



Building State Capacity and Productivity Center



# ESSA's FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY REPORTING REQUIREMENT

## The Productivity Opportunity:

A Role-Playing Activity to Engage Leaders in Financial and Outcomes Data

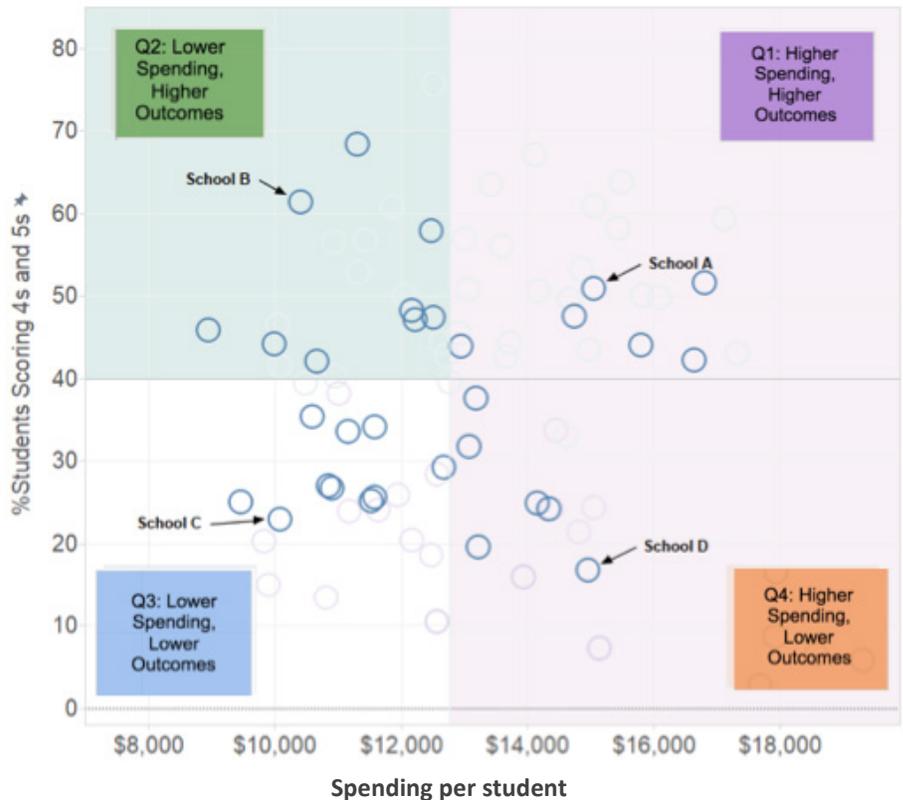
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This document offers a set of exercises designed to help education leaders better understand the relationship between spending and student performance—and position them to use emerging data to explore opportunities for productivity in their day-to-day work improving education.

Typically, schooling has been measured on student outcomes alone. Imagine an information system that incorporates student performance and school-level financial information for every school in a state, or even across states. Merging these data into powerful, interactive visual displays like the scatterplots used in these exercises can enable clearer interpretations of the relationship between spending and performance.

To date, such data have been difficult and time-consuming to access or array, but that is about to change. For the first time, the federal government requires states to report how much is spent on each school in addition to measuring student outcomes by school. This means education leaders and stakeholders will have access to unprecedented financial data, both within and across states. The pairing of outcomes and spending data becomes even more powerful when stakeholders can easily compare schools with similar characteristics (such as urban, suburban, or rural; small or large; high poverty; high concentration of English language students) or within a district, region, and state. Once built, these emerging data systems will help clarify which schools are most able to leverage funding to maximize student outcomes and will allow all schools to benchmark their progress toward improved productivity.



The exercises below are intended to make productivity data easily comprehensible and a regular part of everyone's efforts to improve education. They are designed to engage education leaders at any level or stakeholders in mock discussions around the productivity data (pairing per-pupil spending and student outcomes). By playing different roles in the conversation, participants can help broaden perspectives around the data and its importance.

**Instructions:** The role-plays contemplate three scenarios rooted in real data from a New England-area state system. The per-pupil expenditure for each school includes all instructional and non-instructional costs (except debt and capital expenditures), as well as the school's real staff salaries. For each activity, participants should read through the scenario, digest the data, and take time to independently jot down thoughts about the mock conversation. The group could then assign one person to each role in the conversation. After the conversation, the group can debrief together.

If you would like a moderator guide or support in moderating or training on these activities, please contact [Katie.Hagan@georgetown.edu](mailto:Katie.Hagan@georgetown.edu).

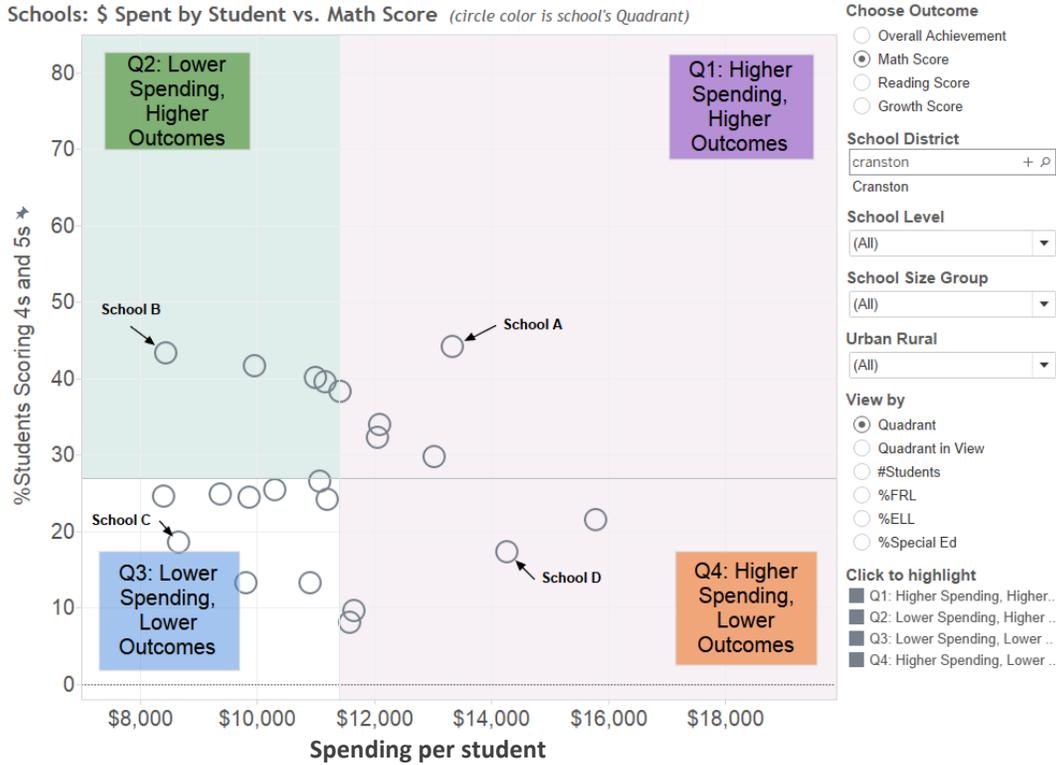
# Role Play #1: The Superintendent Meets With the School Leader

Scatterplot #1 shows all the district schools. The district serves a small, working-class city. The district is relatively uniform in its demographics: each school's poverty level is approximately equal to the district average.

The superintendent schedules separate meetings with the principal of one school from each quadrant to discuss the data display in the spending/outcomes dataset. Record a few notes on what might be included in each conversation, first from the perspective of the superintendent, then the principal.

	What might the superintendent say in this meeting?	What might the principal say in this meeting?
School A Meeting		
School B Meeting		
School C Meeting		
School D Meeting		

**Scatterplot #1: Schools in My District**



## Role Play #2: The Principals Work With School Staff

Scatterplot #2 includes all school districts in the state and has filtered the data to create more uniformity in student demographics.

Now imagine that each principal goes back to her school to discuss the findings with the school's faculty and staff. This time, the principal has expanded and filtered the dataset to explore how her school's spending and outcomes compare to all schools in the state with similar demographics and other conditions. With both scatterplots in hand ...

	What might the principal say in this meeting?	What might the teachers/staff say in this meeting?
School A Meeting		
School B Meeting		
School C Meeting		
School D Meeting		

**Scatterplot #2: All Non-Urban Elementary Schools with 25-50% FRL**



## Role Play #3: The Principals Meet With a Stakeholder Group

Imagine that a stakeholder group (parents, a subset of teachers, etc.) wants a new program or offering in a particular school, such as a new class, activity, or sport, or professional development. How might a principal use the spending and performance data shown in Role Play #2 to consider and discuss the option with the stakeholder group?

	<b>What might the principal say?</b>
In the context of School A	
In the context of School B	
In the context of School C	
In the context of School D	

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