

WPCP Guidelines Summary

To participate in the WPCP, private schools must adhere to rigorous standards designed to ensure accountability while preserving their private status. These mandates are overseen by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The oversight includes, but is not limited to the following:

Academic Standards

Participating schools must provide a high-quality academic environment comparable to public institutions:

- **Instructional Hours:** Schools must offer the same number of instructional hours by grade as required by the public schools (K/4K–437 hours, Elementary–1050 hours, Middle/High School–1137 hours)
- **Curriculum:** Schools must offer a sequentially progressive curriculum in reading, language arts, math, social studies, science, and health.
- **State Testing:** Choice students must be administered the same state standardized tests as public school students (e.g., Forward Exam).
- **Accreditation:** All schools must be accredited by a *DPI-approved agency*.
- **All teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education or a teaching license issued by the DPI.**

Admissions, Eligibility, and Student Rights

The WPCP requires a transparent and non-discriminatory admissions process:

- **Selection Criteria:** Choice schools may not use a student's race, ethnic background, religion, prior test scores, grades, recommendations or membership in a church or parish. Choice schools must accept all eligible Choice applications during each of the school's open application periods.
- **Random Selection:** If applications exceed available seats, schools must hold a random lottery.
- **Special Needs:** Schools cannot discriminate based on special needs but are only required to provide services involving "minor adjustments."
- **Religious Freedom:** Schools must allow students to opt out of any religious activity or instruction upon a parent's written request.

Financial and Administrative Accountability

To ensure the proper use of public funds, schools must maintain strict oversight:

- **Mandatory Audits:** Schools must undergo *four* annual audits. There are two enrollment audits to ensure accurate enrollment numbers that affect state funding. There is a fiscal/internal control audit to ensure that state financial rules are followed, proper accounting is used, funds are managed correctly, and that the school has strong internal controls to prevent fraud. Finally, there is a financial audit to ensure that funding is being spent appropriately on student needs and expenses. These are all performed by a licensed, independent CPA firm approved by the DPI and reported back to DPI.
- **Staff Safety:** Background checks are mandatory for all employees and contractors. The school cannot hire individuals disqualified by the DPI.

Governance and Student Records

Schools are required to maintain transparency with parents and the state:

- **Public Meetings:** Schools must hold at least two meetings per year where parents can interface with the governing board (requires 30-day notice).
- **Disciplinary Procedures:** Schools must provide parents with written procedures for suspensions and expulsions, including an appeals process.

Sources:

https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Choice/school_registration/New_Private_School_Requirements_Overview.pdf

https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/pi/35

<https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/parent-faq#Religious%20Activities.%20Transportation.%20and%20School%20Policies>