

4

IMPORTANT LESSONS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT

MONEY

What we've learned from message research and talking about schooling and spending with communities across the country.

**DO link the issue of
finance to students.**

All too often statements emphasize things like financial sustainability, teacher retention, or investments in pre-k without linking the discussion directly to students.

In fact, not mentioning how students are affected is likely a missed opportunity.

TRY THIS:

“We need to give our teachers a raise so we can recruit and hold onto the best talent possible because we know that’s what makes the difference for our students in the classroom.”

DO communicate with dollar amounts and acknowledge tradeoffs. **But, avoid** using business lingo.

Concerns about waste in school spending are widespread (even among teachers) and communicating in dollar terms can help assure audiences that you've thought through costs alongside value.

Using terms like "efficiency" or "reallocation" suggests that the speaker thinks the students or staff are widgets and doesn't fully appreciate that there are real humans at stake.

DO put any research
in local context.

Communities often distrust research that isn't contextualized to local conditions.

People want to know that changes in policy or investments are appropriate for their own districts or schools.

TRY THIS:

“Research shows that preschool education is a good investment. And in our community, many children come to kindergarten unprepared for school. That’s why investing in pre-k spending makes sense for our students.”

DO offer the public and school community a means to weigh in on financial decisions.

Teachers and parents participating in focus groups wanted to have a voice in resource allocation decisions, to engage in discussions of tradeoffs, and to offer their perspectives. Most of all, they care about transparency and the opportunity to participate.

Research suggests that if leaders' invitation for public feedback is authentic, the leaders are perceived as more trustworthy and competent. Even if a decision has already been made, inviting feedback on how a change is playing out can go a long way toward maintaining confidence.

Want to learn more?

Read this post by Marguerite Roza and Laura Anderson:

[Understanding School Finance Is One Thing. Being Effective In Communicating About It Is Another Skill Entirely](#)