

History of school funding in Ohio: 1912 constitutional amendments to the 1935 School Foundation Program

When the 1912 Constitutional Convention was held there were, in the range of, 3000 school districts in Ohio. Within those districts there were over 10,000 one-room schools.

Governor James A. Cox made a concerted effort to lead serious efforts to reform public K-12 education in response to the 1912 education amendments. He addressed the legislature in a special session, called for education discussions to be held in every school building on a specific date, appointed a state education survey committee, and hosted a statewide Education Congress of delegates from school districts throughout Ohio.

In 1914 the legislature enacted four bills that embraced the findings of the various study initiatives. These enactments had far reaching implications for school district reorganization, curriculum, programs and services. However, serious school funding issues seemed to be neglected.

The 1914 school legislation instituted the county Boards of Education to assist with the education reforms legislated. One of the main thrusts of county Boards of Education was the reorganization of school districts into larger units. As a result, county boards became very unpopular in most school communities.

A school finance study in the mid-1920's showed the need for a state school finance foundation program. Notwithstanding the Great Depression, Ohio adopted its first school foundation program with the result of a 50/50 state and local share of financing the public schools of Ohio. A three percent sales tax was enacted to provide the state portion of the formula.

The next post will review how the state , between 1935 and 1970, reneged on the 50/50 share concept.