

The Daily News Journal told me this was too long and wanted me to edit it. I refused. I told them I was a motivated camper. Had a lot to say.

Another media person told me this was too informative. LOL!

I started researching local school funding in 1997. Where is Hakko? It is now 2025:

The Tennessee State Legislature passed a Voucher Plan and the Rutherford County School Board drove outside its lane in the same week.

The Voucher Plan gives 20,000 students \$7,000 to attend the private school of the private school's choice. "School Choice" means "Schools Choose". The bill calls for 50% of those scholarships to be awarded to low income, disability, and children attending the public schools. A current private school student can get scholarship? What percentage of those compared to low income or a student with a disability will get one?

So 2.1% of the kids (and their parents) get 1.2% of the state's school funding and 97.9% get 98.8% of their current school funding. The bill goes on to say the legislation will guarantee there will be no decline in the State TISA Funding (*the money must come from somewhere. Roads? Public Safety?*) and schools will set aside some funds for school maintenance and construction to enhance the school facilities. Does it guarantee that private schools will not increase their tuition by \$7,000? Will we be provided a report of the zip codes of each of the 20,000 winners? Breakdown of that 50% of low income, disability and present private school students?

History has a way of repeating itself, it just changes the labels. Debt to Construct Schools in Rutherford County since 1998 and now, 27 years later, the just-passed School Voucher Plan.

In 1998 I made a speech of how debt to fund construction of new schools was going to be the yoke that would end up goring our oxen of a county. I argued for Impact Fees instead of an Adequate Facilities Tax. Impact Fees are calculated on the exact impact a new subdivision or shopping mall, or other project will have on the local economy. The need for new Schools, Roads, Parks and other infrastructure. An Adequate Facilities Tax is a set amount regardless of impact. **I was right.**

Why Impact Fees? What if Rutherford County had them? Let's Compare Franklin and Williamson Counties' Debt (They have had impact fees for decades) and Rutherford County's Debt (Development Tax).

Key Passages from City of Franklin's 2024-2025 Budget: "Property taxes are increasing by a healthy 8.6% year over year due to growth in the overall levy and lower debt service requirements" and "Summary Despite the challenges and uncertainty facing communities across the country, the City of Franklin is in excellent financial condition. Our reserves are at strong levels, our debt obligations are relatively low and manageable, and our tax rates are among the lowest in America"

Rutherford County was 120th out of 143 Schools Systems in 2022-2023 School Year.

Rutherford County 2024 Property Tax Share

County General	\$0.7388	38.2%
Ambulance Service	\$0.0712	3.7%
Highway Department	\$0.0074	0.4%
General Purpose Schools	\$0.5909	30.5%
Debt Service	\$0.4100	21.2%
Education Capital Projects	\$0.1177	6.1%
	\$1.9360	

Rutherford County? \$71,018,982 Debt and \$18,975,938 for Education Capital Projects.

Williamson County 2024 Property Tax Share

County General	0.3800	20.2%
Solid Waste Sanitation	0.0500	2.7%
General Purpose Schools	1.0900	58.0%
General Debt Service	0.2200	11.7%
Rural Debt Service	0.1400	7.4%
	1.8800	

Franklin:

“In FY 2025, the City's debt service is approximately \$15.1 million and is paid by a combination of property tax and special revenues, including hotel/motel taxes and road impact fees.”

Franklin City Schools is consistently #1 in the State in Spending Per Student.

I am predicting now that the just passed School Voucher Plan will do the same thing, bankrupt our county. I have **current events** on my side. **Do a Google Search on “school vouchers Arizona bankrupt”**, Some stories you will find: “School Vouchers Were Supposed to Save Taxpayer Money. Instead, They Blew a Massive Hole in Arizona’s Budget”, “Arizona Faces Sweeping Budget Cuts, Driven by Flat Tax and Private School Vouchers”, “Private school vouchers add to Arizona’s massive budget shortfall, The state faces a shortfall this year of about \$850 million” and “One year in, Arizona’s universal school vouchers are a cautionary tale for the rest of the nation.” – AZ Mirror:

“The nation is watching as the devastating impacts of Arizona’s universal voucher program unfold. The most expansive and least accountable in the country, Arizona’s ESA voucher program is an unmitigated economic disaster with very real human impacts.

Last year, Arizona lawmakers and Gov. Doug Ducey rammed through universal ESA vouchers pushed by out-of-state interests. The Republicans running the legislature sold universal vouchers under the ruse that it would help low-income students, insisting the additional cost to the state would be negligible.

However, one year into this failed experiment, the truth is clear: universal ESA vouchers are welfare for the wealthy that will devastate the state’s budget and lead to school closures,

teacher layoffs, and eventually cuts to services like firefighters, health care, roads and more. Republican former Rep. Joel John, one of the deciding votes on universal vouchers, said he's "regretted it ever since... It was such bad policy, I was embarrassed I supported it."

Thank You Rutherford County School Board member Tammy Sharp for voting no on the School Board's "Rutherford school board votes in support of closing nation's borders due to rising ESL needs". Your quote: "*Message to our children is 'not a good one'*" is right. Your comment "'We don't have any authority' over federal government" is also correct. Federalism. You must have had a pretty good U.S. Government or Civics teacher in school.

Kids Can't Pick Their Parents! No One Controls Their Original Station in Life. No second grader made the decision to leave a foreign country and come to America.

In 1982 the Supreme Court, in *Plyler v. Doe*, struck down a Texas law that denied funding for education to children of illegal immigrants and allowed school districts to charge tuition to such students. The Court ruled that denying these children access to education violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. I wonder if my county school board is familiar with *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*? Ever read the 14th Amendment? "**Section 1?** "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; **nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.**" Please note, it says "person", NOT CITIZEN.

In Tennessee, like in most states, public education is funded through property taxes and sales taxes. This creates disparities in education quality since wealthier areas generate more funding for their schools than lower-income areas. **It is a canard that illegal immigrants do not fund their children's education.** They pay property taxes, and if they rent, that is commercial property, taxed at a higher rate. Tennessee's proposed Voucher Plan will exacerbate the disparity in public school funding, since most private schools are in the top areas of property tax assessments and tax revenue. Tennessee supplements education funding through sales taxes. Rutherford County used to use the Wheel Tax for that purpose as well. A sales tax is a regressive tax that disproportionately impacts lower-income residents, including many undocumented families. Since undocumented immigrants contribute to sales taxes, their role in funding education is significant despite public misconceptions and media misinformation.

I started tracking Spending Per Student for the 1997-1998 school year. I made a chart. I will add it at the end of my letter.

Again, thank you Tammy Sharp. *As you can see, our county school system is a delivering a lot of bang for the buck*, thanks to the superintendent, staff and teachers in this county. In 1997-1998 Rutherford County Schools ranked 62nd in the state in spending per student. The latest data available, 2022-2023, we ranked 120th. The 62nd school system was Meigs County. They spent \$11,594.87 per student. We spent \$10,538.18 per student. The state average was \$12,292.57 per student. **Imagine Rutherford County Schools if the County Commission just kept the funding at**

the 1997-1998 ranking. In 1997-1998, our county had 23,708 students. We spent \$4,033 per student. State Average was \$4,391. We had 49,864 students in 2022-2023.

This information is a great example of why school vouchers is a terrible idea. Taking money from 100% of the kids in the state and redistributing that to a small percentage of students.

Thank You for taking the time to read my tome. I have been concerned about the funding of our county schools for a long time.

David Limbaugh

Please keep scrolling – I promised you a chart....

The Promised Chart:

		AVERAGE	TOTAL	OPERATING
		DAILY	OPERATING	EXPENDITURES**
		MEMBERSHIP	EXPENDITURES**	PER PUPIL ADM
1997-1998	1. OAK RIDGE	4,752	\$30,965,649	\$6,517
	2. ALCOA	1,344	\$8,434,400	\$6,275
	3. GREENEVILLE	2,516	\$14,892,502	\$5,918
	27. HAMBLEN COUNTY	8,921	\$40,683,797	\$4,560
	28. MURFREESBORO	5,553	\$25,275,519	\$4,551
	29. LENOIR CITY	1,850	\$8,381,604	\$4,530
	61. HAWKINS COUNTY	6,925	\$27,931,187	\$4,033
	62. RUTHERFORD COUNTY	23,708	\$95,619,368	\$4,033
	63. MAURY COUNTY	11,762	\$47,344,131	\$4,025
	135. DAYTON	759	\$2,472,875	\$3,258
	136. *GIBSON CO. SPEC.	2,378	\$7,912,832	\$3,327
	137. SMITH COUNTY	3,084	\$9,475,053	\$3,072
	Grand Total	890,805	\$3,911,246,817	\$4,391

2003-2004	1. OAK RIDGE	4,106	41,192,156	\$10,032
	2. *FRANKLIN	3,581	33,745,550	\$9,424
	3. ALCOA	1,241	11,114,914	\$8,959
	32. ANDERSON COUNTY	6,411	\$44,825,419	\$6,992
	33. MURFREESBORO	5,719	\$39,830,016	\$6,964
	34. CLAY COUNTY	1,107	\$7,695,803	\$6,954
	97. UNICOI COUNTY	2,361	\$14,479,501	\$6,134
	98. RUTHERFORD COUNTY	27,902	\$171,106,422	\$6,132
	99. *PARIS	1,418	\$8,693,727	\$6,132
	133. *MCKENZIE	1,251	\$6,787,101	\$5,424
	134. WHITE COUNTY	3,711	\$20,097,008	\$5,416
	135. CHESTER COUNTY	2,389	\$12,791,359	\$5,354
	Grand Total	857,047	\$5,996,444,360	\$6,997
	Expansion Management Magazine	Graduate Outcome	Resource Index	Community Index
			measures a	measures the
			community's financial	economic and
			commitment to public	education background
			education	of the adult population
	Rutherford County	62/100	30/100	58/100
	Williamson County	68/100	41/100	91/100

2004-2005	1. OAK RIDGE	4,064	\$40,402,785	\$9,943
	2. *FRANKLIN	3,640	\$35,217,958	\$9,675
	3. DAVIDSON COUNTY	65,386	\$593,664,191	\$9,079
	36. UNION COUNTY	2,901	\$21,255,281	\$7,327
	37. MURFREESBORO	5,764	\$42,233,119	\$7,326
	38. HAYWOOD COUNTY	3,316	\$24,261,574	\$7,316
	117. *TRENTON	1,357	\$8,602,975	\$6,342
	118. RUTHERFORD COUNTY	29,399	\$186,417,814	\$6,341
	119. LINCOLN COUNTY	3,802	\$23,966,717	\$6,304
	134. *GIBSON CO. SPEC.	2,526	\$14,918,597	\$5,907
	135. CHESTER COUNTY	2,372	\$13,739,795	\$5,792
	136. *MCKENZIE	1,282	\$7,245,320	\$5,652
	Grand Total	867,134	\$6,387,035,545	\$7,366
	Expansion Management	Graduate	Resource Index	Community Index
	Magazine	Outcome	measures a	measures the
			community's financial	economic and
			commitment to public	education background
			education	of the adult population
	Rutherford County	58/100	10/100	58/100
	Williamson County	86/100	22/100	89/100

2006-2007	1. *FRANKLIN	3,652	41,365,864	\$11,328
	2. OAK RIDGE	4,146	43,950,357	\$10,602
	3. ALCOA	1,520	14,306,827	\$9,415
	28. CLAY COUNTY	1,128	9,026,725	\$8,000
	29. MURFREESBORO	6,384	50,488,419	\$7,908
	30. HAYWOOD COUNTY	3,200	25,252,564	\$7,892
	113. CROCKETT COUNTY	1,695	11,439,621	\$6,751
	114. RUTHERFORD COUNTY	32,497	219,243,452	\$6,747
	115. GREENE COUNTY	6,807	45,923,184	\$6,746
	133. CHESTER COUNTY	2,493	15,182,607	\$6,091
	134. *GIBSON CO. SPEC.	2,777	16,898,463	\$6,086
	135. *MCKENZIE	1,340	7,983,217	\$5,959
	Grand Total	888,313	6,923,127,561	\$7,467.47
	Expansion Management	Graduate	Resource Index	Community Index
	Magazine	Outcome	measures a	measures the
			community's financial	economic and
			commitment to public	education background
			education	of the adult population
	Rutherford County	63/100	8/100	58/100
	Williamson County	74/100	17/100	89/100

2022-2023	1. *FRANKLIN	3,078	\$59,306,994	\$19,268.03
	2. DAVIDSON COUNTY	76,906	\$1,439,775,002	\$18,721.23
	3. PERRY COUNTY	1,007	\$15,295,723	\$15,189.40
	55. JOHNSON CITY	7,792	\$94,640,019	\$12,145.79
	56. MURFREESBORO	8,968	\$108,427,477	\$12,090.49
	57. JACKSON COUNTY	1,406	\$16,993,337	\$12,086.30
	119. MONTGOMERY COUNTY	37,984	\$406,398,038	\$10,699.19
	120. RUTHERFORD COUNTY	49,864	\$525,476,033	\$10,538.18
	121. LINCOLN COUNTY	3,829	\$40,283,294	\$10,520.58
	139. WILSON COUNTY	20,013	\$181,575,043	\$9,072.85
	140. JOHNSON COUNTY	4,834	\$40,430,745	\$8,363.83
	141. UNION COUNTY	5,783	\$35,036,687	\$6,058.57
	GRAND TOTAL	970,457	\$11,929,409,534.80	\$12,292.57