

School funding discussions already underway

Well in advance of the next state biennial budget bill, two House members – Rep. Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and Rep. John Patterson (D-Jefferson) – are beginning discussions on school funding through a workgroup comprised of lawmakers, school superintendents and school treasurers.

“It’s impossible to make any major changes to the school funding formula during the budget process, particularly in the House because it comes too early in the year,” Cupp, who chairs the House Finance subcommittee responsible for the state’s education budget, explained. “It’s so compressed time-wise and there are so many continuation-types of issues that have to be addressed.”

“Rep. Patterson and I both agreed that after the (last) budget, when we found it just impossible to do anything other than put some patches on it, that we need to spend more time to look at this and find some solutions,” Cupp continued.

The workgroup – comprised of about 35 members -- began meeting at the end of 2017 and has initially focused on determining what components go into providing a quality education before attempting to determine specific dollar amounts linked to the actual cost of educating students. Fairness and predictability are also important considerations.

“We know our current formula has caps and guarantees and it produces some unusual results at times,” Cupp said. “So how do you take all that out of the system and have one that’s much more predictable and stable?”

The workgroup, which meets monthly, plans to complete its work and submit an outline of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly before the legislature’s summer recess.

