

State political officials supported only the common school from 1821 until the so-called Fair Bus Bill in 1968.

In 1819 the Ohio legislature appointed a Common School Committee which began to lay the groundwork for a common school system. Legislation was enacted in 1821 which initially began the development of the common school system. Three years later, legislation was enacted that required communities to develop, govern, and support school districts.

In 1837 legislation was enacted that established the office of Superintendent of Common Schools. Samuel Lewis was engaged by the legislature to fill that position. This was a signal that the state was moving toward a public common school system. Although Lewis resigned after 3 years and the position was abolished, the duties regarding the common school system were assigned to the Secretary of State; hence, a state system of education was evolving.

During the Constitutional Convention of 1850/1851 delegates generally were critical of the condition of common schools and the state's lack of support for it. There was no support among delegates to replace common schools with private ventures or that private schools should be provided financial assistance. Instead, the delegates to the Convention crafted language that required the state legislature to secure by taxation, a thorough and efficient system of common schools and that religious or other sects would have no control over any part of school funds of the state.

During the Constitutional Convention of 1873/1874 a delegate proposal to eliminate the provision to disallow the provision in Article VI, Section 2 which forbids control of any part of the school funds by sects was soundly defeated.

During the Constitutional Convention of 1912 some delegates attempted to excise city school districts from the state school system by allowing city districts to operate by a state-issued charter. This proposal was soundly defeated, and an amendment was adopted to improve the state system by the language—provision shall be made by law for the organization, administration, and control of the public school system supported by public funds. The amendment—Article VI, Section 3—was crafted and thus adopted by Ohioans in September 1912. Four major education bills to strengthen public education were enacted less than 2 years later.

At the federal level, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was passed to provide public assistance for vocational education in agriculture, trades and industry and homemaking. The federal law required that this program be administered and thus provided through school districts, not private entities.

In the mid-1960's the Ohio legislature took a wrong turn regarding its constitutional duty for the the public common school. On August 10, 1965, Governor James A. Rhodes signed a bill to require student transportation to private schools. This action opened the door to additional public support to private schools. State funding for auxiliary services and nonpublic administrative cost reimbursement followed soon thereafter. Then in the mid-1990's the voucher scheme was introduced in Ohio.

A quarter century later in 2023, the universal private school voucher program was enacted as part of the State Budget Bill.