

## **Good Riddance 2020 –Hello 2021**

### **One Serious – One Humorous**

**Tom Moscovic Legislative Chairperson**

### **Shame on Ohio Senate for failing kids again**

William L. Phillis Guest columnist

It is a colossal blunder that Ohio Senate leadership blocked the passage of House Bill 305 and Senate Bill 376 – the Cupp/Patterson Fair School Funding Plan. The reasons given for blocking this intense and accomplished three-year effort are hogwash.

Any fix to the unconstitutional school funding system is complex and hence will not be perfect. Upgrades and adjustments will always be needed as implementation takes place.

Creation of a School Funding Oversight Commission was embedded in the bill to make course adjustments as the plan is implemented and as required in the future by changing demographics and educational demands. The inclusion of this commission, which would provide recommendations to the legislature, should have given the Senate comfort that the plan could be adjusted as needed on a timely basis.

To reject the plan with the glib suggestion that it might have some defects is irresponsible. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled the system unconstitutional more than 23 years ago.

By contrast Senate Bill 89, the EdChoice voucher bill, cleared the House and Senate in less than 24 hours. A few years ago, the infamous House Bill 70 – a law allowing state takeovers of school districts – moved through both chambers of the legislature from introduction to enactment in 24 hours. The Senate had ample time to consider the Cupp/Patterson plan.

The Ohio Constitution requires the state to secure, by taxation, a thorough and efficient system of common schools; hence the funding system must be premised on the components of a high quality education. Those components must be costed out and the distribution system must ensure that school districts have sufficient financial resources to provide the high quality educational components identified.

The Cupp/Patterson plan embraces these concepts and, when fully funded, would meet the constitutional mandate. Historically there has been a disconnect between the school funding formula and the educational needs of students. The Cupp/Patterson plan connects the funding formula and distribution system with the components of the high-quality education that Ohio children need.

The structure of the plan requires the state to fund high-quality education across the board. Without the structure of this plan, school districts will continue to provide only as much for students as enabled by the politically determined amount of funds received, without regard to student needs.

The plan, thus, requires the totality of the necessary education programs and services to drive the funding level. That's how the plan addresses the constitutional requirement that the state secure a "thorough and efficient system of common schools" throughout the state.

On March 24, 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that Ohio's elementary and secondary schools are neither thorough nor efficient. The court identified the factors that contribute to unworkability of the school funding system and must be eliminated. The two primary of these factors were the operation of the school funding formula and the emphasis of property tax in the formula calculation; the Cupp/Patterson plan corrects those critical defects found by the Court.

It should be embarrassing to state officials that Ohio continues to operate a school funding system that the court ruled unconstitutional nearly a quarter century ago. The Ohio Senate should hang its collective head in shame for scuttling a plan to conform the school funding system to the constitutional mandate.

*William L. Phillis is executive director of the Ohio Coalition for Equity & Advocacy of School Funding.*

### **This Awful Year in 6 Words**

**How would you summarize 2020—the most infuriating, frightening, depressing year in recent memory—if you had only six words to do it?**

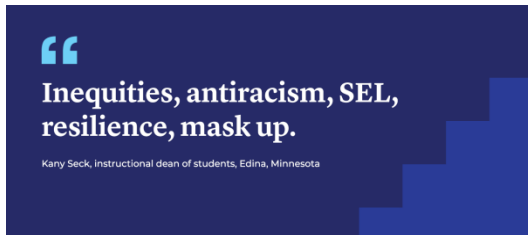
I can't hear you. You're muted!

Jeffery Burton, dean of K-6 students, Arkansas

Worst year in history. Corona sucks.  
Oliver, age 10

Everyone is at the breaking point.  
Amanda, National Skills Coalition

Bars are open. Schools are closed.  
Chad Aldeman, Bellwether Education

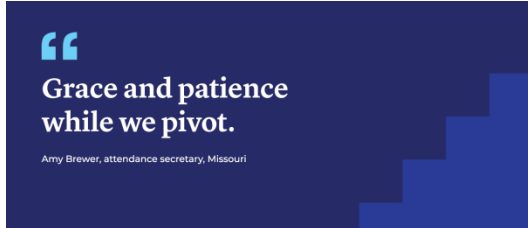


No one in my family died.  
Janet Keller, Santa Monica, California

Hello class, can everyone hear me?  
Heather Parker Devrick, California

Sad, depressing, weird, house bound. Strange.  
Lorraine Tawfik, math tutor

So many losses, but we're surviving.  
Christina Samuels, EdWeek

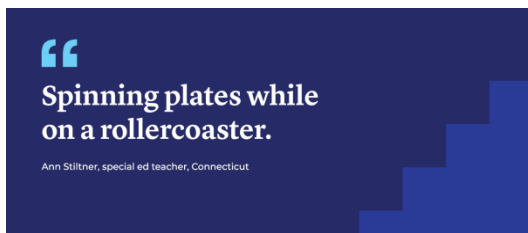


We must do better next time.  
Mark Lieberman, EdWeek

The superintendent cried during our interview.  
Catherine Gewertz, EdWeek

First year teacher: crying and trying.  
Abbie Rexroad, music teacher, West Virginia

I have no motivation for anything.  
Joli

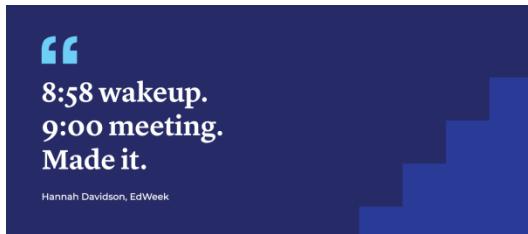


Hardest year of teaching so far.  
Christina Collings, elementary teacher

I'm sure I have no idea.  
Susan Enfield, superintendent, Highline Public Schools, Washington state

One exhausting Zoom meeting after another.  
Giovanni Vincenti

Unpredictable, violated, angry, dismal, shocking, progress.  
Jammie N. Phillips, music educator, Georgia



Challenging, resilience, experimentation, learning, grace, community.  
Larry Wolpe, elementary school principal, Massachusetts

My students need more of me.  
Sarah Dawn-Watson Mott

We're doing the best we can.  
Shari C, elementary school principal

**Happiness, hysteria, helplessness, hostility, humility, hope.**