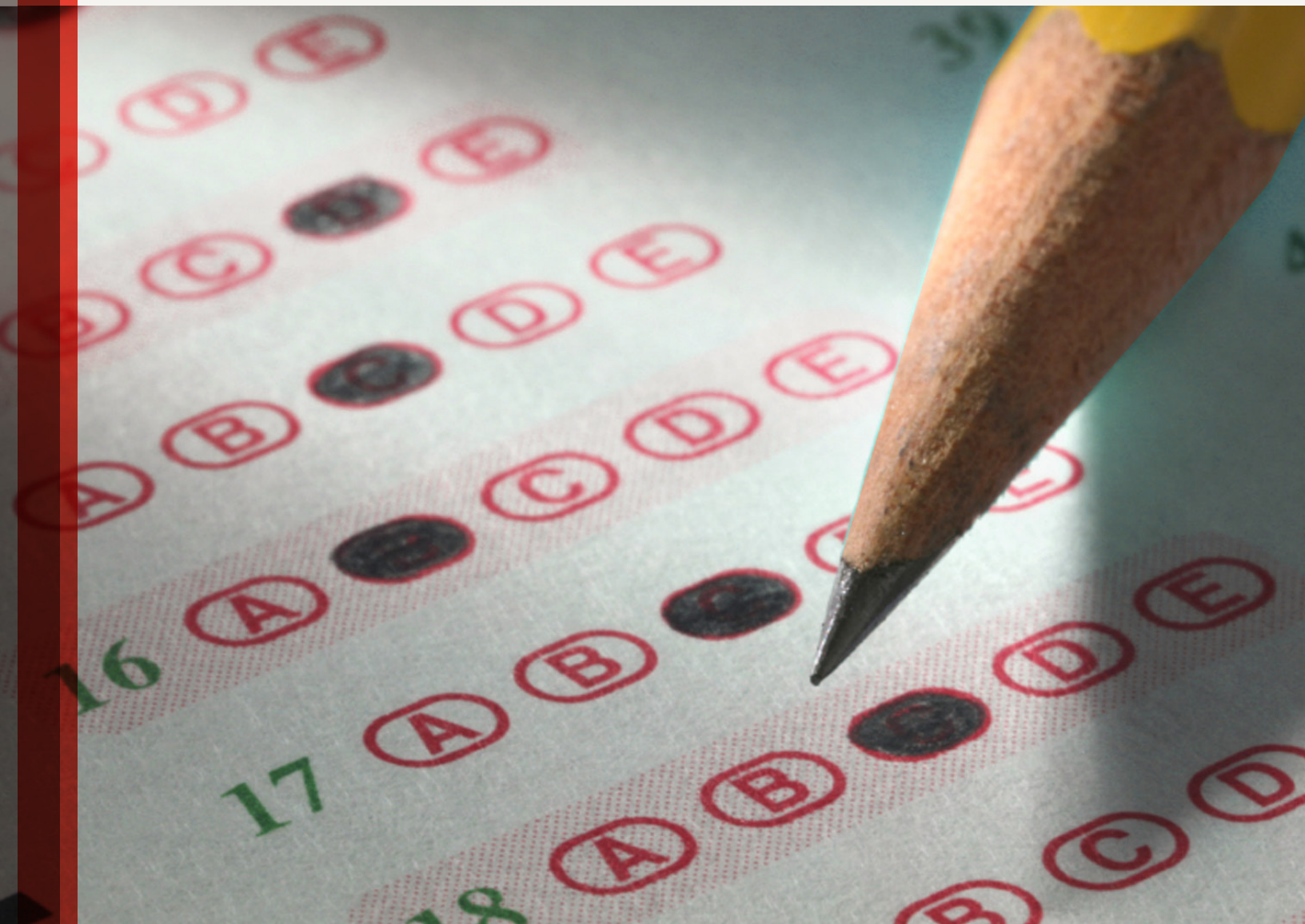
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SCDP Milwaukee Evaluation

Report #26

March 2011





The University of Arkansas was founded in 1871 as the flagship institution of higher education for the state of Arkansas. Established as a

land grant university, its mandate was threefold: to teach students, conduct research, and perform service and outreach.

The College of Education and Health Professions established the Department of Education Reform in 2005. The department's mission is to advance education and economic development by focusing on the improvement of academic achievement in elementary and secondary schools. It conducts research and demonstration projects in five primary areas of reform: teacher quality, leadership, policy, accountability, and school choice.

The School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP), based within the Department of Education Reform, is an education research center devoted to the non-partisan study of the effects of school choice policy and is staffed by leading school choice researchers and scholars. Led by Dr. Patrick J. Wolf, Professor of Education Reform and Endowed 21st Century Chair in School Choice, SCDP's national team of researchers, institutional research partners and staff are devoted to the rigorous evaluation of school choice programs and other school improvement efforts across the country. The SCDP is committed to raising and advancing the public's understanding of the strengths and limitations of school choice policies and programs by conducting comprehensive research on what happens to students, families, schools and communities when more parents are allowed to choose their child's school.

Milwaukee Longitudinal School Choice Evaluation: Annual School Testing Summary Report 2009-10

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**SCHOOL CHOICE
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

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Executive Summary

With the passage of the 2005 Wisconsin Act 125, private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) have been required to administer annual standardized tests in reading, mathematics, and science to their MPCP students enrolled in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. The law further directs Choice schools to submit copies of the scores from those tests to the School Choice Demonstration Project for processing and reporting to the Legislative Audit Bureau. During the 2009-10 school year, MPCP schools administered either nationally normed tests, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or the state criterion-referenced Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE). The School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) received student test scores from 105 of the 115 schools participating in the MPCP that were required to administer tests. Specifically, the SCDP received 6,331 nationally normed student test scores and 1,217 WKCE test scores. Sixty-nine of 105 schools submitted only normed tests, 18 schools submitted only the WKCE, and 18 submitted both types of tests. Seven schools were not required to send in scores as they had no testing grades, and three schools failed to send in scores.

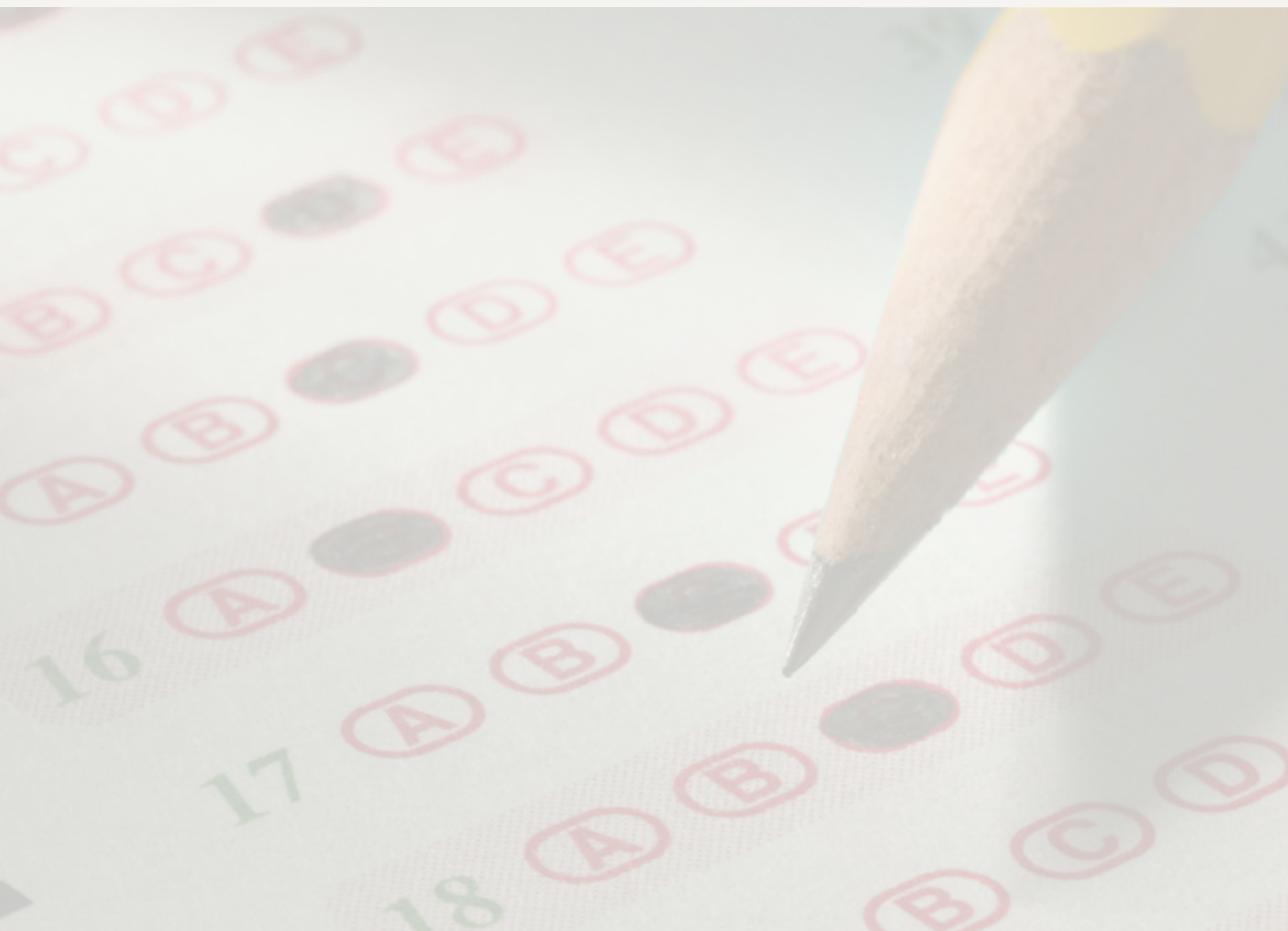
Nationally normed test scores for MPCP students in grades 4, 8, and 10 averaged between the 20th and 35th percentiles nationally, depending on grade and subject. Fourth grade students in the MPCP averaged around the 25rd percentile nationally in reading, math, and science. The MPCP students tested in 8th grade averaged around the 32nd percentile in the same three subjects. The MPCP students tested in 10th grade averaged at the 33rd percentile across reading, math, and science.

MPCP students who took the WKCE can be compared approximately to similarly income-disadvantaged students in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) as similar household income limits apply to participation in both the MPCP and the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program (FRL). The 4th grade MPCP students who took the WKCE on average scored 14 to 27 scaled score points (equal to .26 to .56 of a standard deviation) below the average scores of MPS FRL 4th graders. The 8th grade MPCP students who took the WKCE performed better than MPS FRL students by 9 to 12 scaled score points (.17 to .23 of a standard deviation). Only 65 Choice students in 10th grade took the WKCE, too few to generate reliable comparisons.

Readers are urged not to draw conclusions about the relative success of the MPCP or MPS based upon these rough descriptive comparisons. Any differences observed between the test scores of MPCP & MPS FRL students are open to varying interpretations. The higher scores observed for MPCP over MPS FRL students in the 8th grade could be attributed to older students in the MPCP benefiting from participation in the program, or it might be true that those 8th grade students who have remained in the MPCP are simply more able than those who have left. Moreover, the subset of MPCP schools that administer the WKCE as their accountability test may not be representative of the total population of MPCP schools. Any reliable determination of the effectiveness of a school choice program like the

MPCP can only come from a rigorous experimental or longitudinal study that follows a representative group of choice students over time and compares their achievement gains to those of a comparable set of public school students. For such an evaluation we refer readers to the MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study (LEGS) also being conducted by the SCDP.

This report and its companion reports are the fourth in a series of annual reports on the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) conducted by the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP). This ongoing research project is being funded by a diverse set of philanthropies including the Annie E. Casey, Joyce, Kern Family, Robertson, and Walton Family Foundations. We thank them for their generous support and acknowledge that the actual content of this report is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect any official positions of the various funding organizations or the University of Arkansas.



Introduction

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program has provided scholarships to low-income students in the city of Milwaukee since 1990. It is currently the oldest and largest school voucher program in the United States. In the early years of the program, voucher schools were not required to test their students. This changed on March 10, 2006, when Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle signed Wisconsin Act 125 into law. Participating private schools are now required to administer either the WKCE (the Wisconsin state test) or a nationally normed standardized test annually in reading, mathematics, and science to their MPCP (a.k.a. “Choice”) students enrolled in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. Beginning in 2006 and extending through 2011, the individual student results of the tests must be provided to the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP). Finally, Act 125 requires that:

The [Wisconsin] legislative audit bureau shall review and analyze the standardized test data received from the School Choice Demonstration Project. Based on its review, in 2007 and annually thereafter until 2011, the bureau shall report to the legislature under s. 13.172 (2) the result of the standardized tests administered under subd. 1., the scores of a representative sample of pupils participating in the program under ss. 118.30 and 121.02 (1) (r), and scores of a comparable group of pupils enrolled in the school district operating under this chapter on the tests under ss 118.30 abd 121.02 (1) (r).¹

This report describes the results of the student testing conducted by MPCP schools during the 2009-10 academic year.² The standardized test scores were collected from participating schools throughout the school year, with most of them arriving at the SCDP in the summer of 2010. The SCDP staff carefully entered these scores into a single database and delivered the data to the Legislative Audit Bureau on December 27, 2010.³

Most of the test scores received from Choice schools were nationally normed tests such as the Terra Nova or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). These types of tests measure performance relative to other students by

¹ WI Act 125, Sec. 8, 119.23 (7)(e), 2.

² Although this report is mandated by Act 125, the law specifies that it be conducted by an independent research organization (i.e. the SCDP) and financed by non-governmental sources.

³ The majority of MPCP schools administered the standardized tests late in spring 2010, with some administering in the fall of 2009. The companies that produce the tests require several months to score them and send the test results to the schools. Since most schools operate with a minimum staff over the summer, in some cases the test results were not compiled and sent to the SCDP until late summer 2010. The test score database was entered and checked for errors between the date of receipt of test scores and the date on which test scores were received by the LAB.

including questions meant to produce a full range of scores (i.e. very easy questions ranging to very difficult questions to separate the highest and lowest performing students), and performance is measured across a large national sample of students. By contrast, 36 private schools participating in the MPCP administered the Wisconsin criterion-referenced test, the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE), either exclusively or in addition to nationally normed tests (Table 1). Even though the producers of both norm- and criterion-referenced tests claim that the assessments cover the same subject domain, students likely exhibit different patterns of proficiency on the two types of tests due to differences in content, difficulty, and framework. The WKCE is only administered in Wisconsin; therefore, no national distribution exists to allow a direct performance comparison with the ITBS, Terra Nova, and other nationally normed tests.

To account for these differences, distinct sections of this report present aggregated results from schools that administered nationally normed tests and separate results from schools that administered the WKCE. The report compares the performance of Choice students and schools administering the WKCE with student- and school-level WKCE test scores for Milwaukee Public School (MPS) students who participate in the federal free- and reduced-lunch (FRL) program.⁴

Table 1: Types of Tests Taken by MPCP Schools and Students

	Schools		Students	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Nationally Normed	69	65.7%	6331	83.9%
WKCE Only	18	17.1%	1086	14.4%
Both Types Given*	18	17.1%	131	1.7%
Total	105	100.0%	7548	100.0%

* For schools, this category broadly includes schools which gave both types of tests, though not necessarily to the same students. For example, some grades may have been given nationally normed tests, and others the WKCE, in which case each student in the school may have only taken one test. For students, however, this category includes only individual students who took both types of tests in the 2008-09 school year.

The scores received from the MPCP schools are summarized in two results sections below. The first section describes the aggregate student-level scores for the groups of Choice students in each of the tested grades who took either nationally normed assessments or the WKCE. The second section presents the distribution of MPCP test scores, by grade and subject matter, averaged at the school level.

⁴ As a mechanism for comparing MPCP and MPS students, eligibility for the federal lunch program is limited in two ways. First, the family income ceiling for eligibility for the lunch program is 185 percent of the poverty line, which is slightly higher than the income ceiling of 175 percent of poverty for initial eligibility for the MPCP but somewhat below the income ceiling of 220 percent of poverty for renewal of MPCP eligibility. Second, many students who are income eligible for the federal lunch program choose not to participate. The rate of non-participation tends to increase steadily as students move from the lower grades to the higher grades. Although federal lunch program participation is an imperfect measure of family disadvantage, it was the best criterion available to generate approximate comparisons for this particular element of the evaluation. For this and other reasons described in this report, readers are cautioned against drawing any strong conclusions about the relative performance of MPCP and MPS students from the descriptive comparisons provided here.

Although school-level test scores are presented in the second results section, individual schools are not identified by name. Connecting any individual Choice school explicitly to information about its students could enable readers to identify individual participants in the study in violation of the assurances of confidentiality that are required when conducting such research.⁵ The preservation of the anonymity of participants in educational evaluations is so important that the federal statute establishing the evaluation division of the U.S. Department of Education expressly prohibits the naming of individual students, parents, or schools in any of its reports.⁶ Because state law requires the affected MPCP schools to administer tests and submit scores to the SCDP, we do mention by name in this report the schools that did and did not perform those required actions (Appendix A). Because the information submitted by the schools is designed to facilitate an education evaluation, however, any subsequent presentation of the data provided by schools and students must remain anonymous. Of the hundreds of statistical studies of school choice programs with which the authors are familiar, none of them have revealed school-level information directly associated with named schools, for these very reasons.⁷

The MPCP Annual School Testing Summary Report has important strengths and limitations. The main strength of the Report is its ability to provide a data-rich snapshot of the current academic performance of a large number of students from nearly all of the schools participating in the MPCP. Such information on the Choice program has not been available for more than a decade. There are two primary limitations to this report. First, students are not required to test in consecutive grades, so currently there is no way to observe year-over-year changes in individual test scores. Differences in test score averages between the previous year's report and the current report reflect the achievement of different cohorts of students. Students who were in grades 4, 8, and 10 in 2008-09 and have advanced are not included in the current 2009-10 report. Since testing is not required for consecutive grades, no individual gains are observable in consecutive annual reports. Second, the comparison of MPCP and MPS FRL students is not ideal. Though participation in both programs is subject to income limits, the degree to which these limits reflect the actual demographics of the two groups is not knowable using the data received from these schools. Further, the performance of the two groups cannot be considered a reflection of the effectiveness of either the MPCP or the MPS, as the free selection of students into the two groups precludes a strict scientific comparison. Altogether, these data show us how well a large

5 As with all academic research with human participants, the SCDP research team had to gain approval of an extensive protocol for protecting the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of the information that they provide before research on the MPCP could begin. Approvals of our research protocols, which prohibit us from associating any data with named individuals or schools, were obtained from the Institutional Review Boards for Human Subjects Research at the University of Arkansas, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Kentucky, and Westat.

6 "The Director shall ensure that all individually identifiable information about students, their academic achievements, their families, and information with respect to individual schools, shall remain confidential..." See Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, 20 U.S.C., 1232g, 1232h.

7 Many schools in the MPCP provide school-level information by school name voluntarily to parents and organizations to facilitate the school choice process. In Milwaukee and in other major cities around the country, the organization Great Schools Dot Net is spearheading efforts to consolidate such information into comprehensive school choice guides called "My School Chooser." Because such efforts are voluntary and are not part of a research evaluation, the prohibition against connecting descriptive information to named schools does not apply to such school choice guides. Copies of the "Milwaukee School Chooser" are available at: <http://www.greatschools.net/geo/landing/milwaukee.page>.

group of MPCP students is performing academically, but tell us nothing about what has caused them to perform at that level. Since many factors including the backgrounds and home lives of students as well as the quality of their educational experiences likely influence their performance on standardized tests at a given point in time, it would be a mistake for readers to draw conclusions concerning the effectiveness of the MPCP based on these simple annual descriptive statistics. At present, though this report offers a thorough description of MPCP student achievement, it can show neither progress in the learning of individual students, nor whether the MPCP as a program is more or less effective at educating students than the MPS.

The Longitudinal Educational Growth Study (LEGS), also being conducted by the SCDP, overcomes some of the limitations of this report. By tracking student achievement longitudinally, rather than giving a series of cross-sectional snapshots of achievement, the report is better able to assess the effect over time of the MPCP on individual student achievement. It contains a comparison of the achievement gains over time of a representative sample of MPCP students relative to a carefully-matched set of peers in Milwaukee traditional public and charter schools. It tracks the performance of the same set of MPCP and MPS students as they progress through their education. This report, by contrast, examines a different set of MPCP students each year at fixed points in their educational experience. It is not a growth or value added comparison against peers in MPS or any other group. Readers who are interested in student performance differences that can be reasonably attributed to the influence of the Choice program itself are advised to follow the progress of the MPCP Longitudinal Educational Growth Study.

Process for Obtaining MPCP Test Scores

The School Choice Demonstration Project has performed a variety of responsibilities over the past three years to make this report possible. For the two previous annual testing summary reports, schools were notified, well in advance of testing deadlines, of the requirement that they submit test scores to the SCDP. After successive reminders, in previous years the SCDP has achieved a response rate of more than 97 percent of affected MPCP schools submitting acceptable test scores.

On February 2, 2010, representatives of the SCDP attended the Pupil Assignment Council meeting for the 2009-10 school year. At this meeting, attending school leaders were reminded of their requirement to submit 2009-10 test scores in order to continue participation in the MPCP and mailing materials were distributed to facilitate the sending of schools' test scores to the SCDP. School leaders were given a test score submission deadline of July 1, 2010. Two reminders of this deadline were sent to schools on June 2 and again on July 9. By August, 105 of 108 affected schools had sent test scores for the 2009-10 school year. Similar to previous years, this represents a response rate of over 97 percent.

For the purpose of this report, the SCDP has had to distinguish in its database students who participated in the MPCP from non-voucher students attending MPCP-participating schools. To identify Choice students, previously the SCDP has used an enrollment list, containing names, birthdates, and other personal information, obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This enrollment list has been matched to student information in the database to distinguish MPCP from non-participating student test scores, after which only MPCP students' test scores have been used for the report. For legal reasons, the DPI enrollment list was not available to the SCDP for the 2009-10 school

year. Lacking access to the 2009-10 DPI Choice enrollment list, we asked schools to submit a list of their voucher students. The current report thus identifies all tested students whose records could be matched to the testing files sent by each participating school.

Use of Percentile Rankings for Nationally Normed Tests

Act 125 requires that schools participating in the MPCP administer either the WKCE or a nationally normed standardized test. Schools which chose to administer nationally normed tests used a variety of tests. For the descriptive purposes of this report, these schools' various normed test scores are combined and presented using a single metric which suffices to similarly describe student achievement across different tests.

Though scaled scores are often the preferred metric for reporting test scores, they cannot be easily combined across tests to produce an aggregate snapshot of student performance. A scaled score of 300 on one test might fall at the lower end of the performance distribution, while on another test it might be a very high score. For common norm-referenced tests such as the ITBS and the Terra Nova, the scaled scores for corresponding national percentiles are drastically different. For example, on the 4th grade test, the corresponding scaled score for the 50th percentile on the ITBS is 200. For the 4th grade Terra Nova, the 50th percentile scaled score is 637. Due to this variation, scaled scores are inappropriate for averaging across nationally normed tests. Instead, for all such tests, National Percentile Ranks (NPRs) are used in this report. All participating schools which submitted nationally normed tests reported student NPRs in reading, math, and science. These scores produced the aggregate performance totals given below.⁸

In the case of the WKCE, no national norm or percentile exists. Due to the Wisconsin-specific nature of this test, this report presents student test scores in terms of scaled scores for MPCP schools which administered the WKCE. Because MPS also administers the WKCE, this report also uses test scores for MPS free- and reduced-lunch (FRL) students as a comparison to the test scores of similarly low-income MPCP students.

Percentile Results at the Program/Grade/Subject Level

Here we report national percentile rank (NPR) averages for MPCP students in grades 4, 8, and 10 in the subjects of reading, math, and science. In 2010, the SCDP received scores for 1039 4th grade MPCP students. These scores, expressed in national percentiles, were converted to normal curve equivalents in order to be able to average the numbers (as national percentiles are ordinal figures, it is mathematically ill-advised to average them) and, once averaged, converted back to national percentiles. 674 4th grade students took a nationally normed test. These students scored on average between the 20th and 30th percentile nationally in all three subject areas (Table 2 and Figure 1). These particular scores do not indicate how well the program serves MPCP students; they merely describe the average performance of an educationally disadvantaged group of students at a particular moment in time relative to the average student in the nation, most of whom are not as disadvantaged.

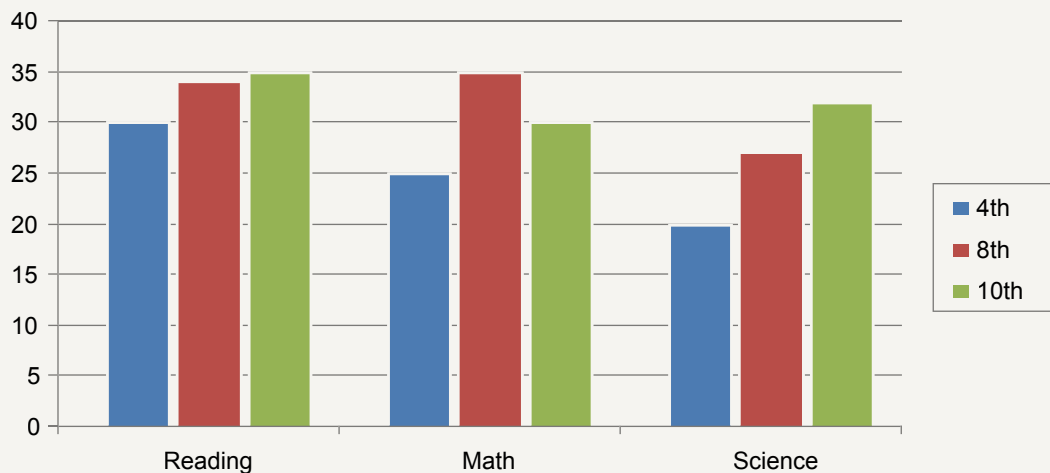
⁸ Although all of these scores are similar in that they describe the student's performance in comparison with the national sample of students that took the test (i.e. the "norming" population), that national sample can vary somewhat across the tests – another reason why readers are cautioned against drawing strong conclusions from these illustrative data.

To interpret the results, one would say that the 4th grade Milwaukee Choice students taking a nationally standardized test averaged near the 30th percentile (scored higher than 29 percent) in reading compared to other 4th graders nationwide taking similar tests. Choice students in the 4th grade averaged in the 25th national percentile in math and the 20th national percentile in science.

Table 2: MPCP National Percentile Summary Statistics

2009-2010		Reading	Math	Science
4th Grade	Avg. NCE	39.3	36.2	32.6
	n	674	671	674
	Avg. National Percentile	30	25	20
8th Grade	Avg. NCE	41.8	42.3	37.6
	n	533	531	529
	Avg. National Percentile	34	35	27
10th Grade	Avg. NCE	42.4	39.1	40.4
	n	529	538	520
	Avg. National Percentile	35	30	33

Fig. 1: MPCP Average National Percentile Ranks



The MPCP students tested in 8th grade performed similarly (Table 1 and Figure 1). The SCDP received scores for 934 8th graders in the MPCP for the 2008-09 school year. Of these, 533 took a nationally normed test. 8th grade choice students scored near the 34th percentile in reading, the 35th percentile in math, and the 27th percent in science. Test scores were received for 789 MPCP students in the 10th grade. Of these, 538 took a nationally normed test. The 10th grade Choice students scored near the 35th percentile in reading, the 30th in math, and the 32nd in science.

Although these descriptive statistics appear to show some academic improvement as Choice students mature, these grade-cohorts of students are compositionally different. Moreover, these data tell nothing about

individuals' achievement growth over time, since they measure different groups of students at the same point in time. Readers are cautioned against inferring from these data that the MPCP is responsible for the difference in performance between 10th grade MPCP students and their 8th and 4th grade counterparts.

In total, MPCP students taking normed tests in grades 4, 8, and 10 averaged between the 20th and 35th percentiles nationally across grades and subjects. Given the low socioeconomic status (SES) of these students, these below-average test scores are not unusual.

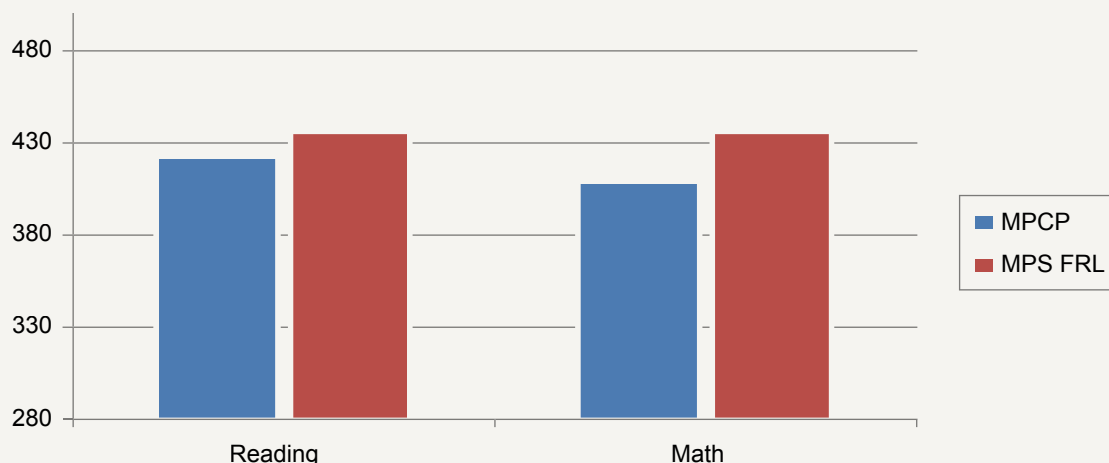
Scaled score Results at the Program/Grade/Subject Level

The fact that a subset of MPCP students as well as MPS students took the WKCE criterion-referenced test allows us to present those results in a different manner. MPS free- and reduced-lunch (FRL) students are likely to be more similar to MPCP students than any national norming population, since both groups of students live in the same city and qualify as low income. Still, because this approximate match is not very precise, and because the subset of MPCP students who took the WKCE is not necessarily representative of all MPCP students, readers are cautioned against drawing conclusions about the effects of the Choice program from this snapshot comparison.

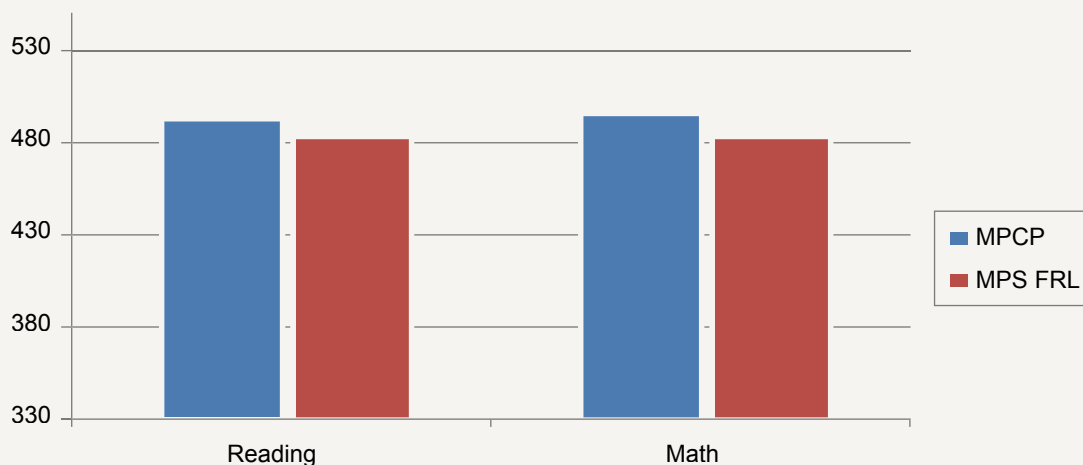
Table 3 illustrates the summary statistics for 4th and 8th grade MPCP students who took the WKCE in the fall of 2009 as well as the statistics from similar MPS FRL students. Figures 4 and 5 show scaled score differences between the comparison groups.

Table 3: 2007-2010 WKCE Summary Statistics for scaled scores, grades 4 and 8

	Reading						Math					
	MPCP			MPS			MPCP			MPS		
4th Grade	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
Mean	429	435	423	438	442	437	411	412	410	411	429	437
N	457	262	33	4723	4548	4606	465	262	332	4825	4611	4635
Std. Dev.	56	43	57	51	47	53	53	51	45	50	47	48
8th Grade	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
Mean	486	496	493	480	483	484	489	503	496	488	500	484
N	579	318	372	4641	4151	3950	581	318	370	4657	4234	3971
Std. Dev.	52	52	48	55	54	52	53	50	53	54	51	52

Figure 2: Grade 4 WKCE Scaled Scores for MPCP and MPS FRL Students⁹

These results show 4th graders in the MPCP who took the WKCE performing 14 to 27 scale points below the average levels of MPS FRL 4th graders. This achievement difference is equal to .26 to .56 of a standard deviation of the MPS test score distribution. These differences are great enough to be considered statistically significant, such that the differences observed are highly unlikely to be due to chance. These differences, as cautioned before, should not be considered a reflection of the relative effectiveness of either the MPCP or the MPS.

Figure 3: Grade 8 WKCE Scaled Scores for MPCP and MPS FRL Students

The 8th grade scores in Figure 7 show a pattern opposite to that of the 4th grade scores. Scaled score averages for MPCP students in 8th grade on the WKCE are higher in both subjects, by 9 to 12 scaled score points, than those of MPS FRL 8th grade students. This achievement difference at the 8th grade level is equal to .17 to .23 of a standard deviation. These differences are large enough to be considered statistically significant. The

⁹ Figures 2 and 3 have been zeroed to the minimum possible scale score for that grade

differences in test score patterns for the 4th and 8th grade comparisons is similar to that observed in previous reports. In the 2007-08 testing report, MPCP 4th graders taking the WKCE scored lower on average than MPS FRL students. In the 8th grade, MPCP students scored higher than MPS FRL students. These differences are similar across years despite the fact that the current report examines a different cohort of students than the previous report in both 4th and 8th grades. Causes of this consistent variation are uncertain though the same pattern was observed in 2008-2009. Despite the uncertainty, the persistence of similar patterns across years suggests that the variation may not be random.

Only 80 MPCP 10th graders took the WKCE in 2009-10, making aggregate statistics about that small subgroup insufficiently reliable to present here.

Performance Distributions at the Individual School Level

This section presents a series of histograms that describe the distribution of results of the 2009-10 MPCP school testing at the school level. Rather than aggregating all MPCP students as a single population and providing averages for that population, this section treats MPCP school-level averages as the unit of analysis. The histograms illustrate 4th and 8th grade scores in reading, math, and science. Figure 4 represents 4th grade and Figure 5 shows 8th grade in all three subjects. These histograms have a normal distribution overlay, which is depicted by the line in each graph. This normal distribution overlay is relative to the empirical data that underlay it. That means it is appropriately scaled and has the same mean and standard deviation as the data. These histograms allow for slightly more disaggregation. These data are organized by normal curve equivalents, the numbers from which previous national percentile comparisons were derived.

Figure 4a, 4b, and 4c. Nationally Normed test results, 4th Grade MPCP by School

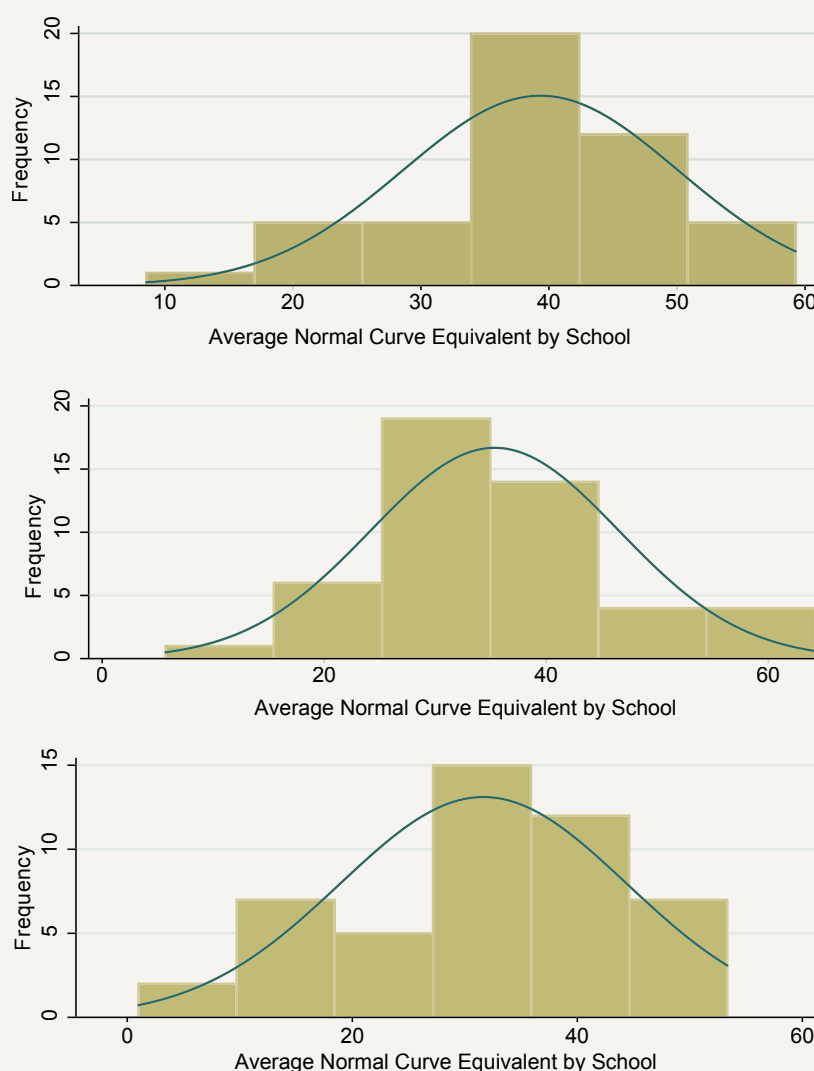
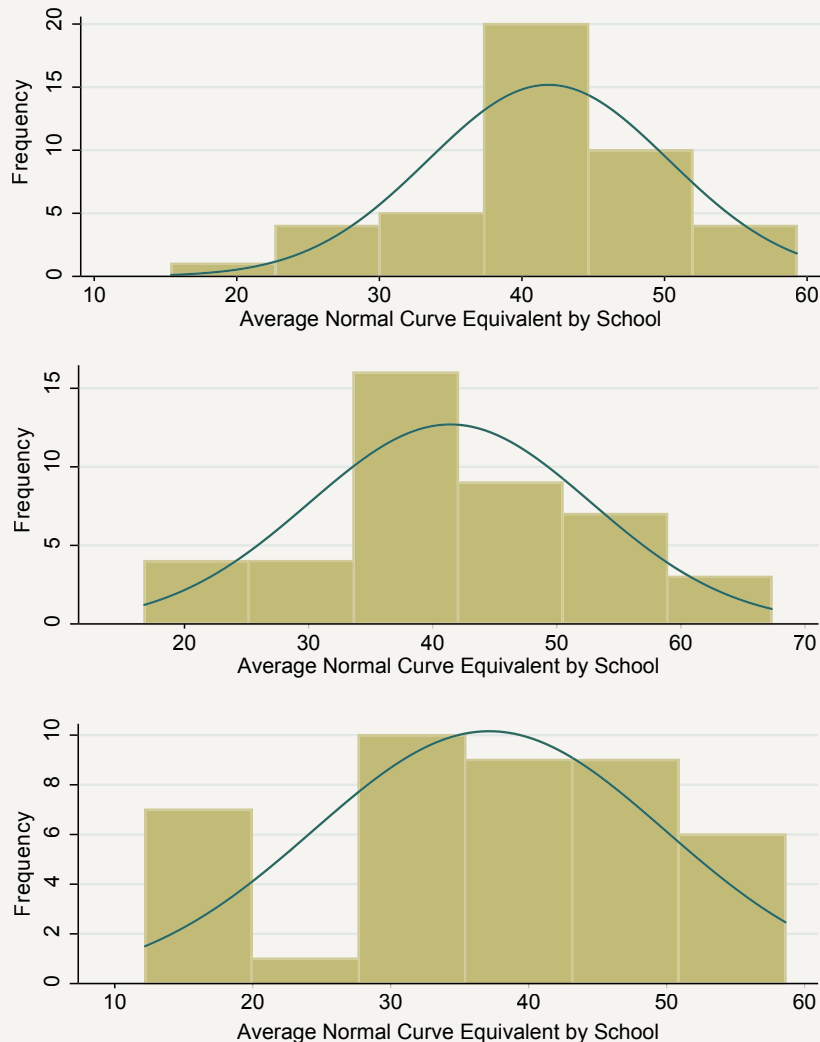


Figure 5a, 5b, 5c. Nationally Normed test results, 8th Grade MPCP by School

The histograms of MPCP school-level test scores presented above generally show distributions with what is known as a “positive skew.” The school-level performance averages tend to cluster around the 30th and 40th percentiles, with a small group of much higher performing units at the upper tail of the distribution. The positive skew is visibly present in both grades 4 and 8, indicating that a small number of schools raise the school-level averages on these scores. The distributions reveal that some school-level clusters of MPCP students are performing very well relative to national norms; however, most school-level clusters of students performed just below national averages. Because these data merely provide a snapshot of school-level groupings of students, we cannot infer from them that some MPCP schools are much better performing than most MPCP schools, since the results could be due to higher-performing groups of MPCP students gravitating towards particular MPCP schools. In other words, we cannot rule out student self sorting as the cause of the school-level performance distributions presented above.

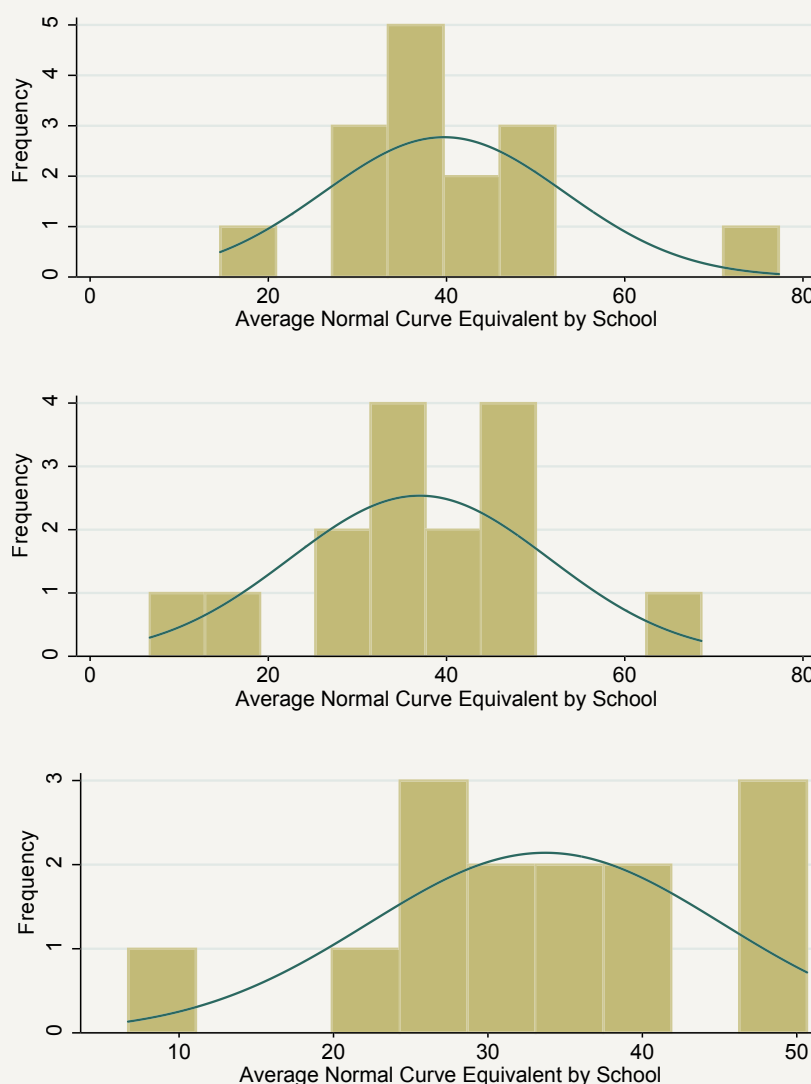
Figure 6a, 6b, 6c Nationally Normed test results, 10th grade MPCP by school

Table 4 illustrates the WKCE scaled score data aggregated to the school level. Although similar to Table 3, one can see how statistics change when test scores are distributed among schools and then averaged at the school level as opposed to aggregated across an entire program or school system. Under almost all circumstances, the averages of subgroup averages (e.g. performance by school) will provide different results than taking the total average of the population (e.g. all testers). Because a small number of MPCP schools are performing well above both the MPCP and MPS system-level averages, the WKCE scores averaged at the school level result in comparisons somewhat more favorable to the MPCP schools than the comparisons based on test-scores at the individual student level. Still, the performance of school-level groupings of 4th grade Choice students remains lower than the performance of school-level groupings of 4th grade MPS free- and reduced-lunch (FRL) students. In 4th Grade reading, MPCP students scored lower than MPS FRL students by .38 standard deviations. In 4th Grade Math, MPCP students by 1.52 standard deviations. In 8th Grade reading MPCP

students averaged .62 standard deviations higher than MPS FRL students, and in 8th grade math MPCP students outperformed MPS FRL students by .34 standard deviations.

Table 4: 2007-2010 WKCE Summary Statistics for Scaled Scores at School Level

		Reading						Math					
		MPCP			MPS FRL			MPCP			MPS FRL		
		07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10	07-08	08-09	09-10
4th	Mean	433	444	432	439	444	440	416	421	409	430	439	438
	Obs	23	20	21	118	118	115	23	20	21	118	118	115
	Std Dev.	34	46	31	18	43	21	40	44	44	19	43	19
8th	Mean	494	506	495	478	478	477	498	511	504	485	495	494
	Obs	27	25	22	90	90	91	27	26	22	90	90	91
	Std Dev.	34	43	33	28	47	29	38	32	32	29	43	29

The following 8 histograms graphically show the Table 4 data for those MPCP schools taking the WKCE as well as school-level averages for FRL students in the MPS.

As given in Figures 7a and 7b, the means of the two populations are almost identical, but the MPCP group has a slightly higher standard deviation (e.g. greater variation in performance) and has more schools in both the upper and lower tail of the distribution. We would expect this wider variation in school-level achievement among the variegated set of MPCP schools.

Figure 7a. 4th Grade WKCE Reading for MPCP Schools

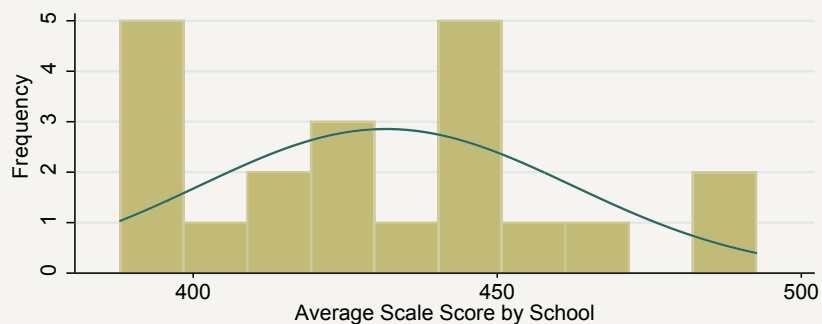
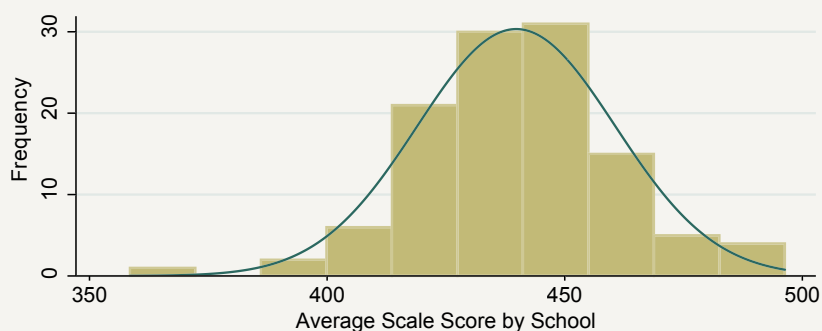


Figure 7b. 4th Grade WKCE Reading MPS FRL



Figures 8a and 8b show that the pattern for 4th grade math is similar to that above for reading. The mean of MPCP school level scaled scores is lower than for MPCP and the standard deviation of MPS FRL scaled score averages is lower than that for the MPCP.

In the case of 8th grade reading, shown in Figure 9a and 9b, while the standard deviation of the distribution were similar, the MPCP histogram shows a higher mean than the MPS figure, by 18 scaled score points.

Figure 8a: 4th Grade WKCE Math for MPCP Schools

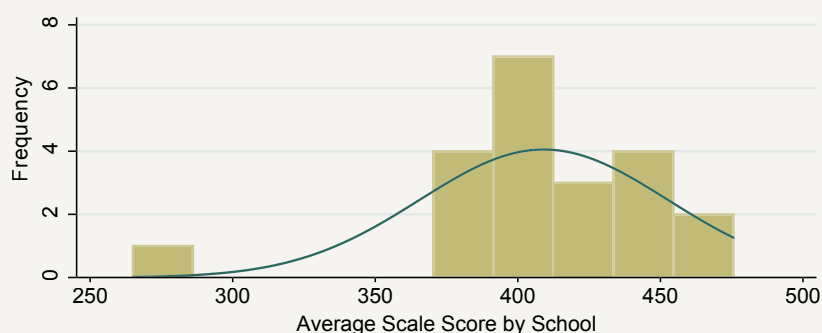


Figure 8b. 4th Grade WKCE Math MPS FRL

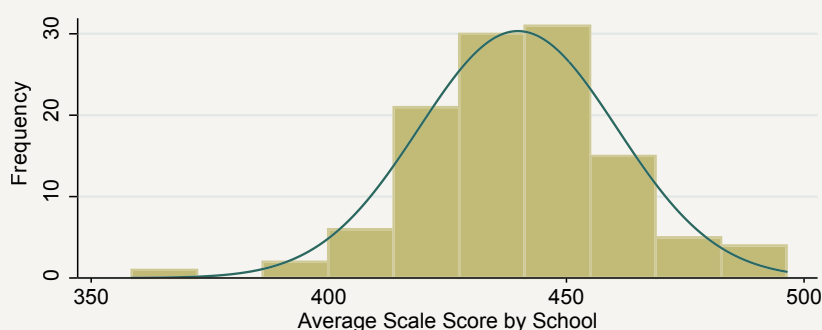


Figure 9a. 8th Grade WKCE Reading for MPCP Schools

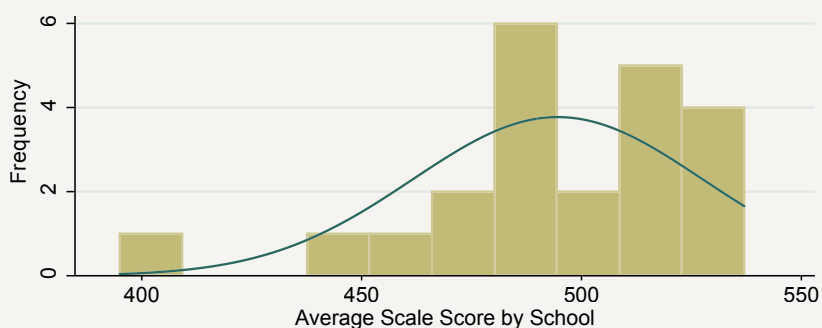
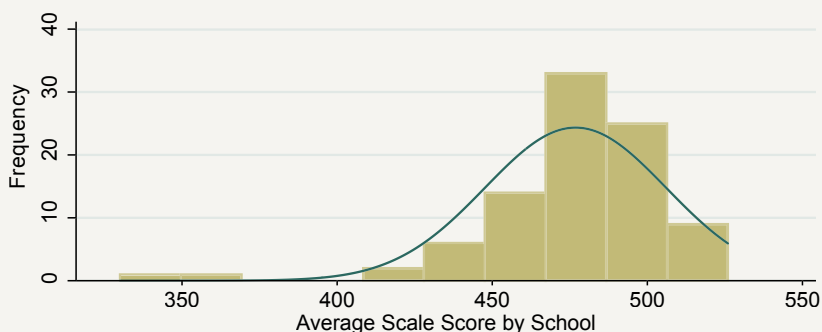


Figure 9b. 8th Grade WKCE Reading for MPS FRL



The math histograms for 8th grade (Figure 10a and 10b) show a relatively normal distribution for MPS FRL students and a biomodal (two-peaked) distribution for MPCP schools. However, the school level average for MPCP schools is 10 points higher than that of MPS FRL students aggregated at school level.

These tables and histograms suggest there are schools in each group (MPCP and MPS FRL) in which students are performing well above or well below the MPS FRL group average. These results suggest there is ample variation in both groups. The standard deviations for the MPCP group are often higher, which is likely because of the lower number of schools and greater diversity of schools in that group. One should be careful in interpreting these data. The differences across the comparison groups and between the grades cannot necessarily be attributed to the Choice program. The figures are presented merely to provide a general description of the school-level performance of MPCP students and place that performance in context by making a rough comparison with the school-level performance of income-disadvantaged MPS students.

Proficiency Score Results

Scaled scores, however, are not the only way to report results from criterion referenced tests such as the WKCE. States and schools often report scores in terms of proficiency rates. That is, if a student received a specific scaled score or higher, then the student is proficient in that particular subject area. This section of the report shows the MPCP students' results in terms of proficiency percentages. Table 5 provides the percent of students proficient in each grade for each subject for MPCP and the free- and reduced-lunch (FRL) students of MPS.

Figure 10a. 8th Grade Math WKCE for MPCP Schools

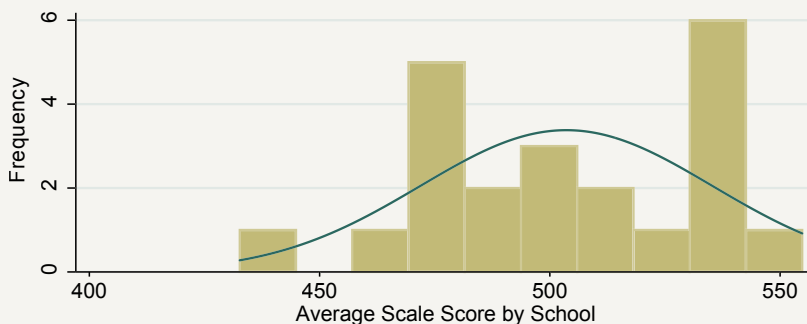


Figure 10b. 8th Grade Math WKCE for MPS FRL

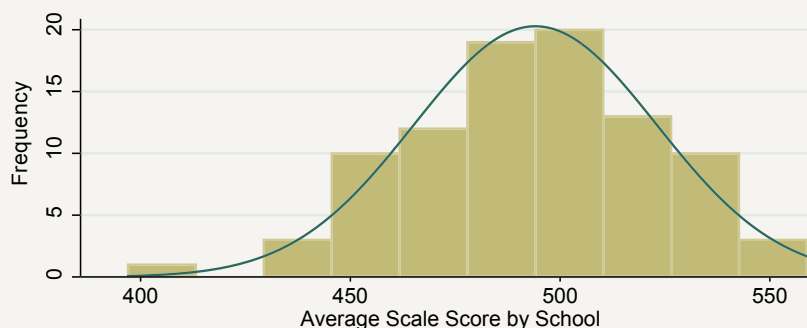


Table 5. Percent Proficient in Reading and Math, MPCP and MPS FRL, 4th and 8th Grade

Grade	Subject	MPCP % Proficient	MPS FRL % Proficient
4th	Reading	39	55.7
	Math	26.5	52.7
8th	Reading	64.2	58.3
	Math	37.8	45.9

Table 5 shows that on the 4th grade reading test, 39% of MPCP 4th graders for whom the SCDP received WKCE scores are proficient while 56% of MPS FRL students are proficient. In 4th grade math, MPS FRL students exhibit a higher proficiency rate than their MPCP counterparts. However, the story is again different for 8th graders. In reading, MPCP students show a higher rate of proficiency than do MPS FRL students, however, in Math MPS FRL students are proficient in greater numbers. Viewing WKCE scores in terms of proficiency percentages thus indicates a similar story as described by Table 3.

Yet another way to look at the percent proficient data is to aggregate it to the school level. The following four figures show the percent proficient in each MPCP school with an indication of the MPS school average for FRL students in that particular grade and subject.

As indicated by the red line in Figure 11, 56 percent of MPS free and reduced lunch students are proficient in 4th grade reading. Of the 20 MPCP schools for which the SCDP received WKCE 4th grade reading scores, 8 had percentages of proficiency above 55 percent. In this and the following figures, the school percent proficient rates are not weighted in any way based on the number of students in the school. To be included, an MPCP school needed 3 matched records of a grade, subject, and school. Figure 12 shows 4th grade reading scores in the same manner. In math, 53 percent of MPS FRL students scored proficient on the WKCE, 4 MPCP schools averaged a higher rate.

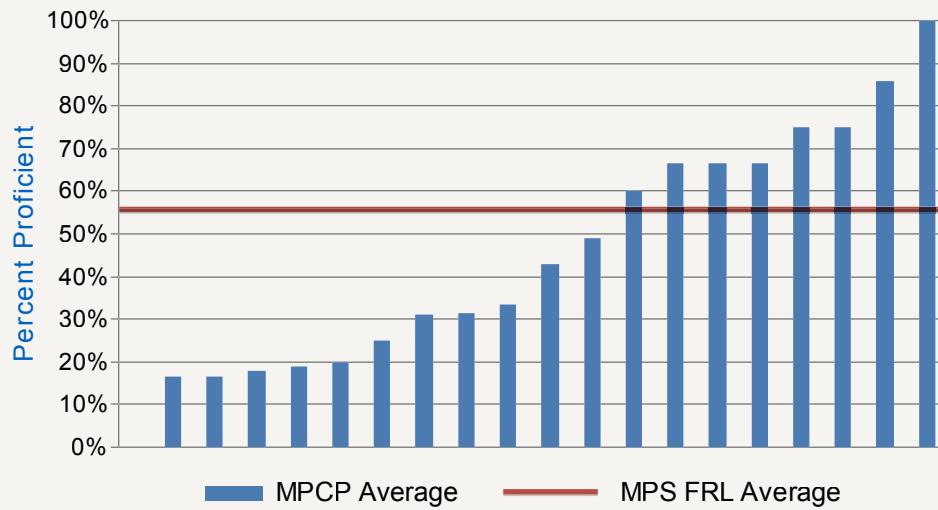
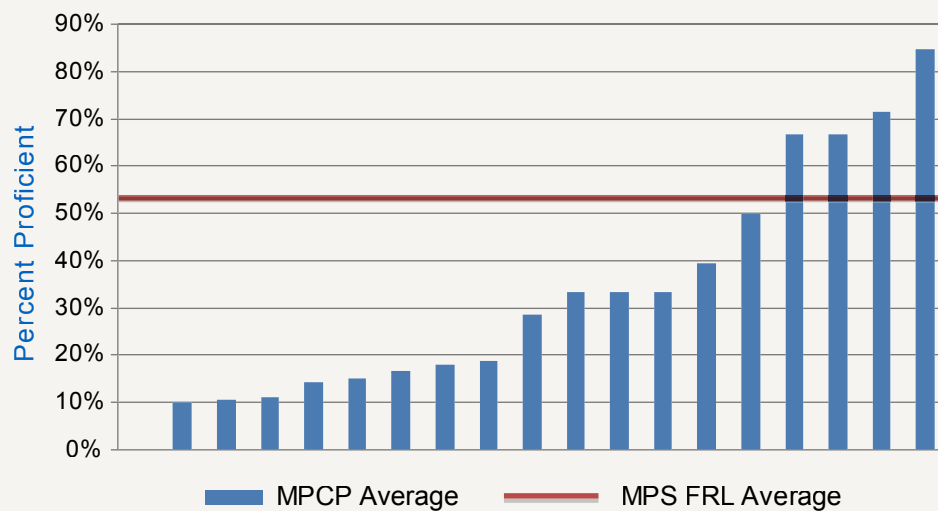
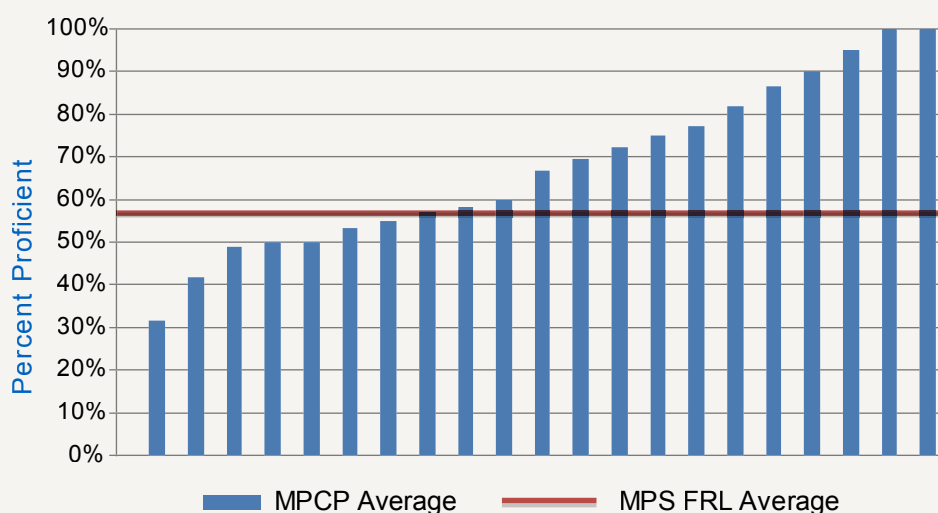
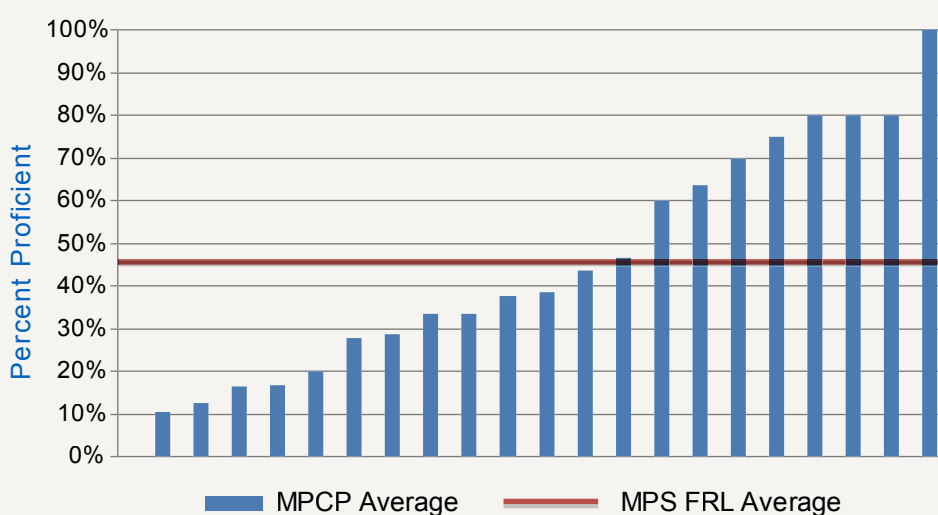
Figure 11. 4th Grade Reading Proficiency Percentage by MPCP School**Figure 12. 4th Grade Math Proficiency Percentage by MPCP School**

Figure 13 shows the 12 MPCP schools that averaged above the 58% MPS FRL proficiency rate in 8th grade reading and Figure 14 shows the 9 MPCP schools that averaged higher in 8th grade math.

Figure 13. 8^h Grade Reading Proficiency Percentage by MPCP School**Figure 14. 8^h Grade Math Proficiency Percentage by MPCP School**

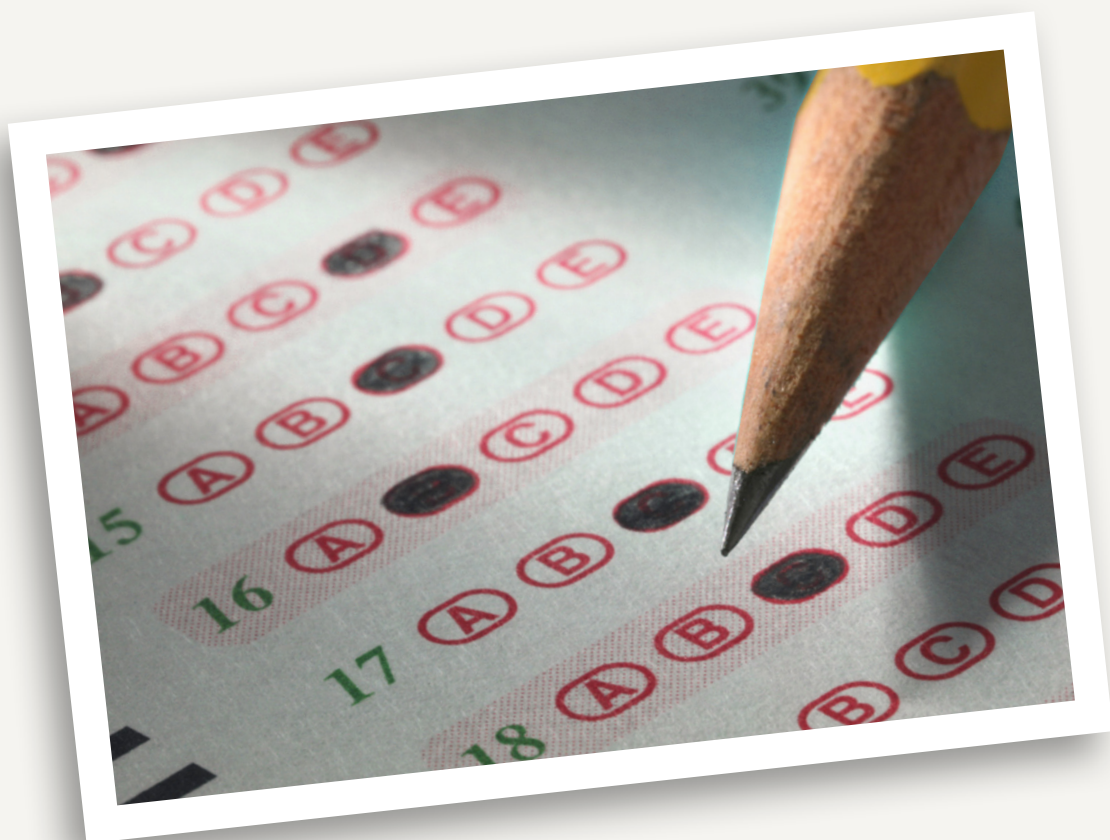
As before, it must be said that the differences shown here are for two different groups of students; one cannot infer relative improvement in MPCP student proficiency rates over time, nor can one draw conclusions from these data regarding the effectiveness of the MPCP relative to the MPS.

The usefulness of these particular figures is to indicate the wide variation in test scores for students attending MPCP schools. Similar to the WKCE histograms above, MPCP schools serve a range of students with diverse abilities, and these charts serve to illustrate this variation.

Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to provide descriptive data regarding the test scores of Milwaukee Parental Choice Program students in grades 4, 8 and 10 in reading, math and science, as reported to the School Choice Demonstration Project 2009-2010. The above tables, graphs, and histograms provide a snapshot of these students' percentile scores relative to overall national norms, and scaled scores on the WKCE relative to MPS FRL students. Because national norms are based on students with "average" educational circumstances, and the MPCP exclusively serves low-income inner-city students, the fact that their average levels of performance on norm referenced tests cluster around the lower one-third of the distribution is not surprising and should not be interpreted to indicate that the MPCP in general or MPCP schools in particular are necessarily doing a poor job of educating students.

The comparison of the scaled scores of the Choice students and schools that took the WKCE with the scores of MPS FRL students and schools similarly is presented descriptively with no claim that the schools themselves were independently responsible for the various results. Any reliable determination of the effectiveness of a school choice program like the MPCP can only come from a rigorous longitudinal study that follows a representative group of choice students over time and compares their achievement gains to those of a comparable set of public school students. The MPCP Longitudinal Education Growth Study (LEGS) will serve as the proper source for such a determination.



Appendix A:

Schools with MPCP students in tested grades operation through May 2010
N=108; (the three italicized schools did not provide acceptable test scores in 2009-2010)

Alston's Preparatory Academy	Institute of Technology and Academics	Saint John's Evangelical Lutheran
Atlas Preparatory Academy	Jared C. Bruce Academy	Saint Josaphat Parish School
Atonement Lutheran School	King's Academy Christian School	Saint Leo Catholic Urban Academy
Believers in Christ Christian Academy	Life 101 "THINK" Institute	Saint Lucas Lutheran School
Blessed Sacrament School	LifeSkills Academy	Saint Marcus Lutheran School
Blessed Savior - East Campus	Lutheran Special School & Education	Saint Margaret Mary School
Blessed Savior - North Campus	Services	Saint Martini Lutheran School
Blessed Savior - West Campus	Marquette University High School	Saint Peter-Immanuel Lutheran
Blessed Savior-South Campus	Messmer High School	School
Carter's Christian Academy	Messmer Prep Catholic School	Saint Philip's Lutheran School
Catholic East Elementary School	Mills Christian Academy	Saint Rafael the Archangel School
CEO Leadership Academy	Milwaukee Lutheran High School	Saint Roman Parish School
Ceria M. Travis Academy, Inc.	Milwaukee Montessori School	Saint Rose Catholic Urban Academy
Christ Memorial Lutheran School	Milwaukee Seventh Day Adventist	Saint Sebastian School
Christ St. Peter Lutheran School	School	Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy
Christian Faith Academy of Higher	Mother of Good Counsel School	Saint Vincent Pallotti School
Learning	Mount Calvary Lutheran School	Salam School
Clara Mohammed School	Mount Lebanon Lutheran	Sharon Junior Academy
Concordia University School	Mustard Seed International School	Sherman Park Lutheran School/
CrossTrainers Academy	New Testament Christian Academy	Preschool
Daughters of the Father Christian	Northwest Catholic - East Campus	Siloah Lutheran School
Academy	Northwest Catholic - West Campus	Tamarack Waldorf School
Destiny High School	Northwest Lutheran School	Texas Bufkin Academy
Divine Savior Holy Angels High School	Notre Dame Middle School	The Margaret Howard Christian
Dr. Brenda Noach Choice School	Oklahoma Avenue Lutheran School	Leadership Inst.
Early View Academy of Excellence	Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish	Travis Technology High School
Eastbrook Academy	<i>Outlook University Independent School</i>	<i>Tuskegee Aviation Academy</i>
Emmaus Lutheran School	<i>Network</i>	Urban Day School
Excel Academy	Parklawn Christian Leadership	Victory Christian Academy
Family Montessori School	Academy	Washington DuBois Christian
<i>Garden Homes Community Montessori</i>	Pius XI High School	Leadership Academy
<i>School, Inc.</i>	Prince of Peace	Wisconsin Lutheran High School
Garden Homes Lutheran School	Right Step, Inc.	Word of Life Evangelical Lutheran
Gospel Lutheran School	Risen Savior Lutheran School	School
Greater Holy Temple Christian Center	Saint Adalbert School	Yeshiva Elementary School
Harambee Community School	Saint Anthony School	Young Minds Preparatory School
Hickman Academy Preparatory School	Saint Catherine School	
Holy Redeemer Christian Academy	Saint Charles Borromeo School	
Holy Wisdom Academy	Saint Coletta Day School of Milwaukee	
Hope Christian School	Saint Gregory the Great Parish School	
Hope Christian School - Fortis	Saint Joan Antida High School	
Hope School	Saint John Kanty School	



College of Education and Health Professions
Department of Education Reform
School Choice Demonstration Project



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February 2nd, 2009

Dear Principal:

As our previous correspondence has mentioned, Wisconsin Act 125 mandates that all schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) administer annually a nationally normed, standardized test of their choosing or the WKCE to their choice students in grades 4, 8, and 10. The test must cover reading, math and science. Additionally, Act 125 requires that MPCP schools submit a copy of all individual student level scores from any standardized tests they administer to the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) at the University of Arkansas. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with guidance regarding how to submit your school's test scores to the SCDP.

Items to be Mailed to the SCDP

Once you have received the scores from all your 2009-10 testing, please copy the individual student level score sheets and place the copies in the FedEx package you received along with this letter. You will find enclosed in this package a copy of the MPCP Principals' Survey. Please complete this survey and insert it in the FedEx package along with your school's test scores. New this year we are asking for you to also include in this package **a print-out of the 2008-09 and 2009-10 audited MPCP student list from the MPCP on-line application system.** This list should contain the name, date of birth, home address, phone number, parent name, and grade for each student using a MPCP voucher to attend your private school last year and this year. Next, complete the top portion of the FedEx airbill with your school's name and address. Remove the "sender's copy" for your records. This copy can be used to track the package in the event that it does not arrive at the SCDP. Please either have a FedEx representative pick up the package at your school or drop off the package at a FedEx store.

Time Frame & Mailing Address

Results of any fall testing that was administered at your school should be mailed to the SCDP by **March 1st**. If your school conducts both fall and spring testing, or only spring testing, these results should be mailed to the SCDP by **July 1st**. Please wait until you have received the results of ALL 2009-10 testing before sending the SCDP your FedEx package.

Format of Scores

A copy of the scores can be submitted to the SCDP in either electronic or paper format, though paper format is strongly preferred.

Security Protocols

To protect the confidentiality of your students, it is important certain data protection strategies be implemented. If you are sending an electronic copy of your students' scores, you must password protect the file and burn the file to a CD. Instructions on how to password protect Microsoft Office 97-2003 Word, Microsoft Excel, and Acrobat Professional documents can be found below. If you choose to submit a paper copy of your students' test scores, please sign your name over the seal on the FedEx package.

Securing a Word or Excel file with a password:

With the file open:

- On the Tools menu, click Options, and then click Security.
- In the Password to open box, type **MPCP2010**, and then click OK.
- In the Reenter password to open box, type **MPCP2010** again, and then click OK.

Securing an Acrobat Professional/PDF file with a password:

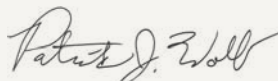
With the PDF document open:

- Control D for Document Properties
- Click Security Tab > Change Security Method to Password Security
- Check "Require a password to open the document"
- Enter a password **MPCP2010** in the "Document Open Password:" box
- Confirm the password **MPCP2010**

If the electronic file containing your students' scores is not in any of these formats, please check the help menu in the program that fits the file for guidance in how to password protect the file. Another option would be to convert the file from its program format into Excel, which is the most preferred format for transferring data files securely.

We look forward to receiving your school's **test scores, principal survey, and 2008-09 and 2009-10 audited MPCP student list from the MPCP on-line application system**. As always, if you have any questions, please call Laura Jensen or Brian Kisida, SCDP Research Associates, at 479-575-6345.

Sincerely yours,



Patrick J. Wolf, Ph.D.
Professor and Endowed Chair in School Choice
Principal Investigator, SCDP



College of Education and Health Professions
Department of Education Reform
School Choice Demonstration Project



201 Graduate Education Building
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July 9, 2010

Dear Principal:

I hope this letter finds you doing well and enjoying the summer weather! I want to begin by thanking you for all your assistance throughout this year as we gathered data for the fourth year of the state-mandated Longitudinal Evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP).

This letter serves as a final reminder the School Choice Demonstration Project is still waiting on the following items from your school:

1. A copy of all individual-level test results from ANY standardized testing that your school did during the 2009-10 school year.
2. A print-out of the 2008-09 and 2009-10 audited MPCP student list containing name, grade, and date of birth for all voucher students from the MPCP on-line application system.
3. Parent contact information including home address, phone number, and parent name for each student using a MPCP voucher to attend your private school in 2009-10.
4. A completed copy of the 2009-10 MPCP Principal's Survey (enclosed).
5. Test score release form (enclosed).

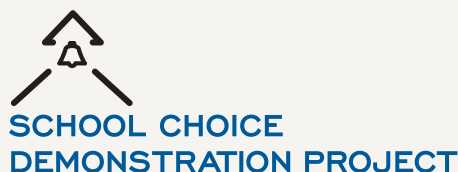
On **Monday August 2nd**, I will notify officials at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction regarding which private schools have failed to provide the SCDP with items necessary to the evaluation of the MPCP.

If you have questions or need additional FedEx materials to mail your school's documents, please contact SCDP Research Associate Laura Jensen (479-575-6345).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick J. Wolf".

Patrick Wolf, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
School Choice Demonstration Project



College of Education and Health Professions
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THE LONGITUDINAL EVALUATION OF THE MILWAUKEE PARENTAL CHOICE PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do we have to test MPCP students?

The testing requirements in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) are the result of 2005 Act 125 passed by the state legislature and signed into law on March 10, 2006. The new law also raises the cap on total participation in the MPCP to 22,500 students and requires that all schools participating in the MPCP obtain accreditation, among other changes.

Act 125 outlines the two components of the required testing program: program accountability and program evaluation. MPCP schools have vital responsibilities in both of these areas.

COMPONENT ONE: PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

1.1 Who and what are we required to test for program accountability purposes?

Under the new law, all MPCP students in grades 4, 8, and 10 must be tested annually. The test must cover reading, math, and science.

1.2 What test can we use?

Schools can use any nationally-normed standardized test. Qualified tests would include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, SAT 10, Terra Nova, or the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE).

1.3 Who pays for the test?

The participating MPCP schools are expected to pay for the costs of purchasing and scoring the test that they choose to administer.

1.4 When should we test?

Schools that choose to administer the WKCE for accountability purposes need to test during the fall testing window of October 27th through November 28th. Schools that choose to administer a national norm-referenced test can do so in the fall or spring.

1.5 What testing information do we need to provide to whom for program accountability?

Act 125 requires that, beginning in 2006, all MPCP schools forward to the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) the **individual level results** of all standardized tests that it administers. That means that if the school tests all students in grades 4, 8, and 10 – not just MPCP students – the scores for all those students must be provided to the SCDP. Also, if a participating MPCP school administers standardized tests to students in grades besides 4, 8, and 10, the results of those tests must also be forwarded to the SCDP. The basic requirements of Act 125 regarding testing are that participating schools must test all 4th, 8th, and 10th grade MPCP students annually, can test non-MPCP students and MPCP students in other grades, and must forward to the SCDP the individual-level results of any standardized testing that they conduct.

1.6 Why is testing information being provided to the SCDP?

Through Act 125, the state government of Wisconsin has ordered the SCDP to conduct a series of data collection, analysis, and reporting activities focused on evaluating the MPCP as a whole. The data collection activities include collecting the test scores from all standardized testing conducted by participating MPCP schools and converting those scores into data that can be compared both with MPS test scores and over time. The SCDP also is required to draw a representative sample of MPCP students and obtain test scores from them on the WKCE in order to make it easier to compare MPCP performance with MPS performance. These comparisons and evaluations will be made very carefully, by an experienced team of school choice researchers. Under the law, the data and results of the evaluations will be forwarded to the Legislative Audit Bureau for secondary analysis and review, and reported to the state legislature.

1.7 What specific testing information do we need to provide to the SCDP?

The SCDP evaluation team will need the following information about each student that MPCP schools test:

- At least two measures of the student's scores in the three sections (reading, math, and science). Scale scores are preferred, but Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) and National Percentile Ranks (NPRs) are also acceptable. For example, a school might provide each student's scale scores and NCEs in reading, math, and science. Raw scores will not be useful to the evaluators.
- Basic information about the test that was administered and the student who produced the scores, including the name of the test, the date(s) of testing, if any special accommodations were made for the student, as well as the name, grade level, birthday and school attended by the student. In many cases, all or most of this information will be on the individual student records that the testing company provides to schools upon scoring the tests.
- *A print-out of the 2008-09 and 2009-10 audited MPCP student list from the MPCP on-line application system. This list should contain the name, date of birth, home address, phone number, parent name, and grade for each student using a MPCP voucher to attend your private school.*

1.8 In what form should we provide that information to the SCDP?

It is our strong preference that each school make paper copies of the test results that have been sent to them from the testing company. The SCDP will provide a FedEx package, along with a pre-paid label, for your use in mailing the paper copies. If your school receives the results of its testing program in electronic format, if possible, please print off a paper copy of those results for us.

1.9 How should we transmit this information to the SCDP?

Because the testing information will include sensitive personal information about your students, you will need to take special precautions in providing us with the data. Early in the spring semester we will provide each school with a FedEx package, along with a pre-paid label, for your use in mailing us the test scores. Please either have a FedEx representative pick up the package at your school or drop off the package at a FedEx store.

1.10 Will the names of students and schools be kept confidential?

Absolutely. This information is being collected in order to evaluate the MPCP as a whole and to learn more about the effects of school choice programs like the MPCP. No data will be reported at the individual level, and no names of participating individuals or schools will ever be reported to anyone outside of the SCDP research team. This research is being overseen by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research at the University of Arkansas. The IRB requires that the identity of all participants – individuals and schools – be kept strictly confidential in the conduct of academic research such as the MPCP longitudinal evaluation. As a result of the study, the public will learn how well the choice program is performing, and perhaps how the program might be improved, but no one will

be given any specific information about the students and schools in the MPCP. The SCDP has strong safeguards in place to make sure that complete confidentiality is maintained throughout the study.

COMPONENT TWO: PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1 In addition to the testing for program accountability purposes, what else are private schools participating in the MPCP expected to do in support of the study?

The SCDP research team will need help from private schools in conducting the MPCP impact study that is called for in the law, based on the representative sample of MPCP students. During fall 2006 we drew a representative sample of approximately 2,000 MPCP students in grades 3-8 and the entire census of MPCP 9th graders. Last fall and again this October we will draw an additional representative sample of 500 3rd graders. All panel students will be administered the same tests taken by their respective public school peers (e.g. the WKCE-CRT in grades 3-8 and 10 and the Milwaukee Benchmark Assessment in grade 9). The testing of the “MPCP Panel” will take place sometime between October 27th and November 28th to coincide with MPS testing. We will follow this subgroup of MPCP students for another two years, re-testing them annually and surveying them and their parents about their educational experiences. The research team will handle all of the survey activities, but we will need help from the MPCP schools in testing the MPCP panel. We will notify schools early this fall regarding which of their MPCP students have been selected for the MPCP panel, and then work with the schools to arrange for the administration of the WKCE-CRT and the Benchmark Assessment to panel students during the fall testing window.

2.2 Who will administer the WKCE-CRT to the students on the MPCP panel and how will they do it?

We prefer that the WKCE-CRT be administered to students on the MPCP panel in their own school by school personnel. Such testing conditions would best replicate how MPS students are tested and therefore would facilitate a proper comparison between the performance of MPCP and MPS students. The research team will purchase these tests and pay for their scoring. We also will provide training on WKCE test administration to the school personnel assigned the responsibility for conducting the testing (training is not necessary for the Milwaukee Benchmark Assessment). Since it is highly unlikely that the MPCP panel will include all 3-10 grade students in a particular school, or even all such MPCP students in a particular school, we recommend that the testing of the MPCP panel students be conducted on a “pull out” basis in order to minimize disruption of the school schedule, and be conducted over several days so that students are not spending an entire day away from their classmates and the curriculum.

Schools that lack the personnel resources to conduct the testing themselves should contact the Westat representative on the SCDP to request assistance. SCDP staff will be available throughout the testing period to provide advice, support, and quality control over the test administrations. As soon as the testing of the MPCP panelists at a particular school is complete, administrators should contact Westat and a staff member will come by to pick up the testing materials for processing.

2.3 Why are there two testing requirements instead of one? Can the two requirements be satisfied by a single testing program?

There are two testing requirements as a result of Act 125 because one is appropriate for program accountability purposes and the other is appropriate for program evaluation purposes. Participating schools are required to test all of their MPCP students in grades 4, 8, and 10 using the qualified test they choose in order to generate program-wide information about how well MPCP students are doing. That information could not serve as the foundation for a reliable study of the effects of the MPCP program on student outcomes because the sample is limited to a few grades and the students will be assessed using a variety of tests. In order to determine if the MPCP program itself is improving student outcomes, we

need to follow a representative panel of MPCP students and assess their performance using the same test that comparable MPS students take – the WKCE-CRT. In specific schools, the group of students that take the tests, and the specific tests that are administered, will likely differ for purposes of accountability (all 4th, 8th, and 10th MPCP students on school-selected test) and evaluation (a sample of 3rd-10th MPCP students on the MPS test). The two testing programs will only perfectly overlap at a particular school if both of the following conditions hold:

- All MPCP students in grades 3-8 (if elementary) or 9 and 10 (if high school) are tested in reading, math, and science in the fall of every year;
- The school administers the public school test (WKCE-CRT if grades 3-8 and 10, Milwaukee Benchmark Assessment if grade 9) as its school-selected test.

Under those conditions, the school could simply provide the SCDP with a copy of the results of its annual testing program and the school's testing requirements under Act 125 would be completely satisfied. Some participating MPCP schools might administer the WKCE-CRT as their annual student test, but not necessarily to the students in all of the grades 3-8. If that is the case, we will accept the test scores of the students that were tested and make arrangements with the school to test any students in the MPCP panel attending that school that were not tested. Thus, for private schools that administer the WKCE-CRT, there will be overlap between the two testing programs but the overlap might not be complete.

2.4 What testing accommodations should we provide for students with special needs?

We urge test administrators to provide appropriate testing accommodations based on the type and severity of special needs that students may have. In the public schools, such accommodations are detailed in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Although IEPs are not usually used by private schools, if a specific student is known to have or to have had an IEP that specified testing accommodations, then those accommodations should be followed for purposes of MPCP testing to the extent possible. In most cases, MPCP students with disabilities or language challenges that affect their ability to take tests will not have IEPs as a guide. In those cases, school personnel must do the following:

- Notify Westat regarding who will be accommodated, how, and why;
- Document all accommodations on a sheet sent to the test scoring company along with the testing materials (Westat will provide one if the testing company does not);
- Administer the same set of accommodations to the same students each year that they are tested.

The state of Wisconsin administers alternate assessments to students with disabilities (the WAA-SwD) and for English language learners (WAA-ELL) in the same subjects by grade as the WKCE-CRT. Westat will have copies of those alternative assessments available for testing purposes and will train test administrators on how to use them.

CONTACT INFORMATION

What if we have additional questions regarding the testing requirements under Act 125?

For questions regarding what participating MPCP schools are required to do under the new law, please contact the Department of Public Instruction:

Tricia Collins: 608-266-2853 or toll free 1-888-245-2732, ext 3 then 3

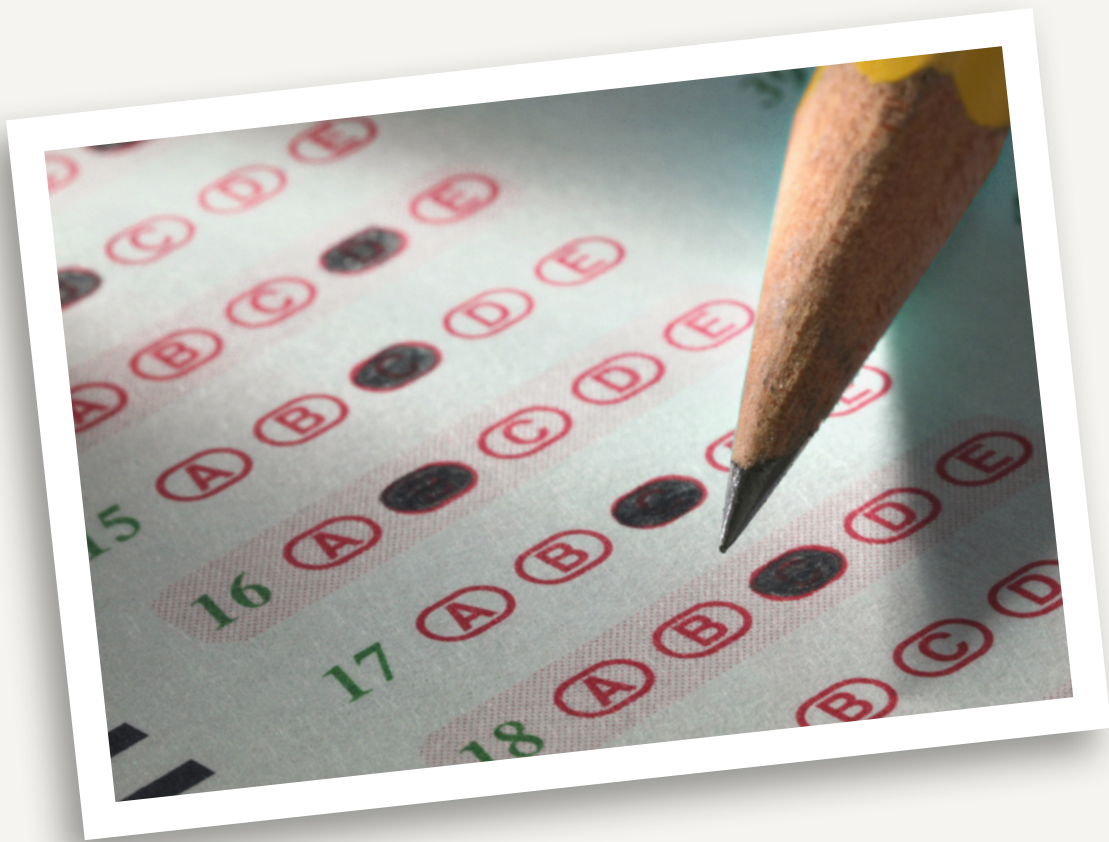
For questions regarding the specific process of transferring the results of your school's regular testing program to the School Choice Demonstration Project, please contact the School Choice Demonstration Project:

Laura Jensen: 479-575-6345

For questions regarding the specific process for testing students on the MPCP panel, please contact Westat:

Sylvia Segovia: 240-453-2965

Kerri Wills: 301-294-2860



Milwaukee Longitudinal School Choice Evaluation: Annual School Testing Summary Report

About the Authors



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