



TALAWANDA SCHOOL DISTRICT

131 W. Chestnut Street, Oxford, Ohio 45056 | www.talawanda.org

Educate and Prepare!

Community Member Questions FQA 1

*Please note all questions should be sent to one of the contacts below. You may also call the Superintendent or Treasurer.

**We do not monitor social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, TickTok, etc. where questions are posed. We want to be able to provide the community with information. Please use the contact information below:

Contact: Shaunna Tafelski, Treasurer/CFO tafelskis@talawanda.org
Ed Theroux, Superintendent/CEO theroux@talawanda.org
levyinformation@talawanda.org

We will continue to make FQAs and videos to answer questions as well as provide information to our community. When we see certain questions repeated, we will make Community Members Questions documents.

Question 1: Who should I contact at the district if I have questions?

Contact: Shaunna Tafelski, Treasurer/CFO tafelskis@talawanda.org
Ed Theroux, Superintendent/CEO theroux@talawanda.org
levyinformation@talawanda.org

Question 2: Why doesn't a mental health agency, like St. Joseph's Orphanage, provide the majority of our mental health services so we can reduce the number of counselors, psychologists, nurses, social workers, and other mental health workers to help reduce our overall budget?

We have partnerships with St. Aloysius, TriHealth (McCullough Hyde), and Primary Health. We do not have a partnership with St. Joseph's Orphanage due to distance. We have mental health services for students at each building. Some mental health services are mandated through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students who are identified with a need for mental health services are referred to these partners. These partners provide medical, mental health, and other services to address the individual student's needs. These partners are able to bill Medicaid and other insurances for some services. Our partners, in conjunction with our own staff, provide mental health staff and supports based upon the identified needs found in each building. Additional supports and staff are added when caseloads reach their maximum capacity. While the billing conducted by our partners helps defray some of the costs, it does not cover the entire

cost to provide these services. Insurance limits, lack of insurance, or private insurance limits only cover certain items.

Beyond our partners listed above, our counselors, social workers, and psychologists work with students and families in the pre-intervention (first levels of intervention called Tiers 1 and 2) to assist students with their mental health needs. Students work on socialization skills, conflict resolution, positive behaviors, working with others, and mediation. These skills help our students become well rounded individuals ready to learn and able to meet and follow the expectations found in a K-12 school district setting.

Our counselors, social workers, and psychologists also work with students and families in our intervention levels (Tiers 2 and 3). At these levels intensive support and education is provided to these students. Direct instruction regarding conflict resolution, positive behaviors, mediation, working with others, de-escalation strategies, coping skills, and other targeted interventions are provided to these identified students. Again, with the same focus to help develop our students into successful citizens who are well rounded, ready to learn, and able to follow and meet the expectations found in a K-12 school district setting.

Our Board of Education four years ago approved the hiring of additional social workers. The Board of Education stated the importance of students to not only have academic success, but have basic needs met along with their social/emotional needs. This goes hand-in-hand.

Our Board of Education also has hired a psychologist for each building as well as elementary counselors. All buildings have both a psychologist and a counselor. The psychologist and counselors support the pre intervention needs (Tiers 1 and 2) as well as the intervention needs (Tiers 2 and 3). They also provide services as required for 504s and students with IEPs. Our Board of Education continues to emphasize the importance of developing the whole child including academics, social and emotional, and mental health in order to be successful contributing members of society.

As the Superintendent, I also believe in these programs and services. Time on task, focusing, coping skills, conflict resolution skills, positive behaviors, and mental health services increase resulting in increased student outcomes.

We continue to look for additional partnerships. We know intervening earlier poses the best possible outcome for student achievement and wellness. If the services were reduced or eliminated the result is that student needs are not being met. We want all of our students to succeed and be healthy.

Question 3: Does FFA or FCLA or other extra curricular clubs and activities really cost the district money?

Yes, clubs, extra curricular activities, and athletics cost our district money. Not only do these programs help students achieve academically, but also socially and emotionally. Learning how to work as a team, becoming a leader on and off the field, deepening their learning in other capacities, and giving back to the community are part of these activities that prepare students to

become outstanding citizens. There are students who rely on these activities to succeed in school.

Our Board of Education eliminated fees associated with pay to play. The goal was to attract and retain additional students to the extra curricular activities. In fact, as presented by our former Athletic Director, Wes Cole, participation in these activities has increased since the Board of Education eliminated these pay to play fees.

Butler Tech does provide us with a few teachers each year. These teachers work in our buildings and have expertise in FFA, FCLA, and other activities. Many of our students take and shine in these classes. Butler Tech programs cost Talawanda money, in the fact that for each student who attends these classes, State funding is diverted from TSD to Butler Tech for each class/period that the student enrolls in. We also pay for room, electricity, materials, and other supplies needed to operate these programs. I firmly believe these programs are needed in Talawanda.

Below is a rough estimate of some of the costs associated with our extra curricular activities for last school year:

THS Athletics/Band (includes salaries,fringe,transportation, uniforms, rentals): \$642,742

TMS Athletics (includes salaries, transportation, uniforms): \$97,050

Student Activities (newspaper, mock trial, choir, jazz, best buddies, etc): \$97,994

Question 4: Talawanda provides foreign language classes at the middle school and high school so why is there a cost to foreign language club? Aren't the teachers paid already?

Foreign language classes at the middle school and high school are different from the foreign language clubs. The foreign language classes require teachers who are knowledgeable in the language and can teach the language. Colleges and universities require foreign language. A bi literacy seal on a student's diploma can be earned which not only makes these students marketable for colleges, vocational/technical schools, and universities, but for the military and direct employment.

Foreign language clubs provide an opportunity for students to learn, practice, and expand their language skills beyond the school day. In fact, our elementary schools offer a club to start this education. It costs additional funds for the room, electricity, stipends (for people to teach), clean up, and work with our students. These clubs have a direct connection to our foreign language classes in preparing our students for a global world.

Question 5: Why are we paying for a parent mentor?

There is a little confusion about our parent mentor or surrogate parent and our parent mentoring program. We do not participate in the ODE parent mentoring program. There was a limited number of districts who have this parent mentoring program through ODE. We do have a parent/family/adult Talawanda mentoring program called The Parent Project and Why Try.

Our surrogate parent is a legal requirement. This person is paid through a contract based upon the number of hours he/she works. This person provides information to families and staff regarding the needs of students. Often, this position provides support to our families as the team works through the intervention process, 504 process, or special education process. Not everyone needs this service, but we are required by law to have a person fill this position. It is a position that truly helps bridge the gaps of understanding as well as meet the legal requirements.

We also have people hired as interpreters. By law, we need to provide interpreters when needed. We know it is important to have our families understand the needs, services, and programs in our district. Interpreters help us accomplish these goals especially with more complicated issues such as IEPs, 504, and the intervention process.

English Language Learner services (ELL) must also be provided to our students who speak another language as their first language or are learning English. This is a required service by law. We staff teachers and educational assistants each year based upon the number of students needing this service. This is the first year (2022-23 school year) where we have students with ELL services in all 5 buildings. This service has been growing over the last few years.

We also offer a parent/family/adult mentoring program called the Parent Project and Why Try . Our Human Resource Director and Wellness Coordinator spearhead this program. Parents/family/adults are identified by our school staff. Meetings are held with these identified individuals. Outside and internal partners work with us to provide the services needed to help these individuals with parenting skills. How to help with homework, how to de-escalate, how to understand how schools work, setting expectations, and helping these individuals work and parent their children is the focus. Costs include stipends to individuals to work beyond the school day, electricity, clean up, materials, and other costs based upon the participant's needs. The typical yearly cost of this is around \$1,000. This program benefits our families and students leading to improved academics and social emotional skills.

We do have partners such as the Oxford Foundation and OMHAS grant to help defray some of these costs.