

Plan for K-12 education funding in Ohio takes shape as budget hearings begin

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**By Erin Glynn
Columbus Dispatch**

The debate over how to pay for K-12 public education has resumed in Ohio, as hearings over the state budget continue this week.

The amount of money a school district receives from the state is determined by a formula developed by former state representatives Robert Cupp and John Patterson in 2017.

The funding plan is based on many factors, such as where students are educated, their needs and demographics. The formula provides more money to districts without the means to raise money locally and uses property values and income to decide the money the state provides.

The plan was meant to be phased in, with lawmakers voting on it every two years, but this last phase of funding may not be approved as House Speaker Matt Huffman has said he doesn't believe the spending is sustainable.

What does Gov. Mike DeWine want for K-12 education?

Gov. Mike DeWine supports continuing the Cupp-Patterson formula, but gradually reducing the funding guarantee in his two-year budget plan.

Dewine's plan would provide \$23.4 billion for 2026 and 2027 and would reduce the guarantee to 95% in 2026 and 90% in 2027.

What do lawmakers think of DeWine's plan?

It's still early in the debate, but some Republican lawmakers have expressed interest in "tweaking" the funding formula.

Rep. Tom Young, R-Washington Township, said at a budget hearing Thursday the current school funding formula is inadequate and inequitable and that property taxes are a burden on Ohioans.

Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney, D-Westlake, said she wants to be careful about shifting the burden of inflation onto local school districts.

"I just see if we do not adjust for inflation, but we're gonna ask our locals to, we're going to shift all the burden and we are not gonna have schools. I mean, we have to fix the system," she said at the hearing.

Stephen Dackin, director of the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, said the department wanted to start the budget process by planning for the final two years of the Cupp-Patterson plan with small adjustments and that there is the chance to take a deeper look.