

It is problematic that some rural school leaders and personnel seem to be unconcerned about the universal EdChoice voucher plague creeping into rural Ohio

I spent 18 years of my career as a teacher, principal, and superintendent in rural Ohio. As an Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, I was the Department of Education liaison with the County Superintendents of Ohio (County Superintendents pre-dated ESC superintendents.) It was my observation (and still is) that the rural school is the hub of the community, possibly more so than some of the larger school districts.

Since many rural school communities have little to no private school presence, some district leaders reason that the EdChoice vouchers, Education Savings Accounts (ESA's), Tuition Tax Credits, and other publicly funded private education ventures do not have nor will have any negative effects on rural school districts.

However, consider the following:

Rural districts would have gained healthy state funding increases had the Cupp/Patterson Fair School Funding Plan been fully funded from the time it was enacted a few years ago.

For example, Trimble Local school district would have received an additional \$5.4 million for fiscal years 26 and 27 as opposed to \$1.08 million had the Fair School Funding Plan been fully implemented. Adena Local school district would have received an additional \$1.4 million for fiscal years 26 and 27 as opposed to \$68,000 had the Fair School Funding Plan been fully implemented.

The Cupp/Patterson Fair School Funding plan could have been fully funded but for the EdChoice voucher scheme.

State school funds that should have flowed to rural public schools are now being diverted to tuition subsidies for high income folks whose children were never enrolled in public schools. How smart is that public policy? Where are the legislators who serve rural areas? Are they serving their constituents or are they serving their party leadership?

That's not all.

The most recent Capital Improvements bill provides facilities funding for several private schools. This opens the door to massive capital funding for private schools. The current House Speaker advocates for the proliferation of private schools in rural areas.

So, what will happen to rural public school districts when the state diverts tax funds to private school facilities in rural areas? Consolidation. Loss of community support. Building closings and more harm. Vouchers Hurt Ohio.

All school districts, especially all rural school districts, should get on board with the EdChoice voucher litigation.