

Jan Resseger's July 23 blog— Ohio Legislature Ensures that Public School Funding Will Remain Inadequate and Grossly Inequitable—alerts readers to the legislature's ongoing failure to provide a constitutional system of public education.

Jan Resseger puts in perspective the failure of the legislature to meet its constitutional responsibility to secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools.

The legislature's priority for EdChoice vouchers is the problem. Underfunding the constitutionally-required public system to fund a private school system shows contempt towards the voters who elected them.

When will the public education community en masse rise up to demand a system of public education that matches the constitutional requirement of thorough and efficient?

Ohio Legislature Ensures that Public School Funding Will Remain Inadequate and Grossly Inequitable

Posted on [July 23, 2026](#) by [janresseger](#)

There is massive evidence of a public school funding crisis across Ohio. The [Cleveland](#), [Columbus](#), and [Cincinnati](#) public school districts, along with many other districts across the state, have already announced major staff reductions for the coming school year. The *Plain Dealer's* [Molly Walsh](#) [describes](#) all kinds of districts on the ballot to try to pass local property tax levies: "Several are heading back to voters this fall after earlier tax defeats, reworking their requests as they warn that the next round of cuts could reach classrooms, staffing, student services, and school buildings.... The growing number of repeat requests reflects how little room some districts say they have left."

Ohio's legislature is shortchanging public education. [Policy Matters Ohio's Molly Bryden](#) [precisely explains](#) how Ohio school funding is supposed to work under what would have been a new, and finally a constitutional, funding system: "The Fair School Funding Plan's formula considers each district's capacity to raise revenue through local funding streams, like property taxes... and delivers additional state support to districts with lower levels of community wealth. The legislature's departure from the Fair School Funding Plan strips resources from districts that need them most... By refusing to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan (in the current biennial budget), legislators ensure further cost-shifting to local revenue sources with less state support in future budget cycles."

Policy Matters Ohio's [Madelaine Matej MacQueen](#) [explains](#) how the legislature failed to fulfill the Fair School Funding Plan's promise: "(W)hen enacting... the state budget bill for 2026-2027, the legislature updated neither the cost inputs nor the funding weights for special categories of students, meaning that school support from the state is tethered to what it cost to educate students in 2022, rather than what it costs in 2026-2027. These funding choices especially harm high-poverty, urban districts. Cleveland Municipal School District received \$157 million less in the... biennium than the Fair School Funding Plan would have given it. Columbus received \$48.4 million less, and Cincinnati received \$50 million less... Of more than 600 school districts in Ohio, 161 will receive more state funding over the biennium than they would have... and a majority of these are low-poverty districts... (D)istricts that rely on state support the most will see funding cuts."

Molly Bryden reports on how the legislature actually managed to reduce school funding equity by adding an additional factor: "In addition to underfunding nearly 75% of Ohio school districts, this budget play disproportionately favors wealthier districts through a 'performance supplement'... The problem with basing funding on school report cards is that districts' performance ratings strongly correlate with social and economic contexts in their surrounding communities... Because the new performance supplement... favors wealthier districts with more capacity to raise local revenue, lower income districts don't get their fair share of state funding..."

Why is the Ohio Legislature short of money? First, the legislature cut taxes in the 2026-2027 state budget. Policy Matters Ohio's [Aditi Srivastava explains](#) why, “millionaires in Ohio will pay the same 2.75% income tax rates as public school teachers, child care workers, firefighters or any Ohioan with income over \$26,050. Twenty years ago, the Ohio tax code had nine income tax brackets; we taxed income over \$200,000 at 7.5%.”

In the 2026-2027 state budget the legislature eliminated tax brackets: “With... (the) passage of a flat income tax, the legislature all but eliminated progressive tax policy from the Ohio tax code... The flat tax alone will cost the state approximately \$486.2 million in fiscal year 2026 and \$1.03 billion in fiscal year 2027... Ohioans could do a lot with all that forgone revenue. We could, for example, ensure every public school had the resources to meet every student’s needs by fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan.”

Second, the Ohio Legislature has radically expanded private school tuition vouchers funded entirely from the state budget. The Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding’s [Bill Phillis reminds us](#) that between Fiscal Year 2014 and FY 2025, the number of students using Ed Choice vouchers in Ohio grew from 18,133 to 143,548. During the same years, the annual diversion of state funding to vouchers increased by 945.6%.

How does all this add up? In a January 30, 2026 “On the Money” column for *Hannah News Service*, Columbus economist and school finance expert, Howard Fleeter reported¹ that the state’s share of the school funding formula’s base cost has dropped significantly in recent years, leaving increasing responsibility for funding schools up to the state’s 609 public school districts to pass local taxes. Fleeter reported that in Fiscal Year 2024, the state paid for 43.3% of the cost of Ohio public schooling. The state share dropped to 38.4% in FY 2025, and 35% in FY 2026. The state share will drop to 32.2% in FY 2027.

The *Plain Dealer*’s Public Interest and Advocacy editor, [Leila Atassi captures](#) the tragic reality of Ohio’s abandonment of the needs of the state’s poorest children in the public schools. Writing about the “Success Sequence,” which was passed by the legislature and signed into Ohio law earlier this month, Atassi writes:

“Gov. Mike DeWine signed Senate Bill 276... requiring every public and charter school to teach the ‘Success Sequence’—the idea that if you finish high school, get a full-time job and marry before having children, you’ll probably avoid poverty. In other words, Ohio’s children are getting a mandatory lesson in escaping poverty from the same politicians who keep making sure so many of them are born into it... (I)t turns out the Success Sequence misses a pretty important fact: poverty is not merely an outcome of your choices. It is a force that shapes which choices you get... The Success Sequence will now be taught, by state mandate, to sixth graders being raised by single mothers and to kids in foster care. To children whose parents divorced, or never married, or died. To teenagers who are already poor and already know it. The curriculum will inform them that the reliable path to a decent life runs through a two-parent home—the one thing they cannot choose for themselves and, in many cases, one thing they don’t have... Ohio is treating it as a substitute for the (legislature’s own) work of actually reducing poverty. It’s a lot cheaper to teach children the formula than to build the conditions that make it attainable.”

¹Howard Fleeter, “On the Money,” January 30, 2026. Paywalled *Hannah News Service* document available in the research collection of many public libraries.