OHIO COMMON GROUND

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Ground Truth · Fact-Check Tracking ID: RL-2026-021

Do Ohio's Urban Districts Spend Far More on Special-Needs Students? A Toledo–Perrysburg Comparison

THE CLAIM

A claim circulating in public discussion holds that Toledo Public Schools devotes roughly 45% of its spending to special-needs or student-support services — three to four times the share of a well-off suburban district such as Perrysburg, which is put near 14–16%.

VERDICT: FALSE

On every available basis in the districts' own primary financial records, special-education instruction is about 14–15% of operating spending in *both* districts, and student-support services about 8% in both. There is no 45% figure and no three-to-fourfold gap.

What the Record Shows

Measure (FY2024–25)	Toledo City	Perrysburg EVSD
Student support services (% of operating)	8.1%	8.5%
Special education instruction (% of operating)	14.5%	14.4–14.7%
Special education instruction, per pupil	$2,766	$2,032–$2,363
Total operating spending, per pupil	$20,805	$14,632

Figures are from DEW's report-card financial data (function-level operating expenditures) and each district's FY2025 audited financial statements. "Special education instruction" is the special-instruction function; it excludes related services and special-education transportation, so it understates total special-education cost symmetrically for both. Perrysburg spans General Fund and all-funds bases; Toledo is General Fund.

The Kernel of Truth, and the Error

- **Toledo does spend somewhat more per pupil on special education** (about $2,766 versus roughly $2,000–$2,360), consistent with a modestly heavier student-need profile. That is a real, and much smaller, difference than the claim describes.
- **The share of the budget is nearly identical** (~14–15% in both), because Toledo's total per-pupil spending is also much higher. A larger budget spread over higher need can leave the special-education share unchanged.
- **The cited numbers do not match the records.** No basis produces 45% for Toledo. The "14–16%" attributed to Perrysburg for "student support services" in fact matches Perrysburg's special-education share — the categories appear to have been conflated.

What This Does and Does Not Establish

This fact-check compares reported spending shares from primary sources. It does not evaluate whether either district's spending is adequate, efficient, or sustainable, and it does not measure the full cost of educating students with disabilities, which extends beyond the special-instruction function. It takes no position on school-funding policy.

Sources

- Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, 2024–25 report-card financial data (function-level operating expenditures), for student-support-services shares.
- Toledo City School District, FY2025 audited financial statements (Lucas County): General Fund special-education instruction and total expenditures.
- Perrysburg Exempted Village School District, FY2025 audited financial statements (Wood County): Statement of Activities and General Fund special-education instruction.
- District enrollment (average daily membership) from DEW's FY2025 expenditure files.