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Overview:

Wisconsin Watch has released its third article in a series attempting to discredit the great work choice programs do in Wisconsin. Their latest article misrepresents admission policies of choice schools while ignoring the fact that public schools often engage in admission practices that would be illegal for schools participating in the state's choice programs.

Wisconsin Watch is again making false claims.

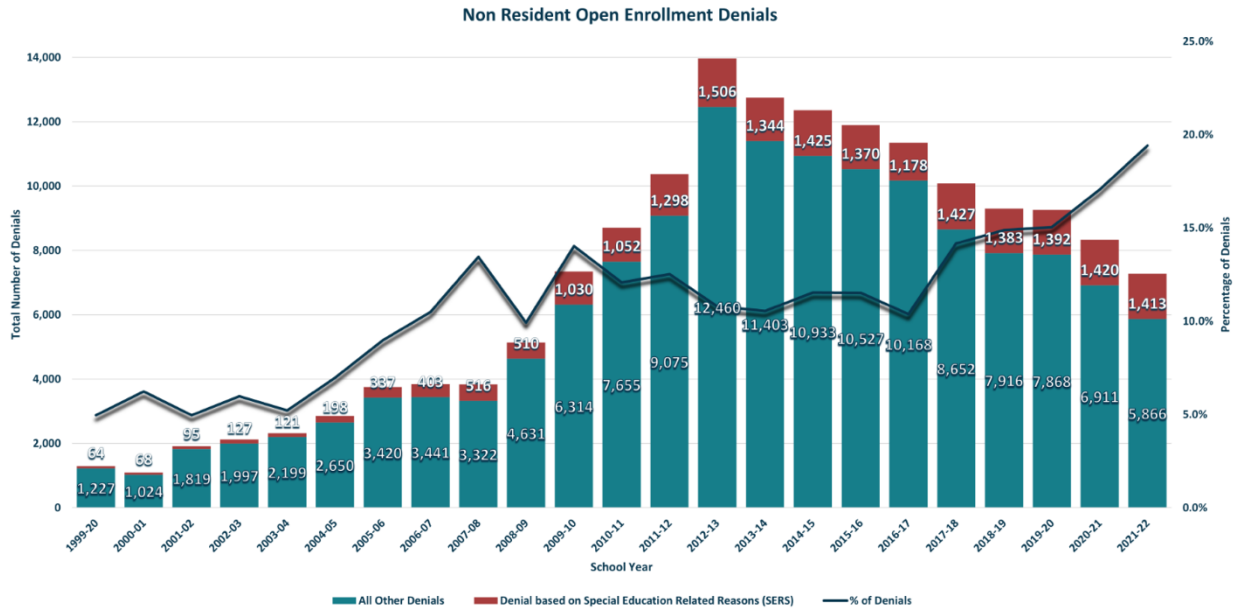
- **In their most recent article, Wisconsin Watch again misrepresents school choice admission practices and now adds a false narrative that schools "expel" students with disabilities at will. Their claims don't match reality, nor is a single example provided.**
- **Fact: Schools in Wisconsin's choice programs may not discriminate against any eligible family based on a student's disability.[i]**
- **As with many individual public schools, individual private schools are not required to provide a full range of disability services. Parents who choose to enroll their student do so only after being fully informed of available services.**

Some Wisconsin public schools have admissions processes that would be illegal for private choice schools.

- **Public school districts often have specialty public schools, in addition to their residentially assigned schools. Public schools are permitted to create admission requirements for these schools.**
- **Public schools having admission requirements is not a new phenomenon, with the practice being documented in Wisconsin for decades.[ii] (Link)**
- **Today, specialty schools like those in Milwaukee[iii] (Link) use a points system to admit students based on their report card scores, attendance, standardized test scores, and an essay. In Green Bay,[iv] (Link) students must complete a test for admission to a school for the gifted.**

- **Choice schools must admit students on a random basis if there is excess demand with few exceptions, primarily related to being in the same family as an existing student.[v] (Link)**

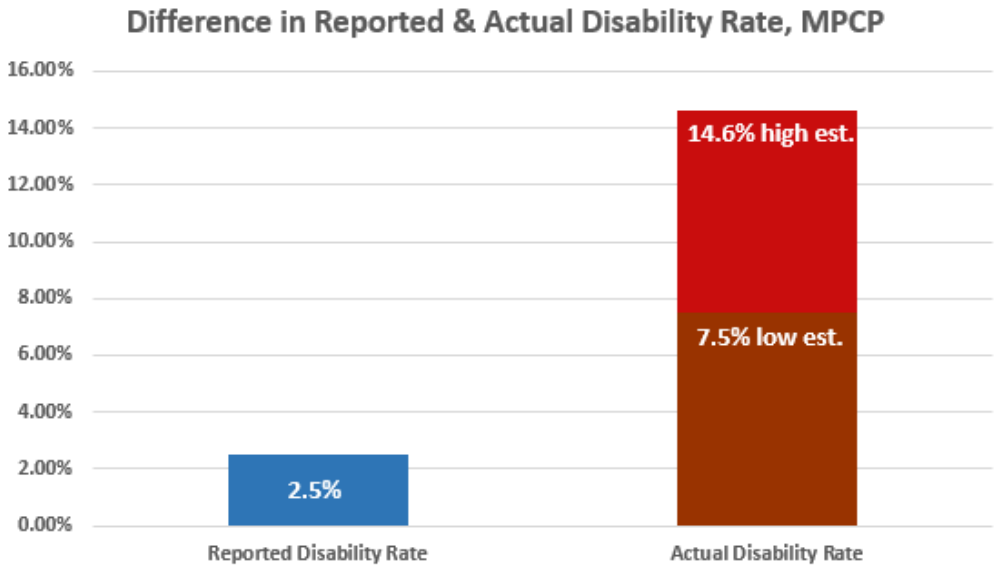
Public schools reject students in the public school full-time open enrollment program.



- **Public schools are permitted to determine the number of seats for disabled students, separate from non-disabled students, for the public-school open enrollment program.**
- **Since the creation of the program, the number of denials has increased by 464% even as public school enrollment statewide has decreased by 5.1%.[vi] (Link)**
- **Since the creation of this program, denials for special needs have increased about 2107%.**

Private choice schools likely serve more students with disabilities than is reported.

- **2015 Study: Choice schools often lack financial incentives to report students with a disability. The disability rates reported by DPI are at least 3 times lower than actual rates.[vii] (Link)**



Public schools in Wisconsin do not have a great track record when it comes to students with disabilities.

- **Disability Rights Wisconsin is a non-profit organization that protects the rights of people with disabilities statewide, including students with disabilities against public school districts. The organization filed a complaint against Racine Unified in 2018[viii] (Link) regarding their failure to provide services for students with disabilities.**
- **DPI receives numerous complaints annually regarding districts failing to meet state and federal law requirements for students with disabilities each year.[ix] (Link)**

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[i] **Wis. Stat. §119.23(3)(a)**
[ii] https://archive.org/details/ERIC_ED441904
[iii] https://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/Schools/How-to-Apply/High-School-Enrollment/High-School-Enrollment-Criteria.htm
[iv] https://davinci.gbaps.org/2020_2021_enrollment
[v] https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/informational_papers/january_2023/0030_private_school_choice_and_special_needs_scholarship_programs_informational_paper_30.pdf
[vi] https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/open-enrollment/pdf/2021-22-oe-annual-report.pdf
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[ix] https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/dispute-resolution/complain/decisions