

Some rural areas have no private schools and thus few vouchers. Some legislative leaders want taxpayer money for private school facilities so as to create a demand for vouchers in rural areas.

Historically, the public common school has been the center of community life in most districts throughout Ohio and the nation. The public school system in many districts has been the economic engine of the community. In the past, small town mayors and village councils typically resisted consolidation of school districts for reasons of the local economy.

Some voucher-centric legislators want to provide funding to private schools to build facilities and thus to eliminate the public school from being the community center.

Rural legislators are under pressure to support vouchers from legislative leaders who are bent on privatizing public education. Rural legislators should ponder the consequences of fragmenting rural communities by using tax funds for vouchers and private school facilities. Of course, the voucher-hungry leaders will put out the threat of competition in primary elections when rural legislators protect the public common school.

Rural legislators would be wise to bond together along with their respective communities to protect the public common school system. Voucher students do not perform academically as well as their peers in the common school system. These voucher students lose more ground each year they are enrolled as a voucher student in private school.

Ohio has near-universal school vouchers, but 10 counties have no private schools

By: [Megan Henry](#) - March 10, 2025 4:55 am

Despite the expansion of near-universal school vouchers in Ohio, students in some counties don't have the option to attend a private school.

Ten of Ohio's 88 counties have no private schools during the 2025 fiscal year, according to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce.

"There are a lot of rural areas in the state that do not have many options," said Ohio Federation of Teacher President Melissa Cropper. "Students in those areas really don't have access to these vouchers."

Carroll, Champaign, Hardin, Harrison, Holmes, Meigs, Morgan, Noble, Preble and Vinton counties had zero private schools during the 2025 fiscal year. Many Appalachian counties have only one or two private schools, according to ODEW data.

"To say that we have universal vouchers, that every family can take advantage of a voucher, is actually a fallacy," Cropper said. "A lot of these counties don't have options, or have very few options, yet they're still being impacted by money going to vouchers, so it has a disproportionate impact on rural areas."

About 90% of Ohio students attended public school during the 2023-24 school year, according to ODEW.

“Public education is the education that serves the majority of people in most of, particularly in the rural parts, of the state and Appalachia,” said Susie Kaeser, education specialist at League of Women Voters Ohio.

The 2023 state budget expanded school vouchers eligibility to 450% of the poverty line — meaning a family of four above the \$135,000 income threshold can [still be eligible for at least 10% of the maximum scholarship](#). Ohio spent nearly a [billion dollars on private school scholarship programs](#) for the 2024 fiscal year, the first full year with near-universal school vouchers.

There are about 720 private schools in Ohio for the 2025 fiscal year, according to ODEW. Most of the state’s private schools are concentrated in Cuyahoga (125), Hamilton (94), Franklin (88), Summit (40), Montgomery (33) and Lucas (32).

“It’s a double hit to rural communities when kids leave a public school because they take that money with them, but the cost of education in that school doesn’t change,” Kaeser said.

Population density and lack of interest are two reasons why these counties may lack private schools, Kaeser said.

“You have to have enough people to make it worthwhile to create an alternative school,” she said. “There would be more private schools in rural Ohio if there were demand. People may just be content with what they have.”

The governor’s version of the state budget for the next two years would decrease funding for traditional public schools by 0.9%, according to a workgroup analysis. Voucher programs including the EdChoice private school program would see a 15.8% increase.

The Ohio House is currently reviewing the budget and [local public school leaders recently testified](#) on how full state funding is critical to their districts.

“We keep putting off funding our public schools, but that’s who’s being hurt, the people who rely exclusively on public education,” Kaeser said.

If public schools receive less funding, schools could cut the number of teachers they have or offer fewer courses, Cropper said.

“It impacts pretty much the daily life of the student,” she said.

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