

Significant changes to school funding may – or may not – be made in new state budget

It's state biennial budget season again, which generally means continued discussion and debate over how best to fund Ohio's public schools.

The process begins with Governor John Kasich's (R-Westerville) budget proposal introduced as legislation in the House of Representatives, where it will be subject to consideration and likely change



Kasich recently announced that although the upcoming budget will be tight, primary and secondary education remain a top priority and would increase by one percent under his proposal.

Under the previous budget, two-year funding to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) totaled \$15.5 billion – second only to Medicaid funding.

Continued district complaints on the way charter schools are funded may result in consideration of a new approach, according to House Finance Committee Chair Rep. Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell). However, two key concerns have derailed previous discussions on the issue: the need for an additional \$160 million in state funding (according to the non-partisan Legislative Service Commission) and risk of elimination of funding through a line-item veto by a future anti-charter school governor.

In addition to direct funding for charters, e-school funding is also likely to be addressed. State Auditor Dave Yost has indicated that he will encourage legislators to move to a performance-based e-school funding system.

It's difficult to say what the outcome will be for the two-year budget period that begins July 1, 2017, but it's safe to say that school funding will likely be a key area of focus throughout the process.