



January 2023

Dear Students, Families, Business Members, and Community Members,

Talawanda District is in deficit spending. We have not had an operating levy since 2004 (18 years ago). We know our community supports our schools.

Talawanda School District is not the only school district facing budget shortfalls, deficits spending, unfunded mandates and requirements, and the pitting of community members against each other due to an unconstitutional school funding model. In 1997, the DeRolph case found Ohio's school funding was unconstitutional. While there was a slight change to the funding model about two years ago, the funding model is archaic, unconstitutional, has an over reliance on taxpayers to pay for their schools through property taxes and school income taxes, and divides our great state of Ohio.

Talawanda continues to make reductions. We are moving to the state minimums such as the lowering of credits needed to graduate, eliminating busing for grades 9-12, eliminating course offerings, instituting Pay to Play, eliminating many of our mental health and behavioral support staff such as counselors, social workers, and psychologists, increasing class sizes, eliminating STEM and Gifted services, reducing intervention services that are not required and additional reductions that may be found in our three year plan.

Talawanda will cut \$5.3 million dollars over the next three years. These cuts will not save Talawanda from future cuts and reductions. Our revenues will not increase even during this high inflationary period. Our community overwhelmingly said no to the November 2022 levy.

Our community members are pitted against each other. This disagreement should not have occurred. Our legislators know there has been a funding problem since 1997. Let that year sink in....1997. Very little to nothing has been done to fix this problem.

State takeover is the solution from our legislators when we no longer can fund our operations. Best practices, unfunded mandates, additional requirements, mental health, educating the whole child, preparing the student for life beyond high school (military, workforce/career tech, employment, college) as successful contributing citizens who make our communities and state the best.

Ohio was once ranked in the top 10 in the nation. We have been in a downward spiral for over a decade. Why? Education has been put on the back burner.

Talawanda is on the Guarantee right now. We receive \$2,500 per student from the state share of the unconstitutional funding model. When the Guarantee is eliminated, Talawanda will receive \$1,100 per student. Why do we receive so little? The expectation is that our taxpayers through property taxes and

school income taxes pay the rest because we have the capacity to pay more. Simply...UNFAIR and not in the best interest of all Ohio students and community.

If a Talawanda student moved to another district that received a higher state share of funding from the unconstitutional funding model, that same student with no changes to needs would receive a higher amount of state funding for that new school district. Nothing had changed except the child moving to a different district. Again, not fair and not supportive of all students in our educational system.

We are asking our community members to contact our local legislators as well as the Educational Committee members to voice their concerns as well as offer possible solutions.

We believe it is important to offer ideas, suggestions, and possible solutions to problems. I am promoting the idea of a base cost needed to educate a student be established and provided to each student in Ohio. Using the ODE 2021-22 Report Card data (or you may use the CUPP data which is higher), the average cost per pupil to operate a school district is \$11,306. I am advocating that we use \$9,000 per pupil as the base cost to educate a student. Each district would receive \$9,000 per student. The rest of the cost to educate the students would come from the local community so there is some ownership. Not only would this solve the unconstitutional funding model, but be similar to other states funding models and put us back on track to meet the ever changing needs of our students.

Our Ohio students deserve the best. Denigrating our communities and dividing us against each other is not an answer. It also is a poor leadership tactic in an effort not to address the real problem.

Our schools deserve a fair and equitable funding model. Our current and future businesses, communities, and citizens deserve a great Ohio education system that builds strong communities. We know when schools are not strong and there are not enough supports including mental health, we pay for services down the road that are more costly: jails, retraining, welfare, higher crime rates, increased healthcare costs, and supporting individuals and families who could have supported themselves IF we had a great Ohio educational system that is funded adequately.

We have posted a sample template letter. You may simply copy, edit, add, or just send the letter to our legislators, Governor, and Educational Committee members. We also have posted some sample talking points where you may write your own letters. Again, I believe it is imperative that our legislators hear from all of us. Understanding how this funding problem affects our parents, families, students, businesses, communities, and state is critical. Offering some ideas and solutions also shows how we have thought about this problem and have ideas to contribute.

We also have included our legislators' contact information as well as the Educational Committee contact information. Unfortunately, it will take many letters and contacts over a long period of time for our voices to be heard.

In Education,

Dr. Edward Theroux