

# THE PARENT AWAKENING IN WISCONSIN

**Wisconsin voters want families to have more say in the education of their children. Their support extends to every corner of the state and crosses the political spectrum.**

This message was clear in the polling that was done in February of 2022 for School Choice Wisconsin. The polling was conducted by a highly regarded polling firm with deep experience in Wisconsin (see note on p. 3).

The independent Marquette University Poll has confirmed the School Choice Wisconsin poll results. Substantial majorities supported universal school choice and believed traditional public schools are in “worse shape than a few years ago.”

By large margins, voters believe parents should have the right to have their concerns heard by local school board officials and the right to review their children’s instructional materials.

There is majority support for Wisconsin’s school choice program. Support is strongest among Independents and Republicans. More than a third of Democrats also express support. Statewide, only 15 percent of likely voters strongly oppose it. Nearly two-thirds of voters think all families should be eligible for Wisconsin’s school choice program.

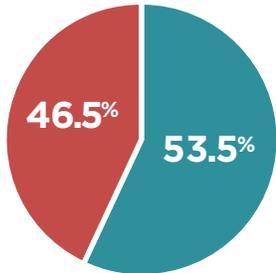
Statewide, 56 percent of voters would be more likely to vote for a legislator who supports private school choice for all families. Only one-third of voters would be less likely, while the remainder had no opinion.

**Nearly one-third of those surveyed said they or someone they know considered changing schools last year.**

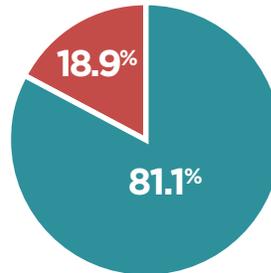


# THREE DECADES OF SCHOOL CHOICE GROWTH

In the 1990s, legislators and Governor Tommy Thompson gave families three K-12 options other than their local school district: (1) private schools; (2) charter schools; and (3) enrollment in other school districts. Despite arbitrary limits, more and more parents are taking advantage of these options. As adjacent charts show, nearly half of Milwaukee families use them. Statewide, nearly one in five families do so.



In Milwaukee, **46.5 percent of students** attend private or charter schools or use open enrollment to attend a public school outside MPS.



Thanks to historic gains during the 1990s, fully **18.9 percent of Wisconsin students** now use educational options formerly unavailable.

■ Share of enrollment in private choice, charter, and non-resident district schools

■ Share of enrollment in traditional public schools

## PARENT CHOICE WORKS

Private school choice students outscore traditional public school students on the college-readiness ACT test. On most state tests private choice students show greater academic proficiency.

In Milwaukee, where the choice era was launched, the majority of private choice and charter students attend schools rated highly by the Department of Public Instruction. A minority of MPS students attend the highly rated schools.

## Milwaukee Students At Top-Rated Schools

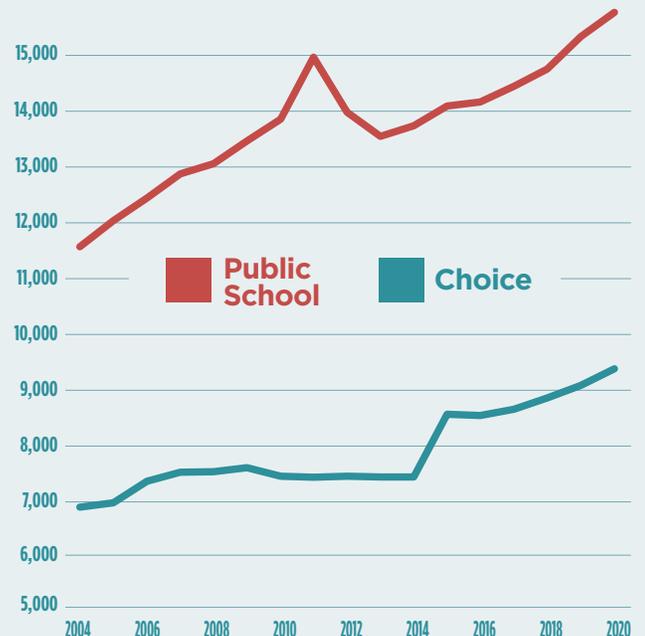


## THE CHOICE & CHARTER FUNDING GAP

Private choice schools receive less than 60% of the funds provided to traditional public schools. Charter schools receive only a slightly larger amount than private choice schools.

### Choice vs. Public School Funding Gap\*

*\*Excludes varying amounts of limited federal aid to private schools.*



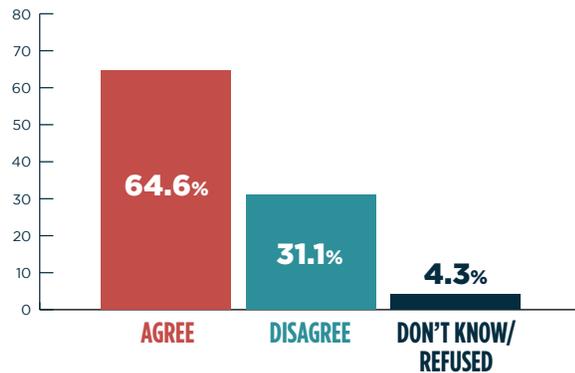
# STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TWO KEY REFORMS

## Make Choice Universal

Wisconsin's private school choice program is the only tax-supported option not open to all families. Traditional public schools, charter schools, and Open Enrollment public schools have no eligibility barriers.

**The public supports ending the eligibility barriers.** A recent scientific survey of likely Wisconsin\* voters finds nearly two out of three respondents agreed (65% vs. 31%) that "income restrictions need to be dropped so that every Wisconsin family has the ability to send their children to a school that's best for them." This support extends to every major Wisconsin media market.

**INCOME RESTRICTIONS NEED TO BE DROPPED SO THAT EVERY WISCONSIN FAMILY HAS THE ABILITY TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO A SCHOOL THAT'S BEST FOR THEM.**



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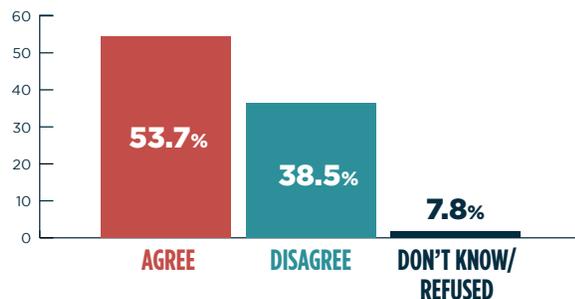
## End Funding Inequity

Lack of adequate funding has forced Hope Christian High School in Milwaukee to close. This is a major loss. For ten straight years, 100% of its graduates have been accepted into post-secondary education.

Andrew Neumann, CEO of the organization that oversees the network of Milwaukee Hope schools, explains: **"The significantly lower funding provided to private choice schools compared to other publicly funded programs is inadequate to support high-quality outcomes at the high school level."**

The public supports Neumann's call for ending the disparity. A clear majority\* (54% vs. 39%) agree "it is time to fully fund charter and choice schools." The support for full funding is statewide.

**CHARTER AND CHOICE SCHOOLS HAVE BETTER ACADEMIC RESULTS COMPARED TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS YET RECEIVE LESS THAN TWO-THIRDS OF THE AMOUNT OF PUBLIC FUNDING TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS RECEIVE. IT IS TIME TO FULLY FUND CHARTER AND CHOICE SCHOOLS.**



\*The survey was conducted between February 13th and 16th by OnMessage Inc., a national public opinion research firm with more than 30 years of experience in Wisconsin. OMI pollster Wes Anderson was recognized in 2019 by the American Association of Political Consultants as "Pollster of the Year". The survey polled an equal number of those who identify as Democrats or Republicans. Fifteen per cent of those surveyed identified as independents.

# WHAT LIES AHEAD

**Now is the time to empower parents and give them more control over their children's education.**

Parents across the state seeking reform have the support of a growing coalition of groups. School Choice Wisconsin is working with these allies to seize the day.

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## SCHOOL CHOICE WISCONSIN GOALS

- **Let all families choose private schools**, just as they now can choose all other tax-supported schools.
- **Establish the rights of parents** to engage with local school officials, to review instructional material, and to choose the schools they believe are best for their children.
- **Remove access barriers** such as the power of public school districts to block parents from virtual charter schools or from using the open enrollment program.
- **Expand enrollment periods** to increase access to all programs.
- **Reduce excessive regulation** that leaves parents and schools terrified that they will make a mistake that costs them participation in the program.
- **Eliminate the funding disparity** among private, charter, and traditional public schools.



School Choice Wisconsin is a 501(c)3 that works to advance and defend parent choice. It works in tandem with its 501(c)4 affiliate, School Choice Wisconsin Action. Advocates also support the Fund for Parent Choice, a conduit that provides direct contributions to political candidates.