

## Checking Ohio Gov. Kasich's math on school funding

**Karen Kasler**

Friday, March 22, 2013

One of the biggest sticking points in Gov. John Kasich's budget is his school funding formula, which he says puts more money in K-12 education and helps poor districts. But as Statehouse correspondent Karen Kasler reports, there are those who doubt his math, and that's holding up this key part of his budget.

Gov. Kasich introduced his funding formula this way:

"If you are poor, you're going to get more. If you're richer, you're going to get less."

But critics have said that's not the way the plan looks on paper. They point to huge increases in wealthy districts such as Olentangy Local, New Albany and Twinsburg, while many districts in poorer, rural areas would get no more money. The governor defends those increases, saying the student populations in those districts have exploded as property values have fallen. And the governor says there is increased funding for education overall in this budget, and he's irritated with claim that school funding is not at the level it was before his first budget two years ago, in which K-12 education took cuts.

"The fact of the matter is K-12 is important. That's why we're putting so much more money in it now."

### **Climbing back**

Kasich challenges claims by some communities and schools that they're still not back to where they were when he authored his last budget and they were hit with cuts.

"It's just not true. ... At the end of the day, we have said that no school district would be cut. We have a \$1.2 billion increase; it's almost a 6 percent increase in K-12 funding. Now, if you're increasing K-12 by almost 6 percent, I don't know ... you talk about that as a cut. But let's face it: sometimes in the school bureaucracy, if you gave them a trillion dollars it would never be enough. And I understand that and that's OK."

### **Do the math**

But Democrats say the governor's own math shows that funding for K-12 education is below where it was before Kasich was elected in 2010. Stephen Dyer is a former state representative

from Green, and is a school funding expert for the liberal think tank Innovation Ohio.

“All I can say is, in his own blue book, total funding to education is down \$340 million. That’s total funding to education, not just district-by-district stuff. It was down \$340 million from the (20)10-11 budget. It’s his own budget documents that say that.”

Dyer says the budget sets the per pupil foundation level – what he says is the minimum kids need – at \$5,000, which is the lowest level it’s been since the 1990s. And while the governor’s statement that no district is getting cut in his budget is accurate, districts still aren’t back to where they were before their budgets were cut in the last spending plan.

“It’s true that they’re not getting cut this year, but they’re being guaranteed on last school year. So their guarantee is based on a big year, a year in which they received big cuts.”

### **The formula says...**

Lawmakers are also concerned about the funding formula. House Speaker Bill Batchelder, who leads a super-majority caucus of 60 Republicans, says he plans to spend a lot of spring break looking into the formula, which he says is easier to deal with than the proposed expansion of Medicaid in the budget.

“I think it’s absolutely solvable. I don’t think it’s one of these overwhelming things; it’s not like Obamacare, for example. I think we can get that work done, In addition to coloring eggs and other activities, we will be spending a lot of time next week in the conference room in my office working on that particular issue.”

The state's two teachers' unionw -- the Ohio Education Association and the Ohio Federation of Teachers -- are opposed to the school funding plan. Kasich introduced his plan in front of a group of school administrators. And superintendents are lining up for and against it, with more opposing it than supporting it.

### **Audio:**

<http://www.wksu.org/news/story/35028>