

# \$chool Fees

## *School Fees Pay For More Than Students Know*

by Zaria Drakeford

Fees have been imposed on parents of public school students for years to cover expenses, however, a *The Talon* investigation reveals that parents and students aren't aware of where their money is actually going.

Accounts for specific charges include additional expenses not listed on the website where mandatory fees are paid.

### **Required General Fees**

Required fees listed on students' accounts at Nation Ford include a \$30 instructional fee, \$7 publication fee, and access to the website Vocabulary.com for which students are charged \$10.

"The instructional fee covers any item for students that is used for educational purposes, such as a site license, books, and anything a teacher might use to teach with," NFHS bookkeeper Annette Irvin said. "The publication fee covers communication that has to be printed. For example, it subsidizes the cost of the school yearbook."

"The price for the vocabulary website is \$10 for each student and every student is required to use it," she added.

Vocabulary.com is a company the school decided to use primarily for English classes, replacing the \$13 vocabulary workbooks used in previous years.

The school now charges \$10 for each student. If all 2,188 students pay, the school will collect close to \$21,880. However, the company says they charge the school only \$3.53 per student, which means the school pays only \$7,723 for Vocabulary.com.

Even allowing for the 16 percent of Nation Ford students who are not required to pay because they receive free or reduced lunches due to lower family income, the school should receive fees of more than \$18,379.20 for the Vocabulary.com fee — a difference of \$10,656.20.

Students are being charged an extra \$6.47 for Vocabulary.com, so where does the extra \$14,157 go?

According to Assistant Principal Debra Miller, the money collected for Vocabulary.com also goes towards instructional materials for classrooms and websites Quia.com, Padlet.com and Lynda.com, which are used for educational purposes.

As of Nov. 9, only 580 students — only about a fourth of the student body — had actually paid the fees required before the start of the school year. The amount each student owes is listed in PowerSchool for them or for parents to see. Students who do not pay fees can't attend

prom and will not receive a diploma.

### **Parking Fees**

Another payment that the school requires from drivers is for student parking on campus. The price for a parking pass is \$50, and it can cost an additional \$25 for seniors who want to paint their parking spots, though students pay for all supplies themselves. (Before paying the school for parking, students are required to take Alive at 25 driver safety classes, which can cost \$40 if students are not the first 50 to sign up for classes held in the school district.)

Many students say they are unhappy with the price of parking passes.

"I think the price is a little crazy for a parking pass, but as long as the money goes towards keeping our parking lot and school efficient, safe and clean then it's okay," said Josephine Clark ('21).

However, according to Principal Jason Johns, the parking lot fees go not only toward maintaining the parking lot, but also toward buying microwaves and tables for the Commons, for paying security personnel, and for supplies for student clubs.

"The parking passes are way too expensive," Rawan Hamed ('21) said. "The money should go towards getting more parking spots and having more space in the parking lot."