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M I L W A U K E E  
**JOURNAL SENTINEL**

JUNE 11, 2005 WWW.JSONLINE.COM

## Positive Impressions

A sampling of visits that left Journal Sentinel reporters with the sense the schools were doing well or making gains:

**Believers in Christ Christian Academy**, 4065 N. 25th St., 213 voucher students: A school that started on a shoestring and has grown into something much bigger. Every day starts with a prayer service and assembly, which is regularly attended by parents and other relatives. The academy reports that all of its high school graduates have been accepted by colleges in recent years.

**Eastbrook Academy**, 5375 N. Green Bay Ave., 93 voucher students: Principal Julie Loomis, retired from Brookfield Academy, a top-notch private school, pursues some of the same goals here. The school serves a diverse student body that includes many low-income students. Latin is taught in middle school, and reading is taught using a strongly phonics-oriented program. In recent Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, the school scored at the 91st percentile overall.

**Hickman Academy Preparatory School**, 4200 N. 51st Blvd., 230 voucher students: Owner Bennie Hickman keeps extra shirts in her office for the school's mostly low-income students and an iron for pressing their clothes; the school uses Direct Instruction programs for reading and math; it is seeking accreditation, which is unusual for independent start-ups in the choice program.

**Hope Christian School**, 2345 N. 25th St., 171 voucher students: Sixteen students in a sixth- and seventh-grade combined class, working in pairs, read to each other about molecules. The teacher tells them they need to be ready for timed tests tomorrow. Features a highly structured program, using back-to-basics approaches to reading and math. Uniforms are required, discipline is strict, teachers are licensed, generally having gone to Lutheran colleges. Attendance is 92% to 98% daily.

**Malaika Early Learning Center**, 125 W. Auer Ave., 29 voucher students: Malaika means "little angel" in Swahili, and with its \$3 million child care center, which opened in 2003, the non-profit learning center provides a clean and safe environment, as well as a consistent and ambitious curriculum. Keona Jones, Malaika's administrator and a former assistant principal in MPS, says "I believe in choice schools that are non-profit and have definite accountabilities and outcomes for students."

**Messmer High School**, 742 W. Capitol Drive., and **Messmer Preparatory School**, 3027 N. Fratney, 732 voucher students: A perennial showcase for the voucher movement, Messmer demands that students meet high expectations. When a reporter visits an English class, the teacher pushes students to undertake a complex and nuanced analysis of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess."

**St. Marcus Lutheran School**, 2215 N. Palmer St., 223 voucher students: Principal Henry Tyson calls it "an intense, no excuses program," and observations support that. There's a strict uniform code - boys wear ties. Outside the office, a large sign announces the previous day's attendance - 97%. In a 4-year-old kindergarten class, kids shout out answers in a sing-song chant as they read words posted on the wall. The words include "Christ," "God" and "heaven." They also include "college."