

## The largest online schools are failing

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**By Jo Ingles**

[...]

When charter schools began more than a decade ago, proponents of them argued they could provide a better education for Ohio' kindergarten through 12th grade students....and they could do it cheaper. But a new study by a left leaning think tank shows the state' largest online schools cost more and are not nearly as effective as public schools.

Innovation Ohio's Dale Butland says the group looked at seven of the state's largest online schools and found 6 are not even rate effective by state standards.

Butland "It's fair to say that Ohio's eschools are a disaster"

Butland says five of the seven online schools in his group's report have graduation rates that are worse than the Cleveland Municipal Schools...the public school that has the lowest graduation rate in the state.

Butland "At a time when Governor Kasich is cutting traditional school district budgets by three billion dollars, and everyone's being told you've got to tighten your belts and we need more accountability higher standards, how in the world do you justify continuing the same funding levels or even greater funding levels for charter schools that are not doing well...that are clearly failing....that have worse graduation rates than the worst public schools have? It makes absolutely no sense until or unless you look at the campaign contributions. And I think when you add it all together, it becomes a textbook example of pay to play."

Butland notes the two largest eschool operators have made nearly four million dollars worth of campaign contributions since 2001...mostly to Republicans. Butland says this new report shows those ineffective online schools get millions of dollars worth of money from the state....and sometimes even more local taxpayer money....because of the funding formula. Innovation Ohio's Steve Dyer uses Pickerington, a central Ohio school district, to make the point that the state isn't the only funding sources for eschools.

Dyer – "They end up giving Pickerington about 2500 (dollars) a kid. Yet they ship off a bunch of kids to Odella and Ecot and all of that for about 6300 dollars a kid. They are shipping out more money to eschools than they are getting from the state. And even though all of that money that's going to eschools is supposed to be state money, that's not what the district is getting from the

state. So you're actually shipping more money than you are getting from the state. How do you make that up? Local property taxes or cuts."

Innovation Ohio has put district by district numbers on its website so Ohioans can see how much their districts are spending on these eschools. Sara Donlon with The Ohio Eschool families and friends coalition takes issue with the Innovation Ohio report. She says it is biased.

Donlon says her group will spend the coming days going through Innovation Ohio's report to determine how the group came up with its numbers.

**Original Article:**

<http://www.wksu.org/news/story/28344>