

Beginning with the Northwest Land Ordinance of 1785, the foundation governing documents in Ohio have directed state government to restrict school tax funds to only public school entities. Part II of a series

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 built on the education provision of the Northwest Land Ordinance of 1785, which set aside the 16th section of each township for public school purposes.

The 1787 Ordinance in Article III 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."

This policy statement supplemented the 1785 education provision for support of schools via the 16th section of each township. Again, this pronouncement pointed to a public education venture with no provision for private education. By attaching support for education to a plot of ground (the 16th section of each township), it can reasonably be concluded that the education envisioned would be public education or education, i.e., provided in common.

In fact, in 1819 the legislature appointed a committee of legislators to study common schools and report back. Legislation was enacted in 1821 that set up the general framework for a common school system.

The next post will consider the education provisions in the 1802 Ohio Constitution and the legislature's action regarding education the first eighteen years of statehood.