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Ideas are good, but paying for them is tricky

In the opening of his State of the State address, Gov. Ted Strickland played to the crowd in Columbus with an Ohio State football comparison.

But in talking about education, Strickland had his eyes downfield.

Strickland mentioned belt-tightening and cuts in some state services -- no surprise to people who themselves are doing more with less, if they even remain employed -- and floated the idea of passenger rail service between Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati.

But it was his thoughts on school systems that could do the most good -- and are the most direly needed.

Only about a quarter of Ohio residents have a college degree, according to 2000 Census figures. Blue-collar jobs -- particularly in the automotive and related industries -- are drying up.

Closer to home, school districts face inequitable funding, and are trying to upgrade buildings while teaching to that boondoggle of educators everywhere, unfunded mandates.

However, Strickland's proposals include all-day kindergarten, new residency programs for teachers, an additional 20 days of the school year -- and more state funding for local school districts.

With this money appears to come some oversight. Strickland wants to make it easier to fire nonperforming teachers and overhaul or eliminate underperforming school districts.

There is something disconcerting about this plan, though. It'll cost \$750 million, and there is no indication how Ohio -- a state that is asking its workers for givebacks and trying to trim hundreds of millions of dollars from its budgets -- will pay for it.

Tax revenue is stagnating, if not declining in the state as well.

We admire Strickland's ambitious plan. We hope it works out, and Ohio becomes a mecca for educated professionals and well-paying jobs.

But we don't know how we can pay for it.
