

Making School Finance Data Accessible

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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

The infographic is a black rectangle with white and grey text. It features a small icon in the top left corner. The text is centered and reads: 'NONWHITE SCHOOL DISTRICTS GET', '\$23 BILLION' (in large bold font), 'LESS THAN WHITE DISTRICTS', and '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.

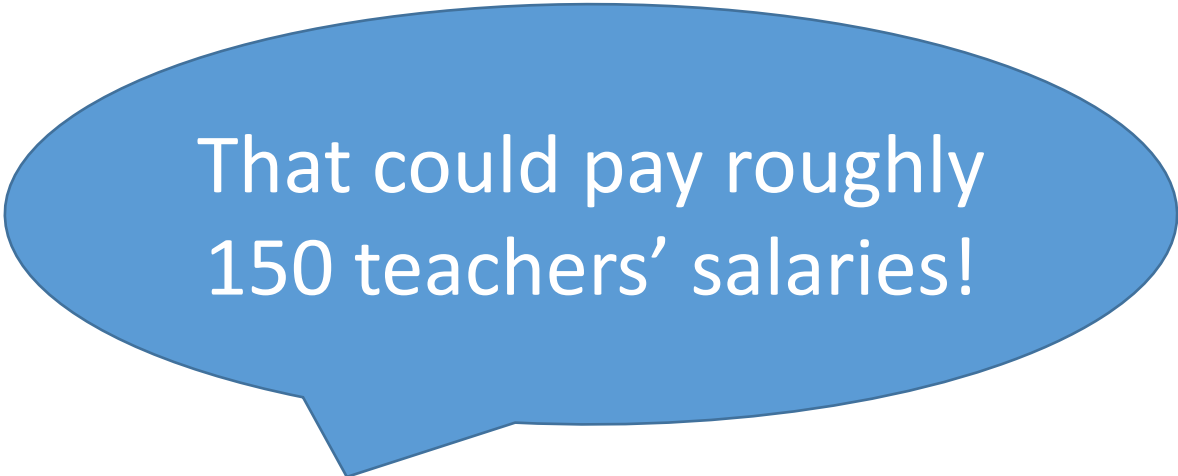
1. **Effort:** how much of a state's total resources or capacity are spent directly on K-12 education;
2. **Adequacy:** whether states provide sufficient resources to districts, relative to other states or to common outcome goals (e.g., test scores);
3. **Progressivity:** whether states allocate more 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.**”



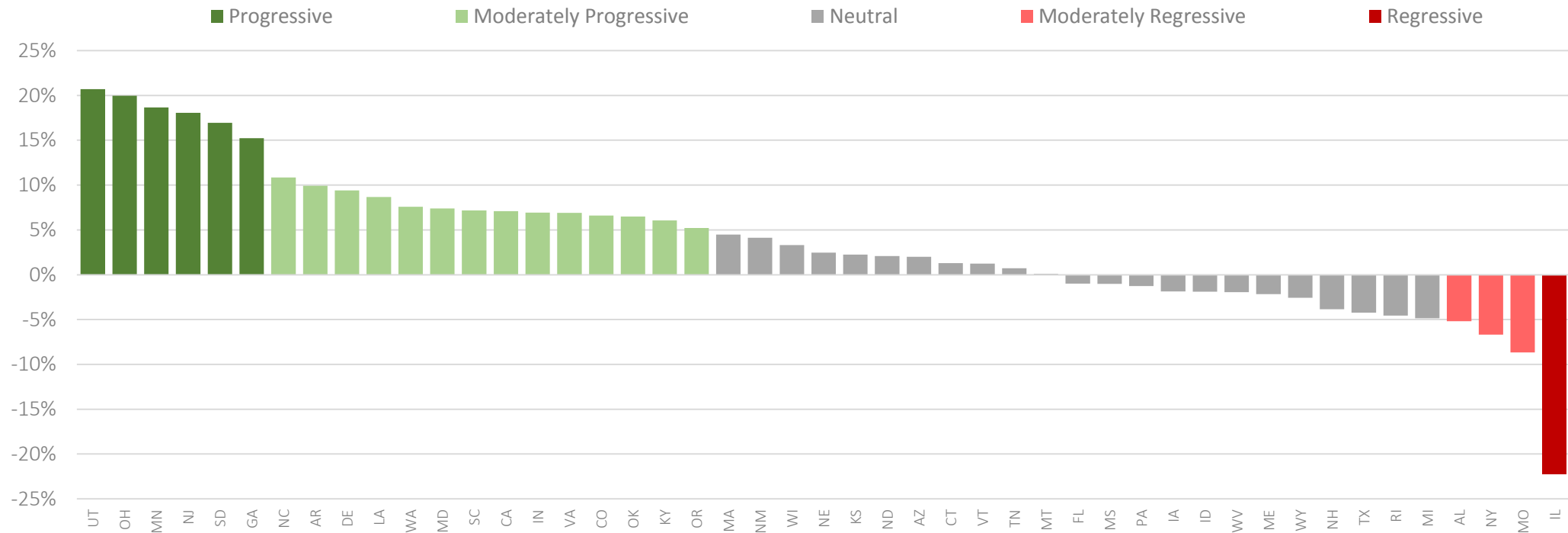
That could pay roughly
150 teachers' salaries!

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.

[HOME](#)[SEE MY SCHOOL](#)[SEE MY DISTRICT](#)[COMPARE
SCHOOLS](#)[MAP THE DATA](#)

**IS MY SCHOOL GETTING THE FUNDING IT NEEDS TO HELP ALL
STUDENTS SUCCEED?**

Source: [New York School Funding Tool](#), The Education Trust New York

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[HOME](#)[SEE MY SCHOOL](#)[SEE MY DISTRICT](#)[COMPARE SCHOOLS](#)[ABOUT THE DATA](#)

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.

[LOOK UP A SCHOOL DISTRICT](#)[LOOK UP A SCHOOL](#)[VIEW DETAILS](#)[VIEW DETAILS](#)

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

After you've checked out your school or district, let your local school leaders know what you think. Click [here](#) for three questions you can ask your school district.

DON'T SEE YOUR SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT LISTED HERE?

This year, 76 school districts were required to report their school budgets. More districts will have to participate in the future. Check back here in the fall for more districts and the latest data.

CONTEXT

IS MY SCHOOL GETTING THE FUNDING IT NEEDS TO HELP ALL STUDENTS SUCCEED?

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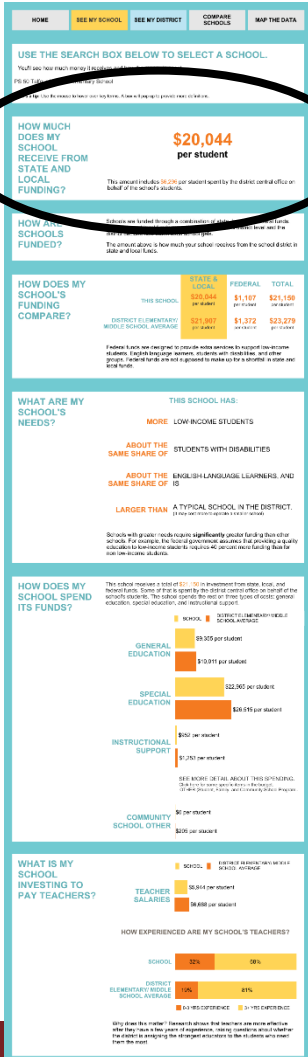
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SCHOOL VIEW



SCHOOL VIEW

THE HEADLINE



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.

SCHOOL VIEW

COMPARE



HOW DOES MY SCHOOL'S FUNDING COMPARE?

THIS SCHOOL

DISTRICT ELEMENTARY/
MIDDLE SCHOOL AVERAGE

STATE &
LOCAL

\$20,044
per student

FEDERAL

\$1,107
per student

TOTAL

\$21,150
per student

\$21,907
per student

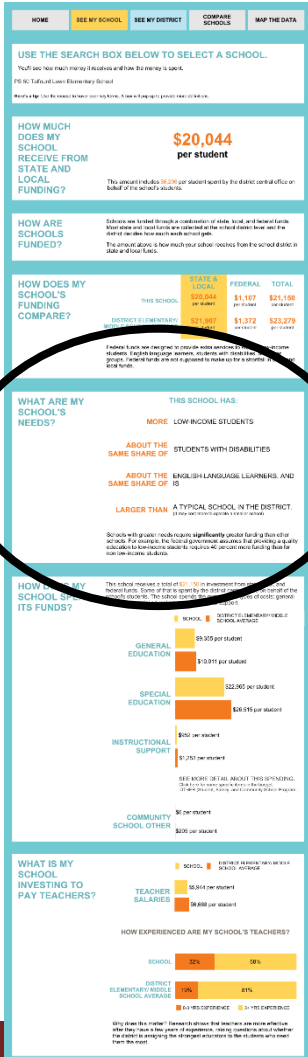
\$1,372
per student

\$23,279
per student

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.

SCHOOL VIEW

EQUITY CONTEXT



WHAT ARE MY SCHOOL'S NEEDS?

THIS SCHOOL HAS:

MORE LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

ABOUT THE SAME SHARE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

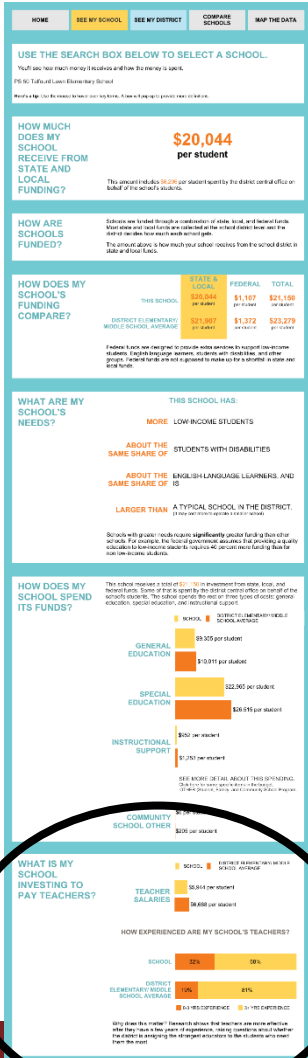
ABOUT THE SAME SHARE OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS, AND IS

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.

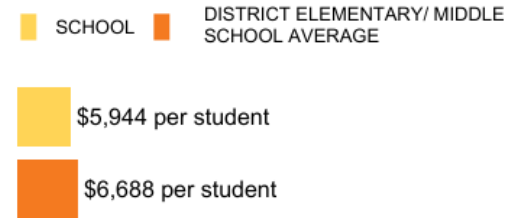
SCHOOL VIEW

MAKE IT TANGIBLE

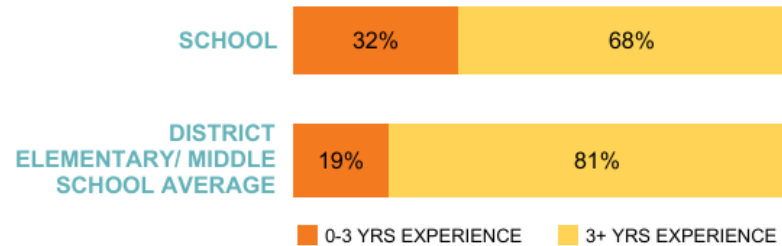


WHAT IS MY SCHOOL INVESTING TO PAY TEACHERS?

TEACHER SALARIES



HOW EXPERIENCED ARE MY SCHOOL'S TEACHERS?



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

HOMESEE MY SCHOOLSEE MY DISTRICTCOMPARE SCHOOLS

MAP THE DATA

Use the search box below to select a school district.

You'll see how the district is allocating funds and if the schools with the greatest needs receive the most resources. This tool is only available for some school districts.

CHOOSE A DISTRICT

Saratoga County School District

DOES THIS DISTRICT DISTRIBUTE RESOURCES EQUITABLY?

CHOOSE DATA

TOTAL DISTRICT AVERAGE SPENDING PER STUDENT (including central office costs)

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOLS

\$15,474

average per student

HIGH SCHOOLS

\$17,684

average per student

A typical school district spends more per student in high schools than in elementary/middle schools.

IS THIS SCHOOL DISTRICT PROVIDING THE MOST RESOURCES TO THE SCHOOLS THAT SERVE THE LARGEST SHARES OF STUDENTS WITH THE GREATEST NEEDS?

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).

HIGHEST NEED

LOWEST NEED

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOLS

SHARE OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

\$15,905 per student

\$15,551 per student

SHARE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

\$14,803 per student

\$15,587 per student

SHARE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

\$15,549 per student

\$14,598 per student

COMBINED OVERALL NEED

\$15,932 per student

\$15,256 per student

WHAT'S MISSING HERE?

This information helps us understand how the school district is making decisions about how to fund its schools. But it doesn't tell us whether the overall level of funding from state and local sources is adequate to provide a quality education, or whether schools are spending the money effectively. All of these parts of the puzzle are important to understand whether schools are receiving the resources they need to help students succeed.

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE DISTRICT

STATUS OF DISTRICT DATA

This school district submitted the funding data you see here to the New York State Division of Budget, as state law requires. The data is Approved.

DESCRIBE THE LOCAL METHODOLOGY/APPROACH USED TO ALLOCATE FUNDS TO EACH SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT

view details -->

IS THERE ANY THING UNIQUE ABOUT CERTAIN SCHOOLS WHICH EXPLAIN WHY PER-PUPIL SPENDING AT THESE LOCATIONS MAY BE SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN THE DISTRICT AVERAGE?

view details -->

DESCRIBE ANY ITEMS WHICH THE DISTRICT FEELS MIGHT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

view details -->

DISTRICT VIEW

EQUITY FOCUSED OVERVIEW



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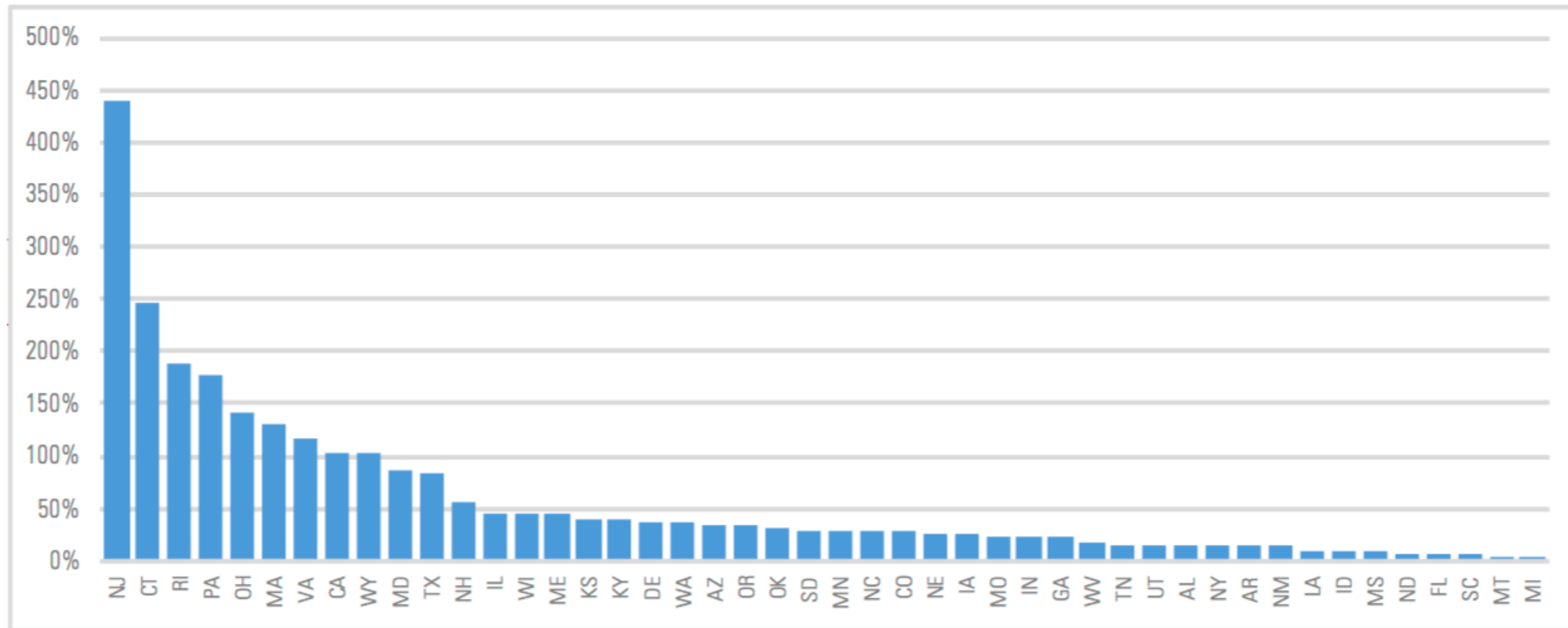
Simple, Tangible, Meaningful,
Actionable

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?

School funding is important for student success. We care about how much schools receive and how they use their resources.

For example, students should have access to strong educators. They should have the chance to enroll in advanced courses. And they should have modern textbooks and technology.

The students with the greatest needs should have the most resources. But we know their schools often don't receive the resources they need.



Who decides the budget?

The school district's leadership develops the budget plan. The School Board is responsible for voting to approve the budget.



When does this happen?

A school district's budget is usually finalized by Spring. But the real work is already happening. You can find out more at School Board meetings and at public hearings.

3 QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Click [here](#) to check out how your school is funded. Then, here are a few questions you can ask district leaders and other elected officials:

1

HOW IS THE DISTRICT INVESTING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR SCHOOL?

What services are provided to students learning English in our school? To students with disabilities?

Are low-income students getting extra support to achieve at high levels?

In middle and high schools, do our students have access to advanced courses?

2

THE DISTRICT IS GOING TO GET MORE MONEY FROM THE STATE THIS YEAR. ARE THEY PLANNING TO INVEST THESE NEW FUNDS IN A FAIR WAY?

All schools have needs, but a school district should put the most new resources into the schools that serve students with the greatest needs. Is the district planning to do that in this year's budget? How?

Tip: Most school districts spend about the same in the schools that serve the **most** low-income students compared to the schools that serve the **fewest** low-income students. Equal is not the same as equitable!

3

DOES MY CHILD HAVE ACCESS TO STRONG EDUCATORS?

Tip: In many school districts, the highest-need schools have more new teachers than other schools. Research shows that having strong teachers is the most important in-school factor for student success. And teachers are typically stronger after a few years of experience. Click [here](#) to see how teacher experience at your child's school compares to other schools.



Make your voice heard



Find your school district and send a letter to the Superintendent and School Board asking them to consider these three key equity questions when developing this year's budget.

English

Spanish

Adirondack Central School District

School funding is important for student success! Encourage your local education leaders to ensure that the most dollars are reaching the students with the greatest needs.

First Name

Last Name

Suffix (Optional)

City

Email

Comment on next year's school district budget

Dear [DISTRICT LEADER],

Personalize your message

School funding is important for student success. As a parent in the district, I care about how much schools receive and how they use their resources.

The students with the greatest needs should have the most resources. I am writing to ask you to consider and report to the public on three questions as you craft next year's budget:

- How will the new budget support low-income students, students learning English, and students with disabilities so they receive the extra support to achieve at high levels?
- The district is going to get more money from the state this year. Will the district put the most new resources into the schools that serve the students with the greatest needs? How?
- Research shows that having strong teachers is the most important in-school factor for student success. How will the new budget ensure access to strong educators?

Sincerely,
[Your information here]

SUBMIT

Source: [New York School Funding Tool](#), The Education Trust New York

The Education Trust | April 2019

Practitioners (State & District superintendents)



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