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## **Kasich plan would let parents overhaul failing schools**

By Jennifer Smith Richards

Can't fix failing schools? Parents could get tough on Ohio's districts.

Gov. John Kasich's budget plan would give parents the power to force radical changes on chronically underperforming schools.

"Failing to address the concerns of parents could for the first time come at a high cost," said Chad Aldis, executive director of School Choice Ohio, which pushes for charter schools and private-school vouchers.

The "parent trigger" would apply to schools that rank in the state's bottom 5 percent in academics for three consecutive school years. If a majority of a school's parents sign a petition demanding change, the school would be forced to accept the reform the parents propose:

- Converting into a charter school.
- Replacing at least 70 percent of the staff.
- Contracting with another school district, an effective nonprofit group or a for-profit group to operate the school.
- Turning the school's operation over to the Ohio Department of Education.
- Making "fundamental reforms" to the school's staffing or governance.

If parents pull the trigger, the reform would take effect the next school year. The lowest-performing 5 percent of schools would be identified using performance-index scores, which measure how well students do on state tests.

Applied to the past three years of school data, fewer than 50 schools in the state fall into that category. In Franklin County, the only district with trigger-eligible schools would have been Columbus, where a handful of schools would be considered failing by Kasich's measure.

Kasich spokesman Rob Nichols said the trigger provision is based on California's parent-empowerment law, which was enacted early last year. A dozen other states have discussed similar measures.

**READ MORE:** [http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local\\_news/stories/2011/04/03/kasich-plan-would-let-parents-fix-failing-schools.html?sid=101](http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2011/04/03/kasich-plan-would-let-parents-fix-failing-schools.html?sid=101)

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