

# #STUDENTSFIRST

Empowering Parents to Help Students  
Regain Lost Learning



By Greg R. Lawson



# #STUDENTSFIRST

## Empowering Parents to Help Students Regain Lost Learning

By Greg R. Lawson

September 6, 2022



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Problem: Learning Loss and Its Lifelong Effects</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Solutions: Empower Parents, Fund Students First, Enhance School Choice</b>	<b>8</b>
Broad-Based Education Savings Accounts	
Universal Open Enrollment	
Expanded Tax Credit Scholarship	
Enhanced Spending Transparency	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>14</b>

# INTRODUCTION

Among its various ill effects, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated learning loss within Ohio’s K-12 schools. Students who have lost the equivalent of semesters or academic years of education and have fallen behind where they otherwise would have been academically have suffered this loss. The pandemic made such losses deeper and more pervasive. And the tension between parents and public school administrators spurred by extended school closures and concerns over controversial classroom instruction has enflamed a festering parental distrust of public school systems. A July 2022 Gallup Poll found confidence in public schools has fallen to an all-time low.<sup>1</sup> In the early days of the pandemic, trust in schools ticked up to 41 percent overall, but has now collapsed to 28 percent, with confidence waning among Republicans and Democrats.<sup>2</sup> Republican confidence in public schools has consistently trended downward over the past three years—dropping from 35 percent in 2020 to 20 percent in 2021 and a paltry 14 percent in 2022<sup>3</sup>—and Democrat approval has slipped to just 43 percent.<sup>4</sup> Given the lost learning opportunities for students over the past several years, these low poll numbers are not surprising, but policymakers must find ways to help students regain lost academic ground and restore parental trust in public education.<sup>5</sup>

To accomplish these goals, Ohio should pursue policies that empower families to seek and provide the best education for their K-12 children. By dramatically increasing schooling options and educational resources available to parents, policymakers will help families to tailor academic environments to fit their children’s learning needs. This begins by shifting away from a funding model that pays for school districts instead of for students. Policymakers should adopt a “fund students first” approach to education funding. Robust education savings accounts that provide state funds for families to use a broad range of academic tools should be funded and expanded. Inter-district open enrollment should be mandatory with limited exceptions. The state should increase its current scholarship donation tax credit for contributing to qualified scholarship organizations. And school districts should be required to share their financial and spending information with parents and taxpayers through the Ohio Checkbook online database.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lydia Saad, **Confidence in Public Schools Turns More Partisan**, News.Gallup.com, July 14, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Robert Pondiscio and Tracey Schirra, **“Restoring Trust in Public Schools,”** *National Affairs*, Number 52, Summer 2022.

Taking these steps will improve the K-12 academic experience for students, allow parents to make better schooling decisions, make educational resources more affordable, and raise the public's trust and confidence in government-funded instruction. Without implementing significant reforms and more educational choice for parents, Ohio risks subjecting children to the long-term negative effects of learning loss brought on by COVID-19 protocols.

# THE PROBLEM: LEARNING LOSS AND ITS LIFELONG EFFECTS

The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic has cost Ohio students the equivalent of months of academic instruction, also known as learning loss. Given the negative long-term financial and social effects of curtailed education, Ohio policymakers should pursue student-first strategies to regain lost learning time and immediately improve academic outcomes for elementary and secondary students.

In early 2020, Governor Mike DeWine announced the closing of Ohio’s classrooms for the remainder of the academic year.<sup>6</sup> Although most schools finished the school year with some form of “virtual classrooms” and remote learning, traditional in-person instruction did not resume until the 2020-2021 school year when local school boards decided whether and how to reopen their doors. Students returned to school in a variety of ways, including five-day in-person instruction, remote learning, and a hybrid classroom combining in-person and remote instruction.<sup>7</sup> These inconsistent learning environments caused significant learning loss across the state.<sup>8</sup>

Analyzing state test data provided by the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio State University researchers determined that between March 2020 (when schools began closing due to the pandemic) through April 2021, K-12 students lost between one-half and one full year of equivalent learning in math, and between one-third and one-half of a year of learning in English language arts (ELA).<sup>9</sup> Minority and low-income students saw even larger declines of between one and a half and two times greater—a worrisome extension of a stubborn achievement gap.<sup>10</sup> Students

---

<sup>6</sup> Camryn Justice and Olivia Fecteau, **Gov. Mike DeWine Closes In-Person K-12 Schooling in Ohio for Remainder of School Year**, News5Cleveland.com, April 20, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> **Gov. DeWine Reveals that 38 Percent of School Districts Plan to Return Full Time this Fall**, WKYC.com, August 11, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Vladimir Kogan, **Academic Achievement and Pandemic Recovery in Ohio: an Update from Fall Third Grade English Language Arts Assessments**, Department of Political Science at The Ohio State University, April 27, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Kogan and Stephane Lavertu, **How the COVID-19 Pandemic Affected Student Learning in Ohio: Analysis of Spring 2021 Ohio State Tests**, Department of Political Science at The Ohio State University, February 26, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* **State Profiles: Ohio**, NationsReportCard.com (Last visited June 24, 2022). Ohio has struggled with long-standing achievement gaps for minority students. The state’s National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores have trended above the national average in eight-grade mathematics and reading, but the total scores have not shown significant improvement over

already performing below grade level prior to the shutdown lost more than those performing at or above grade level.<sup>11</sup> Hybrid instruction that included limited in-classroom as well as remote instruction led to a significant 10 percent reduction of ELA performance relative to the norm.<sup>12</sup> And students who remained in fully remote learning environments suffered nearly three times the learning loss of those who maintained in-person instruction.<sup>13</sup> A subsequent study by one of the same Ohio State researchers found ELA improvement for some students in the fall of 2021,<sup>14</sup> but many students remained months behind, and the achievement gaps with minority students persisted.<sup>15</sup>

The full impact of learning loss accumulates over a student's lifetime, costing the individual, the community, and the broader public many of the benefits of a fuller education.

Academic literature shows a nexus between education levels and the development of social and cognitive skills that help individuals become productive workers and wage earners.<sup>16</sup> In general, each year of schooling yields approximately 10 percent more income. Thus, each third of a year of education that Ohio students lost to the pandemic shutdown means at least an estimated three percent loss of lifetime career earnings.<sup>17</sup> And a 2020 study by McKinsey and Company estimated that COVID-related school closures could reduce lifetime earnings for students by nearly a full year's income.<sup>18</sup>

---

the past two decades. The academic achievement gaps between white students and minorities have persisted since the early 2000s. Eighth grade black students scored 10 percent lower in 2003 and 12 percent lower in 2019 than white students in math, with a similar gap in reading. Hispanic eighth-grade math students scored six percent below white students in 2003 and 2019, and the gap in reading grew from one percent in 2003 to five percent in 2019.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Kogan, ***Academic Achievement and Pandemic Recovery in Ohio: An Update from Fall Third Grade English Language Arts Assessments***, Department of Political Science at The Ohio State University, April 27, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Eric A. Hanushek and Ludger Woessman, ***The Economic Impacts of Learning Loss***, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, September 2020. This study is consistent with earlier studies in Belgium and Germany.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Emma Dorn, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, ***COVID-19 and Student Learning in the United States: The Hurt Could Last a Lifetime***, McKinsey & Company, June 2020. This study cites and is consistent with earlier studies in Belgium and Germany, *see e.g.*, Kamila Cygan-Rehm, ***Is Additional Schooling Worthless? Revising the Zero Returns to Compulsory Schooling in Germany?***, working paper, Ludwig-Maximilians University's Center for Economic Studies and the Ifo Institute, Munich Society for the Promotion of Economic Research, August 7, 2018.

Learning loss risks broader societal impacts as well, such as reduced gross domestic product (GDP) and potentially higher incarceration rates.<sup>19</sup> Long-term GDP projections are inherently speculative, but several recent estimates expect a smaller GDP over the coming decades as COVID-impacted students enter the workforce. A 2020 study for the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development estimated that nations may face an average 1.5 percent lower GDP for the remainder of the century due to learning and cognitive skill loss associated with COVID-19.<sup>20</sup> Even losing one-third of a school year could cost the U.S. more than \$14 trillion over the remaining 80 years in the century.<sup>21</sup> The University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business projected that learning losses would reduce U.S. GDP by 1.4 percent or several trillion dollars of economic output over the next thirty years.<sup>22</sup> And the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco predicts a smaller, but still significant negative impact on GDP.<sup>23</sup>

Research also suggests that impaired literacy and dropping out of high school lead to higher arrest and incarceration rates.<sup>24</sup> A U.S. Department of Justice study found that 68 percent of state prison inmates had not received a high school diploma.<sup>25</sup> A study by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics revealed significantly lower literacy rates among incarcerated populations.<sup>26</sup> And a study in the *American Economic Journal* using data found a correlation between dropping out of high school and higher rates of arrest.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Eric A. Hanushek and Ludger Woessman, *The Economic Impacts of Learning Loss*, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, September 2020, National Center for Education Statistics, *Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults: Their Skills, Work Experience, Education, and Training*, U.S. Department of Education, November 2016

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* The \$14 trillion was calculated using a three percent discount rate.

<sup>22</sup> Daniela Viana Costa, Maddison Erbabian, and Youran Wu, *COVID-19 Learning Loss: Long-Run Macroeconomic Effects Update*, October 27, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> John Fernald, Huiyu Li, & Mitchell Ochse, *Future Output Loss from COVID-Induced School Closures*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, February 26, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Lance Lochner and Enrico Moretti, “**The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports**”, *The American Economic Review*, Volume 4 (March 2004) p. 155-189.

<sup>25</sup> Caroline Wolf Harlow, Ph.D., *Education and Correctional Populations*, U.S. Department of Justice, January 2003.

<sup>26</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults: Their Skills, Work Experience, Education, and Training*, U.S. Department of Education, November 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Philip J. Cook and Songman Kang, **Birthdays, Schooling, and Crime: Regression-Discontinuity Analysis of School Performance, Delinquency, Dropout, and Crime Initiation**, *American Economic Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 2016), pp. 33-57; D. Mark Anderson,



Lower lifetime earnings, slower overall GDP growth, and increased rates of arrest and incarceration are serious consequences exacerbated by learning loss. They require serious responses that will improve educational opportunities and make up academic ground lost during the pandemic-related school closures.

---

***In School and Out of Trouble? The Minimum Dropout Age and Juvenile Crime,***  
Department of Economics at the University of Washington, November 2009.

# THE SOLUTIONS: EMPOWER PARENTS, FUND STUDENTS FIRST, ENHANCE SCHOOL CHOICE

Historically, Ohio has prioritized funding public school systems rather than individual students.<sup>28</sup> Schools were funded according to the number of students that lived within the district, with a certain amount of funding guaranteed even if enrollment declined.<sup>29</sup> Voucher programs and charter schools eventually introduced some competition, but were typically limited to families in poor-performing districts.<sup>30</sup> And even when families chose vouchers or charter schools, state funds were first routed through the local school district, per-student funding was deducted from the district's aggregate allocation, and only then could the funds reach the chosen school. Worried that school districts were "losing" state funds to non-district schools, zealous political opposition rose to challenge school choice options, further perpetuating a system of funding districts over students.<sup>31</sup>

Fortunately, Ohio's General Assembly structurally revised the school funding system in 2021. Instead of funding districts and then deducting state dollars when a student transferred, the new funding formula directly funds the school the student attends.<sup>32</sup> The new system lays the foundation for Ohio policymakers to fund students first and provide families with financial tools to help students recover lost academic ground. Several policies can work together to better meet student needs, including broad-based education savings accounts (ESA) to help parents pay for more learning aids and educational resources; universal open enrollment to allow students to transfer to better performing school districts; an expanded tax credit scholarship program to make more educational funds available to lower-income families; and increasing financial transparency at the

---

<sup>28</sup> **Final Analysis of House Bill 110 of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**, Ohio Legislative Service Commission, September 8, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> **School Funding Complete Resource**, Legislative Budget Office, Ohio Legislative Service Commission, February 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Kevin Currie-Knight, **The Libertarian Pioneers of School Choice**, *Cato Policy Report*, July/August 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Eileen McClory, **K-12 Public School Enrollment Still Down After Pandemic**, *Dayton Daily News*, March 17, 2022.

<sup>32</sup> **Final Analysis of House Bill 110 of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**, Ohio Legislative Service Commission, September 8, 2021.

district level to give parents more information as they select the school that is best for their children.

### **Broad-Based Education Savings Accounts**

A broad-based ESA initiative will reform Ohio's education system and its long-standing government-run education monopoly by shifting the focus to fund students before districts. Charter schools and voucher programs produce positive academic outcomes<sup>33</sup> but still lack the flexibility to meet the personalized educational needs of each student. ESAs, on the other hand, help parents pay for educational products and services tailored to their child's academic needs.<sup>34</sup> Unlike vouchers, which are generally limited to paying private school tuition, ESAs may pay for tuition and additional educational resources such as textbooks, tutors, online classes, and group learning pods.<sup>35</sup> And tailored academic resources such as high-intensity tutoring will be critical for helping students suffering from pandemic-related learning loss.<sup>36</sup>

Public support for all school choice options consistently polls over 50 percent<sup>37</sup> and support for ESAs is generally even higher. A 2013 focus group found that 94 percent of Arizona families using an ESA were satisfied with their accounts.<sup>38</sup> Since 2017, ESAs have received more than 70 percent of the public's support each year, reaching 78 percent in 2021.<sup>39</sup> And parental support for ESAs in 2021 was a robust 84 percent.<sup>40</sup> Such favorable ratings likely coincide with the broad range of customized educational services that ESAs help families afford. Sixty-four percent of North Carolina families using an ESA purchased more than one service.<sup>41</sup> And a

---

<sup>33</sup> Greg Forster, Ph.D., *A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Case for School Choice*, EdChoice, May 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Lindsey Burke and Greg R. Lawson, *Education Savings Accounts: Expanding Education Options for Ohio*, The Buckeye Institute, May 31, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Andre Nickow, Philip Oreopoulos & Vincent Quan, *The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence*, working paper, National Bureau of Economic Research, July 2020.

<sup>37</sup> *Schooling in America Polling Dashboard*, EdChoice.org (Last visited August 31, 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Butcher, *Dollars, Flexibility, and an Effective Education: Parent Voices on Arizona's Education Savings Accounts*, Goldwater Institute, October 3, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> *Schooling in America Polling Dashboard*, EdChoice.org (Last visited August 31, 2022).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Butcher, *Research Shows Education Savings Accounts Are Being Used Precisely as Intended*, The Heritage Foundation, October 25, 2021.

study of Florida’s ESA program shows that the longer a family uses an ESA, the more services it buys.<sup>42</sup>

ESAs should be widely available to families throughout the state. Maximizing parental purchasing power will spur more education service providers to enter the market and apply competitive pressure to alternatives to traditional public school districts. Ohio’s ESA program should be available to families making up to 400 percent of the federal poverty guidelines<sup>43</sup>—the same income level used for renewing the state’s EdChoice expansion scholarship<sup>44</sup>—and funding levels should be commensurate with existing voucher programs.<sup>45</sup>

Programmatic administrative details will need to be worked out. For example, it may make sense for the Treasurer of State to operate the ESA program to simplify the process for families and avoid bureaucratic hurdles within the Department of Education. Ohio’s treasurer’s office has experience with specialized accounts.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, families with existing Ohio ACE accounts should not face a second bureaucratic approval process. Ohio ACE recipients who have already had their income level determined should pre-qualify for the new ESA. Reducing administrative burdens will help encourage more families to take advantage of the program.

Establishing a broad-based ESA program will take some time and planning. In the meantime, state policymakers should expand the Ohio ACE program to offer immediate help to students most effected by pandemic-related learning loss. Ohio ACE currently offers a limited \$500 ESA for additional education opportunities. It was initially funded with \$125 million in federal COVID-19 aid and is available on a first-come-first-serve basis to student households making less than 300 percent the federal poverty line. With additional federal relief funding available, Ohio should make more households ACE-eligible and increase the ESA value to \$1,000 per student.

---

<sup>42</sup> Michelle L. Lofton and Martin F. Lueken, “**Distribution of Education Savings Accounts Usage Among Families: Evidence from the Florida Gardiner Program**,” *Journal of School Choice* (March 5, 2022) p. 1-26.

<sup>43</sup> **U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines Used to Determine Financial Eligibility for Certain Federal Programs**, ASPE.HHS.gov (Last visited July 14, 2022).

<sup>44</sup> **2021-2022 Income Eligibility Requirements for EdChoice-Expansion**, Education.Ohio.gov, July 9, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> For the 2021-2022 school year, for example, these amounts were \$5,500 for students attending grades K-8 and \$7,500 for grades 9-12. Those dollar amounts are currently set to increase by the amount of the per student basic cost increases in the state funding formula. See, **Final Analysis of House Bill 110 of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**, Ohio Legislative Service Commission, September 8, 2021.

<sup>46</sup> **STABLE Account**, Ohio.gov (Last visited August 15, 2022).

## Universal Open Enrollment

Ohio's largest school choice program is inter-district open enrollment, which allows students to attend schools in other public school districts. Attendance is subject to local school board decisions and space limitations,<sup>47</sup> and state education dollars follow students to the selected school district. Roughly 80 percent of Ohio public school districts and nearly 85,000 students already participate in open enrollment.<sup>48</sup> Most nonparticipating districts, however, are suburban districts near major urban centers.<sup>49</sup> Their nonparticipation limits opportunities for students in urban, under-performing schools to address pandemic-related learning loss and close academic achievement gaps. Policymakers should make it easier for all families to send students to their school of choice by requiring all Ohio public schools to participate in inter-district open enrollment.

## Expanded Tax Credit Scholarship

Ohio's current budget for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 included a new tax credit scholarship program that offers taxpayers a dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to \$750 if they contribute to an approved scholarship granting organization.<sup>50</sup> The tax credit takes a step in the right direction to provide students additional educational resources, but the \$750 limit is too small. Current K-8 vouchers of \$5,500 are seven times that tax credit amount, and it would take 10 maximum contributions to reach the \$7,500 voucher for high school students. Increasing the maximum credit to \$2,500 would make it easier for grant organizations to ramp up and offer larger scholarships to more students in need. Critically, awarded scholarships should augment, not replace, ESA dollars in order to further level the playing field for financially disadvantaged students.

## Enhanced Spending Transparency

Given recent news of tensions and controversies between parents and district school boards, it is important for public school districts to be transparent with parents and taxpayers about the education they are providing and the decisions they are making. Any perceived secrecy only exacerbates distrust between parents

---

<sup>47</sup> **Open Enrollment**, Education.Ohio.gov (Last visited July 14, 2022).

<sup>48</sup> **Ohio by the Numbers**, OhioByTheNumbers.com, Thomas B. Fordham Institute (Last visited August 30, 2022).

<sup>49</sup> Devon Carlson, *Open Enrollment and Student Diversity in Ohio's Schools*, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, January 15, 2021.

<sup>50</sup> **Scholarship Donation Credit**, Tax.Ohio.gov (Last visited August 31, 2022).

and public educators, and more transparency that schools can muster to help parents make educational choices for their children the better.

Ohio has already blazed a trail of transparency with respect to state finances and collective bargaining, and it should follow that path in education, too.<sup>51</sup> The Buckeye Institute urged Ohio policymakers to make state and local government spending practices more transparent—and policymakers listened.<sup>52</sup> Ohio’s treasurer took initiative and implemented the Ohio Checkbook,<sup>53</sup> which eventually merged with the Office of Budget and Management’s online state budget to give Ohio taxpayers an up-to-date picture of how and where their money is spent.<sup>54</sup> The online system includes easy-to-navigate search functions and allows users to track expenses at the individual check level. Ohio went from being one of the least transparent states for government spending to one of the most, according to the U.S. Public Interest Research Group.<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately, less than one-third of Ohio’s public school districts voluntarily share their spending with taxpayers through Ohio Checkbook.<sup>56</sup> For those that have joined, the data are several years old and do not include details on how districts spend tax dollars on third-party vendors. The State Employees Relations Board makes public sector collective bargaining agreements available online,<sup>57</sup> and there is no reason that school districts cannot make third-party vendor contracts, teacher training materials, and student surveys public, too. This information is already available through Ohio’s public records law, but the process for seeking it can be cumbersome.<sup>58</sup> State policymakers should require public school districts to operate more transparently by sharing their spending data with parents in Ohio Checkbook.

---

<sup>51</sup> Robert Pondiscio and Tracey Schirra, “**Restoring Trust in Public Schools,**” *National Affairs*, Number 52, Summer 2022.

<sup>52</sup> John C. Kuehner, **Ohio Teacher Salaries Available Through Buckeye Institute Database**, Cleveland.com, December 12, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Joe Guillen, **Public Workers’ Salaries Available on Ohio Treasurer’s New Website**, Cleveland.com, August 31, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> **Husted, Sprague Announce New OhioCheckbook.com Partnership**, Office of Budget and Management press release, June 30, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> **New Report Ranks All Fifty States on Government Spending Transparency**, U.S. Public Interest Research Group press release, March 18, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> **Ohio Checkbook**, Checkbook.Ohio.gov (Last visited August 15, 2022).

<sup>57</sup> **Collective Bargaining Agreements**, SERB.Ohio.gov (Last visited August 9, 2022).

<sup>58</sup> **Ohio Revised Code Section 149.43 (2022)**.

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked historic havoc on Ohio's school children. Elementary and secondary students lost months if not years of academic progress that must somehow be regained. Parents have grown increasingly distrustful of the education that their tax dollars support in the local public schools, and they are looking for better alternatives for their children. These are serious problems that will require serious reforms at the state and local levels.

Ohio should vigorously pursue new school funding models that fund students not just school districts. Parents should be empowered with educational savings accounts to help pay for educational resources tailored to suit the needs of their children. Families should be free to choose which local public school their students attend, and school districts should be required to admit them. Existing tax credits for charitable donations should be increased to promote larger philanthropic grants and scholarships. And public school districts should be made to share their spending data with parents and taxpayers on the Ohio Checkbook to enhance transparency and accountability, and provide parents with more information as they make their schooling decisions. Families deserve these reforms as their students struggle to overcome the negative long-term effects of the pandemic protocols that cost them valuable years of learning.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Greg R. Lawson is a research fellow at The Buckeye Institute with expertise on Ohio's budget, local government, state and local taxes, education and education funding, transportation funding, and occupational licensing.

Lawson also serves as Buckeye's liaison to the state government policymakers where he educates policymakers in the legislative and executive branches on free-market solutions to Ohio's challenges. In this role, he is regularly called on to testify before legislative committees on policies that impact Ohio's families and the state's economy.

With nearly 20 years of experience working on seven state budgets, Lawson is a recognized expert on Ohio's budget, and is the co-author of *Principled Spending: Using Ohio's Capital Budget to Benefit Ohioans*. He has a deep knowledge of state and local taxes, and how Ohio funds Medicaid, education, and transportation. He is the author of the *Piglet Book*, The Buckeye Institute's biennial publication outlining areas of government waste.

A recognized expert in the school choice movement and on occupational licensing, Lawson is the co-author of *Education Savings Accounts: Expanding Education Options for Ohio* and *Still Forbidden to Succeed: The Negative Effects of Occupational Licensing on Ohio's Workforce*. Lawson is also the author on several reports dealing with local government funding and reform, including, *Revenue Sharing Reform: On the Road to Ohio's Recovery* and *Joining Forces: Rethinking Ohio's Government Structure*.

Prior to his position at Buckeye, Lawson served in the Ohio General Assembly as a Legislative Service Commission fellow. He then went on to several government affairs roles focusing on numerous public policy topics, including Medicaid, school choice, transportation funding, and Ohio's Building Code. He also has a background in fundraising, grassroots organizing, and communications and served on the boards of two Columbus-based charter schools.

Lawson is a frequent speaker across the state of Ohio and is regularly quoted in media outlets throughout the state. His writings have appeared in most major Ohio newspapers including *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, *The Plain Dealer*, and *The Columbus Dispatch*, as well as national publications including *Forbes*. He also



regularly provides commentary on policy and Ohio's political landscape on Ohio's premier public affairs programs.

*#StudentsFirst: Empowering Parents to Help Students Regain Lost Learning*

Copyright © 2022 The Buckeye Institute. All rights reserved.

Portions of this work may be reproduced and/or translated for non-commercial purposes provided The Buckeye Institute is acknowledged as the source of the material.



# THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

88 East Broad Street, Suite 1300

Columbus, Ohio 43215

(614) 224-4422

[BuckeyeInstitute.org](http://BuckeyeInstitute.org)