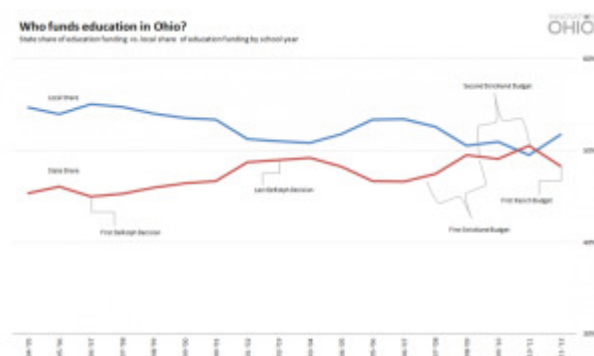


State spending in education decreases while mandates increase

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By Arian Smedley, staff journalist



Source: Innovation Ohio

Who funds education in Ohio?

Using data from the Ohio Department of Education, Steve Dyer, education policy fellow at Innovation Ohio, graphed the state share of education spending versus the state share by school year.

A recent study finds that the state share of funds to public education is shrinking, putting pressure on local communities to make up the difference. One local superintendent takes issue with that, given what he says is the state's constitutional responsibility to create an equitable system and its increasing number of unfunded mandates.

"The problem is, the state portion is going down while the state mandates have gone up," said George Wood, superintendent of Federal Hocking Local Schools. "Local school boards are on the hook for results not of their design, with fewer and fewer resources from the state."

When analyzing the state versus local funding data, Steve Dyer, education policy fellow at Innovation Ohio, used total revenue figures from the Ohio Department of Education, minus most of the federal spending.

During the 2011-2012 school year, the state share of school funding dropped to its lowest level since the 2004-2005 school year, Dyer found.

The only time the legislature increased state funding for education relative to local property taxes was between 1994 and 2007, he wrote. That was during the time of the *DeRolph v. State of Ohio* case, when the Ohio Supreme Court ruled the school funding system unconstitutional.

“In this state, the only time the share shrank noticeably for local taxpayers is when a lawsuit was hanging over (legislators’) heads or the legislature was split between parties,” Dyer said.

The other time the state share was more than the local share was during the 2010-2011 school year. That was under a different funding model and also during the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided State Fiscal Stabilization Funding.

Going forward, Dyer said he suspects the gap will only get wider in the second year of the governor’s budget.

“Some argue that this is the only budget that meets the constitutional mandate,” Dyer added. “The graphic and the data is so telling that I thought it was important to get out and show that making choices on these issues does matter.”

“I think local schools boards should be pitching a fit,” said George. “If we’re going to provide more and more skin in the game, we should have more of a say. No one in my community wanted the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Nobody wanted the new teacher evaluation system. Nobody knows what the Common Core is.”

These initiatives, put forward within the last few years, are all dictated by the state with no additional funds for implementation, he added.

The role he’d like the state play is in creating an equitable and efficient system (ensuring fiscal and social equality, no matter the child’s zip code) and improving teacher quality (making university programs more competitive and providing teachers more financial support).

“It’s perfectly legitimate for the state to give us money to meet certain standards,” he added. “But they can’t be micromanaging. What I’m saying is, let every public school system have the freedom you give charter schools. Get off our back. Let us figure it out. If we fail in the end, ding us. Ding us hard.”

Those types of changes, he admits, would take a “massive change of thought.”

“But we can’t start doing what’s right until we stop doing what’s wrong,” Wood added.

Original Article: http://www.athensohiotoday.com/news/state-spending-in-education-decreases-while-mandates-increase/article_92f572bc-2931-54fa-9b74-545e0093467b.html