

**HB 96, the biennial budget, omnibus summary**  
[Link to the Legislative Service Commission comparison document](#)

**Funding**

- Modifies the requirement that the county budget commission reduce school district property tax rates based on the district's carryover balance by increasing the threshold from 25% to 30% of previous fiscal year (FY) general fund expenditures, creates an earlier timeline for reviewing school district data and rate reductions, and establishes a special timeline for FY25 and TY25. Specifies that rate reductions only apply to that tax year and requires new language on the tax bill explaining the temporary rate reduction.
  - Removes the county prosecutor from the county budget commission and makes the president of the board of county commissioners a member instead.
- Reduces the duration for school district operational revenue and expenditure forecasts from five to three years.
- Clarifies that a newly opened community school is exempt from law requiring the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) to deduct or withhold certain funds from state payments.

**Vouchers**

- Requires ODEW to establish a system for comparing the performance data of state scholarship students enrolled at chartered nonpublic schools with the data of similar students in nearby schools.
- Requires ODEW to compile and report assessment scores for students with an ESA for each nonchartered nonpublic school and create a measure of growth for those students in grades 4-8.
- Requires the treasurer of state to develop an application procedure for the Nonchartered Educational Savings Account Program (ESA) by Feb. 1, 2026, and clarifies that the ESA funds should be returned to the GRF when a student disenrolls from a participating school.

**Transportation**

- Provides \$10M in FY26 from the lottery profits to support the School Bus Safety Grant Program and adds ESCs as eligible recipients.

- Provides \$450,000 each FY for ODEW to award rural transportation grants to dropout prevention and recovery community schools that meet certain requirements.
- Clarifies that a community school may only be reimbursed by the resident school district for purchasing mass transit passes for its students who are in grades nine-12.
- Requires school districts in the eight largest counties to ensure student transfers on mass transit systems do not take place at central hubs. Requires these transit systems to ensure students are transported via direct route or one transfer.

### **Facilities**

- Provides \$20M in FY26, to be used by Ohio Facilities Construction Commission to support the construction or renovation of a school building to each district that meets certain criteria.
- Specifies the bill's exemption for the involuntary disposition law only applies to a building located on, or adjacent to, a tract or parcel of land where other school district facilities used for educational instruction are also located.
- Requires a community school, STEM school, college preparatory boarding school, or chartered nonpublic school that sells property it purchased from a school district through the involuntary disposition law or the right of first refusal law to pay to the district any profit the school earns from the resale of that property.
- Includes chartered nonpublic schools in the list of schools that receive priority access to purchase or lease unused school facilities on the market.
- Establishes the Career-Technical Planning District Construction Study Committee.

### **Release time for religious instruction**

- Changes the time school districts must permit students to attend religious release-time instruction from hours and minutes to periods.

### **Report card**

- Adds the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) to the list of programs that may be considered an "advanced standing program" at public and chartered nonpublic schools and allows passing scores on the CLEP exams as a demonstration of post-secondary readiness on the state report card.

### **Governor's merit scholarship**

- Adds private nonprofit institutions to “qualifying institution” for the Governor’s Merit Scholarship if they admit any Ohio 12th-grade graduate in the top 10% of their class beginning FY27 and commit to adhering to a variety of policies similar to state institutions of higher education but shall not conflict with the current religious practices and policies of a religiously affiliated private, nonprofit institution — grandfathers in current recipients of the scholarship.
- Expands eligibility for the Governor’s Merit Scholarship to eligible students enrolled in nonchartered nonpublic schools.

### **Miscellaneous policy provisions**

- Creates a permanent exception to permit certain licensed teachers to teach computer science without a computer science-specific license.
- Restores the current law requirement that qualifying public or chartered nonpublic schools or an interscholastic conference permit an individual to pay cash for a ticket to a school-affiliated event.
- Permits a school district to excuse a student from the financial literacy instruction graduation requirement if the student participates in a program offered through the student branch of a credit union or bank.
- Eliminates the law requiring licensed school counselors to complete a mandatory training program on building and construction trades career pathways.
- Clarifies that a public school may partner with private entities, in addition to public and nonprofit entities, to assist students and families in reducing absences.
- Requires ODH to create informational materials on Type 1 Diabetes for parents, guardians, and educators, and public school districts to provide a copy to each student's parent or guardian.
- Requires Ohio Technical Centers to enroll high school students through a contract with a school district.

### **Miscellaneous funding provisions**

- Provides \$1.5M each FY to the Stay in the Game! Network.
- Provides \$250,000 each FY to fund grants supporting regional partnerships that connect early childhood to post-secondary education and the workforce.

- Provides \$250,000 each FY to support FFA, urban agriculture and agriculture literacy programs around the state.
- Increases GRIT Program funding by \$1M each FY.
- Provides \$2M each FY to the Values-In-Action Foundation for the Kindland Initiative.