



Frequently Asked Questions About Governor Strickland's 2010-11 Education Budget Proposal

How does the budget affect funding for charter schools?

The Governor's proposed budget is a serious threat to school choice. Based on comments the Administration has published, we do know the budget would be devastating for charter schools. This budget would reduce funding for charter schools by more than \$100 million from current levels. Overall, charter schools already educate Ohio students for about a third less per pupil than do school districts; this proposal imposes a death sentence on charter schools that have no wiggle room in their budgets.

How does the Governor's budget affect the ability of parents to choose a school that best meets the needs of their child?

This budget effectively takes more than \$1,000 of education funding away from every charter school student and puts 80,000 Ohio children at risk of losing their schools. While it's difficult to know how many charter schools would close because of this proposal, most of Ohio's charter schools are already struggling for funds. Further, Governor Strickland's budget specifically prohibits charter schools run by for-profit management services. Those schools now serve 38,000 students – a larger student enrollment than found in Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Dayton, or Youngstown school districts.

Why shouldn't we prohibit for-profit companies from managing charter schools?

There is nothing unusual or inappropriate about charter schools hiring private, for-profit companies to provide vital services that support the education of students. All traditional district schools have similar relationships with a wide range of for-profit entities, such as food services and transportation vendors. The major difference is that traditional district schools can rely on the administration for help with essential professional services; charter schools do not have access to such resources and must therefore seek help from the private sector. The real test should not be whether a school is operated by a for-profit management company, but whether the school is educating its students.

Will other charter schools have to close if this budget is enacted?

Overall, charter schools have access to fewer financial resources and already educate Ohio students at a per-pupil cost that is about a third less than for school districts. Some charter schools may determine they can no longer provide the level of education they strive for without adequate funds. While most will do everything in their power to remain open, this proposal imposes a death sentence on charter schools that have no wiggle room in their budgets.

How does the budget affect charter schools' ability to serve special needs students and dropouts?



It affects the ability of all charter schools to remain viable, thus affecting all types of charter school students – virtually all of whom have left their assigned district schools because they were not reaching their full potential in a traditional school. Because many of the charter schools serving dropouts and special needs students receive management services from for-profit entities, these students are at special risk

How does the budget affect e-schools?

Currently, e-schools provide one of the most innovative and flexible educational approaches available. They serve all kinds of students, including gifted students, students with special learning needs, independent learners and children whose parents prefer a home-based education. While the budget would provide resources for technology support and equipment, it would not provide any funding for gifted and talented education, enrichment activities, and teachers who provide specialist services or career-technical education.

How does the budget affect charter schools' ability to remain innovative and flexible?

While funds alone do not determine educational quality, inadequate funding makes it more difficult to provide innovative and flexible programming.

How does the budget affect low-income students?

Economically disadvantaged children constitute 62 percent of charter school enrollment. The proposed funding disparity is grossly disproportional to charter schools that serve these students. Before charter schools, choice existed only for families who could afford to relocate to a different school district or pay private school tuition. The Strickland proposal is a separate but unequal strategy for starving charter schools and their students to a slow death.

Shouldn't the State's overall educational goals be a higher priority than the interests of charter schools?

- In fact, Ohio's charter schools are designed to meet the goals Governor Strickland has outlined in his administration's educational philosophy:
 - To provide a student-centered focus and achieve a 21st century education for all students.
 - To prepare the creative problem-solvers needed for 21st century jobs.



- To help all students reach their fullest potential – in fact, most charter school students enroll in these schools because they are not reaching their full potential in traditional classrooms.
- To identify and use the creative and innovative best practices developed by educators. In fact, many of the innovations pioneered in charter schools are being adopted in traditional district classrooms.
- To emphasize the importance of personalized educational experiences for all students and positive student-teacher relationships. One of the hallmarks of charter schools is the more personalized education they afford: Charter schools provide smaller class sizes and increased one-on-one attention for students as well as improved communication with parents.
- To provide environments in which students are free of bullying and violence. Many charter school students left their assigned district schools to take advantage of the more orderly and safer environments available in charter schools.

If charter schools close, what will be the effect on local school districts?

Closing charter schools could have a devastating financial impact on school districts because of a sudden influx of students returning to their district schools. We know this to be true under the current school funding formula; we don't yet know the extent of the impact under the new formula.

Currently, when a student leaves a traditional district school, the state dollars allocated to educate that child follow him or her to the charter school. The district retains the local portion. Thus, the district school loses all of the cost of educating the child but only some of the funds. If charter school students were returned to their districts schools, the school that in the first place lost all of the cost and some of the funds to educate each departing child would receive back all of the cost and some of the funds. Assuming the local funds retained by the school district were fully allocated to educate other students, the result would be a budget shortfall. The return of large numbers of students to traditional schools would also result in larger class sizes and a decline in resources available to each child, which would result in pressure by teachers and parents to demand more money.

What other impacts will Governor Strickland's budget have on charter schools if it is enacted?

There are a number of other concerns about the Strickland plan, which may become clearer in the days ahead as the actual legislation is introduced. Of particular concern after review of the budget overview:

- Incorrect assumption that charter school teachers' salaries are equal to those in traditional public schools



- Assumption that each charter school has one “organizational unit” regardless of actual enrollment
- Omission of funding for charter school superintendents and treasurers as well as the possible omission of training funds for those positions
- Silence about whether the state will provide funds to charter schools to implement the Ohio School Climate guidelines needed “to create optimal learning environments”
- Silence on whether grants available to traditional school districts for school improvement strategies will be available to charter schools
- Silence on the question of whether the new transportation funds called for in the budget will be available to charter schools that aren’t adequately served by their local districts or who provide their own transportation to students
- Omission of struggling charter schools in language that recommends funds to assist “districts in financial distress”