

**Tug of war in Ohio this budget cycle: A constitutional funding system for school districts vs the universal EdChoice voucher system on steroids.**

There has always been a tug of war in the state budget proceedings when dividing funding for K-12 students. Prior to the 1990's nearly all of the "tug" was within the traditional public school arena. The first task related to the decision of what portion of the state General Revenue budget would be assigned to K-12 education. (Since 1975 the percentage has varied from a high of 45% in 1975 to a low of 34% in the early 1990's.) After a "control" figure for K-12 education was established by legislative leaders, education advocates would lobby to get as much of the revenue as possible for their particular area of interest—basic aid, career/technical education, special education, including gifted, disadvantaged pupil, early childhood education, etc.

A new dynamic in the "tug" began in the late 1990's when the state started to flitter away K-12 funding to private schools in the form of private schools and charter schools. (However, private schools received student transportation, auxiliary services and nonpublic administrative cost reimbursement decades before.)

During this current budget cycle, the real tug of war will be between the advocates of the constitutionally-required system of common schools and the advocates of the unconstitutional voucher giveaway. The out-of-control voucher zealots in the General Assembly will attempt to disable the Cupp/Patterson Fair School Funding legislation in favor of a free flow of public tax dollars to the private school enterprise. Several legislators have announced their reluctance to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan which the legislature enacted two budget cycles ago. The voucher lobby seems to have purchased quite a few legislators to do other bidding.

As an educator and school administrator since 1958, I am completely baffled by the assault on public education. The beginning attacks began about the time of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Brown (1954). The Reagan administration escalated the assault with the publication of the bogus Nation at Risk report.

The voucher/privatization movement could not have taken root without a fraudulent attack on the public common school. The voucher zealots have been successful in the privatization campaign by trashing the public common school.

Now, the public common school system is fighting for its very life.