

Governor's state budget numbers for school districts may not add up.

As has been stated previously in my daily email, the school funding tug of war is between the constitutionally mandated public common school system and the privatization contrivances. Karen Kasler, with [Statehouse News Bureau](#), shows how the Governor's budget for education favors vouchers and charter schools over constitutionally authorized public common schools.

Some numbers of concern are identified in the [article](#):

1. Half of the school districts will receive less state funding. Many of these districts increased in enrollment in the last year.
2. The state share of the base cost decreases both years (contrary to the DeRolph school funding decision).
3. Charters and vouchers will receive a half billion dollars increase or a 1.9% increase the first year and 1.4% increase the second year, while school districts are handed a reduction.

DeWine's budget includes less money for Ohio's public schools, more for vouchers and charters **The Statehouse News Bureau | By [Karen Kasler](#)**

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Gov. Mike DeWine's proposed budget would spend \$23.4 billion on education, and DeWine said it would fully fund the final phase-in of the school funding formula that was first implemented in 2021. But an analysis of the numbers shows there are actually cuts to traditional K-12 public schools, but almost a half a billion dollars more for vouchers and charter schools.

"Our budget also includes \$23.4 billion over the biennium to support students, educators, schools and districts, with increased funding in the K-12 school funding formula and school choice programs," DeWine said when introducing his budget on Feb. 3. "This plan includes a phase in of the final two years of the General Assembly school funding plan."

An analysis of information from the Legislative Service Commission, the office that reviews legislation for lawmakers, shows traditional public schools will get \$16 billion. But that includes a cut from current spending adding up to \$103.4 million over two years, with more than half of districts getting less state funding. And a fifth of those schools receiving less state funding actually grew their student populations in the last year.

The state share of base cost decreases in both years of the budget; it goes down for 87% of the state's more than 600 public school districts in the first year, and 83.1% of districts in the second. Only three districts will see an increase in their state share of base cost in the first year, and none will get a boost in the second.

Critics had already raised concerns that the salary and other financial inputs that were used in the funding formula in this budget were from 2022, and therefore weren't updated.

Meanwhile, vouchers and charters will get almost a half a billion dollars more in the budget. The state's five voucher programs will get \$2.4 billion, which is \$265.4 million more over two years and a 16.5% increase over current funding. Charter and STEM schools will receive \$2.7 billion, or \$221.8 million more. That's an 11.7% increase over current funding.

Spending on vouchers has increased dramatically, as the last budget allowed for taxpayer-supported EdChoice vouchers to go to any family in Ohio that wants them, though families with higher incomes get less money. The value of vouchers doesn't change in this budget: a full voucher for K-8 is \$6,166 and

\$8,408 for grades 9-12. So it's expected the increase is included because of anticipation that more families will enroll in the EdChoice voucher program.

Though traditional public schools will get less money in this proposed budget, with those increases for vouchers and charter schools there's a 1.9% boost in spending for primary education in the first year of the budget and 1.4% more in the second.

The budget, which is House Bill 96, is now being reviewed by the House Finance Committee, with other committees also hearing testimony on it. Changes are expected from House Republicans, who have said they hope to pass the budget around the break for Easter on April 20.

Gov. Mike DeWine's spokesman Dan Tierney responded in a written statement:

"As the Governor mentioned in his Budget press conference on February 3rd, his budget proposal for K-12 schools is guided by the principle that the state budget should be funding students vs. "empty desks." The analysis by bucket, by nature, focuses on administrative entities over where students and their parents choose to obtain an education. Overall, when all students are included, education funding is increased. The changes reflect student population movement among the different types of schools. The "guarantee" phase out prevents the dollar changes from being apples to apples, as districts are proposed to maintain at least 90% of the baseline funding under the proposal. In addition, the previously adopted Cupp-Patterson funding formula is designed to reduce state share when local share increases due to increased property tax revenue. Due to the increase in property values across Ohio, Cupp-Patterson is designed to reduce state payments in such a scenario, even when the formula is fully funded, as it is in the Governor's proposal."

NOTE: This story has been updated with a comment from Gov. Mike DeWine's office.