

MONTHLY

APRIL 2025

Inside the *Choice Community*

April marks the end of the Wisconsin program enrollment period—congratulations to participating schools on making it through this busy time! This year, we sent out nearly 45,000 marketing materials to schools, which is nearly double what we have sent during past enrollment periods. This is not only a testament to the growth of the choice programs over the years, but the rising interest in your schools. You know your community's families best, and the demand for more quality, private educational options is evident.

We field high volumes of questions from parents this time of year, **but the work done inside schools to keep the programs running smoothly on the ground floor never goes unnoticed.**

The next page offers several examples from school leaders and parents of what makes choice schools so special. If you have accounts of challenges you or a parent overcame, or your school's successes, feel free to reach out to us. We want to share your story and promote all the good happening in your school!

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SCWA KEY ISSUE OF THE MONTH: FUNDING INCREASE & IMPACT

The 2023-2025 legislative session saw a historic increase in per pupil funding. We love hearing from schools about how this additional funding has been used to improve the quality of education for students at choice schools across the state. Here are just a few examples of the impact of this monumental legislative decision:

Cross Trainers Academy (Milwaukee, WI)

Cross Trainers Academy is part of the Milwaukee Rescue Mission, a homeless shelter on the city's north side. Thanks to the increased funding, the school was able to **purchase career exploration software** to help guide high school students in vocational programming. Naviance, the software students now use to explore career pathways, introduces students to a range of jobs/careers they may have never considered before. All of this opens numerous doors for at-risk students to find success.

Sheboygan Christian School (Sheboygan, WI)

Sheboygan Christian used much of their increased funding to **expand the school's special education programming**. The school, which participates in the Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP), has hired a dedicated team of in-house special education teachers. This provides a direct channel for students with all kinds of learning needs to receive assistance. Choice schools such as these recognize how flawed a "one-size-fits-all" education is and prioritize the calling to serve all students toward success.

EverGreen Academy (Racine, WI)

Much of the increased choice funding EverGreen Academy received has gone towards **increasing faculty and staff salaries**. The teachers at EverGreen truly embody the culture of the school, one which revolves around respect, security, perseverance, and joy (the school's four core values). Making their salaries and benefits more competitive is one way EverGreen can give back to those who pour their heart into the school's mission.

CHOICE VOICES

Families are the heart of our cause. Read about two Wisconsin families' experiences in the choice program, and [click here](#) to visit our website for more stories from real families and school leaders.



Jay Abitz from St. Peter's Lutheran School (Freedom, WI)

Jay has been a public-school teacher for almost two decades, and he sends his three sons to St. Peter's Lutheran, a private choice school. This is no paradox—many Wisconsin families have ties to both public and private schools and find success in exercising their right to have educational options.

The school is well known in Jay's community for their early childhood care, and his family lives close to the campus. Smaller class sizes, personable administration, and faith-based education were other selling points. Jay credits the faculty and staff at St. Peter with creating a peaceful and welcoming atmosphere. During one of his first visits to the school, Jay recalls being warmly approached by teachers introducing themselves and speaking highly about his children. **These intentional relationships help parents feel secure in where their kids spend so much of their time.**

With his oldest beginning to explore high school options, Jay admits that his son may end up choosing to attend the local public school where Jay works, while it seems likely that the

youngest may continue in private. Ultimately, the family will decide where their children will be most successful—a decision made even easier with the state's parental choice program.



LeNay Graham from St. Paul Lutheran School (Grafton, WI)

LeNay was searching for a school that provided a value-aligned, Biblical-centric education, one small enough for one-on-one academic attention for each child while also offering ample extracurricular activities. She found all this and more at St. Paul Lutheran School before even

realizing it was part of the choice program and that her family did qualify to participate. Michael Yurk, principal at St. Paul's, informed LeNay about the opportunity, which was a "game changer" for LeNay's family. She says that without the choice program, it would not have been possible for all five of her children to attend St. Paul's.

This early communication between Principal Yurk and LeNay set the tone for a positive, collaborative experience. LeNay says the school promotes healthy communication with the parents and is easy to partner with when issues or questions arise. **"They don't replace us [parents]," she says, "but having them on board and having good conversations makes us feel safe."**

It's still up in the air where LeNay's oldest, a soon-to-be 8th grade graduate of St. Paul's, will attend high school. LeNay is confident, however, in the education her children have received at St. Paul's since 3K, believing they have a solid foundation that will prepare them for any school setting.