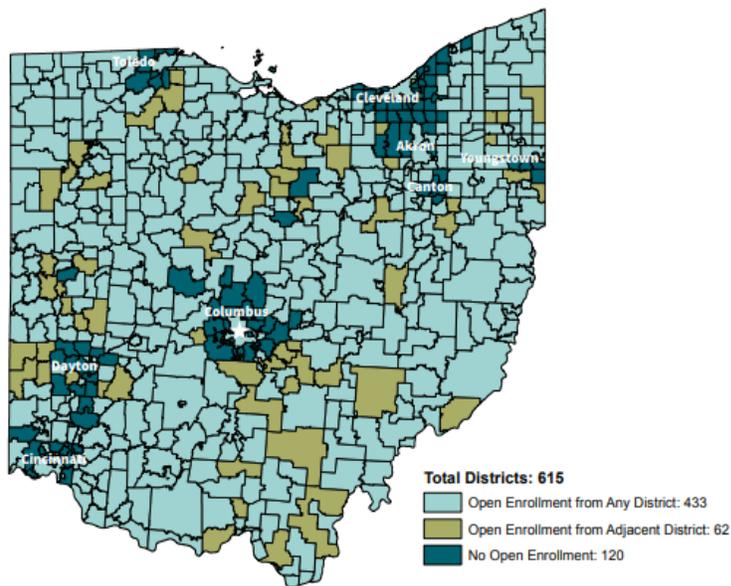


Expand interdistrict open enrollment

Proposal: Require all Ohio school districts to participate in interdistrict open enrollment. This would require a change in state law that currently allows local school boards to prohibit open enrollment entirely (ORC 3313.98). However, current rules allowing districts to limit open enrollees based on schools' capacity should be maintained.

Background: Since 1989, Ohio has allowed districts to admit students who live outside their geographic boundaries via interdistrict open enrollment. But district participation is voluntary; that is, each district decides for itself whether to accept nonresident pupils. Today, roughly four in five Buckeye districts participate in this choice program, which enables nearly 80,000 students to attend schools outside their districts. Students may choose to open enroll for any number of reasons, including access to special academic or extracurricular programs, closer proximity to their homes, or the ability to go to class with close friends. Research also indicates that students benefit academically when open enrolling over multiple years—and the gains are greatest for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Yet more than one hundred Ohio districts forbid open enrollment—with most such districts located in suburban areas surrounding the state's big cities (figure 2). This is a very cramped view of “public education,” and it

Figure 2: Ohio school districts by their participation in open enrollment, 2013-14



removes quality school options for tens of thousands of needy children just because of their home addresses.

Proposal rationale: Although many parents are satisfied with their home districts—and many choose them intentionally via where they purchase or rent their homes—others have children who would benefit from attending a different school. For these families, public schools outside of their district of residence should be accessible. Requiring statewide district participation in open enrollment, as twenty-three other states do, would ensure that all Ohio families have opportunities to enroll their children in the schools that are best for them.

Cost: No significant impact on the state budget.

Resources: For an analysis of academic impacts on open enrollees, see Deven Carlson and Stéphane Lavertu's report [Interdistrict Open Enrollment in Ohio: Participation and Student Outcomes](#), published by the Fordham Institute (2017). The map displayed above also comes from that report (p. 12). For more on other states' open-enrollment policies, see the National Center for Education Statistics' "[Numbers and types of open enrollment policies, by state: 2017](#)." Detailed information about Ohio's interdistrict open-enrollment policies can be found at the ODE's web page "[Open Enrollment: Overview and Explanation](#)," and a list of participating districts is also at the ODE's website, under "[Open Enrollment](#)."