

Cleveland.com's Laura Hancock reviews the report by the Network for Public Education (NPE) listing Ohio as one of the worst states in the Union for commitment to public education.

The Ohio Constitution requires the state to secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools.

Ohio public officials have proudly operated an unconstitutional system of public common schools for three decades. Other folks across the nation are taking notice of how badly Ohio public officials are treating Ohio public school students.

Ohio ranked 14th worst in country for support of public education, scores a grade of F

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[Image](#)

A Network for Public Education report cited Ohio's lack of accountability for voucher-funded private schools and charter operators, with nearly half of charters that opened eventually closing. Above, teachers from the Columbus area lead a demonstration at the Statehouse in May 2025 against the state's diversion of tax money to private school vouchers. © Laura Hancock -/cleveland.com/TNS

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Ohio received a grade of F in a recent report by a pro-public education group measuring each state's commitment to public education by looking at laws around funding and accountability in the privatization of schooling.

In the [2026 Network for Public Education report](#), Ohio's overall ranking out of 50 states and the District of Columbia was 38th, or the 14th worst. That was an improvement compared to the [2024 report](#), when Ohio was 42nd, or 10th worst. But that's not because Ohio increased funding to public education or created more accountability laws around homeschooling – among the measures the report considered.

It's because other states ranked higher in 2024 fell below Ohio for the 2026 report, said Carol Corbett Burris, executive director of the Network for Public Education.

"Texas started a voucher program," Burris said. "Indiana's funding of its public schools worsened. Therefore, while Ohio's rank moved up slightly, I would not consider that to be a reason to be pleased. Ohio was an F-rated state in 2024, and it is rated F today."

The study rated state performance based on points in four categories: Privatization, including voucher and charter school expansion and student protections; protections for homeschooled students; funding for public schools; and conditions for teaching and learning.

Points were deducted based on the component rating criteria for each category, the report said. The states were then ranked and given a letter grade.

Two states, Nebraska and Vermont, earned grades of A, with point totals topping 80 points. Ohio and 16 other states were given grades of F for their lack of support of public schools, students, and educators while embracing privatization.

Greg Lawson, senior research fellow at The Buckeye Institute, a conservative-leaning think tank, said the report is based on preserving the public school system, not deciding what's right for students. He said that vouchers help families who choose to opt out of public schools due to academics or bullying, among other reasons.

"We've always been for putting students first," Lawson said about his organization's positions on school choice. "I understand where they're coming from. They put the school districts first they look at it as a

system, and they think that it needs all the funding. So, anything that diverts that is going to be something they disagree with.”

Network for Public Education dinged Ohio for its charter and private school voucher policies, which Burris said were among the most expansive and least accountable in the nation.

Ohio private schools that receive vouchers do not have to show how they’re using funds. Their students don’t have to take the same standardized tests that public school students must take, [making it nearly impossible to compare](#) an area’s public and private schools. Additionally, one of Ohio’s voucher programs provides taxpayer funding for people at all income levels, [allowing some of the state’s wealthiest families to access vouchers](#).

About half of Ohio’s charter school operators are for-profit companies, which is high even by national standards. Forty-nine percent of charter schools that have opened in Ohio have closed. This suggests there is not enough state oversight or school accountability, said Jeanne Melvin, a retired Columbus-area teacher and president of Public Education Partners, an Ohio group that seeks school accountability for all students and works frequently with the Network for Public Education.

Melvin noted that in the two-year budget legislators passed last summer, lawmakers didn’t abide by the Fair School Funding Plan, a bipartisan concept to increase and provide more equitable funding to public schools over six years starting in 2021. This plan came after [the Ohio Supreme Court decided](#) in a [series of rulings](#) in 2001 and 2002 that Ohio’s public school funding system, which relies on local property taxes, did not result in evening funding across the state.

As a result, public school districts received the [lowest funding increase in a decade](#), with some districts receiving less state support. Among those was Cleveland Metropolitan School District, which received \$307 million in state dollars last year and will receive \$304.4 million in the 2026-2027 school year.

Charter and private school vouchers received more of a funding increase, not because the legislature was adding new programs, but because enrollment was expected to increase.

Burris said most states dropped in the 2026 report card, as statehouses become less friendly to public education.

Ohio’s school children have become guinea pigs for poorly developed school privatization laws, Melvin said. Along with the growth in privatization, more public school advocacy groups have formed across the state.

“All children deserve a quality public education and equitable public schools,” Melvin said. “Unfortunately, so-called education reform often stands in the way of this goal.”

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