

Two approaches to funding school districts to achieve high quality educational opportunities for students.

There are two general approaches to determining how much state funding will be provided for public K-12 education. One is to determine the amount of funding based on a political decision of what portion of the state general revenue should be assigned to K-12 education. The other is to determine the components of a high-quality education for various categories of students and find the funds to accommodate the needs of all students.

Article VI, section 2 of the Ohio Constitution: "The General Assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise, ... will secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the State..." demands an approach that funds the needs of students. The "what funds are available" approach has never met the constitutional standard.

Notwithstanding the 1851 school funding mandate, Ohio has generally used the residual approach, i.e. "whatever funds are available after everything else is funded".

Periodically the public education community and state officials have reached an agreement that K-12 education should be funded on the basis of student needs. That happened during the Strickland administration when the Evidence-Based Model was legislated, but that model was replaced with no formula during the Kasich administration.

Most recently the Cupp/Patterson Fair School Funding plan was adopted. This "student needs-based" model was adopted by the legislature, but is being phased in. Legislators like the Speaker of the House and Chair of the Senate Education Committee seem to be setting the stage to scrap Cupp/Patterson. The Speaker says it is "unsustainable", while at the same time putting a billion dollars in the voucher scheme.

Senator Brenner, chair of the Senate Education Committee, has recently said he is working on a school funding plan. A paragraph in a recent [Gongwer](#) reveals Senator Brenner's ideas:

Brenner said he does expect candidates running for governor will want to "have a conversation" about the direction they want to take K-12 finance in, if elected, which could influence the future of the bill or its successor.

"If we want to be the No. 1 school system in the United States and world, we've got to do some radical changes to the way that we're handling things right now," he said.

Brenner said he also does not believe the legislature can address long-term property tax relief – an issue championed by many lawmakers on both sides of the aisle – without revisiting school finance.

"The school funding piece really is what this is about," he said.

Mr. Brenner's comments suggest that he would favor the "whatever is left over in the state budget process" approach be used to determine the funding level for education. Mr. Brenner does not seem to want to address the outrageous increases in property tax because to lower the property tax amount would require a major increase in state funds for the school funding formula.

The Cupp/Patterson Fair School Funding plan when fully funded, including the funds needed for special education and special needs students, would represent success. Unfortunately, some legislative leaders seem to resent success, wanting to return to the failures of the past.