Making School Finance Data Accessible

Ary Amerikaner
The Education Trust
SHOW OF HANDS

When you hear the phrase “school finance data” do you feel?

a) Excited 😊
b) Bored 😞
c) Scared 😨
Guiding Principles

✓ Simple
✓ Tangible
✓ Meaningful
✓ Actionable
Simple, Tangible, Meaningful, Actionable
The hardest thing first: use fewer numbers!

Nonwhite school districts get $23 billion less than white districts despite serving the same number of students.

Source: 23 Billion, EdBuild
Track a small # of things

**RESULTS: CORE INDICATORS**

We propose the following three “core indicators” for comparing and evaluating state (and district) school finance systems.

1. **Effort:** how much of a state’s total resources or capacity are spent directly on K-12 education;

2. **Adequacy:** whether states provide sufficient resources to districts, relative to other states or to common outcome goals (e.g., test scores);

3. **Progressivity:** whether states allocate more resources to districts serving larger proportions of disadvantaged children.

Source: *The Adequacy and Fairness of State School Finance Systems*, The Albert Shanker Institute & Rutgers University
Simple, Tangible, Meaningful, Actionable
Big $ numbers are hard to internalize

“In the U.S. today, school districts serving the largest populations of Black, Latino, or American Indian students receive roughly $1,800, or 13 percent, less per student in state and local funding than those serving the fewest students of color. This may seem like an insignificant amount, but it adds up. For a school district with 5,000 students, a gap of $1,800 per student means a shortage of $9 million per year.”

That could pay roughly 150 teachers’ salaries!

Source: Funding Gaps 2018, The Education Trust
Simple, Tangible, **Meaningful**, Actionable
Provide Comparison to Peers

Gaps in State and Local Revenues per Student Between Districts Serving the Most and the Fewest Students in Poverty

Source: *Funding Gaps 2018*, The Education Trust
Include Data on School or District Need

✓ Contextual data on demographic characteristics and outcomes are critical if your audience is going to make meaning out of spending differences between schools or districts
NEW YORK SCHOOL FUNDING TRANSPARENCY TOOL

New York School Funding Transparency Tool

This tool is designed to help the public better understand how funds are spent within school districts, and whether resources are reaching the students who most need them. School districts shown here have submitted their budget information to the state, and it is currently under review. Read the data note here. Have questions? Please contact us at schoolfunding@edtrustny.org.

Source: New York School Funding Tool, The Education Trust New York
The New York School Funding Transparency Tool

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Is My School Getting the Funding It Needs to Help All Students Succeed?

We know that the amount of school funding and how these resources are invested play an important role in student success. The students with the greatest needs should have the most resources. But we know their schools often don’t receive the resources they need.

For the first time ever, many New York school districts are now required to tell parents and the public how much the district is spending in each school.

We’ve created this tool to help you see the information and explore what it means.
How much does my school receive from state and local funding?

$20,044

per student

This amount includes $6,296 per student spent by the district central office on behalf of the school's students.
How does my school's funding compare?

Comparing the funding per student for this school ($20,044) with the district elementary/middle school average ($21,907), we can see a difference.

Federal funds are designed to provide extra services to support low-income students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and other groups. Federal funds are not supposed to make up for a shortfall in state and local funds.
**EQUITY CONTEXT**

**WHAT ARE MY SCHOOL'S NEEDS?**

**THIS SCHOOL HAS:**

- **MORE** LOW-INCOME STUDENTS
- **ABOUT THE SAME SHARE OF** STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
- **ABOUT THE SAME SHARE OF** ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS, AND IS
- **LARGER THAN** A TYPICAL SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT.

(It may cost more to operate a smaller school)

Schools with greater needs require *significantly* greater funding than other schools. For example, the federal government assumes that providing a quality education to low-income students requires 40 percent more funding than for non-low-income students.
MAKE IT TANGIBLE

WHAT IS MY SCHOOL INVESTING TO PAY TEACHERS?

- Teacher Salaries
  - School: $5,944 per student
  - District Elementary/Middle School Average: $6,688 per student

HOW EXPERIENCED ARE MY SCHOOL’S TEACHERS?

- School:
  - 0-3 yrs experience: 32%
  - 3+ yrs experience: 68%
- District Elementary/Middle School Average:
  - 0-3 yrs experience: 19%
  - 3+ yrs experience: 81%

Why does this matter? Research shows that teachers are more effective after they have a few years of experience, raising questions about whether the district is assigning the strongest educators to the students who need them the most.
# District View

## Does this district distribute resources equitably?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of Elementary Public Schools</th>
<th>[\text{%}]</th>
<th>Share of Middle Public Schools</th>
<th>[\text{%}]</th>
<th>Share of High Public Schools</th>
<th>[\text{%}]</th>
<th>Combined Overall Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>[%]</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>[%]</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>[%]</td>
<td>Overall Note</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## What's Missing Here?

- The information may be incomplete due to the absence of data or missing information.
- Further analysis is required to provide a comprehensive view.

## Additional Information Provided by the District

- The district offers additional resources and data, which are not detailed in this summary.
- Further inquiries are recommended for a more detailed understanding.

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Schools with greater needs require significantly greater funding than other schools. For example, the federal government assumes that providing a quality education to low-income students requires 40 percent more funding than for non-low-income students.

In the chart below, we compare the “highest need” schools in the district (with the largest share of students with the greatest needs) to the “lowest need” schools in the district (with the smallest share of students with the greatest needs).
Simple, Tangible, Meaningful, Actionable
Connect different stakeholders to action

- Policymakers
- Advocates
- Practitioners (State and District Superintendents)
State Policymakers: Show Data they Can Change

FIGURE 4: Difference in State Revenues per Student Between Districts Serving the Most and the Fewest Students in Poverty

Source: Funding Gaps 2018, The Education Trust
Advocates

MY SCHOOL’S FUNDING: IS MY CHILD’S SCHOOL GETTING THE FUNDING IT NEEDS TO HELP ALL STUDENTS BE SUCCESSFUL?

Source: New York School Funding Tool, The Education Trust New York
Practitioners (State & District superintendents)

Every Student Succeeds Act
School finance data can help make ESSA’s resource allocation review requirements meaningful

- **States** must “periodically” review resource allocations to support districts with schools identified for improvement (ESSA §1111(d)(3)(A)(ii))

- **Districts** with schools identified for improvement must identify and address resource inequities within their district (ESSA §1111(d)(1)(B)(iv))
Let’s end with an exception

What about students of color?
What about students of color?

✓ Ask this question *even if* you don’t have an “actionable” policy recommendation to pair it with, because we have to start having the conversation directly if we’re going to solve the problem.

✓ Changing the narrative – helping others understand that we are shortchanging students of color, and that poverty isn’t a good proxy for race – is a first step.
Simple, Tangible, Meaningful, Actionable