

History of school funding in Ohio: Northwest Ordinance of 1787

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was an ordinance for the government of the “Territory of the United States northwest of the River Ohio.” It is significant that this ordinance of governance, in Article 3, states, “Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged”; hence the mandate to government, before public schools existed in the Northwest Territory, was “to encourage education.” Recall that the Ordinance of 1785 set aside the 16th section of each township (640 acres) for the “maintenance of public schools.” Hence the intent was to tie public government schooling to specific geographic areas, in this case, each township.

The next post will start with the education provisions of the 1802 Ohio Constitution.