

Education Savings Accounts (ESA's) for nonchartered non-public in the House version of the State Budget: Beyond belief but in Ohio not surprising.

School privatization gimmicks at taxpayers' expense have been escalating in type and amount since the 1965 legislation to mandate that public school districts bear the cost of transporting nonpublic students to their private schools. The transportation mandate was followed by auxiliary services and then nonpublic administrative cost reimbursement in the 1980's. The Cleveland voucher program was established in the mid 1990's. The EdChoice voucher scheme, along with the Jon Peterson and autism vouchers, came online at the dawn of the 21st century. The universal EdChoice voucher is in full bloom, but the appetite of voucher zealots for privatization is insatiable. They want more, much more; every dime of tax money appropriated for education.

Tax funds for private school facilities crept into the most recent Capital Bill.

Now, included in the House version of the State Budget Bill is the cleverly named Education Savings Accounts (ESA's). The ESA proposal, like the Cleveland foot-in-the-door voucher pilot project, is starting with a particular group of private schools—nonchartered nonpublic schools. This group of private schools agreed to forgo taxpayer money available to private schools in exchange for operating with no state regulations. Now the 136th General Assembly (with the House already agreeing with it) wants to give this group of about 500 "schools" in the range of \$40-50 million via taxpayer money flowing directly to parents of the students enrolled. The \$40-50 million price tag for the initial installment will most assuredly escalate to hundreds of millions. This class of "schools" got off regulation-free by claiming their religion did not allow state regulation. Try to imagine how this class of "schools" will expand when some folks "get religion" in order to receive a taxpayer handout to start an unregulated, unaudited, unaccountable "school".

When will taxpayers come to the conclusion that enough is enough? Where is the outrage?